

POETRY.

THE CANDIDATE.

"Father! who travels our road so late?"
"Flash! my child, 'tis a candidate;
Fit example of human woes;
Early he comes and late he goes.

Brothers who labor early and late,
Ask these things of the candidate;
What's his record? How does he stand
At home? No matter about his hand,

SELECT STORY.

A CRUEL WRONG.

By the author of 'That Fair Face,' 'She Knew Best,' etc.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUED.

"Yes, try," he whispered, softly, smile answering smile.

Her answer was in her eyes, her lips, the clinging fingers, the sweet attitude of abandon; she surrendered herself to him in all the beautiful self-obliteration of true womanhood.

So the storm subsided; their hearts, bright as the sunning, affianced lovers, they left the little barge just one backward glance at it, as with his arm around her, they wended their way through the pearl bespangled grass towards noble Kingscote.

"Do not tell me," said Noreen, loosening his arm from her when they were almost in sight of the house. There was a terrified expression about the dark eyes. What could she fear?

"Tomorrow, darling, all the world must know," he whispered. "If possible, I'll hide the gladness in my eyes to-night, even at the fancy ball, but I doubt capabilities."

She thanked him with a glance. Old Lady Declair was first to step upon them on entrance.

" Bravo, Sir Giles," she exclaimed, "you are a true knight-errant. You have brought the stray bird back without wounding her wings. It would have been a sad ending indeed to a pleasant entertainment, had aught happened to the fairest flower of all."

Noreen blushed red. More than one noticed the gratified expression in Sir Giles' eyes at this speech, his rapid glance to the sweet face of his companion; amongst them was Denize, who, although surrounded by devoted lovers as she was, was terribly angry. Noreen had drawn this one from her side. She flashed her blue eyes on her mother, who stepped forward, taking Noreen by the hand. She held the girl's fingers in a firm clasp, Noreen could not have moved them had she wished.

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CHAPTER V.

SURELY there is no prettier sight than a fancy ball in good society; the gay mingling of kings and queens, celebrated characters, patricians and peasants. We improve in these affairs' too, day by day; each one, as it takes place, gathering additional splendor and magnificence.

This was the case at the Emmonds', the explanation, 'Beautiful!' came, with one consent, to every lip, as entering the grand old mansion, they beheld a spectacle that dazzled them by its costly decorations, its throngs of gaily-attired guests.

Noreen had been snubbed unmercifully by Denize before setting out. She felt very small in the simple dress she had been enabled to manufacture, as she stood near her cousin's radiant figure, yet for her age, as it would have been for the other's, it was far better chosen, and, in spite of her cousin's assurance to the contrary, her glass had told her she would look very pleasing in her critical lover's eyes.

She personified 'Priscilla, the Puritan maiden,' that sweet character of Longfellow's delightful poem, 'The Courtship of Miles Standish,' her face a mixture of piquancy and innocence, was a charming portrayal of the poet's ideal. She was all smiles, too; her cheeks would dimple whether she would or no.

"What are you laughing at?" said Denize, snappishly, as they proceeded en route. "You made such an exhibition of yourself to-day. I should be ashamed to show my face, were I in your place."

"Not many people will notice me, cousin, beside you," said Noreen, with a sweet little laugh.

Denize, finding her shafts falling so flatly, got more vicious.

"Don't go making eyes at Sir Giles again, like you did this afternoon," she went on, "because he's only laughing at you, child. Probably you think he searched for you in the storm out of kindness; he did not, he went, thinking to please me. Mamma, you said you'd speak to Noreen, and make her behave more decently. Why don't you?"

"I prefer Noreen's simple dress to yours

now, Denise," said her father; "you put ten years on to your age by your love of finery."

"Her dress is suitable to her penniless condition, as mine is to mine, father. Mamma, didn't you hear what I said?"

"Yes, child, but I was thinking of something else. It is perfectly true. Noreen, you must be more particular in your behaviour. Sir Giles is the last person to think of you, so don't get silly ideas into your head; remember he is in love with Denise. You acted most shamefully and ungratefully in detaining him so long from her side."

"I am awfully sorry, auntie," said Noreen, laughing again, "but indeed, it cannot be helped now."

They were quite aghast, and could not make the girl out; snubbing was quite lost upon her, nothing subdued her spirits, nor took the contended look from her eyes. When at the entrance of the already well-filled ball-room, the first person they encountered were Sir Giles Messinger, and Denize. He bowed with grace to all, but instead of offering his arm to Denise, he asked for the hand of the young Puritan maiden, and away they went, whirling around the room in a most delightful valse.

Denize hid her red lip and frowned, looking from one parent to the other with reproachfully flashing eyes; the brightened color, the glorious bright eyes suited well her queenly costume. Her coteries of admirers clustered around her, dubbed her radiantly beautiful, flattering her on all sides, eager for a smile from her lips, or a touch from her small fingers.

Surely her path was one of roses! What more could she desire? She wanted everything, all to be at her feet; she desired and determined to acquire the love of Sir Giles Messinger; he had no eyes but for Noreen.

"How sweet you look, my darling!" he said, the moment he had her in his arms, "such a divine Priscilla! How can I make choice of my favorite heroine?"

"Do you like it?" asked the girl, flushing up with delight. "I am so glad; I made it myself. I was forced to choose something simple, not having many materials to make use of. It is hardly the dress to go with your Sir Roger de Coverley, is it?"

"The contrast is excellent, and if it were not— Ah! my darling! this is the happiest day of my life. I trust there are still happier for us!"

She shivered in his arms, one of those strange feelings of dread coming over her, we cannot account for, when we seem to have our cup of happiness flitted to the brim.

"What is it dear one?" he questioned, seeing her cheeks pale, a distressed look came into her dark eyes.

"I cannot tell," she answered, "for indeed I am very happy. A strange fear seemed to oppress me. I thought of the storm and the woodman's hut, together with my first arrival at my uncle's house, when a child of two or three years old, in my nurse's arms—that was also an storm. It seems the great events of my life must all take place amongst the tumults of the elements, and I am so stupidly afraid. I think it is the dread that something worse will happen."

"Nothing sad will happen now, my love; I shall always be near you. You will never be afraid again, will you?"

"Ah, no!" she laughed happily, feeling the strong arms round her, meeting such true eyes looking into hers.

She had no idea she was the talk of the room, as she danced with Sir Giles one dance after another; she was so unsophisticated, so very young. Her aunt had never told her what a very gorgon society is, that it does not allow folks to be happy, because she had never intended Noreen to enter society at all. Lady Messinger, at her son's desire had done part of the mischief; Lady Declair, in her spite, had finished it.

"Vainly did Mrs. Ardleigh try to catch her niece's eye; Sir Giles steered her so well, they never came in contact. After the third dance, throwing a fussy wrap over the girl's shoulders, he led her out into the spacious grounds.

"Let them hunt for us, Noreen," he said. "You do not want to dance with any other fellow, do you, sweet? I feel I should be miserably jealous to-night, if I see another's arm around you."

She nestled closely to him in a rose arbor; a refreshing breeze lifted the sweet blossoms, wafting their perfume around them; the silver moonlight shed her holy beams on tree and flower.

"I would rather be with you," she whispered. "It is so wonderful to think of what has happened today."

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never in all her young life had she experienced such terrible pain.

"How dare you so openly disobey me? How dare you run after Sir Giles in that shameless manner, when I directly warned you of your un ladylike conduct?"

Mrs. Ardleigh had closed and locked the door, had taken a seat in Noreen's room, beginning her tirade in this manner.

The girl was still in Puritan costume, she had but thrown aside the quaint, little cap; her curly hair, a trifle ruffled and tumbled, made her look extra pretty.

She confronted her irate companion with wide-open, astonished eyes, the girl's beauty evidently increasing the other's anger, so perfectly innocent, so free from immodest thought, was the fresh, young countenance.

"I, auntie?" she questioned, both surprised and frightened. "Oh, indeed I did not. Please do not scold me now, you will know all to-morrow, and will think very differently of me then."

Mrs. Ardleigh gasped for breath, then her wrath came out in full force. Was it possible this girl could be preferred before her beautiful Denise?

"Do you mean to insinuate that Sir Giles intends to marry you?" she exclaimed, her voice hoarse with passion.

"Vain, conceited fool, I can tell you he will never do that; there is too powerful a reason against such folly."

"Oh, auntie, what can you mean?" Noreen's eyes dilated, she clasped her hands pathetically; cross words she had had at times, but never had her aunt been so furious with her before; it was from Denise the cruel gibes had come, and only lately, since she had begun to emerge from childhood, she had little to complain of in earlier years.

"Ah! now you own what you have been aiming at. Wicked, designing girl, to try and take your cousin's lover from her. Shame, shame on you Noreen."

Tears welled up into the beautiful eyes; the girl sobbed pitifully.

"He never loved Denise," she said, in broken accents. "I have known him long, ah! longer than you think, auntie. I never told about it, for I thought there was no harm in it; but I know he loves me and me only. I was so happy just now, thinking of all that has happened today."

"Sir Giles proposed—he is coming to ask your uncle's consent in the morning, is it not so?"

"Yes, auntie."

The words were very faintly spoken, almost indistinctly; the poor child's heart was in a tumult, and was choking her with its violent throbbing. Caroline Ardleigh heard them, however.

Noreen had not noticed the meek in the other's voice, when she asked her question; she looked up through her tears, trusting now she would be understood. The storm of the elements had been cruel suffering that day, but what was that in comparison to the human one that burst over her defenceless head after her admission of Sir Giles' intentions.

Caroline Ardleigh rose to her full height; taking the girl by the shoulders she shook her as if she would kill her; she was white with rage, trembling as though a mortal terror was upon her.

"Base-born wretch," she cried, "I tell you, you must refuse Sir Giles' offer plainly and decidedly; this folly must be put an end to at once."

"I love him," said Noreen, all the hot blood in her face. "Why should I make him unhappy? Then, as her aunt would have touched her again, her dark eyes blazed. With folded arms she gazed into the other's face unflinchingly, and the elder woman covered before her.

"Why do you call me base-born?" she inquired, her noble head held proudly.

"You have no right to do so; surely the Ardleighs are as good as the Messingers by birth?"

"The Ardleighs are, but do you belong to the family?"

"Uncle was my father's brother?"

"A myth, a fallacy. You are a creature reared on charity, a nobody's child, probably a gypsy woman's offspring, as Denise has more than once told you. Now, perhaps, you can understand how unfit you are to make any alliance with the Messingers; remember they belong to the proudest family in the county."

"He loves me," moaned Noreen, her hand on her poor, wounded heart. "Oh, he loves me! Aunt, unmy those words, I cannot believe you would say them to me; money—anything, but oh, not that—not that!"

"The time has come to tell you the truth, when you put yourself before Denise—it were cruel kindness to keep it from you."

Again the girl moaned "he loves me, oh, he loves me!" There were no tears now, her eyes were dry and burning, her face colorless. Some griefs are too deep for tears.

"Love! What is that?—an illusionation for the moment. Do you fancy you are the first girl he has loved? Supposing even he married you out of pity, what would come of it? He would hate you for bringing the first stain on his spotless pedigree."

"Every vestige of color died from the girl's lips; a piteous, imploring expression came into her dark eyes, as she continued to look intently at the woman who had uttered such cruel words, words that echoed jarringly in her ears, and filled her with a miserable anguish. Could it be true what she had just heard? Was she unfit to become the wife of the man she so passionately loved, and must she give him up? Her dream of happiness seemed to slip from her and leave her in a maze of trouble and bewilderment.

"Please leave me now," she said at last, her young face set and stony, "I begin to understand; only first let me—your husband, tell me what you say is true, then I will do the thing you wish."

CHAPTER VI.

A LIGHT summer had floating amongst the lilies, the tiny impress of small feet beside the river, which rushed with rapid current through the Ardleigh estate, passed Kingscote, onward, swiftly feeling towards the sea, carrying all before it, an empty room—a bed unmade on. What might these signs portend?

Sir Giles' splendid bay carried him as on wings to Noreen