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LIFE IS STILL ROMANTIC...

By Helen Oldfield.

There be some people, cynical philosophers, who declare that romance in everyday life has ceased to exist. Such people are wrong and their wisdom approaches folly. As Rudyard Kipling says: "Our lives hold quite as much romance as is good for us, sometimes more."

It is true that this century claims to be, and is, intensely practical. The struggle for life is strenuous, and many are forced to "cut their hard paths straight by Poor Richard's eloquence." On the other hand, we are continually told that modern society has no earnestness, no depth, little or no sincerity, and, worst of all, no high moral standard. Fashion and pleasure and a sham love are the amusements of the hour. To outshine each other in dress, in engagements, in admirers is apparently the whole duty of young women in the "classes." Of many of these it may be said, as Thackeray said of Blanche Amory, that while emotions are necessary to them, they are unable to carry out any emotion to the full, but have "a sham enthusiasm, a sham hatred, a sham love, a sham grief, each of which flares and shines vehemently for an instant, but subsides and gives place to the next sham emotion."

So, also, the story is told of a prominent society man, a most desirable party, much pursued, who declared that he never writes a letter to a woman, not a relative, without first submitting it to a lawyer. Nevertheless a divinity does not cease to exist because its temple is desecrated; and none can deny that love is the greatest thing in the world. It is not merely the fulfilling of the law; it is the law itself, the fundamental fact of the universe, the sunshine which is the source of light and life, which makes "the desert blossom as the rose."

There can be no love without romance. Take that away and poetry vanishes; even as war without romance is merely licensed slaughter, so love bereft of its sentiment is but an affair of sale and barter, or at most brute passion. That can hardly be called a natural union where the imagination never has been kindled; where hearts are untouched, where, in a word, all romance is absent. It is quite a different matter from a love affair when a man wants to "settle" for prudential reasons. The one man wants to marry because he has fallen in love, and cannot be happy without the beloved one; the other desires to fall in love because he wishes to marry. As George Eliot says: "It's a deep

mystery the way the heart of a man turns to one woman out of all the rest he's seen in the world, and makes it easier to work seven years for her, like Jacob did for Rachel, sooner than have any other for the asking." Foolish people think of love as a good joke, a subject for fun and banter; wiser men understand that it is a gift of God, and that to fall seriously in love is, for good or evil, among the most important things that one can do.

Says Emerson: "All mankind loves a lover. We see them exchange a glance or betray a deep emotion, and we are no longer strangers. We understand them, and take the warmest interest in the development of the romance. . . . The strong bent of nature is seen in the proportion which this topic of personal relations usurps in the conversation of society. What do we wish to know of any worthy person so much as how he has sned in the history of this sentiment? What books in the circulating library circulate? How we glow over these novels of passion, when the story is told with any spark of truth and nature!"

In the meanest but there is romance if we but knew the hearts there! So long as the tired clerk lengthens his homeward journey after the toll of the day, in order that he may pass his sweetheart's window; while the soldier goes into action with a woman's picture on his breast; while a man treasures a torn glove, or goes out nominally "for a smoke," but really to look at the stars which are shining alike upon him and on her whom he loves, who shall dare say that romance is dead, with the age of chivalry? "Every form of human life is romantic!"

All the same, the lover should endeavor to blend practicality with his romance, otherwise he becomes a mere dreamer, and impossible. Rhapsodies over the attractions of his lady love are but empty compliments unless he strives to make a home for her. Impassioned utterances in the light of the moon are all the sweeter when they come as a relaxation after strenuous efforts to make marriage a speedy possibility. Desperate love-making and pretty speeches will not purchase chairs and tables, although they may sweeten the possession of them. The real man, the true lover, will make his romance gild the practical side of life. He will not make it an excuse for idle dreaming and aimless inconsequence. Jacob proved his love by seven years' hard work.

A pretty little story of a lover who worked for love's sake and was inspired by love while doing so was recently told by a London newspaper. At an examination for a civil service appointment a candidate was observed to take a piece of card from his pocket. Whenever a stiff piece of work was reached out came the card; and after gazing at it earnestly for some moments the youth would

put it away and go on writing with redoubled energy. The examiner thought that he had detected him copying and demanded to see the card. The young fellow blushed, but handed it to the examiner. It was the photograph of a pretty girl, the one whom he hoped to marry if he obtained the appointment. He had been gaining courage and inspiration from the beloved face.

When the great apostle wished to describe the love of Christ for his church he could find no more fitting simile than that of true husband for true wife. It is love, romantic love, which makes of marriage the most sacred and beautiful of ties; that sweet passion which South has called "the great instrument of nature, the bond and cement of society, the spirit and spring of the universe," which, wisely controlled and rightly bestowed, warms, elevates, and brightens life. But it should not be lightly given nor heedlessly accepted. The heart should carefully discriminate between true love and its many spurious imitations; with its sacred aureole of glory no unworthy object should be crowned, neither should it be allowed to dominate reason and judgment. Romantic love is by no means one and the same with blind, unreasoning passion.

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