

Saint Mary's Beacon.

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Saint Mary's Beacon.

A NEWSPAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

Published every Thursday Morning at

LEONARDTOWN, MD.

\$1.00 PER YEAR.

DEMOCRATIC IN POLITICS.

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\$1.00 per inch for the first insertion, and 50 cents for every subsequent insertion. Obituaries, church festivals, etc., over ten lines in length will be charged at the rate of 25 cents per inch. A liberal deduction made to those who advertise by the year.

All communications must be accompanied by the real name of the author or no attention will be paid to them.

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Horse feed, long and short, combin Nov 18, 84—87

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If you want a first-class Boot or Shoe go to

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SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

As the earth rolls over, on its axis whirled, There is always midnight somewhere in the world.

But though darkness' pinions ever are unfurled, There is always morning somewhere in the world.

Sorrow has its mission, so Fate's shafts are hurled; There is always sorrow, sorrow in the world.

Even as the morning gleams with light imperiled, There is gladness always, always in the world.

MY WIDOW.

'Wanted for Australia, a lady capable of taking entire educational charge of three girls. Applicants must be willing to enter into a three years' engagement. Liberal salary and traveling expenses; but no holder of university certificates will be accepted. Apply, personally or by letter, to E. H., Queen's Hotel.'

Here appeared the appearance of my advertisement, and the desirable person had not yet presented herself. Worn out with interviewing ladies whose only qualification for the post seemed to be a desire to proceed immediately to Australia, I was enjoying a temporary rest. A pile of notes on my right hand promised me ten more visitors for the afternoon; but, in the presence of the waiter who had just provided me with a tempting luncheon, I had sworn to cease from my labors till that repast was fairly discussed. At my third mouthful however the man reappeared.

'Another lady, sir; and she cannot wait.'

'Let her wait, or go to Jericho.'

'Yes, sir; I'll tell her, sir.'

He left me, but conscience took all relish from my repast. Visions of my little nieces growing up in the semi-savage state in which I had left them, while my apathy and greed let slip the very paragon of instructresses, proved at last too much for me, and I again summoned William, bidding him ask the lady for her name and address.

He returned with a black-edged visiting card.

'May Somers.' Affectation to begin with,' said I. 'Why can't she put 'Miss May Somers'?'

'A widow, sir,' William explained gently.

'Young, William?'

'Middling young, sir.'

'Do you mean middle-aged, William?'

'Oh, dear, no, sir!'

My rising hopes fell, for I remembered only too well my sister's parting words:

'Not old, Mark, dear, but certainly not young, or we shall have the expense of bringing her out here for nothing. She mustn't be pretty, because of all you young men but she mustn't on any account be unattractive, because of the children.'

'A person who in the Roman Catholic countries, might be devoted to the bon Dieu!' I suggested.

'Exactly, Mark,' agreed my still pretty sister—'in a word, find me some one whom you couldn't fall in love with if you tried.'

'At his age,' interposed my brother-in-law pensively, 'one sees so few women one couldn't fall in love with if one tried.'

'Remember, Mark,' added Emily severely, 'the comfort of the house depends on the kind of person you send us.'

I left her with a much clearer idea of what she did not want than of what she did, and the next day was on my way to Europe. My visit was to be a long one, and chiefly of a business character. The affairs of our house needed for a time the presence of a principal in London. I had given my word to Emily to attend to her commission first; but it seemed difficult to fulfil, and I was on the point of giving it up in despair when William announced the 'middling young' widow.

Where could William's eyes have been? A woman's face must be as ugly as sin to neutralize such a figure. She was looking out of the window as I entered, and the slight willowy movement with which she acknowledged my presence struck me most agreeably. This impression was more than confirmed by her voice.

Through the crepe veil I got a vague idea of hazel eyes and waving hair to match; the rest was undiscoverable. I placed a chair for her purposefully facing such light as the November day afforded, and I could have sworn that she smiled as she thanked me and took

another. It seemed impossible to ask a widow to raise her veil, but, till she did so, I was bringing her a divided attention to the matter at hand. In five minutes I cared not to know what layed behind the veil than whether my little niece could be well grounded in music, modern languages, and the moralities. Had she not promised Emily to send her by such a woman as in my judgment could endanger no man's peace of mind?

Within the last fortnight I had interviewed some thirty ladies of more or less attainments, and I had been stern and uncompromising with them, a very Daniel come to judgment. I can go farther—I can say that I had interviewed them with the eye and the heart of a woman seeking a governess. But to-day Emily's questions—questions I was bound to ask and have answered—struck me as grossly impertinent.

During the ensuing fortnight my correspondence with Mrs. Somers was incessant. There was much to arrange, and in money matters the lady showed what I hoped was a just appreciation of her own value. From my original offer I advanced to the utmost limit assigned me by my brother-in-law, and there I stood firm. At last I was allowed to take her passage. By my advice she was to start from Southampton; and thither I journeyed some two or three days beforehand to see that everything was arranged for her comfort. Captain Hall, with whom I had made the journey twice before, promised to take special care of the lady; and, with a load off my mind, I returned to London.

A few days later I was leaving London for Paris, where I intended to take a few days of well-earned rest before going south. As I stood on the steps of the hotel, a telegram was put in my hand. It was from our head-clerk, and was brief and heartless, as such a communication always sounds.

'Mr. Bradshaw found drowned. Beg your immediate return.'

My cab was at the door. By taking the train I had originally chosen, and by traveling day and night, I might join the Aurora at Brindis.

How far poor Tom's speculations had led him to risk our joint credit, whether I was the head of a flourishing firm or a bankrupt, whether I was left legally as well as morally the guardian of Emily's children, were matters on which the next few days gave me ample time to speculate. It was not till I shook hands with Capt. Hill on board the Aurora that I remembered Mrs. Somers.

'I'm glad you've come to look after that consignment yourself, Mr. Stretton,' he said with a laugh; 'if you hadn't I'm afraid those poor children would never have seen their governess. We're a week out, and the story goes that every single man on board has proposed to her?'

'Were want of employment?' I responded lightly. 'They can't all marry her. You don't know—how should you?—what is taking me out again so soon.'

'Heaven bless me!' exclaimed the Captain, when I had told my news. 'Business all straight?'

'A shrug was my only answer, and at that moment two ladies passed us, one was the Captain's wife, a little beauty I had known years before, the other—'

'Who ever loved that loved not at first? Well, I do not quite mean that; but sure I am that I was looking at the loveliest figure, and, to me, the sweetest face I had ever seen!'

'I can't tell you how glad I am to see you, Mr. Stretton,' said Mrs. Hall, 'for I'm chaperoning two girls, and never leave them for more than five minutes at a time. I'll fetch them up here while you and Mrs. Somers renew your acquaintance. What a pleasant party we shall be now!'

She hurried away, and of the embarrassed people she left, Mrs. Somers was the first to recover self-possession.

'You did not recognize me, Mr. Stretton?'

'Till now you have not spoken, and in our one interview you gave me no chance to recognize anything but your voice.'

She smiled, and in so doing showed two white rows of teeth. Had I seen that smile before, the many letters and the many stamps wanted on the Vicar of Claydon would have been saved: I would have staked my existence upon her wisdom and virtue.

There was, after all, something of the face I had imagined under the crepe veil. She had hazel eyes and rippling hair to match. If the complexion lacked color, that was atoned for by lips of the purest carmine. The expression of the face left nothing to be desired—at least in my eyes it was calm and clever, but with no want of animation.

We seated ourselves in the corner indicated by Mrs. Hall, and Mrs. Somers drew out her knitting, an occupation which she was rarely without. A wedding-ring of unusual thickness was the only ornament about her, and on this my eyes were fixed then she became aware of my gaze; then the hazel eyes challenged mine in not altogether friendly fashion.

'You altered your plans suddenly,' she remarked.

'Very,' I responded shortly, for I had no mind to acquaint her with the cause of my sudden return; and, strange to say, I only saw the matter as it might affect Mrs. Somers. If things were as I feared, Emily could no more afford a governess at a hundred and fifty pounds than she could keep up her present establishment in other respects.

'Mr. Stretton, you are repenting your selection,' she said lightly.

'Far from it,' I assured her, adding, 'But, frankly, you are a good deal younger than I supposed.'

She smiled again, an amused, rather ironical smile.

'Your requirements in that respect, as in others, were negative—I was not to be over thirty; and indeed I am not over thirty. Did your sister understand how little exacting you would be when she entrusted you with such a mission?'

This time her smile was exasperating.

'However much my experience amuses you, ma'am, I must ask leave to think that I have fulfilled my mission with the best—'

'I will try to shake even your faith in your own penetration,' she interrupted quite seriously.

She rose as Mrs. Hall and a gentleman came up to beg for some music. I did not follow them, but stayed on deck to smoke, and think of my new acquaintance.

What would Emily say to me? I had been but a few hours on board, and could already vouch for the truth of the Captain's statement; the havoc Mrs. Somers was making was patent even to me. We had our full complement of passengers, but very few ladies, and these were neither pretty nor amusing. Mrs. Somers had it all her own way; and her way seemed to be to ignore a good deal of the attention lavished on her. She was gentle and dignified, but kept as close to the Captain's wife as a girl in her first season. Me she honored with a shy confidence of which I was very proud. When I found how little she knew of the life to which she was going, I thought her faith in her own penetration at least equalled mine. As the days wore on, I wondered more and more what manner of man was he, who, winning such a woman for a wife, had left so heart-whole a widow. I had got into the habit of spending the greater part of the day at her side, for she was an intelligent talker, too speculative to be pedantic, and a sympathetic listener; for such a woman one could have a true passion or a true friendship. I already enjoyed the one and ignored the proximity of the other, for my prejudice against widows remained in full force, and was even strengthened by a conversation I overheard between the Captain's wife and Mrs. Somers.

At Aden we parted with Mrs. Hall and her charges; and henceforth my days were spent at Mrs. Somers' side. As the sculptor finds his ideal prisoned in the marble, so I do not know to this day whether May Somers did create or satisfy my ideal. She was a woman whose eyes spoke as freely as her tongue; she warned to her subject, never to me; nor could I flatter myself that my comings and goings had ever once changed the cream-like tint of her face. Alas for me, I had studied this woman—

'The face of her, the eyes of her, the chin, The little stir of shadow round the mouth—'

—till I was tortured by a retrospective jealousy of the man to whom all these charms had once belonged! And still my ideal of a proper marriage remained the same—the woman who should be my wife must have

waited for me as I for her, 'the one, only one in the world for me.'

The voyage, which I would have prolonged indefinitely, drew to a close; it had been unusually speedy and prosperous, and there was a little civilly-expressed regret among the passengers on hearing at table that we should land within twenty-four hours. The general feeling, however, was one of satisfaction and relief. As I looked round upon the pleased excited faces turned to Captain Hall, my eyes met Mrs. Somers'. Neither could ignore what each read in the other's glance, and, within five minutes of the ladies' rising, I followed her on deck. She was walking away from the corner generally left us by common consent, intending, I found, to take shelter under the wing of the veriest old gossip on board. She let me join her, and I in return waited till we were within a few feet of her goal before I said suddenly—

'Mrs. Somers, you have never asked me why I took this ship; you are, I know, the least curious of women.'

'Not so,' she replied; 'but my own affairs have occupied me to the exclusion of other people's.'

'Well, I must ask you to listen to mine for five minutes,' I said.

We turned back to our corner, and I lingered over the little precautions for her comfort which had become my privilege. The warmer color on cheeks and brow as she thanked me was rather a reflection of the passion in my eyes than any feeling of her own. If I could not flatter myself that she loved me, at least I recognized a novice in the art. Startling myself more than her, the pent up thought of weeks burst from my lips.

'Did you love him?'

'If I did not, what must you think of me?' she murmured.

'Think? I have thought till I can think no more,' I responded. 'I, who for years have said I could come second in no woman's heart, ask you, May Somers, for the lowest place in yours.'

Her hands rested lightly on the arm of the rocking-chair. I had almost taken them in mine, when she said softly:

'Are you indeed asking me for the fragments that remain?'

'I am asking for no fragments; I am asking to teach you what love is, for, widow as you are, wife as you have been, you do not know. I would teach you by the service of my whole heart and life.'

I waited for what seemed the longest five minutes of my life before she said—

'I cannot answer you now. It is as you said—I do not know; and perhaps I may never learn the lesson you speak of.'

'Then,' I rejoined, 'for the gift of yourself I am willing to wait. That is not what I am asking for now; and in a few words I told her of the calamity that had befallen our house and of the extreme improbability of her taking up the position she had come to fill. As she listened her face grew pale and alarmed.

'I cannot offer you a very prosperous life,' I said, in conclusion, 'but I can promise that from the moment you take my name nothing shall worry or annoy you, not even myself.'

I pleaded hard with her; but for the life of me I could not wish that she should take me only as an escape from the difficulties of her position.

'You knew this all the time,' she said at last; she had recovered her color, and her tone was full of cold displeasure.

'Why disturb you about a thing we could not alter or—'

'I hate to be treated like an idiot or a child!' she interrupted. 'On a matter of such infinite importance to me you were bound to speak at once. As it is, you have left me less than twenty-four hours to make a plan that might have had a month's consideration.'

'Mrs. Somers,' I pleaded, 'you do not hate me! I ask you now simply to take my name, to take my most faithful service, and to take my love when you will—when you can give me yours.'

Again a faint flush covered her cheeks.

'What you ask is absurd, impossible. You are in no degree responsible for this very disagreeable position of affairs. In making me an offer of marriage you have done much more than your duty, and, when we land, you can see me go my own way with an easy conscience.'

I could not but admire the coolness, the absolute justice of her remarks. Again my eyes met hers, trying to read there either weakness or relenting. Of personal feeling for myself there was none, and if, as I more than suspected, she dreaded to find herself in a strange land, no such fear was revealed. One thing I demanded and obtained—permission to establish her in the hotel always used by our family or to see her on board the homeward-bound steamer.

The next day we landed, and after seeing Mrs. Somers comfortably installed, I left her and went to our former office. It was closed and covered with bills. From there I went to the bank, to our lawyers, to hear everywhere the same story—that absolute ruin had befallen us. Poor Emily and the children were living on the proceeds of her wardrobe and jewelry. She had taken refuge with an old tenant some fifty miles away from the town.

This information gained, I paused to consider. The furniture of my bachelor chambers, with a picture or two, would fetch between three and four hundred pounds, a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of Mrs. Somers' return to England and to keep me in some sort of fashion till I found employment. I next called upon an old friend of my father's. After exonerating me from all share in the imprudent speculations that had wrecked us, he inquired my plans.

'Even blameless as you are,' said he, 'you will be more comfortable out of the city till this affair has blown over. I want an agent for some land I've just bought, you would oblige me and I think do wisely for yourself in accepting the post.'

The occupation suited me, and I accepted his offer gratefully, asking only for a week's delay before entering on my duties. This being granted, I returned to Mrs. Somers' hotel; and, after waiting some minutes, this note was brought me by a waiter, who volunteered the information that the lady had been gone almost an hour.

'Dear Mr. Stretton—This hotel is comfortable but expensive, so I shall have left it before you call. Do not disturb yourself about me. I must have work somewhere, and am as likely to find work to my mind here as in England, whither I shall return only as a last resource. The one thing I cannot face with equanimity is an unnecessary obligation. To avoid therefore a contest in which you might very probably win, I write instead of saying my thanks for the numberless kindnesses I have received at your hands. Hoping we shall meet again some day, I am very sincerely yours.

MAY SOMERS.'

I spent that week in a vain search for Mrs. Somers, and then went westward. I cannot say that I was anxious about her; but without her life was tasteless—for me there was neither past nor future, everything was merged in the six weeks I had spent at her side.

My work left me little time for meditation; at rare intervals my solitude was broken by a visit to or from my sister, when we talked of little but the prospects of her children. On one of these occasions she told me, with tears in her eyes, that she was going to marry again. She murmured something about Providence and duty to her children forbidding her to hesitate.

'You've no objection, Mark?'

'None,' I replied, 'but that you make such an exceedingly pretty widow.'

'Oh,' exclaimed Emily warmly, 'I couldn't wear the dress more than a few months longer! It is better as it is.'

And, on hearing the name of my future brother-in-law, I agreed with her. Once more Emily would have money and care and the luxury her soul loved.

'For the children's sake there will be no unnecessary delay. I suppose, Mark, it's of no use searching for your lost governess?'

'No,' I answered shortly; 'by this time she has doubtless followed your excellent example.'

'Mark, why are you so bitter? Why shouldn't a woman marry twice? You're as romantic as a schoolgirl; the love you dream of, where heart and soul and intellect are alike satisfied, is a very rare thing. The nearest approach to it is a passion that blends all three and doesn't last. Modify your demands.'

(Continued on Fourth Page.)