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ONE LITTLE OLD MAID'S WAY.

By WILL ALLEN DROMGOOLE.

Now, things had turned out curiously. For the second time in her life, Miss Elizabeth declared, she "couldn't see her way clear."

She sat before the open, old-fashioned window, with the moonlight—that had an old-fashioned look, too, falling upon Miss Elizabeth's neatly smoothed hair, with the plain little "coil" twisted low upon her neck and fastened with a gutta percha tucking comb—flooding her face, and her hands folded upon the letter in her lap, and the scent of the old musk roses stealing in from the summerhouse in the garden outside.

The threads of life seemed to have met in two lengths; the beginning and the end. The letter lying upon her lap represented the end, the musk roses the beginning.

"The musk roses and the moonlight," she told herself. "I mustn't forget the moonlight."

As if she ever had forgotten or ever could forget, for one single moment, unless it should be the moment when she would be lying in her coffin, the scent of the old roses that night in a far-away June, when she stood within the shadow of the burdened branches and told him good-by. And how the moonlight looked on the pale blossoms, and upon the glistening white street outside, and upon his face as he said good-by.

Him? Oh, every old maid has her "him!" The one who stands out in her life as something apart from that life; a little bit of the hereafter, that went back to Heaven to wait for her there.

Miss Elizabeth had but the one "him." Some women are that way: some old maids. But they are very weak, simple kind of folk, the world will tell you. Don't ask yourself if it requires more courage to stand alone with life and its deadness and be branded as a foolish little old maid, than it does to give the lips with a lie upon them to the caresses of a husband who only takes the body of you; the body and the lie.

Miss Elizabeth sighed and pinched a corner of the yellow envelope with her small, work-hardened hand. She forgot that her hands were hard, the scent of the musk roses was in her nostrils.

"He told me," she was repeating the words softly to the moonlight, "that he must have a wife who had money. He must; his business demanded it and his tastes, all his life had been one of luxury; he would be a torture to me without money. 'It is for your sake, Elizabeth,'"—she was repeating his very words, poor, little old maid!—"you, too, would grow unhappy with nothing but love to live upon."

Nothing but love. He had dared to talk of love when breaking his engagement in that cold-blooded way. Yet he did love her; she had never had a doubt of that. But she knew that he loved his case better.

It was just one month after her father died, and the estate was found to be insolvent; gone to pieces. He had been considered a very rich man, and she was his only child. She had not known an hour since that had not been a hand-to-hand fight with poverty. Yet, she told herself, it was not death that had robbed her, but Dives. Dives, who had entered her life in the form of Abigail Stone and her money.

She, Miss Elizabeth, had not felt her poverty, nor her aloneness, until that

BC Pills tone and regulate the liver.

June night in the musk-rose arbor, when he told her that money was necessary to him. Necessary! how odd it sounded. She had never found it "necessary," not in all those years of struggle; she had lived without it; done some little good, too, among the abject poor. No; money had never been necessary to her but the once—that night in June.

She remembered how poor she felt that night when she walked back to the empty house without him. How poor, and how alone! Not how lonely—how alone. There is a difference between being lonely and being alone. One can bear the loneliness, because one knows that it will end. But the aloneness, ah! "no man has come back" to tell how that ends.

Then her cousin, with whose people she made a temporary home, had moved to California, and so, to some extent, out of her life, too.

He had begged her to go with him, but she had clung to the old altars whereon her idols had crumbled. She was a very weak old maid, you see, not to wish to leave. So weak that she staid right on there through the marriage, witnessed the ceremony, and saw the couple settle down into their home which Abigail's money had bought; and then, when Abigail's father had got him into the bank, and was fitting his own shoes to the feet of his son-in-law, and people had forgotten to talk about her disappointment in talking of Abigail's triumph, Miss Elizabeth gathered up the broken threads of her girlhood and began her life. Her life as she knew it must be always; she wasn't going to compromise with sorrow; not at all. She was as much an old maid the night her lover abandoned her for Abigail's money as she was twenty years after when her own money came. Oh, yes, it came; she had it in her hand at the moment, in the yellow envelope. Fifty thousand dollars, or its equivalent—a notice which told her that it was in the express office for her. And the same note begged her, as the writer had begged for years, that she would come West.

"I am all alone in the world now, Lizzie," the note said, "unless you come to me. John wished you to have a part of his money, and you must know, dear, that I wished it, too. Your cousin loved you to the last, child. He told me that he had always loved you; my husband told me that on his deathbed. And he asked that you might have a bit of his property to make you comfortable in old age. Gladly, gladly; for I love you scarcely less than he did, Lizzie. You knew I loved him, and you refused to give him a heartless body when another woman's heart was all his. God bless you, Lizzie, and send you to me, that we may spend the little remnant of life that is left us together. Write me when to meet you. And don't throw away your money on the unworthy; you always would, you know."

Miss Elizabeth had pressed her cousin's wife's letter to her lips, and had taken off her glasses more than once to get the tears away, before she could finish the reading. Yes, she had given Clare her happiness in refusing to marry her cousin, who had afterward married Clare. She had made him a good wife, yet he said that he had always loved her; he had said it on his deathbed. What a queer thing is love, Miss Elizabeth was thinking—that is, real love; it never, never dies. She believed that, and that is why she believed that he, Abigail's husband, had not forgotten. She knew that love could not die. That had been her revenge; he would not forget her. Though she did not tell herself so that night, nor indeed, all those years; all she had told herself was, "I shall be even with him yet."

Poor little soul, poor foolish, little old dreamer, to be husbanding any such unlikely stuff as that, and in a week-day world like this!

The moon dipped low behind the old vagabond-looking locust trees, and a mocking bird in an althea bush began to sing. A band of negro musicians passing down the street a moment later began to sing also, drowning for a time the song of the bird in the althea tree. The song of the minstrels floated in at the open window; there was that long, swinging melody in the music that belongs to the negro singer:

"My canoe is under water and my banjo is unstrung,
I am tired of living any more,
My eyes shall look downward and my
—song shall be unsung,
Farewell—"

Miss Elizabeth got up and closed the shutters; it was a song she had used to sing for him.

She closed and belted the doors, and looked under the bed, like old maids always do, and began to brush out her thin, snowflecked hair. She smiled as she brushed; she was thinking of her revenge.

She always knew it would come to her. He would have to meet her now. They might move in the same circle now, who could tell? He would not be obliged to cross the street now to keep from seeing that her dress was shabby, or pretend not to see the hand extended him when they did "meet by chance," because, shaking it, he would be compelled to show that he saw the darned ends of the gloves' fingers. It hurt him, her poverty; she felt that it hurt him, and she had despised him at times for it. But now—well, that was all changed; she would go to the bank in the morning, to his bank—he had long ago stepped into the old cashier's shoes—and she would deposit her fifty thousand with him, until she could look about for a lawyer and adjust herself to the change in her circumstances. But she would enjoy handing that money over to the cashier; she smiled into the little withered face that peeped at her from the old-fashioned mirror over her old-fashioned bureau. She had been living in a very old-fashioned world for twenty years, but she would brush up a bit now. When one is not able to keep in line with the procession one cares very little the direction the procession takes.

She went to bed at last, and to sleep, with the fifty thousand running through her brain like water through the mill race at the end of the town. She went to sleep and woke up with the nightmare and screaming; she had dreamed there was a man under the bed.

"I really don't know whatever I shall do with it," she told herself the next morning, when eating her solitary breakfast. "If it is to disturb my rest in this way I shall wish Cousin John had left his money in California."

But she forgot her worry when once she had donned her old-fashioned gray bonnet, and draped her lace mantilla about her shoulders and hidden her little fire-browned face behind an old beaver veil of a bright-green hue. Her dress was gray, too, and rather short for the fashion; the trim, little old maidly-looking feet tripped down the main street and into the handsome bank building at the corner of the public square, as clear of her skirts as a ship of its sails after a storm off the Florida Reefs.

Miss Elizabeth passed the teller's window and went around to the cashier's desk.

He looked up from a heap of papers that lay upon his desk, and saw the little gray figure of the old maid standing there, looking at him through the brass bars of the railing. There was a queer something about the little withered face that carried him back to the night in June when he had broken faith with her in the musk-rose summerhouse. She did not see the old youth in his face, however; there was a pallidness about it that extended to the very lips; as though with his teeth he had pinched the lifeblood out of them. He rose, half clinging to the desk to steady himself. A clerk passing at the moment wondered what the old maid had said that had upset him so. The cashier stood at the opening in the rail waiting for her to speak.

"I came to make a little—deposit," she began, and stopped. "Are you sick, Oscar?"

The word, the calling of his name, thrilled him through. A warm light crept into the haggard eyes; a light before which her revenge of twenty years' hoarding took flight forever.

She had been loved—she remembered only that.

"No," said he, "I am not sick, only tired; very, very tired. I did not sleep last night. What is it you want—Elizabeth?"

She blushed, ashamed that she had planned such a meanly contemptible trick.

"My cousin, out in California, died some months ago, and left me a little money. I have it to-day by the express, and would like to leave it until I arrange my plans. I am going West, to make my home with his wife."

She handed the express package through the window—bonds, certificates, stocks, all. He did not touch it; only looked at her in a wondering way, and said:

"How much is it, Elizabeth? How much did your cousin leave you?"

She faltered, afraid lest he should suspect the triumph that had been in her heart.

"In all, he left me fifty thousand dollars," she replied, in a low, uneven voice. What was he thinking? Of the night in June? That far-away dead night, when he had told her she was too poor to be his wife? His face had a look she had never seen on mortal face before. Perhaps mortal man had never been so strangely situated.

"Come with me a moment," he said, when the first surprise was over; "come here."

He threw open the door of his private office, and held it wide for her to enter, closing it behind them again.

Then he placed the package on the desk between them, and stood off, with his arms folded upon his breast, and looked at her in silence. The little old figure in rusted gray, the silvered hair, the small, ridiculous looking shoes, the gloves with their darned fingers, the green veil, the faded face with the time-marks about the eyes that had once been girlish blue. Circumstance, circumstance how it ruts out life for us, dragging the wheels down into the creases itself has made. The circumstance that had put him into the cashier's shoes had put her into the darned fingers.

"Elizabeth," said he, looking down at her, "you must not put your money into this bank. To-morrow it will be closed, suspended!" She gave a queer little cry and involuntarily put out her hand for the package. He stooped, and picking it up from the desk, handed it to her. "I did you a wrong once," he continued, "I will not do you another. The bank will not open to-morrow."

She must say something; her throat was dry and hard; she felt her revenge stifling her.

"Will you—lose? Will you suffer by the—?" she could not speak the hard word "failure."

"Everything I possess on earth," he replied, with slow distinctness.

She gathered her wealth in her hands more closely and looked toward the door. What was it that had turned her to stone? She had pitied him in his prosperity; in his shame was she rejoicing?

"It is quite sad," she said, in a voice not her own. "You have all my sympathy; I know what it costs to be poor."

She bowed, and he held the door again while she passed out. He felt the presence of her long after she had gone; it was as though she had turned her heel upon him just once, in that short, meaning sentence: "I know what it costs to be poor."

Miss Elizabeth stopped at a butcher's stall on her way home and bought a small steak for her dinner; she was accustomed to buying steak for her dinner because it was easy to cook and could be divided up, making a bite for breakfast. It "went farther" than other meat. There was no necessity for stinting herself now, but then she was accustomed to it, and had not yet learned to be rich. After awhile, perhaps, she would have a cook, and maybe a pudding with cold sauce, like they used to have in her father's lifetime. She had well-nigh forgotten the taste of cold sauce.

She sat down after dinner and wrote her cousin's wife that she would not come. She was "wedded to the old place" was what she wrote. Had she honestly questioned her own heart it would have said: "I'll wait and see the end; the end of revenge; the end of life's love."

When the letter had been finished she placed it on the bureau, where she would be sure to remember it the next time she went out. Then she seated herself by the window, and, screened by the vines and the gathering dusk, gave her thoughts free rein.

So he was about to fail; to lose the money for which he had sold out his troth. But he still would have his wife—what would she think of the change? Would she still keep her carriage, she wondered, and still carry her head in that high way? Would she be obliged to go into the kitchen and broil her own steak, as she did? Oh, it would be hard on her, and hard on him! What was it he had said that night in the rose arbor?

"Life would be a torture with nothing but love to live on." And now there was not so much as the love. What would it be to him? What would it mean, the old riddle called life, without even love "to live on?"

Suddenly Miss Elizabeth dropped her little brown hand upon her lap and gasped; might it not mean disgrace, too? She had not thought of that when she had flung her one little taunt after him. How contemptible that was! how mean! He might be in danger! might have to go—to—prison! The soul of the woman woke then. That must never be—never! He would die there, if he ever got there. If there was a way not to go he would find it—she knew him well enough to know that. He in prison! he who had held her in his arms once; kissed her lips; loved her! It must never be. He was hers again, for one wild moment; hers, if not to have, at all events to save. It was eight o'clock; she heard the town clock strike as she pulled the tottering old shutters together, and reached for the tattered mantilla, lying in the top bureau drawer.

At the door she hesitated; she had never been on the street alone at night in all the thirty-nine years of her life. She felt that people would criticise her if they saw

her. There was a deal of gossip in the town.

Poor little old witch! what did anybody see in her to attract gossip? Old maids are exempt from suspicion of many kinds. They are the unwanted, the unclaimed of this world's stock and trade. She crept close to the fences, however, as she went down the main street, and well into the shadow of the trees that leaned over from the yards on the other side.

She stopped, breathless, afraid of her own shadow, at the door of the cashier's house. The white stone of the steps had a weird look in the moonlight; and from a vine trained against the wall came the odor of musk roses. Then she remembered that it was June.

The servant who answered her ring stared; it was the first time in her life that her foot had crossed his threshold. The softness of the carpet about the little old fashioned feet reminded her of the old days when she had been her father's "only child."

"I want to see the master of the house," she said, and waited in the hall while the man went to see if the master was at home. While she waited a door opened at her right and a negro woman came out, leaving the door slightly ajar. Before she could retreat beyond reach of the voice she heard the sound of sobbing, as of some one in deep distress. He had told her, then; she knew that the bank would close; that her poor day was over.

The sobs were hysterical, followed by reproaches, upbraidings such as the lonely little old maid had never dreamed could fall from wifely lips.

Then a man came out of the room, with his head bowed upon his breast, and passed her, so close that the gray skirts touched his shoe, but he did not see her. She saw his face a moment; it was ashy white, and his hand was thrust into the pocket at his hip.

He entered the door at the left, closing it securely behind him. A moment, and she was at it, the glistening brass knob in her hand. But the door refused to open; it was fast, locked upon the other side.

She put her lips to the keyhole and called his name.

"Who is there?" a startled voice demanded from the other side. He had fancied that it was the ghost of an old wrong that had called to him from out his despair.

"It is I, Oscar—only I—Elizabeth. Let me in, won't you?"

The door opened, and showed her the white, determined face of the suicide that was about to be.

"Have you come to gloat?" he asked. "If you have, I tell you, Elizabeth Forrester, that you have your revenge. I am as poor as you to-night—as poor as you were that night when I broke faith with you for an old man's money. You are revenged; do you hear? Now will you go, and let me die in peace?"

Slowly the tears gathered in the faded blue eyes; the little, old-fashioned feet took a step nearer; the fire-browned head was laid a moment upon the bowed head of the man who had once refused it. Softly it stroked the silver strands, as gentle as when it rested in the hand of the lover that had once been.

"Did you think I would leave you in your trouble? Did you think I did not care?—that I would not give up life itself to save you? Did you? Will it save you, Oscar—the money my cousin left me? I have it here now; I brought it for you."

She started back when he lifted his head to look at her.

"Save myself with your money, Elizabeth?"

"Yes. I know," she replied—"I know how you feel; but I do not feel as you do. I have learned to be poor, long ago. I shall not miss it. You must save yourself, and with this money. I lend it to you, then; do you hear? You may pay it back—when the tide turns. See?"

She knew that the tide would never turn; it was too late for full tides in his life, though he did not believe it.

"I will pay it back to you some day, so help me God!"

He lifted his hand; she understood that it was an oath. When the uplifted hand dropped at his side she was gone.

"I am as poor as I was that night when he told me he must have money," she whispered to the moonlight lying along her way home. "No, not as poor as I was that night. I have had my revenge. I have saved the man who wronged me."

When she reached her room she opened the letter lying upon the bureau to add a postscript.

The High Commissionership.

OTTAWA, July 31.—Sir Donald Smith will for the present retain the office of the Canadian High Commissionership in London notwithstanding the change in the administration which has taken place since his appointment in May last by the government of Sir Charles Tupper. This is at the request of Mr. Laurier. The object of Sir Donald Smith's visit to the capital yesterday was to place his commission at the disposal of the Premier and Mr. Laurier requested him to retain the office for the present.

Sir Donald arrived in the city yesterday afternoon at half-past one, and was with the Premier until five o'clock. After his interview Sir Donald spoke in a hopeful, even enthusiastic, strain of the fast Atlantic service and the prospects of a successful issue of the Pacific cable scheme.

He was asked what foundation there was for the cabled statement that the adjournment of the conference was due to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's desire to learn of the attitude of the new Liberal government before proceeding further with negotiations. The conference was postponed, said Sir Donald, "for this reason: The Australian delegates, received instructions from their government to attend the telegraph convention in Budapest. They went, and it was decided to postpone the conference until October, rather than await their return and then resume our sittings, as it would be too late to accomplish anything before the next meeting of parliament. I rather fancy that no such suggestion as you mention was offered by the Colonial Secretary."

Sir Donald grew quite diplomatic when approached on the subject of the High Commissionership. To the question:—"Are you still High Commissioner, Sir Donald, and shall you continue in that position?" he replied by asking in turn, with some surprise, if it had been doubted that he was. Then he said: "I was High Commissioner when I left London, and that is all I care to state on the subject. Yes, sir, my business here is partly public of course, but mainly it is necessitated by my private affairs. As you know, I left Canada this spring somewhat hurriedly and without much preparation."

The Premier was subsequently waited upon by your correspondent. He said that the Pacific cable delegates had no formal report to make upon the recent conference. Like Sir Donald, the Premier expressed surprise at the report that the former was to be supplanted as High Commissioner. He added: "I may tell you that Sir Donald will leave on Saturday to return to his post in London. It is not true that Mr. Somerville, M. P., for North Brant, who was here yesterday, is to resign in favor of Mr. Paterson. The Minister of Customs will run for North Grey, whose member-elect died yesterday."

WHERE LAWYERS PREDOMINATE.

Complete returns give the following as the occupations of the members of the new House of Commons: There are sixty-three lawyers, thirty-three farmers, twenty-six merchants, twenty-one physicians, nineteen gentlemen, twelve manufacturers, ten journalists, six mill owners, three contractors, three real estate agents, two surveyors, one veterinary surgeon, one township clerk, two distillers, one financial agent, one insurance manager, one banker, one ship-owner, one rancher, one oil refiner, one printer and one civil engineer. The lawyers and gentlemen combined, form nearly two-fifths of the whole House, so that the outlook is poor for the honest toilers who make up the remainder.

Col. Denville, Mr. Bourassa, and Mr. Bostock are returned as 'farmers,' and Messrs. Wallace, McMullen, Penny, Bain, Tucker, Charlton, Morin, Stenson, Hackett, Broder, Blanchard, Seriver, Sutherland and Krulbach as gentlemen. To these have been added Mr. Foster, Mr. Casey, Mr. Haggart, Mr. Beattie, and Sir Richard Cartwright are not labelled with any occupation, and are therefore entitled to be classed as gentlemen. Only nineteen gentlemen out of total of 213.

Winnipeg, Man., July 28.—Mr. Joseph Martin, in an interview declares his Winnipeg friends had put up the funds and that the protest against Mr. Hugh John MacDonald would be proceeded with. It is now said that Mr. Martin is negotiating with the Greenway Government for a settlement of the school question, and if he succeeds Mr. Laurier has promised to take him into the Cabinet.

In Chicago they never enquire if a woman is well off. The question always is "How much alimony does she receive?"

Children Cry for Pitcher's Castoria.