



THE LATCH KEY.

"No!" It was a peremptory "no," such as mother seldom used, for she was gentle in disposition. "No, Freddy, don't think any more about it."

"Can't you make an exception just this once?" begged "Fred," my brother, looking like a persecuted saint.

"No! You might lose it; somebody might find it; we might be exposed to all sorts of calamities; someone might get into the house—"

"Stop, mother, you are pattering im- probabilities to yourself."

"Secondly," continued our mother, "you are too young to carry a latch- key. I don't wish you to be out late at night; you are the only male protector we have, and I want you to be at home with us."

Under any other circumstances Fred might have been proud to be called our "only male protector," but this distinction made no impression upon him now. When mother had taken the latchkey from the keyhole and con- signed it to her pocket, Fred wasn't in the kindest frame of mind.

Two months ago we had moved from the little town where we were born to a large city—mother, Fred and I. We were still upset and confused by the sudden radical change from country quiet to the bustle of a metropolis. Mother certainly came much against her inclination, but Freddy exhibited an unusual musical talent, and I, too, was modestly gifted with a propensity for drawing, and we felt the needs of instructive advantages which we could not obtain in our native town. Our maternal parent was unwilling that we should go forth into the world alone, and so the little home was sacrificed, and we set up an abode elsewhere.

Our mother, who had been the most confiding soul in the world, was suspicious of everything and everybody in her new surroundings and insisted that the house should be locked and bolted at 10 o'clock every night. At that time we bolted the door to our apartments. At half past 10 the front door was locked by the janitor, and everybody was supposed to be safely tucked away in bed.

"Ridiculous," growled Fred, after mother had left the room with the key in her pocket, "to expect a grown man to be at home every night at 10."

Fred was invited to a little supper after the concert at which his music teacher was to render the star num- bers.

"She will let you stay out till 11 if I ask her, and I will sit up for you."

"You know mother goes to bed at 10, so if I should be a little behind time, don't mind, Milly, don't mind; that's a good girl."

"Very well, brother mine!"

"Or half an hour, or an hour! She'll be asleep, anyway, and I'll just cough gently under your window, and then you'll come down and let me in."

"See that you don't come too far behind time, Freddy!" I laughed, "and I'll see what can be done."

"I'll go down now and try it on! If you hear me cough, let me know."

Freddy went out. A moment after- ward I heard him cough immediately under our window. I looked out and nodded to him. "All right, old fellow. I can hear the signal."

Mother finally was prevailed upon to give her permission for Fred to stay out until 11, and after supper made herself comfortable in the big arm chair with the electric intention to wait for the "male protector" of the family.

At 10 o'clock she looked pretty sleepy, and the strike of the next half hour awoke her from her first nap. She gathered up her knitting.

"He will soon be here now, Milly. It's really not worth while for both of us to sit up. I'm going to bed but to sleep until he is safely at home."

I bade mother good-night. In less than five minutes, I knew, she would be sound asleep. An interesting book would help me over the next hour. Be- fore I knew I was deeply involved in the love affair of a young couple, and when I turned the last page of the book it was twenty minutes past midnight.

A sudden thought struck terror to my heart. Fred may have been here and absorbed as I was in my story, I might not have heard the signal. I rushed to the window, but nobody was to be seen. Two minutes dashed with leaden slow- ness. A quarter of 1! Where could he be? At 1 o'clock I heard him cough myself of my dress and slipped into my gown. Then I arranged my hair for the night and had just finished put- ting one side of my head into curl papers, when the signal came.

I went to the window, opened it just a bit and said softly:

"Is that you, Freddy?"

"Yes."

"Here is the key?" I threw it down into the street.

"Yes!"

"Don't leave it in the keyhole; bring it up with you!"

"Quite right."

"And take off your boots; don't let mother hear you."

"Very good!"

I seized the lamp and hastened out on the stairs to light my belated brother on his way. The key was turned in the lock below. Then there was a pause. Freddy was evidently taking off his shoes before coming up the stairs.

"You are a —" I was on the point of whispering, when I heard the boot- less step quite near me, but I suddenly checked myself. From out of the shadow of the chairs emerged a shining helmet with waving plumes, and be- neath it the strange face of a young man, with a dark brown mustache and black eyes, the whole figure arrayed in knightly armor—evidently in mas- querade suit.

I had just presence of mind enough left not to cry out aloud. A few steps sufficed to bring me into the shelter of our hall, and as I closed the door I saw the tall stranger bow profoundly, then all was dark. I was terribly frightened at first, but when soon after I came to my senses I realized that the stranger had my key, perhaps he had left it in the lock. I rekindled the lamp, arranged my toilet and descend- ed to the front door.

No; it was not there. In my excite- ment I had forgotten to note whether the knight had gone down or up the stairs, after admitting himself with my key. There was nothing left for me to do but to go from one door to the other



THE WHOLE FIGURE ARRAYED IN KNIGHTLY ARMOR.

and find the culprit. I rang the bell of the lower flat timidly enough. It brought to the door an old man.

"Have you a young man lodger who has just come home? He has my—"

"No!" growled a voice, and the door was slammed in my face.

I went to the next floor and repeated the experiment. A young servant maid came to the door.

"No," she said, when I inquired after a young man in a masquerade suit; no young man lived on their premises.

Past our own door I now stumbled and went to the floor above. My knock brought to the door a roly-poly little old woman in dressing sack and night cap.

"What is it, child?" she asked, anx- iously, for she knew me. "Is your mother ill? Can we help you?"

"No," I whispered, "but I have just by mistake given our latchkey to a stranger young man."

"Does he live with you?"

"No, my dear young lady."

"But a young artist has just moved into the garret room. Perhaps he is the man you seek?"

Yes, it must be he! But how could I, a young woman, go to a young man's quarters in the middle of the night to demand the return of my latch key?

My old friend came to my rescue, called her husband, and sent him up- stairs to ask for my key. We could hear their voices, still unintelligible, and then the voice of the stranger rang out in the tone of injured innocence:

"What! not returned the key? I laid it at the feet of the young lady?"

And so it was. When we three came down to our door and held the lamp close to the door, we found it lying where he had said. I thanked my neighbors for their kindly assistance and hastened to the window to look out for Fred.

There he stood, shivering in the cold, anxiously waiting for admittance. He had not much to say, but grabbed the lamp and disappeared in his room. I did not blame him, though he was woefully late in coming home.

Next morning we found that our mother was unaware of the adventure of the night. She had slept the sleep of the just, for which I was profoundly thankful.

Just as we were ready to sit down to dinner the bell rang. My mother opened the door and bowed a young man into the parlor.

"I came to beg your pardon for the disturbance I caused last night," I heard the voice of a young man say.

"Disturbance! I know nothing of it, Milly!"

I came in, red as a penny, and ready to sink into the floor. "Mother! I have my card." "Mr. Charles Bowman, Artist," it said.

"You must tell me all about it, Mr. Bowman," continued my mother, "for I don't know what you mean, really."

And he told her just what had hap- pened. Mother's face grew longer and longer as he proceeded with his nar- rative.

"Stupid me!" I thought. Just at the end he showed a grain of sense.

"When did all this happen?" asked my mother, excitedly. "I went to bed at 10 o'clock. I hope that Fred came home at the proper time, Milly."

The young man's dark eyes turned upon me.

"I don't know just to the minute, but it must have been about 11 o'clock or thereabout."

I blessed him for that answer. Mr. Bowman's first unfortunate visit was followed by many more. He be- came my mother's friend, then my brother's, and now he is my be- trothed. Late in the spring we are to be married.

Authors Enjoying Mechanical Helps

The up-to-date author knows that the brotherhood of the pen are as keenly alive to the advan- tages of a high state of civilization as any other class of people in the com- munity. The author with a fountain pen which holds ink enough for about 10,000 words has also made his ap- pearance, and the amount of ink in his pen, and when that is exhausted he stops; the author who has lost three months' work by the breaking of a photograph, into which had been de- tailed the telephone to a suburban writer at his office are all with us, and the authors are evidently not the kind of people to lag behind the age in which they live.

POPULATION OF IRELAND.

Emigration Decreasing—Report of the Registrar General.

The report of the registrar general of Ireland for the year 1896 has been issued as a blue book. It states that the marriage rate for that part of the United Kingdom, although not high, in 1896 was considerably in excess of the decennial average, and was the highest for any year since 1871, says a London dispatch to the Paris Messenger. The birth rate was somewhat above the average and was the highest for any year since 1884, while on the other hand the death rate was much below the average, being only 10.6 per 1,000, and was the lowest for any year since 1871. The excess of births over deaths was 31,941.

As the loss by emigration amounted to 38,065, there was an apparent de- crease of 7,054 in the population during the year. But against this decrease there is a set-off in immigration, of which no official record has been ob- tained. "The estimated population in the middle of the year was 4,599,378. The rate of emigration last year per 1,000 of the estimated population was 8.6, the average rate for the previous ten years being 12.7. In 1894 the rate was as low as 7.8, whereas in 1887 it reached 17.1. The population of Ire- land, including the military, naval and merchant service, amounted in 1822 to 6,802,708. From that period the num- ber continued to increase until 1845, when it amounted to 8,255,691.

It then began to go through a con- tinuous process of decline, falling be- low 7,000,000 in 1850, below 6,000,000 in 1856 and below 5,000,000 in 1884, the lowest point being reached last year. The emigration which took place in 1896 comprised 3,842 from the province of Ulster, 15,885 from Leinster, 13,474 from Munster and 12,234 from Connaught. Of the total emigrants from Ireland last year 6.9 per cent were under 15 years of age, 8.7 per cent between 15 and 35 years old, 9.4 per cent were 35 or over, and 1.4 per cent were the ages were not specified. The great bulk, therefore, were in the prime of life.

Years came to my eyes. I was at my wit's ends.

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France's Consumption of Alcohol.

A learned professor at Geneva, Swit- zerland, states that France drinks more alcohol annually than any other nation in Europe. His calculation is based on the percentage of alcoholic liquors consumed. According to this standard each person in France drinks thirteen quarts of alcohol in many more quarts of wines, beers, etc., in the course of a year.

There is a lie going around about an old-fashioned child that was noisy.

Seals Love Music.

The well-known love of seals for mu- sical sounds often leads to their de- struction. When the Eskimo hunter sees none of his prey about he begins whistling, and sooner or later is sure to attract an appreciative seal within reach of his harpoon. Lying at full length at the edge of the ice he contin- ues whistling low, plaintive, calling notes, and presently a few of the ani- mals will draw near to the spot, lifting themselves as high as they can out of the water, and slowly moving their heads to and fro, as if keeping time to the music. By and by one seal, more daring than its fellows, will come very close to the hunter, who then jumps to his feet and says the creature, while the French quivers with rage, is the emblem of mourning. All of these colors are symbols. White symbolizes purity, an attribute of the dead; the celestial blue that place of rest where happy souls are at peace, the yellow, or dead leaf, tells the seal that this is the end of all human hope, and that man falls as the autumn leaf, and gray whispers of the earth to which all return. The Syrians considered mourning for the dead an effeminate practice, and so, when they grieved, they put worn men's clothes as a symbol of weakness, and as a shame to them for a lack of manliness. The Thracians made a feast when one of their loved ones died, and every method of joy and dis- light was employed. This meant that the dead had passed from a state of misery to one of felicity. Black was introduced as mourning by the queen of Charlemagne. Before that the French quivered with rage, the seal, and were known as white queens.

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TRUMPET CALLS.

Ram's Horn Sounds a Warning Note to the Lured.

PREJUDICE is the sword of fools.

Fog is the gos- sip's sunshine.

Covetousness is cupidness's nick- name.

Knowledge will grow until the last scholar is dead.

men only good the world would be full of old maids.

Mother, is the little child's Bible. Slow promises make the best time.

Opinions never change the weather. A fool's company is not hard to find. Honesty has never found a substitute.

He that is always calm is always brave.

He is very unfortunate that has no trouble.

Gold loses its shine when it is gotten by guilt.

Nature is the supernatural partially unveiled.

The best safe for your money is a prudent wife.

A giant among giants is not aware of his own size.

The ass might sing better if he didn't pitch his nose so high.

The man robs others who does not make the best of himself.

Nothing can happen without bringing good to those who love God.

Everybody says, "Go up higher," to the man who is "getting there."

Call a little man great, and other lit- tle people will throw up their hats.

Whenever an ass brays he probably thinks he has enlightened the world.

To get the good out of the years, we must learn how to live each hour.

The devil cannot be less merciful to men than they have been to each other.

If you talk to a mule about voice cul- ture, take care to keep away from his heels.

A shallow man may always see the face of a fool by looking into a deep well.

We may stand on the highest hill if we are only willing to take steps enough.

The man who travels the same road every day soon ceases to admire the scenery.

Time and Silence.

As time is the greatest of physicians, so silence is the greatest of arbiters. Time and silence succeed oftentimes where all other agencies and influences fail. The truth is omnipotent and needs no props. In the end only right will prevail, and all men shall see it. Suffering is the only avenue to the highest and divinest experiences. "He was made perfect through suffer- ing," and if we would "reign with Him we must also suffer with Him." Suffer- ing is Heaven's brightest angel in disguise. If we suffer as Christians, let us rejoice and be glad, or great is our reward, not in the far-off life to come only, but here on earth also. If we are right with God and our cause is just, we have nothing to fear, however we may suffer, but in the end we shall say, "It was well; it was well!" All things come to those who know how to wait, and silence is golden when we know that He guides our steps. He knows all things well, and He shall bring forth righteousness as the light, and thy judgment (vindication) as the noon- day." So shall it be with thee; so, suffer on, if it be thy lot.

The German Woman.

In Germany to-day no woman can control property; she cannot even con- trol her own actions; whatever of value she has acquired in any way be- longs to her father, her husband or her son, and the law requires her to obey their orders. Japan is the only other country on earth that pretends to be civilized where the rights of women are so restricted. When a woman marries in Germany all her property passes into the ownership of her hus- band. He has the legal right to use or dispose of it in any manner he chooses regardless of her wishes or protests. If they are divorced the property remains with him. When she assents to the marriage vow she for- gets independence and comes under his absolute jurisdiction over her mind, body and estate. He can compel her to work or do anything else that is lawful for women to do, and she has no relief or protection except in public opinion. Some of the American law- esses who have married German men have learned of this law to their sorrow, and others who may have an opportunity to assist in supporting the German army and restoring ancestral estates should look into the matter very carefully before they appoint the wedding day.—Chicago Record.

Mourning Colors.

In Italy women grieve in white gar- ments and men in brown. In China white was by both sexes. In Tur- key, Syria, Cappadocia, and Armenia celestial blue is the tint chosen. In Egypt yellowish-brown, the hue of the dead leaf, is deemed proper; and in Ethiopia where men are black, and the emblem of mourning. All of these colors are symbols. White symbolizes purity, an attribute of the dead; the celestial blue that place of rest where happy souls are at peace, the yellow, or dead leaf, tells the seal that this is the end of all human hope, and that man falls as the autumn leaf, and gray whispers of the earth to which all return. The Syrians considered mourning for the dead an effeminate practice, and so, when they grieved, they put worn men's clothes as a symbol of weakness, and as a shame to them for a lack of manliness. The Thracians made a feast when one of their loved ones died, and every method of joy and dis- light was employed. This meant that the dead had passed from a state of misery to one of felicity. Black was introduced as mourning by the queen of Charlemagne. Before that the French quivered with rage, the seal, and were known as white queens.

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"Yes," was the reply.

"Do you know what his salary is?"

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"What do you mean?"

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The well-known love of seals for mu- sical sounds often leads to their de- struction. When the Eskimo hunter sees none of his prey about he begins whistling, and sooner or later is sure to attract an appreciative seal within reach of his harpoon. Lying at full length at the edge of the ice he contin- ues whistling low, plaintive, calling notes, and presently a few of the ani- mals will draw near to the spot, lifting themselves as high as they can out of the water, and slowly moving their heads to and fro, as if keeping time to the music. By and by one seal, more daring than its fellows, will come very close to the hunter, who then jumps to his feet and says the creature, while the French quivers with rage, is the emblem of mourning. All of these colors are symbols. White symbolizes purity, an attribute of the dead; the celestial blue that place of rest where happy souls are at peace, the yellow, or dead leaf, tells the seal that this is the end of all human hope, and that man falls as the autumn leaf, and gray whispers of the earth to which all return. The Syrians considered mourning for the dead an effeminate practice, and so, when they grieved, they put worn men's clothes as a symbol of weakness, and as a shame to them for a lack of manliness. The Thracians made a feast when one of their loved ones died, and every method of joy and dis- light was employed. This meant that the dead had passed from a state of misery to one of felicity. Black was introduced as mourning by the queen of Charlemagne. Before that the French quivered with rage, the seal, and were known as white queens.

Mutual Interest.

"So that young man wants to marry you?" said Mabel's father.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Do you know what his salary is?"

"No. But it's an awfully strange co- incidence."

"What do you mean?"

"Herbert is the very same question about you."—Washington Star.

Much-Named War God.

China has a war god with 3,000 names.

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