

## "PANSY'S" DECEPTION.

BY MRS. ALEX. M'VEIGH MILLER.

From New York Weekly.

"I will never forgive him, never! He is a mean wretch, and he has broken my heart!" sobbed Rene Gordon, in a tempest of wrath.

Rene was a beautiful young authoress, who had made a decided hit in the literary world with her short stories and poems in the last three years, and her success had brought her the usual tribute of gifts and letters from admiring readers and autograph-hunters.

One of these letters, from an artless young girl named Pansy Thorn, had proved quite interesting to the young authoress. Pansy had fallen so deeply in love with Rene's writings that she begged for the favor of an exchange of photographs and a correspondence.

"I am only a child, and so lonely," wrote sweet Pansy. "I love to write letters, but I have very few correspondents. I should be the proudest girl in the world if you would let me be your loving friend."

It was rather gushing, but somehow it touched a tender chord in Rene's heart, for she, too, was lonely, an orphan girl living with an unsympathetic aunt in a country town. She was shy and sensitive, and so fond of books that she had never made any intimate friends. As was usual with such natures as hers, friendship had to be sought before it was bestowed, but in the clasp of a loving hand the shy violet gives forth its sweetest perfume.

The correspondence began and continued two years. Photographs and frequent gifts were exchanged. The two girls became very fond of each other, and began to look forward eagerly to meeting at some future day.

This golden summer, when the country was looking its very loveliest, Rene had invited Pansy to spend a month at Honeysuckle Bower, and the invitation had been accepted. Tomorrow she would arrive and Rene was in a fever of joyful excitement.

But today there came another letter following one of yesterday, and as the beautiful girl read it there at the window, where roses and honeysuckles peeped gaily in, her fair face paled with grief, her blue eyes darkened with surprise and horror.

Suddenly she threw down the letter with a cry of anger.

"I will never forgive him, never! He is a mean wretch, and has almost broken my heart."

There was no one to hear her angry cry, for Aunt Marian was making gold cake down stairs for to-morrow's guest, and so Rene threw down her curly head on her arm and sobbed in bitter disappointment.

She was only a girl, after all, with a girl's heart, in spite of her literary successes, and she had received a cruel wound.

The letter lying at her feet was a long and closely written one, and told the story of a clever deception—clever and cruel.

Pansy Thorn was not Pansy Thorn at all. It was a man who had been writing all this while to Rene Gordon—a man who had admired her writing so much that the longing to know her better had prompted that deception by which he had become possessed of her photograph.

"I knew," he wrote, "that you would not have given it to a man, and I wanted it so much so much! I long to know if your face was as beautiful as your thoughts. And, oh, Rene, how I have treasured it, poring over it daily, until my heart went from me into your keeping. And your charming letters, darling—what a bright, sweet revelation they were to me of a young girl's nature, so frank and pure and true. You would not have written those letters to me had you known I was a young man instead of an artless, affectionate girl. Forgive me for stealing your girlish confidence like this, but it has only made me know you at your best. I did not mean to keep up the deception so long, but latterly the more I thought of it the more I feared you would resent this deception. I call it loves deception, and the world pardons much in love, you know. Will you be as kind?"

The photograph I sent you, Rene, was really my own. When a boy at collage we acted a play called Pansy Blossoms, and I was cast for the heroine. I had a rather delicate, girlish face in those days, and the white dress and dainty laces quite completed the illusion. I looked so well that my chum insisted on my being photographed as 'Miss Pansy,' as they called me for a long time afterward. It was that photograph I sent you, Rene, taken at fifteen. I am ten years older now, and have grown a mustache.

"I could not come on that promised visit until I made my confession and implored your forgiveness. I have behaved badly, I know, but in the main, dear, they call me a good fellow. Will you forgive me, Rene? Shall I come on that visit? Or shall I remain away scorned and unforgiven? Write and tell me my fate, and then I shall know whether I shall come and woo you for my bride, or remain away, and be forgotten, my very name unknown to you I shall await your answer with burning anxiety and impatience. PANSY."

The letter lay there at Rene's feet, the golden head drooped on the window sill, and Rene's shoulders with her bursting sobs. The bees hummed outside the window, ruffling the flowers of their sweets, the butterflies hovered in the golden air, the robins sang blithely in the orchard trees, but Rene cared for nothing now. Her air castles were all dissolved, her loved wasted, her trust betrayed.

Suddenly she lifted up her drooping head and gazed with tearful eyes at the mantel with its soft white draperies looped with ribbons.

There was the traitor's face smiling down upon her—the dusky riant face with its big dark eyes and tumbled curls so short and careless. It was boyish—she had always thought so, but she had loved it all the better for that—yes, loved the saucy, pretty face, and the full white throat rising out of a mist of snowy lace ruffles.

The color rose hotly in Rene's face as she noted the little purple glass slipper filled with fresh pansies that she kept always before this treasured portrait.

"Miss Pansy! The deceitful villain!" she cried, wildly, angrily. "Oh, I could never forgive him, never! Only to think how I confided in him! The girlish fancies of what my lover should be like when he came the caricatures of

my village admirers, the rhapsodies over loves of new hats, the gush over nothing! How he laughed in his sleeve when he penned those gushing replies, in that school-girlish hand! How he fooled me writing about his birthday gift this spring—the little pug dog that his mamma said made him look like an old maid when he went to walk out with it. Old maid, indeed! Twenty-five years old, and with a mustache!—called a good fellow, too! And I have sent him gifts, girlish things worked with pansies to suit his name! Ugh! I never shall like pansies any more. I think I shall have all the plant uprooted in the bed!" and she made a grimace of bitter disdain at "Miss Pansy" smiling over the mantel.

Then she caught up the letter from the floor and flung herself into the chair at her writing desk. Across the back of Pansy Thorn's letter she wrote, in determined characters:

"I will never forgive you for your wicked deception, and I hope never to meet you or know your name! You have destroyed my faith in human kind!"

She put the letter into an envelope, then sealed and addressed it to Pansy's home in a great Northern city. Catching up her wide-brimmed summer hat, she started to walk to the village post-office.

Aunt Marian had just made a success of her gold cake, and came out on the porch to rest. She looked at her beautiful niece in wonder. "Why, Rene, what is the matter? You have been crying!" "Aunt Marian, I have had such sorrowful news. Pansy Thorn will not come tomorrow. I have just received a letter from—one of her relatives. My dear friend Pansy, is dead."

She hurried away to post her letter, without stopping to answer the old lady's wondering speeches. "Pansy is dead—to me," she thought bitterly, and her hot tears fell for her lost friend whose gay little letters had always made sunshine in her heart.

She could not sleep that night, she was so restless and unhappy, but she thought, ceaselessly, and at breakfast next morning she said:

"Aunt Marian, will you come with me for a month to the seashore? I have a fancy for change of scene, so that I can throw off my grief and horror over Pansy's sudden death."

They chose one of the popular Virginia beaches for their outing, and directly found themselves in the whirl of gay society at an ultra-fashionable hotel.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Differed with Webster.

A few weeks ago I visited a graded school in one of the lesser Indiana towns. It was "examination day," and the President of the School Board—a large, pompous old fellow—was present. I presume that school-room was never so quiet before. A reading class was called and a bright little fellow rose, and in a monotone, drawled through a paragraph about a massacre in the time of Nero.

"Ah! um!" interrupted the "educator," "will you please have that little boy read that verse again?"

The paragraph was given again precisely as before.

"Ah! um!" exclaimed the wise man, smiling like a chimpanzee, "why do you pronounce that word 'massa-ker'?"

The youngster hung his head and made no reply.

"It should be pronounced 'massa-cree,'" said the board member, benignly.

There was a painful silence for a moment; then the teacher weakly said: "Excuse me, Mr. Blank, but the fault is mine. I think, if the word is mispronounced, I have told the class to pronounce it 'massa-ker.'"

"But why, sir, may I inquire?"

"I believe that Webster favors that pronunciation."

"Impossible, sir."

"Well, that is a matter easily settled. Here is a copy of 'Webster's Unabridged.' Suppose we refer to it."

The "educator" seized the dictionary and turned hurriedly to the word. For a moment his face was a study. Then he removed his glasses, wiped them on a red bandana handkerchief, and replacing them, said very solemnly: "I am perfectly astounded, sir, that Mr. Webster should have made such a mistake as that!"—The Chicago Mail.

Jerry Simpson evidently does not mean to allow Vanderbilt to have a monopoly of the "damns." When asked if the populists were not violating the laws in Kansas he replied: "D—n the law! We do as we please and then make laws to fit our actions."

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