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RENUNCIATION.

What does the future hold for me? Never again the ecstasy Of hands that touch and lips that meet; Of eyes that speak in answer sweet To thoughts that do not need to be Expressed, for very sympathy. What does it hold? The simple sense That right is right, and nothing hence Can ever stand with you and me, To mock a happy memory.

YOUTH WINS.

"To think we all knew him when he was out at elbows," exclaimed old Mrs. Ward.

"Never exactly out at elbows," corrected pretty Mrs. Vivian in her habitual soft tones.

"Well, at all events, he had not a decent evening suit, as we all know," put in Miss Jones (who was secretly believed to be the oldest woman in Mme. Laroche's establishment).

"And he occupied a little cabinet an troisieme," continued Mrs. Ward, "and never drank anything but the vin compris of the table."

"Yet nothing is more sure than that Mr. Bernard is now Lord Merivale," said Mrs. Vivian.

"Then it's to be hoped he will pay madam's account," cried Miss Jones. "He's never been out of her debt since I can remember."

"I have settled madam's account, since that interests you," said a cold, quiet voice from behind.

If a shell had burst in our midst we could scarcely have been more struck with consternation. It was Lord Merivale himself who had spoken, and not one of us had seen him enter the salon—not one of us even knew that he was in Paris. Old Mr. Frost, who had been quietly playing cards in a distant warm corner with the equally aged Dr. Hauser, showed no sign whatever of having seen or heard anything, and caused an amusing diversion in the moment of silence which followed the "tapage" by saying in his usual old gentlemanly tones: "Fifteen two, fifteen four, and a pair, six."

Really these two old gentlemen were about the dearest mortals it has ever been my lot to know. Miss Jones remarked to me irreverently that it was her firm opinion that when the late trump sounded Mr. Frost and Dr. Hauser would remain in their graves, for they would never hear it.

One would think we had had enough surprises for one evening, but still another awaited us.

We had all laughed when Mr. Frost had broken in on the silence, and that helped to put everyone a little more at ease. Then Lord Merivale apologized for startling us, with remarkable good humor, considering what he had just heard, and addressing himself to Mrs. Ward, said that he had taken a box at the Porte St. Martin, and wanted his old friends to join him in an evening's enjoyment—all of us, if we would so far honor him. "I have a decent evening suit now," he added, with a comical smile. "I had been partly sheltered from view by a large artificial palm which stood upon the grand piano."

"There is a lady here I have not the pleasure of knowing," said Lord Merivale to Madame Laroche, who had just entered the salon. "I had thought we were all old friends; kindly introduce me, madam."

In a moment his lordship was bowing before me, and I had the intense mortification of hearing myself described in madam's voluble but not over correct English as "Mees Delaney, an English writer, ver' celebrate, who is here only one week."

"Please do not believe anything of the kind, Lord Merivale," I exclaimed, feeling my cheeks grow hot from annoyance. "I am an English scribbler, if you like, but not at all celebrated."

"If you had lived here as long as the rest of us, Miss Delaney, you would have found out that we are all celebrated who reside at Madame Laroche's," replied his lordship, with a fine smile.

I now regarded him more fully, and saw that he was still a young man. His expression was particularly debonair. His eyes were blue, and his light brown hair waved on his high, white forehead. For the rest, he wore a moustache, and his lips seemed specially invented to smile pleasantly.

I shall figure in this narrative merely as an outsider, and shall as far as possible record exactly what I hear and saw of a romance in real life during my sojourn at Mme. Laroche's boarding house. The house was and is still situated in the Rue —, which is near the Luxembourg Gardens, and a very comfortable place it was, as boarding houses go. Lord Merivale had, it appeared, made it a sort of headquarters for over ten years. Mr. Frost and Dr. Hauser had been there for fifteen years, while Mrs. Ward and Miss Jones had joined the circle seven and three years ago respectively.

I got my first definite information about some of these habits on this wise. Only Miss Jones and Mrs. Vivian seemed inclined to accept Lord Merivale's offer of a seat in his box at the Porte St. Martin. Mrs. Ward pleaded headache and I an obligation to correct some proofs. As regards the proofs, I soon made a resolve to sit up late to complete them in my own room, and thus get an opportunity to hear anything Mrs. Ward had to tell before she retired.

Mr. Frost and Dr. Hauser went to bed early, so it was not long after the departure of Lord Merivale and the two ladies that Mrs. Ward and I were alone in that red velvet salon.

Everything seemed to be red velvet in that room that wasn't gilt or mirrors. There was, however, one pre-eminent redeeming feature in this salon—namely, an open English fire—a fact on which great stress was laid in madam's advertisement.

Near this fire Mrs. Ward and I seated ourselves when we were left alone, and after I had paid some trifling attentions to the old lady in the shape of a foot stool and cushions, she began to give me the information my curiosity craved, without any overture on my part.

"Lord Merivale, you know, my dear," she began (Mrs. Ward called me "my dear" more to annoy Miss Jones than for any other reason, I believe). "Lord Merivale really was dreadfully short of money till he came into the title and estates, which no one here ever thought he would, for there was two brothers between him and such happiness, as well as a father, whose vigorous tenacity of life was only equalled by his vigorous dislike of his third son, the present Lord Merivale."

"What made Lord Merivale take up his abode here in the first place?" I interrupted.

"The comfort—at the price," replied Mrs.

Ward, briefly, with a pitying smile at the simplicity of my question.

"And Mrs. Vivian?" I put in interrogatively.

Mrs. Ward smiled grimly. "Mrs. Vivian," she said "is, I fancy, the cause of Lord Merivale's coming here now. All of us noticed his kindness to her when Mr. Vivian died—not that what he was kind to any one he saw in trouble."

"He may also have the consideration not to forget the friends he had in the days of his poverty. He may not have come here to see any one specially," I ventured.

"My dear, you may be a wise woman, but you don't know the world yet," was the smiling rejoinder. "There are kindnesses and kindnesses, and when a young man is very kind to a pretty woman, well, it can have but one meaning."

"Then you think Lord Merivale has come awooing?" I inquired.

"Yes; and so does Miss Jones, or she wouldn't have gone to the theatre to-night. It must have cost her something, after her remarks being overheard, to accept a courtesy from his lordship."

"You think, then, that she went so as to give Mrs. Vivian an opportunity of going?" I asked.

"Not a bit of it," affirmed Mrs. Ward stoutly. "Miss Jones went out of pure contrariety. She felt sure those two would have preferred to be alone, so she went."

"But," I exclaimed, "Mrs. Vivian surely would not have gone alone with Lord Merivale to the theatre."

"There you betray your want of knowledge of the world," said Mrs. Ward scornfully. "Mrs. Vivian would go anywhere with any one if she had enough to gain."

"Well, if she is that sort of a woman it is perhaps a mercy she has no child," I assented with some vehemence.

"But she has a child—a little girl that her husband's mother is bringing up in England. She makes a moan about this child every now and then, and says how cruel it was of her husband to express a dying wish that their child should remain with his mother. He bound his mother in one way, nevertheless, for he stated in his will that Olive, she calls her 'Pussy,' should not marry under age without her mother's consent, in which case she won't marry under age; her mother has too much horror of becoming a grandmother."

"How old is little Olive?" I inquired.

Mrs. Ward laughed. "Well, my dear, she used to be 11, then she became 10—now she is 8. She will probably become a baby again in time."

I very much wanted to ask some more questions, but Mrs. Ward began to show signs of sleepiness, so I got out my proofs after all and went on correcting them till Lord Merivale appeared with Mrs. Vivian and Miss Jones. Then Alphonse, our small page boy, brought in a little supper tray. Mme. Sarah Bernhardt had surpassed herself, it seemed, as Theodora that night, and both his lordship and Mrs. Vivian were in the highest spirits. As for Miss Jones, she sipped her coffee and said very little, but her eyes had an unpleasant glitter in them, as if her presence had not been so potent a preventive of the enjoyment of the other two as she had expected, not to say hoped.

Mrs. Ward and I went to our respective rooms soon afterward, leaving the others to their supper and their discussion of the play.

In the course of half an hour I was not a little surprised to hear a gentle tap at my door. I was even more surprised on opening it to find Mrs. Vivian there, dressed in a white robe de chambre.

"May I come in, Miss Delaney?" she asked in her pleading, childlike voice.

"Why, certainly," I made answer; "I hope nothing is the matter?"

"Oh, no," she said, with a nervous little laugh, "only I feel I must have a talk with some one, and you are the only person I feel I can confide in here. I hope you don't mind?" she added plaintively.

"You must think it strange," she went on confusedly, "that I should have come to you in this way—well—"

"When you have only known me a week, and when you have scarcely spoken to me during that time," I hastened to put in.

Mrs. Vivian flushed under her rouge and said: "You see, Miss Delaney, we poor little ignorant women are half afraid of you learned ones, at first; but when we want some one to trust we come to you."

Now this was certainly an artfully turned compliment, and having uttered it, my fair visitor regained her equanimity and looked at me smilingly out of her big blue eyes.

"And what weighty secret do you think me a worthy depository of?" I inquired, smiling myself.

"Well, first of all I have a favor to ask. Will you be so very kind as to go with Lord Merivale and me to the Louvre to-morrow morning?"

"You see he wants me to go, and I shall feel bound to ask Miss Jones to accompany us if you will not, for," here Mrs. Vivian looked down shyly at her white hands in her lap, "I am too young to go about with a gentleman alone—until—until—" Here followed a pause, and to relieve her evident embarrassment I said:

"Until you are formally engaged, you mean, is it not?"

Mrs. Vivian covered her face with a tiny scrap of lace, presumably a handkerchief, and began to sob plaintively.

"He began to love me when I was in my trouble—when my husband died," she said between her sobs, "but he was poor then, and my income is small, and there was Pussy to think of—but now he is come back, and everything is possible, and Miss Jones will try and upset it all unless you help me."

"And do you love him?" I inquired with interest.

Mrs. Vivian left off crying, and clasping her hands tightly together looked at me mournfully, and presently said, with a sorrowful shake of her blonde head, "My heart is buried in Pere la Chaise; it is Pussy I am thinking of—my sweet little girl whom my mother-in-law's machinations have deprived of me. As Lady Merivale I could do so much for her. What mother would not sacrifice herself in such a cause?"

"Well, Mrs. Vivian," I remarked meditatively, "it is scarcely for me to venture to give an opinion on such a delicate subject, but if you do not love Lord Merivale do you not think you could find some other way of being of use to your little girl without sacrificing yourself?"

"But I like him very much," the widow hastened to explain, "and if we were married I should get to love him."

The brass clock on my mantelshelf now struck a quarter to one, so my visitor rose to go, in a little flutter of apologetic words and gestures at having deprived me of my rest.

As she stood outside my door she whispered, "Then you will go with us to the Louvre to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, I will go," I replied. And then with

another good night she disappeared down the gallery, and I returned to my seat by the fire to meditate on what I had heard.

II.

We all breakfasted in the long dining room at Mme. Laroche's and at no fixed hour. Alphonse brought a small pot of coffee for each of us as we appeared.

When I reached this room the morning after the events just described, Miss Jones was just commencing breakfast.

"Good morning, Miss Delaney," said Miss Jones as I entered. "You are later than usual this morning. I suppose Mrs. Vivian kept you up late."

"Oh, did she tell you?" I answered unconcernedly, as I seated myself at the table and rang for my coffee.

"She tell me?" laughed Miss Jones, "she never tells me anything! You ought to know that; besides, she is not down yet, and won't be till Lord Merivale's step is heard on the stairs—then she will come down, and the two will breakfast together."

"You seem to be a walking catalogue of the concerns of these two," I observed in a tone I meant to be withering. I suppose it was not, for Miss Jones laughed good humoredly, and said:

"I've not watched Mrs. Vivian's tactics all this time for nothing. From the time her husband died, and Mr. Bernard was so kind to her, she made up her mind to keep him in her—in case he came into the property. You see that letter lying by her plate? It's in her mother-in-law's handwriting. Just note her face when she sees it."

This voluble lady had scarcely finished speaking these last words when the door opened and Mrs. Vivian entered, followed by Lord Merivale.

Mrs. Vivian was looking lovelier and younger than I had ever seen her. She was wearing a pearl gray morning wrapper, which trailed in silken folds behind her, making a gentle "frou frou" as she walked. All down the front of this robe little black crepe butterflies (incongruous ideal) were fixed, in token of mourning, while upon the golden rings which adorned her shapely little hand the most coquettish of tidy widow's cap sat jauntily.

I could not help observing during breakfast how very attentive Lord Merivale was to the pretty widow. I observed, too, an angry frown which gathered for a moment on the lady's white brow at sight of the letter which lay on her plate. She took it up unopened, and put it into the pocket of her peignoir.

When I was tying my bonnet strings in my own chamber half an hour later, I heard something about that episode. Mrs. Vivian had come to my door with her last night's gentle appeal for admittance, and had seated herself near my toilet table quite comfortably, this time unasked.

"I've had such a letter from that horrid old woman, my mother-in-law," Mrs. Vivian complained. "It will quite spoil my morning's pleasure—she says she is coming to Paris to see me about Pussy—she is going to bring Pussy—she may be in Paris now for anything I know, for her letter is dated three days ago, and must have missed the post somehow. She is sure to make an upset between Lord Merivale and me—that is if she can—but he is fond of me. Besides she says she has had a proposal for Pussy, most suitable in every way."

"A proposal for your little daughter?" I cried with an incredulous laugh. "Impossible. Why it savors of India. Your little girl is only 9 years old, isn't she?"

"She must be more than that," admitted Mrs. Vivian, reflectively. "To tell the truth I have quite lost the count. I was married when I was so young, and they took Pussy away at once; they thought me too much of a child myself to care for a baby properly, I suppose." Here the pretty widow sighed. "I can't help wishing," she went on, with a sudden outburst of confidence, "that it might be all settled between Lord Merivale and me before I am called upon to discuss this affair of Pussy's with my mother-in-law. If the person who wants to marry Pussy were only like Lord Merivale I would give my consent at once, for such a man would make her happy."

"I fear we are keeping Lord Merivale waiting," I suggested, for I really felt I had nothing to say about "Pussy's affair."

"Oh that morning's visit to the Louvre I shall only record what has a bearing on a later event."

We were in that gallery containing the Collection La Caze, and were admiring the dresses in one of Watteau's pictures, when Lord Merivale observed, "When I look at these exquisite blues and pinks I always think it a great pity for women to wear black."

"And I am doomed to wear it!" sighed the widow.

"Not doomed," rejoined Lord Merivale, "and I venture to predict that an occasion may arise that shall demand the putting aside of this dismal garb."

I was a few yards away by this time looking at a Rembrandt portrait, but I distinctly heard all they said.

"I suppose I must give up this dress some day—for Pussy's sake," Mrs. Vivian murmured.

As I glanced toward them I observed a glad light spread itself over Lord Merivale's features.

"Yes, I was sure of it," broke in the young man excitedly. "You would do anything to add to your child's happiness."

"Anything," replied the widow fervently. "Bless you for those words," said his lordship fervently, "they give me the courage to ask you to grant me a few moments alone with you this evening. I have a request to make to you—and your answer will render me either the happiest or the most wretched of men."

On the way home Mrs. Vivian whispered to me, "It is coming, dear Miss Delaney—to-night."

III.

At Mme. Laroche's we lunched at 2 o'clock. It wanted a quarter to that hour when I came down to the salon after removing my walking dress. I was not a little surprised to find madam there with two strangers.

I was about to withdraw when madam's shrill voice cried:

"Pray do not go, Mees Delaney. This is Mrs. Vivian's daughter and madam, her grandmother."

I now observed the ladies in the stiff black fashion. The prim old lady in the stiff black silk was only what one might have expected Mrs. Vivian, Sr., to be; but could this tall, graceful young woman be "Pussy"? She looked about 18, and was certainly even better looking than her pretty mother.

That pretty mother entered, before I had got over my astonishment, and appeared to be struck dumb for a moment. But speedily recovering herself, she embraced her daughter rapturously, exclaiming:

"And is my naughty, neglectful darling

come at last to her mother?"

Then turning to the old lady, she extended both her hands—only one of which the grandmother took—and cried in her joyous treble: "And you, dear Pussy's grandmamma, you are not come to scold poor, silly little me, are you?"

"You know what I am come about," answered the old lady severely, "and I trust you will be sensible about it."

The widow turned again toward her daughter and with one of her winning smiles said, "And does my Pussy think her little mother could refuse her anything, with her child's pretty eyes looking at her?"

There was no answer to this appeal, for Lord Merivale came in just then, followed by Miss Jones and almost at once by old Mrs. Ward.

Lord Merivale stood apart, turning the leaves of a journal which lay on a table near the door. He was very pale I noticed; and I thought I could guess the cause. He, too, had been deceived by Mrs. Vivian about this daughter, and his whole faith in his future bride was shaken.

It was the elder Mrs. Vivian who spoke, and there seemed to be in her face and voice the pent upon anger of years. Before she uttered a word, I knew, I felt, that she would say before us all what she had intended for her daughter-in-law's ear alone. And so she did.

"So, Adelaide, you are unchanged, I perceive," she cried with withering scorn. "You still cling to your vanity, and hold on to a vanished youth at the cost of all a woman should hold dear. Do not think your words to your child—yes, your child whose first appealing cries stirred no mother's response from you—do not think those words deceive me any more than the false bloom on your cheeks—the false light in your eyes."

Here Lord Merivale stepped forward, saying deprecatingly:

"My dear madam, I beg of you—"

He was not allowed to go on. The irate old dame meant to have her say, and went on, with a dignified wave of her hand toward Lord Merivale and Mme. Laroche, who was about to interrupt.

"So, Adelaide, you will refuse your child nothing now, you say—well then, we will go, Olive—your mother consents to your marriage with Lord Merivale."

Mrs. Vivian uttered a scream and fell back—into the arms of little Dr. Hauser, who had just come in to look for Mr. Frost. To say that that respectable old gentleman was staggered is literally true, for, in addition to the mental shock of such an event as a lady falling unexpectedly into his embrace, the feeble old man felt his physical strength very unequal to the task of holding up plump Mrs. Vivian, and Lord Merivale came to his assistance only just in time to prevent an ignominious collapse.

"Let us go, Olive," cried her grandmother.

"First let me kiss my mother," Olive said in a trembling voice.

"No, I won't let you," her mother fairly screamed from the shoulder of Mr. Hauser, where her blonde head now reposed, "and you, Lord Merivale, never let me see your deceitful face again—go all of you—except good Dr. Hauser," and then she burst into hysterical peals of laughter.

"I think, Lord Merivale, that you have behaved very badly indeed to Mrs. Vivian," old Mrs. Ward observed with asperity. "We all thought you were paying your addresses to her."

Lord Merivale looked from one to another in a bewildered way. Then he asked me if I had shared in this delusion. I frankly admitted that I had.

"It is a great pity—a great pity," his lordship rejoined slowly. "You see I wanted to win the mother's consent to let me marry her daughter. I must have bungled sadly, but I never dreamt of anything like this. I thought of Mrs. Vivian as Olive's mother; that was all."

Yes, that was all. Lord Merivale had been staying at a friend's country house where Olive Vivian and her grandmother were also guests, and he had fallen in love with the bright young girl and she with him. Then the grandmother had told him that, according to her son's will, the consent of Olive's mother must be obtained. "And she will never give it," the old lady had added, "she is too much afraid of having her own age guessed at if she has a married daughter."

"But she was always kind to me," Lord Merivale had answered. "I will run over to Paris and do my best to please her and then make my request."

The result of this plan the reader has seen. Olive Vivian did become Lady Merivale.

And her mother? She married Dr. Hauser within a month!—Selgravia.

Sailing Vessels of the Future.

The era of the wooden sailing vessel, according to the captain of an American ship, is passing away. He predicts that within fifty years the wooden deep-sea ship will be as rare as the wooden steamship is now. He says the steel ship is lighter, cheaper, and in proportion to the size of hull, has greater carrying capacity than the wooden craft. Freight rates are eight times as low as they were when the Dreadnaught made her famous run to Liverpool, and to carry freight profitably the hold of the modern ship must be capacious and her crew must work cheaply. Machinery for hoisting ships has lightened the work of the sailor-man and cheapened his labor. The British shipyards are turning out steel sailing craft with a rapidity that indicates that they have come to stay. Within the past few years a fleet of about twenty monster four-masted, all measuring more than 2,000 tons, have been launched. Some of them are the Puritan, Englehorn, Falkland, Craigend, Elginshire, Dumfriesshire, Robert Hill, California and Glenalvar.—New York Sun.

The Latest Version.

The train has just been wrecked. Distracted woe rushes up.

"Oh, save my husband!"

Horrible groans from the inside. Smoke ascends. The timbers crash.

"Oh, Henry, are you still alive?"

"Yes, but I am pinned across a red hot stove; my clothes are on fire; the roof of the car is fast settling down on me; a beam is impaling me; and in one instant I shall be dead, unless rescue comes."

"Oh, help! Help! Rescue my husband! I am safe, Henry."

"Thank heaven for that!"

"Thank heaven for that! Make haste, men; the car is on fire, and I shall be roasted alive in one second more."

"And, Henry, dear mamma is safe, too."

"What! Boys, you can lay off and save some one else; I'd just as lieve roast!"—Chicago Light.