



OUR STORY.

(The CAPITAL JOURNAL will contain regularly a story, completed in one or two numbers.)

Her Dead Heart.

"I am so grieved, so sorry for this," Erma Walrick murmured, with the tears hanging thick and heavy upon the lashes of her large, lovely eyes. "But love is not for me to take nor give. My heart is dead, buried years ago in the grave of him who would have been my husband had he lived. Ah, my friend of friends, I thought you knew."

But Ransie Dunmorrow had not known. He could recall some far-away whispers of some sad romance of her young life. But how had it seemed possible that she who was always so sweet and bright, that she for whom laughter and smiles were ever so ready and gay, could be mourning a dead lover?

And if he had known, it would have made no difference. He would have loved her just the same, yearning for her all the more tenderly perhaps.

"But I would be so tender with you, dear one," he pleaded. "I would cherish you as something dearer than my own heart's blood. You could try to love me, sweet."

She shook her drooping, lovely head, and a faint smile glimmered through the helplessly gathering tears.

"There is no one living that commands my esteem and affection as you do, Ransie. But the power of loving is not mine at my bidding. It would be vain to try. A lifeless heart would not be aroused, neither at your wish nor mine," she breathed sadly.

"Dear heart, be mine," he sought her passionately. "Let me have the husband's right to adore you, and I will be content with your simple liking. Even toleration from you, Erma, would be more precious to me than the fondest devotion from any other woman. Yield your beloved self to me, dear heart, just as you are, and my bliss will be greater than my deserving."

"Ah, Ransie, my yielding would be no joy to you in the end. You would crave more than simple liking; unknown perhaps to yourself you would become dissatisfied, and your misery would day by day increase a thousand-fold. Ah, my best-beloved friend, why have you snatched the sweet charm of our blessed friendship by your vain dream of a closer bond? We have been so happy as we were, Ransie," she sighed, almost reproachfully.

She was firm, as he was compelled to understand at last. And with a last, unavailing appeal, Ransie Dunmorrow finally withdrew.

But as he went reluctantly away, his look was not that of utter despair. "I can almost fancy she cares for me more than she yet realizes," he thought. "No heart can throbb with a friendship so warm and sweet as my darling's for me, and yet be dead to love. I have a blessed belief that she will yet be mine—my sweetest heart, my treasure, my bride!"

But his hopes were of short duration. Before he had again looked upon his darling's winsome face what he regarded as a double-foiled disaster, an utter fatality, had occurred.

Erma Walrick had become an heiress. And her older lover, whom they all supposed lying in a far-off grave, had returned.

"Now, indeed, all is over and done," Ransie Dunmorrow groaned in hopeless despair. "My darling has passed out of my sight forever and forevermore."

He did not venture near her. It would have been more than he could bear to witness her delight in another's love.

And besides, had there been no older lover, her fortune would have kept Ransie away from her.

Miss Walrick, the great heiress, with her dazzling new social rank, and with her host of devoted new friends, would not be likely to value the friendship of an obscure lawyer as yet without riches or station, he told himself. Meanwhile, amid all the pleasant cares of her new life, Miss Walrick had plenty of time to wonder why Ransie held himself aloof.

She missed him more than she cared in the beginning to admit. She missed the wise and unselfish counsel upon which she had learned to rely.

She missed the thousand gentle courtesies to which she had become so accustomed. She missed their delightful chats in the hushed gloomings, their delicious morning strolls.

Highest of all in Leavening Power.—U. S. Gov't Report, Aug. 17, 1889.

Royal Baking Powder

ABSOLUTELY PURE

And then she began to feel so sorry for him, so regretful of what she had done, she almost hated herself at times for having so grieved his loyal, patient love.

"And it's too late now to undo what I have done. Ransie will never forgive me. If he were not estranged utterly he would not remain away from me as he does," she sighed.

As the days elapsed she began to feel the absence between them was becoming unendurable.

Her whole soul cried out for him with a very mad passion of yearning. Her pulses throbbed at the recollection of his passionate pleadings, and tears rushed to her eyes as she recalled the cold selfishness with which she had repulsed him.

And yet she did not love him, she told herself. Her heart was dead.

She felt a melancholy satisfaction in wandering about the spots where she had so often strolled with him, where everything recalled his tender courtesies and unwearied devotion.

She had not yet transferred herself to the fine new mansion which was being made ready for her. She was still in the old house, haunted with vivid reminders of Ransie Dunmorrow in the pretty rooms and in every niche of the sweet, ancient garden.

At the far end of the garden was a grove opening upon the low bank of a charming lake, over which she and Ransie had often drifted by sunlight and moonshine.

It was to the grove she wandered one day when her regrets had become more than ever unbearable. A red sun hung low in a brilliant March sky. A breath of early flowers and springing grasses issued from the warm, brown mold where daffodil buds were already opening their pale-green sheathes.

She stood gazing at the lake which was touched with the prismatic glory of the sunset, when she heard footsteps rapidly approaching her. She had been thinking of Ransie, as she always was latterly; but it was not Ransie she saw when she turned so eagerly.

It was the olden lover, so long supposed to be dead. The face changed. She looked proud, unresponsive, almost displeased.

"You heard of my return, of course? You received my message?" he said, as confidentially, as easily, as if they had parted but yesterday.

"The girl bowed coldly in utter silence. He flashed a swift, furtive searching glance at the pale, calm face, at the graceful figure so proudly erect.

"Are you not pleased to see me, Erma?" he asked, in an injured tone. "I am always pleased to see my friends," she answered slowly.

"And am I not more than a friend? Am I not your plighted husband?" he returned, uneasily.

"I think not. I think you have no claims upon the regard of any person whom you have willfully deceived for five years," she said, incisively. "I can explain all that, dearest. I was too busy trying to pile up golden dollars to correct the rumor of my death. And I was always a poor correspondent, as you know. I knew you would be faithful to me, Erma; I knew I should find a charming little wife waiting for me when I should return, no matter how long my absence might be," he answered her.

He spoke coaxingly, as he would have spoken to a vexed child. In air and aspect there was something about Cecil Staunton at the moment, which impressed the girl as being base, greedy, and insincere.

"What hastened your return?" she inquired presently.

"I could no longer resist my desire to see you, my dear. I had heard of your good fortune, and, of course, I knew our marriage need not longer be delayed for lack of money. And so I am here," he replied, with that assured and easy air.

He never finished the sentence. Some one caught him in an iron grip, tore his arms from the girl's palpitating form, and sent him reeling helplessly down the low bank.

He scrambled to his feet, glared upward for a moment and then decided to walk away.

Erma was weeping piteously in the arms of Ransie Dunmorrow.

"Don't, sweet. It breaks my heart to see you cry," murmured Ransie, brushing the tears from the sweet face resting against his bosom.

"Were you so frightened, darling? Or do you grieve because he has proved so unworthy your love?"

"I don't think I ever loved him. I am ashamed for having mourned about him as I did. Oh, Ransie, if you only knew what has been in my heart since you left me the other day as you did!" she sobbed. "Can you forgive me, my friend of friends?"

"Do you mean, dear heart, that you can care for me a little? That you can trust your precious self to me?" he asked doubtfully, trembling from head to foot in his agitation.

She lifted her face and looked at him shyly, with a quivering smile and an eloquent blush.

He understood the look, and a strange, glad cry broke from his lips.

"Dear heart, my own bride," he murmured, rapturously, as he kissed the warm, yielding lips of his beloved—wholly won at last, and giving him back love for love, despite her "dead heart."—Family Story Paper.

FUN FOR ALL.

PRIDE.

Little Boston Girl (to recent arrival)—You just came from heaven, didn't you?

Bruder vows she has no reply. Little Boston Girl—Heaven people ain't so smart as Boston people. We can talk.—N. Y. Sun.

HAD A PEDIGREE.

Willis: Why don't you let up on those old jokes and get off something new occasionally? Kilbury: These old jokes of mine, sir, were brought to this country by my ancestors, in the Mayflower.—Terra Haute Express.

INVOKED THE LAW.

First Doctor: Say, there's an unlicensed physician in town curing people right and left. Second Doctor: Curing people? Good gracious! We must have him arrested.—New York Weekly.

WHAT STOPPED IT.

"How soon do you start on your talk of trip to Europe?" "I had to give it up."

"Because my wife went and ordered a bonnet for the voyage, and when the milliner's bill came in it took all my money."—Light.

NEVER DID IT BEFORE.

Jenks—Did you hear about Bailey, Jenks—No. What about him? Jenks—He went to Chicago last week, and I just read in the newspaper that he "returns a corpse."

THE GREAT CHANGE.

Wife—Who will mend your old clothes when I am dead and gone? Husband—Nobody will mend them, because I won't wear any old clothes when you are dead and gone. Then I'll have money enough to buy new clothes, so don't worry about that.—Texas Siftings.

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