

Written for THE JURY.

Poetic Vengeance.

By NINEPHUS, ST. JOHN, N. B.

Martin McFerrick was a genius. As yet his talent had brought him but scanty reward, but year by year he had scribbled patiently on, urged by the same inspiration that caused his eight year old fingers to write beneath an illustration in his primer,—

"Look at that;  
It is a cat"

the sublime poetry of which was acknowledged by his doting relatives, who predicted fame and wealth for the embryo poet. But the years have brought him little besides long hair, biliousness and chronic impecuniosity. And that is how it happens that on one of the hottest afternoons in June Martin McFerrick sits writing as if for dear life and inwardly cursing the heat of his room. It was an attic, of course. (Genius in an attic is so romantic.) "Abode—road—load," murmurs the poet, as with his eyes "in fine frenzy rolling" he gloomily watches the eccentric motions of a blue-bottle fly on the window. "What rhyme can I bring in there. Let me see,—

'Look out from thy fair abode;  
From my sad heart lit the load.'

Hm'm, that last line does sound better than the line I thought of first. If only— Come in."

In response to the invitation the door opens and a stout, rubicund, ugly man enters. Martin looks up sharply from his work, and the newcomer grins broadly. His face is stupid, but its abounding good-nature goes far to atone for that. The grin extends to a jovial laugh as he seats himself astride the one chair the room contains and folding his arms upon the back of it beams amiably upon his host, who stands beside the window looking unutterably sullen. If there is one man on earth whom Martin McFerrick intensely hates, it is John Cronlin.

"Well, Marty, my boy, how goes it?" he asks facetiously. "Hard at work as usual, I see."

"Yes," assents Martin, sullenly, eyeing with meek disfavor the cool-looking summer suit his visitor is wearing. It seems like an insult to the poor fellow, who is forced to abide in his stuffy garb of shabby black.

"That's right. You're a good, moral little boy. Wish I was like you. I toil not, neither do I spin. Got in a quotation from Shakespeare that time, didn't I? Speaking of work reminds me that I have a job for you, Marty."

"Indeed?" carelessly.

"Yes. I want you to serenade the widow, Mrs. Dormer, for me. Serenades are all the rage since Miss Flirtwell received one the other night. She and the widow are rival belles, and little Dermot is fairly wild about it. Somebody told

me that it was Oakley who paid you to do the whole business for him. Is that so?"

"I am hardly at liberty to say," responds the sulky Mr. McFerrick.

"Oh, that will do you! We all know you of old, Marty; also your little tricks to make money. What kind of stuff do you write in a case like this?"

"I have something here which I think will suit," says the poet, lifting a manuscript from amongst the mass of papers on his table.

"Listen:

'Darling, sleep. O'er fields of clover  
Softer zephyrs never blew.  
All the sky with stars is gemmed,  
And the hills, slender stemmed,  
Let their snow-white cups brim over  
With their sparkling weight of dew.'

"No, don't give me any rot like that," protests the disgusted Mr. Cronlin. "The widow would never credit me with that. Give me something that doesn't limp quite so much and describe me in it so that she will know me. Little Flirtwell is sweet as nuts on the fellow who she thinks serenaded her, and I want Mrs. Dormer to get sweet on me. I'd give you fifty dollars if I could come out ahead of that ass Blinker. of the —th. He had the impudence to keep close to the widow all the afternoon in the Gardens.

"Too bad," sneers Martin, with mock sympathy.

"Yes; but I wasn't so very bad off after all, for that superb creature, Madge Dashly, helped me to listen to the band. You know her, don't you?"

The poet blushes. Yes, he knows her, and what is more he is in love with her. His book, "Dawn of the Ideal and other poems," is to be dedicated to her.

"Yes," he replies quickly, "I know her."

"Oh, yes, of course you do," says Mr. Cronlin, with a jovial laugh. "I was telling her about you this afternoon. I thought she would go into fits when I described to her the sensations you created the day that Oakley and I asked you to dinner—blacked your face when you got half seas over and fell asleep at the table, and then started you off to the flower show. Oh, Jupiter, how you looked!" Mr. Cronlin once more gave way to mirth of an artless but violent nature. And Martin McFerrick grew white to the lips.

"Well, my business is settled now, I suppose," says Mr. Cronlin, checking his laughter and rising to his feet. "You will have it done by this evening and serenade her to-night, won't you? I'll send around the money some time tomorrow. Remember it is to describe me plainly and to be smooth and spicy."

"I hope you will like it," says Martin, dubiously.

"Don't fret. I'm not hard to suit, but it will be the first time I ever was averse to a poem. Ts, ts," and he lounges buoyantly out of the room, whistling a version of "Tit Willow," in which he vilely attempts to make noise and shrillness atone for several damages sustained by the tune.

"So you have been making me ridiculous in the eyes of she that I love, have you?" mutters the poet. He is alone, and after the manner of genius soliloquizes aloud. "And you ask my aid

that your love may prosper. 'Nemo me impure lacessit.' I will have revenge!"

It is night, warm, fragrant and magical, as only a June night can be. The half-grown moon is nearly at its zenith for time is near the witching hour. Silence has long since settled over the city, and now there is only a rustle of the leaves, the murmur of the sea, the occasional screech of the night hawk and the wailing song of the cat.

The latter sound rises weirdly from the backyard in Spring Garden Road and floats in through the window of the room where Mrs. Dormer stands in stowy raiment putting her hair in curl papers. "Botheration take those cats!" ejaculated Mrs. Dormer, as an unusually loud burst of feline sentiment assails her sensitive ears, and she turns from the reflections of sparkling brunette beauty reflected by her mirrors, and walks briskly to the window.

"Scat!" she hisses, fiercely; "scat!" and an empty boot-polish bottle is poised ominously in her dainty hand.

Hark!

The animal "scats" ere she can carry out the hostile intention, and mindful of her curl papers Mrs. Dormer shrinks behind the curtains, and her face is covered with a flush of delight. Surely that sound which breaks the brooding stillness of the night is the tinkle of a guitar. Somebody is going to serenade her. Now that horrid Flirtwell girl shall learn that she is not the only one in the city who can receive such attentions. How kind this is of Mr. Cronlin. She knows that she owes this to him, for he has talked so rapturously of serenading. Certainly he is not nice-looking or very clever, but— Well, she must listen now that she may know what language he sends on the sweet wings of melody to woo her with. Breathlessly she listens to the words uttered by the fine tenor voice below.

"Of diseases terrific the night is prolific;  
I am running the risk of catarrh,  
Such ideas I resist 'em, though bad for my system,  
Whilst I strum to you on my guitar,  
That I brave all these perils, to you may seem funny;  
But let me confess, dear, I'm after your money."

Now as you're no chicken, you'd very soon sicken  
Should I gush about love—

Martin McFerrick stops abruptly as the back door is flung violently open and a woman's figure comes out into the moonlight. She is wrapped in a long, dark cloak, which gives dignity and apparent height to her appearance. Her very curl papers seem to bristle with indignation.

"Mr. Cronlin," she says, haughtily, "may I ask how you dare to— Ah!"

"It is not Mr. Cronlin," interposes Martin, doffing his hat and bowing low; "only his representative."

"Oh, Mr. McFerrick. Ah, I see," in a tone of relief. "It is some mistake, or joke, or—"

"Not so," responds the poet, cruelly. "Mr. Cronlin sent me here to-night to serenade you. It was by his direction I wrote the words and he was most particular as to the style of the composition."

She stared at him in blank dismay.

"But why?" she queries, plaintively, at length.

"I don't see the motive; I don't understand; I—" Her words are lost in a tempest of sobbing. There is a pause.

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