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ANOTHER SPLENDID LOVE STORY!

JUDGE HAWTHORNE'S SECOND LOVE.

BY ELLIS AMMONETTE.

"Oh, you for whom I write! whose hearts can melt
At the soft thrilling voice whose power you prove,
You know what charm, unutterably felt,
Attends the unexpected voice of Love;
Above the lyre, the lute's soft notes shower,
With sweet enchantment to the soul it steals
And bears it to Elysium's happy grove;
You best can tell the rapture Psyche feels
When Love's ambrosial lip the sons of Hymen seals."
[Mrs. Tighe.

Judge Hawthorne in his library stood with folded arms and troubled brow, at the oriel window, fronting west, and through which the red and yellow glow of the setting summer sun streamed in bright but fading rays. The landscape without was one of smiling beauty. Nearest lay the spacious enclosure of the pleasure ground, charming in its agreeable diversity of flower-decked beds, sweeping greensward and clumps of shade-trees; next beyond, the garden, devoted to the utilitarian purposes of the table, though even here the sable cultivator had combined somewhat of the beautiful with the useful, by bordering the walks with touch-me-nots, prince's feathers, four o'clock's and such like homely plants, all of which were gay in flaunting colors; beyond this commenced the fields, spreading away in many a fair and fertile acre, now teeming with their half-matured crops of corn and cotton.

Within there was everything that could minister to taste and comfort. The room was situated on the second floor of the spacious house, in an octagon wing. Windows opened east, south and west, and the fourth and remaining one of the alternate sides, wherein were placed these openings, was occupied by the heavy mahogany door. The intervening spaces were filled by substantial shelves, extending from floor to ceiling, and on them was stored the intellectual wealth of every age. Over the mantel hung one fine picture, and on brackets were the marble lineaments of two or three who live to fame. There was "The blind old bard of Scio's rocky isle," he who drank the hemlock draught, and he who sang till the thought of Laura and his love are inseparable throughout the world. In the centre of the room was a table with its accompaniments of writing materials, and around it were grouped chairs that courted to their embrace.

Judge Hawthorne was the master of all, but he bore a deep grief in his bosom. He walked hurriedly from the west window to the east. There a green expanse swept unbrokenly to emerald banks that clasped the silver current of the Coosa, as it flowed through the noble State of Alabama.

The scene here was one of blandest beauty, but Judge Hawthorne looked upon it for the first time unheedingly.

A moment more, falling into a chair, his face bowed upon the table, and sobs, convulsive sobs, heaved his breast, and hot, burning tears were shed in bitter profusion; for the bride of his youth, the mistress of his home, his helpmate in trouble, his companion in sorrow, his wife, so faithful, so tenderly cherished, lay dying.

Judge Hawthorne had been a favorite of fortune. Commencing the world without patrimony, he qualified himself for the law, and followed that profession until a sufficiency of means enabled him to gratify his inclination for a planter's life.

The tract of land originally purchased, after each year's successful crop, was added to in every direction, and the humble roof-tree was eventually superceded by the stately mansion he now occupied.

His negroes increased, his fields extended, his money multiplied, and his possessions now, while he still numbered but thirty-six years, were valued at hundreds of thousands. All had been accomplished, too, while he lived the life of a truly noble man. No one could recall an act of his by which another had been aggrieved or oppressed. No orphan's tear flowed because of his treachery, no widow's hands were upheld to call down judgment upon him; and far and near throughout the State he was cited as that "noblest work of God—an honest man."

While apparently enjoying her usual good health, Mrs. Hawthorne had been seized with what was at first supposed to be an ordinary chill, but growing rapidly worse, upon medical aid being summoned, it was pronounced to be of a congestive character.

The case proved to be stubborn; for one chill succeeded another with rapidity, and after the fatal third she sunk into a state of insensibility, and now lay faintly breathing away her few remaining moments of life.

Choked by the mighty grief that swelled within him, Judge Hawthorne had left her room to give it vent in solitude, and to nerve himself with strength and composure, to support her through her last great trial.

It came. When the next day's sun pressed its crimson lips on the cool bosom of the Coosa, all that was immortal of Mrs. Hawthorne had taken its heavenward flight; and when the second day's shades closed in, her mortal part had been consigned to its mother earth.

Then, indeed, was the husband desolate; and as he sat alone, again in his library, the consciousness of the completeness of his bereavement gathered new force. His only child, a daughter, how without a mother's holy aid to raise her?

And then, too, a female ward, the child of his old friend Noble, who, when he felt himself near life's boundary, had summoned him, and conjured him by all the memories of their disinterested youthful love, to extend over her his protection; how could he rear her so as to answer the inquiring spirit of the father hereafter?

With his wife's cooperation all had seemed easy, but now?

The misfortunes of Judge Hawthorne, as has occurred from time immemorial, did not come as "single spies," for before the tender grass had sprung upon the fresh-made mound that buried so many of his hopes, a letter came from Greenwood Hall, an institution of learning near Philadelphia, to which he had carried the two little girls but three short months before, bearing the fatal tidings that among the numerous victims to an epidemic of scarlet fever which had broken out in the establishment, his daughter was one, and that his ward was then but slowly convalescing.

It seemed, then, that there was nothing more to live for, and notwithstanding that he put the thought away with horror, the question would rise, why she, on whose head was garnered so much love, should have been taken, and the little orphaned one, for whom no tear would have been shed, no sigh heaved, save of kindly regret, should have been spared?

Judge Hawthorne was but a man, though too noble and too thoroughly imbued with the pure spirit of christianity, to give a thought which come alone from the promptings of weak humanity—a moment's home.

Death is irrevocable, and so, ere long, one white tablet told how Rose, aged thirty and Rose, aged ten, wife and daughter of Clarence Hawthorne, lay sleeping their last sleep.

When the first benumbing shock of utter woe commenced to pass away, Judge Hawthorne resumed his usual routine of life; but, day after day, he found the home on which had been lavished so much of care and taste, becoming more distasteful to him.

The hands of slaves were not like wifely hands, and their ministrations, however mingled with love and veneration, could never supply those of her who was, lost; so the result of it was, he determined to leave the beautiful home, to travel, to make himself a wanderer, until the yearnings of his heart bade him return.

The management of his plantation was easily arranged. He had an overseer in whom he reposed every confidence, and his nearest neighbor and particular friend, Mr. Heywood, would supervise, give all the instructions, and render all the assistance necessary.

His lawyer would attend to his money affairs, and all that remained to be thought of was his sacred charge, the orphan May Noble. She was a little thing of thirteen years, so childish in face and manners as to appear even younger, shy, but withal graceful and arch, and intellectually of much promise.

After many days of grave and prayerful deliberation, Judge Hawthorne arrived at the conclusion that he could do nothing better than leave her under the care of the estimable ladies who presided over Greenwood Hall, until the prescribed course of studies had been accomplished, and she had graduated.

He wrote to her and to her teachers to that effect, enjoined that no pains or tenderness should be spared in her rearing, informed them where their money could be obtained as it fell due, and with his affairs thus arranged, was soon away from the scene of his great sorrow, and shortly borne on the heaving waves of the mighty ocean to the shores of Europe.

CHAPTER II.

The end of five years found Judge Hawthorne still a wanderer. The time that had seemed so long when looked forward to, had glided imperceptibly to the past.

It had dealt gently with him in its stilly flight. The beginning of it had found him alternating between a rebellious questioning of Divine will, and utter indifference to life and its duties. Eventually, sincere appeals for Divine aid had brought unquestioning faith, and necessarily perfect resignation.

A tender sorrow that must be life-long, still remained with him, but while straying among the sublimest works of the great Creator, he had felt himself elevated and strengthened, and while examining all that was marvelous in art and science, he awoke once more to the sense that man does not live for himself alone.

In appearance he was scarcely changed. The hopeful, anticipative glance was probably not so bright as of yore in his eyes, and around his expressive mouth there lingered lines of seriousness unknown to his earlier days. But his fine figure was as erect, his carriage as dignified and pleasing, and the profusion of his dark brown locks were unprofaned by the presence of a single thread of white.

He had wandered far and wide, and had added rich treasures to his previously well-stored mind. From Norway to Greece, every kingdom of the Eastern continent was familiar to his footsteps, and in every principality from Ireland to Russia, he had made himself temporary homes. He had traveled far into the East, visited some of the kingdoms of Africa, and was but now returned to Paris to replenish his purse and mark out the route of renewed journeyings.

His only correspondence at home had been with Mr. Heywood, and that not of very frequent occurrence; so that, after months of ignorance, it was with real anxiety he sought for letters.

One awaited him from Mr. Heywood and one from Greenwood Hall. The latter announced the fact that Miss Noble had completed her studies and graduated in the most satisfactory manner, and that in the absence of any instructions from him the principal of that institution wrote to be advised of his further duties with regard to her. Enclosed was a little note from the young lady herself, expressing gratitude for the advantages he had afforded her for obtaining a good education, and requesting that he would intimate to her his wishes as to her future arrangements.

Judge Hawthorne thought the chirography of the note very graceful, and the phraseology unusually elegant, and in being told that the writer had completed her course at school, was for the first time forcibly reminded of the immense extent of time he had passed abroad. He did not, however, have a very realizing sense of the change those five years might have effected in his ward; and associating her as he did with his dead child, who had never grown to him, he thought of her as a child still, and murmured pityingly, "Poor little one, forlorn and desolate."

Then he fell to musing, and then the thought came as to whether he was not neglecting a sacred charge, and then came the long-waited-for yearning for home, the desire to go back and take up the burden of his responsibilities where he had laid them down, and in it he found that the heart so grievously torn was healed, the energies so paralyzed were restored to new strength, and life again had charms.

Emerging from his meditations, he immediately dispatched a letter to Mr. Heywood, who, as it was now the fall of the year, he know would be returning from his annual trip North, requesting him to make it convenient to stop in Philadelphia, and take his little ward, May Noble, under his protection, and carry her South with his family. That, when arrived at home, he would please be kind enough to see their old neighbor, Widow Goodall, and ask of her the favor to permit one of her daughters (Miss Polly he would prefer) to take charge of May, and preside over the household until his return, which would probably take place in about two months. Furthermore, to tell the overseer to attend to all their requests, and be careful that they were provided for and made comfortable in every respect.

Judge Hawthorne then wrote two short letters, addressed respectively to the Principal of Greenwood Hall and Miss May Noble, informing them that his friend, Mr. Heywood, would be in Philadelphia, he could not say exactly at what date, but probably soon after the receipt of those letters, and that Mr. Heywood would conduct May to her home.

CHAPTER III.

By the middle of the next month Judge Hawthorne was embarked homeward bound. Two weeks later saw him in New York, and the week following in Montgomery.

It was his fancy to arrive at home without any more definite announcement as to the time of his coming; so taking lodgings at a hotel for one night, he proceeded the next morning, in a hired conveyance, to traverse the comparatively few miles that intervened between himself and his destination.

The feelings which now animated him, marked how entire the change was that had come over his spirit. The last time this route had been passed he had sat with closed blinds, hopeless and despondent; now in an open vehicle, his eager gaze wandered from side to side of the familiar road, finding in each tree a landmark, and in every hill an old friend.

It occurred somewhat strangely, that through the entire day's travel he met no one from his immediate neighborhood, and it was only when the sun had sunk low in the west, and the road had entered upon his own possessions, that far down the lane formed by the substantial fences on either side he perceived two persons on horseback. As he drew nearer he found them to be male and female, and he scanned them as closely as the distance would permit, to see if they might chance to be acquaintances. There was nothing, however, in their air or appearance familiar to him. He noticed that the gentleman rode a very fine horse, and silently admired the round, graceful figure and easy seat of the lady. Just then, as if it were the result of some banter, they dashed forward at a run, and cleared almost simultaneously the wide, low bars which here stretched across the road, to prevent the predatory incursions of wandering stock.

A musical laugh, silvery clear, floated back on the evening air, and Judge Hawthorne, with what he thought to himself was almost childish interest, followed the two equestrians with his eyes, until he saw them in the distance, riding at an easy canter, disappear in a piece of woodland there left standing for future purposes of fire-wood, and through which he remembered there formerly ran a bridle path, much used as a short cut by his negroes, forking and leading in one direction to his own house, and in another to Mr. Heywood's. He wondered to himself if a new family had moved into the neighborhood; but as his now rapid approach to the home from which he had been so long absent was constantly bringing in sight some object made sacred by tender recollections, his mind was soon distracted from the subject.

It seemed as if the very hour of his arrival had been anticipated, for no sooner had the yard dog given his bark of warning, than out came trooping negroes, old and young, of every size and hue, all uttering the glad ejaculation, "Master's come, master's come," with shrill cries of joy, and happy welcomes home.

At the steps came bustling forth Miss Polly, sweet and savory in her well-preserved fifty-five years of maidenhood, as a useful and fragrant garden herb. As she welcomed the Judge with tears in her dear old eyes, she flew around most assiduously, relieving him of his hat and gloves and overcoat, saying over and over, "Dear me, who'd have thought it?" just as though the event had not been the sole subject of her anticipations for one whole month.

"Dear me, who'd have thought it? Cherry, Sally, Amy—come in Judge—Cherry, run quick and light a fire in your master's room and the library. And great sakes, just when May happens to be out. Sally, take some hot water up stairs, your master will want to refresh himself with a change of clothes before supper. Amy (in a stage aside), you streak it and tell Hetty to make some waffles—and, stop—tell her to put plenty of rice in them, and have them swimming in butter. Dear me, who'd have thought it? But I'm mighty proud," said the kind old lady, "to give you the happy welcome home, Judge. Have you had a pleasant trip?"

In somewhat of a dilemma, when looking back over a space of five years, how to answer so concise a question, Judge Hawthorne, with smiling gravity, said, "Yes, Miss Polly, upon the whole, a very pleasant, and, I believe, a very beneficial one. I think I will act upon your suggestion, and go up to my room. Be so kind as to bid them bring my baggage, and I will be with you again in a few minutes."

"Where did you say May was?" he asked, turning round.

"Out riding with Mr. Livingston."

"Mr. Livingston?" he answered, interrogatively.

"Yes; don't you remember Mr. Heywood's nephew, Alfred Livingston? He used to play with your little girls years ago. He's done graduated at Yale, and came home with his uncle when May did. He's growed up to be a mighty likely young man."

"Ah," uttered Judge Hawthorne, which reply was so entirely non-committal that it was impossible to tell what it was intended to express, but he resumed his ascent without pursuing the conversation further.

When he descended to the dining room, he found it all aglow in the brilliant blaze of a pine fire, and the snowy damask and the rich table service glittering in the flooding lamp-light. Miss Polly was bustling around with her hand-maids, putting the finishing touches to its appointments; and, standing gazing tranquilly into the fire, was May, who had returned in the interval, removed her riding habit, and was now waiting the entrance of her guardian.

Judge Hawthorne entered quickly, intending to make her feel how entirely he claimed her as a daughter, by giving her a father's tender embrace and kiss, but the idea must have been suddenly abandoned, for when she turned to him smiling and self-possessed, he only took the little white hand that was extended, in his own, and then, as if that was too cold a greeting, pressed it to his lips.

When the words came with silvery clearness, "Judge Hawthorne, I feel the deepest pleasure in welcoming you home. Your arrival has been awaited by every member of the family with interest, but above all by myself, who have so much to thank you for." He knew the speaker one, with the equestrienne whose mirthful notes had fallen so pleasantly on his ear.

"Your welcome is most sweet, May." He would not say Miss Noble, although her little duchess-like air almost commanded it. "But do not speak a word of thanks. You have a right to reproach me rather, for having failed in personal supervision over your rearing. You have grown entirely away from my memory."

"You doubtless find me much changed."

"Come, come to supper," here broke in Miss Polly, "while the waffles are hot."

It was a part of her religious creed to have the kitchen, over which she presided, excel in the production of that dainty article of fare, and she was duly exercised in mind, if they were not partaken of in their first crispness and tenderness.

As they gathered round the table, Judge Hawthorne had his attention attracted to May's silent endeavor to motion Miss Polly to the seat at the tea-tray, by the latter saying quite aloud, "Oh, dear, no, honey, keep your seat, it's just as comfortable here, and I want to eat these waffles—besides, you ought to become accustomed to it."

"Pray do not let my presence interfere with any of your domestic arrangements," said Judge Hawthorne, in a matter-of-fact manner, affecting to busy himself with the thin slices of ruby-colored ham before him, and yet evidently realizing a sense of pleasure, as May's face beamed upon him across the table when he asked permission to serve her from the dish before him.

As the meal progressed he took occasion to examine her more closely, and he arrived at the conclusion, that it would be difficult to find any one more lovely.

Without being regularly beautiful, her face was irresistibly charming.

With a complexion of singular fairness, tinged with a brilliant color, eyes of the deepest blue, dewy, crimson lips closing over little pearl-like teeth, a wealth of glossy, black, tendril-like curls, that wilfully refused to remain pressed behind her tiny sea-shell ears, and lashes and brows that dashed the otherwise saucy expression of her face with a shade of pensiveness, she could afford to dispense with a classic perfection of outline.

Her dress, too, was entirely becoming.

It was of grey silk, trimmed with a rich and delicate lace, relieved with bows of ribbon of a true rose color.

Altogether, Judge Hawthorne thought he had never seen any one with a more high-bred or more sweetly-feminine air, and as the flow of her conversation bubbled forth in a joyous stream, or as she listened with a deeper shade in her eyes, or else with dimpling smiles around her mouth, or pealed out a laugh like the chiming of silver bells, the lights shone more brightly, the fire burned more cheerily, the flowers that crowned every vase sent forth fresher odors, and home seemed doubly home with her present.

The meal finished and the table cleared, they lingered around its charmed circle, questioning and answering, giving the incidents and experiences of five years.

Miss Polly, now that the waffles were satisfactorily disposed of, was a pleased and attentive listener, though with the unceasing industry acquired in the habit of a lifetime, she plied unremittingly the knitting-needles, from which depended the half-developed leg of a substantial yarn stocking. Who were all the stockings Miss Polly knit, was a subject for wonderment, though doubtless they made comfortable the feet of many poverty-stricken or shiftless owners in the country round about through the cold of winter.

When conversation failed, music naturally followed.

May's selection of pieces and songs, and style of rendering them, were characteristic; arch, but with an occasional strain and touch of deeper meaning, which told of the earnest soul and true sentiment that lay in their depth.

Judge Hawthorne, no mean performer himself on several instruments, listened delighted, and as the cadences swelled and sunk, and swelled again, his soul in sympathetic harmony revelled in a bliss unknown for many a long year—a bliss that left its warmth in his heart through the darkness of the night, a bliss that fell as balm upon his brain, and made the pillow on which his head reposed more downy and sleep-inviting than any that ever couched a kingly head.

CHAPTER IV.

With what was for him a somewhat unusual suggestion of laziness, Judge Hawthorne did not the next morning descend to the breakfast table, but took that meal in his own room.

Then crossing the hall to his library, he had an interview with his overseer, read letters from his lawyer, looked over some accounts, and finally passed several hours in conversation with Mr. Heywood, who had come over to congratulate him on his return.

It was only when the latter, who pleaded business as an excuse for not remaining to dinner, took his leave, that Judge Hawthorne went down.

On returning from the front gate, whither he had accompanied his friend, he found Miss Polly in the dining-room, but so busied preparing luncheon, that she apologetically suggested that she believed "May was in the sitting-room."

This sitting-room was the most delightful apartment of the house. It occupied the lower story of the octagon wing in which the Judge's library was situated. The windows to the floor, opened on a wide verandahed balcony, at either end of which were steps leading into a narrow strip of flower garden, here seperated only by a low, white fence from the beautiful expanse that sloped with a gentle descent to the banks of the river.

In it was assembled everything for comfort, everything that was homelike and beautiful, but nothing for show or ostentation.

Judge Hawthorne, advancing slowly, his foot-fall was lost in the thick carpet, and his presence at the door was not perceived by the occupants of the room.

The sash of the east window was lifted, the blinds thrown open, and the soft breeze playfully dallied with its white drapery.

May, in a simple fresh tinted morning dress, was seated at a table drawn close up to the window, intently occupied.

By her was a young man whom Judge Hawthorne recognized as her attendant of the previous evening, and whom, consequently, he knew must be Alfred Livingston.

He was bent over her, until his fair locks almost mingled with May's raven ringlets, and as Judge Hawthorne looked, conviction struck him like a pang, that Alfred loved her.

The familiarity of his position, too, made it seem probable that the love was already sanctioned, for he sat with one arm carelessly passed across the back of May's chair, the other elbow resting on the table, while he pretendedly directed and assisted her in placing a rare specimen of moss he had that morning brought her, in an herbarium, but in reality took advantage of his proximity to study the wanderings of a blue vein that meandered over her white temple and downcast lid.

The few words that passed between them were so low as to be inaudible at that distance, and Judge Hawthorne paused a moment, irresolute whether to enter or turn away, but finally advanced quite to the center of the room, before the "Good morning" was spoken which attracted their attention. Then both started; but although a bright flush sprung to May's face, she was perfectly composed, and gave her salutations with a warmth that might have satisfied the most exacting father, yet from some unassignable cause, they failed to give the pleasure to Judge Hawthorne that might have been anticipated.

Possibly to the same cause might have been traced the fact, that whereas his manner was generally courteous and conciliating in the extreme, his acknowledgment of the introduction of Mr. Livingston was coldly polite, and his recollection of the boyish freedom of Alfred's visits, when reminded of them, apparently slight.

Altogether, he was so different from the Judge Hawthorne of the night before, that May turned on him a wondering and somewhat troubled look, and as all her buoyancy of spirits, and unaffected efforts to restore the mental atmosphere to its usual temperature were unavailing, she was really glad when Alfred, with a touch of hauteur, rose and took his leave; though, for fear he might feel real offence, she followed him to the front door, to tell him she would stand in need of his services as cavalier for a ride on the following day.

Alfred was a peculiar type of manly beauty. His features were of the purest aquiline. Hair almost womanly in its profusion, of unadulterated golden color; complexion perfect blonde, entirely suffused with a flush of pink, which did not at all amount to florid; eyes keen and penetrating, of light blue; a figure tall and erect, and a carriage lithe, graceful and dignified. Add to this a well-balanced mind, a heart the home of every noble impulse, and a temperament ardent and enthusiastic, and it would not be wonderful if he had found the way to make May love him, when to his present fascinations were joined the memory of happy, childish associations.

As he took May's hand in the good-bye clasp, he looked into her eyes with an earnest, inquiring gaze, which brought the ready blood to her face, although she did not understand it; and as he turned and walked hastily down to the gate, she followed him with a musing and, if the truth must be confessed, an admiring glance, though, alas for the hopes that he nursed so fondly, in it was mingled no leaven of love.

In the meanwhile, and even while indulging it, Judge Hawthorne had bitterly reproached himself for his uncalled-for coldness; and as he passed out on the verandahed balcony in self-communing, he wondered what could have made him so weak as to yield to a selfish impulse that probably wounded one of whom he knew nothing but what was good. He resolved there should be no recurrence of it; and under the influence of this determination, his manner was so changed when May entered, after Miss Polly's summons to luncheon, that she was more puzzled than ever at the sudden transition.

The day passed happily away, though Judge Hawthorne did not come out from his gravity and reticence as he had the night before. There was music again, but this time it did not lapse his soul in inarticulate and entrancing bliss; and when his head rested again on his pillow, it was not to be overwhelmed by billows of rose-tinted sleep, but to lie awake many hours trying to investigate the direction in which he had commenced so suddenly and blindly to drift, and sternly resolving that no wave of circumstance should have power to carry him to what must ultimately prove disappointment and destruction of the peace which had been secured at the value of the five best years of his life.

He thought to himself that May was young, intelligent and lovely, and it was reasonable to suppose would have many suitors; that Alfred Livingston was manly in person and fascinating in address, and that what was more natural than that they should be mutually attracted, what more desirable than that they should marry, and that nothing was more certain than that May should be dowered as his own daughter.

From this time Alfred Livingston had no cause to complain of his reception at River Home, but afterwards it came to pass, as months rolled away, that May shed some secret and bitter tears, as she felt how perseveringly Judge Hawthorne, even in the midst of his untiring kindness, shrunk away from, or coldly met every demonstration of the love and gratitude and tenderness she felt for him.

CHAPTER V.

The winter glided quickly, and it seemed happily and tranquilly away.

Judge Hawthorne had made arrangements for Miss Polly to remain with them through the year.

Alfred Livingston came and went a privileged visitor.

All the families within a range of twelve or fifteen miles called to see the two absentees, so that with receiving and returning visits, reading, writing and riding, and fulfilling the demands of domestic duties, May and the Judge found ample occupation for every moment of time.

When the spring opened, the marriage of a young couple gave rise to a festive spirit, which made one party follow another in rapid succession.

At all of them the guardian and his ward were honored guests, but it was only to the first that Judge Hawthorne permitted himself the pleasure of acting as May's escort; after that, the privilege was yielded to Alfred Livingston. And think you there was no sacrifice in this? Yes, an earnest and entire one.

Living in daily intercourse with May, a constant beholder of her witching beauty, a constant admirer of her persevering efforts to solve the holier purposes of existence and live accordingly, a constant recipient of her gratitude and gentle attentions, Judge Hawthorne had expostulated and reasoned, and sneered at himself in vain; he had battled against it, he had scorned it, he had dwelt on its utter hopelessness, yet deep in his heart lay a love for her, as ardent as had been that of his youth.

Once convinced of its existence, his next care was to hoard it close, so that no pang should come to May through her knowledge of it, and inability to return it. His every thought and prayer was to gather strength to act in such a manner as that no blight or mildew should ever, through him, canker the opening flower of her life happiness; and his every desire was to be granted daily fortitude to witness the interchanges, and to shape to fruition, the love-dreams which he believed mutual to herself and Alfred.

Sincere as was his struggle, it made him more fitful and variable than ever in his life before.

Sometimes he felt that he would dare and do all to secure her to himself; he would put an end to Alfred's visits, he would forbid their familiar intercourse, he would bear May to distant climes; sometimes he thought he would throw himself upon her gratitude, paint his desolate life, and tell her she had power to make it bloom with a spring-time freshness; and yet, from each and every temptation he emerged with the renewed purpose to let his love lie an unknown sacrifice at her feet if but over it, she might step to a security of bliss.

Finding a necessity for continued and active occupation, after long years of entire withdrawal from them, Judge Hawthorne commenced, once more, to interest and busy himself with the politics and affairs of the county.

He was welcomed cordially on all sides, and in a short time received a nomination, which he was urged to accept, for the legislature. Thinking to find new distraction in the canvass, and subsequent duties of the position, if elected, he signified his consent, and thereafter, was plunged in preliminary efforts to carry to the goal of his success entire party ticket, but even then, unfortunately, could not exclude the heart-grief that had prompted him to this new phase of life.

In the meantime, how was it with May? She still made the sunshine of the house, and waked the smiles and blessings of all the inhabitants of River Home Plantation, from Miss Polly to the decrepid old "Mammie," who drew her chair out each day to the center of the "quarter yard," and there sat, dividing her time between quarreling with the congregation of little darkies, most of whom were her own descendants, or telling marvelous stories of the past.

For the first time admitted to the festive world, May had acknowledged the charms of society, and with her keen appreciation for the luxurious and beautiful, had found in the lights, the music, the flowers, the swell and hum of conversation, the soft crush of satin and lace, the graceful undulations of the dance, and the expressive language of admiration that fell on her from manly eyes, a species of temporary intoxication.

She met at every turn incense and adulation, and in the knowledge that gradually came to her, of what it all signified, she grew to understand the secret spring of Alfred Livingston's devotion.

When the light first dawned upon her, she blushed that her vanity should have suggested such a thought, but when she saw how he constantly hovered round her in a state of happy unrest, with what a trembling and yet tender pressure her hand was detained in his, at the meeting and parting clasp, how earnestly he would strive to read in her eyes what might be buried in her heart, she knew that involuntarily she held his fate at her disposal. She knew it, and sighed. Sighed that the gift of a love and a heart, so pure and noble, could not receive an interchange of like value; and then wondered why it could not be, and in wondering, shrunk away with shame and affright at what she found hid in her own breast.

After that her lips were less frequently wreathed with a smile, her step lacked somewhat of its springy lightness, and her eyes took a darker shade and a deeper meaning in their blue depths, though if in it her girlish gayety seemed to wane, it was more than compensated for by the womanly sweetness and dignity of her bearing.

She assumed to herself more domestic duties, and marked out a useful course of reading, and in these occupations found an excuse for less frequently permitting the long and pleasant hours of almost uninterrupted meeting between herself and Alfred.

She would not pain him by affecting a coldness she did not feel, but she strove by every means in her power to make him understand that her sentiments for him were only of tenderest friendship and sisterly love. Alfred, with a lover's quick apprehension, was not slow to perceive it, and whereas he had been hovering on the brink of declaring to her his love, he now hesitated to put his "fate to the touch," because of the prescience that he should "lose it all."

Judge Hawthorne, too, realized that a change of some some kind had come to May, and to him also it brought an excess of woe.

Notwithstanding his apparent lack of appreciation and acceptance of the attentions and girlish caresses, which in the intimacy of their home, and her position as daughter of the house she had learned to give him, she had up to this time persevered in bestowing them, but now there were no more restings of dimpled elbows on the back of his chair, or passings of white hands over his brown hair, as she poured out a flood of gay and laughter-mingled talk, no more familiar and unasked chaperingings of his arm as he walked the long gallery, and questionings and railleries, and tender efforts to withdraw him from what seemed a silent sorrow; and often, as he had framed the wish, after he had thrilled almost to madness under their influence, that she would refrain from them, he found in their absence they had, after all, been to him a source of painful pleasure.

He attributed that and the tempered flow of May's spirits to some shadow that had fallen on her's and Alfred's love, but as neither had ever reposed their confidence in him, he did not feel that he could force himself into their council.

And so matters stood.

When the election came off in the fall, Judge Hawthorne was triumphant by an almost unanimous vote; and when the Legislature convened at Montgomery, in the winter, he transferred his ward and her companion, Miss Polly, from the quiet of their country house to an elegant suit of apartments in the Exchange Hotel.

The season was one of unusual gaiety. Theatrical entertainments, public balls, concerts, receptions and private parties followed in a nightly stream, and as besides his talents and preeminently fine looks Judge Hawthorne had the still further value of having under his fatherly care the acknowledged beauty and belle of the fashionable world, and was also considered a most desirable and unexceptionable match for any fair lady who could bind him in her silken meshes, they were feteted and fêted, and sought, until incense and flattery grew tiresome from constant repetition.

On the whole, their absence from the peaceful tranquility of River Home, where the deeper emotions of the soul had uninterrupted sway, was a relief to all, and the high-toned hospitality and festive whirl of the gay population of Montgomery, (which fair city sits upon her hills with the grace of a young queen,) served to withdraw them from too entire absorption in their own trouble.

In the midst of it all, though, Judge Hawthorne and May found confirmation of the belief that had lain hid in their separate hearts for so many months, that each had met in the other a destiny.

When May saw her guardian rise in the Council Chamber of the State, so dignified and handsome in the maturity of his manhood, so earnest and true in his patriotism, and so gifted in the rich flow of his eloquence, however much she might sympathize with the devotion which had held Alfred Livingston her constant attendant through the winter, however she might seem to give her thoughts and smiles to the moustached train that dangled at her bidding, she acknowledged to herself—now almost with exultation—that there stood her hearts's lord.

As she had mingled in the nightly throng, the sought-for in every crowd, the admired and appreciated by old and young, the fascinator of grave and gay, the petted and flattered even of her own sex, and yet withal so unassuming, so gentle and so charitable, so ready to promote the pleasure, the comfort, and the enjoyment of all, Judge Hawthorne garnered up a new harvest of tenderness, and felt a keener, subtler thrill, at the bare thought even, of the pride and deep happiness it might be to claim her as a wife.

But for all that they came no nearer together, and the old familiar intercourse was never resumed.

Public attention was somewhat attracted by Alfred Livingston's assiduity, and it finally grew to be a current belief that he and May were betrothed, and the wonderment was often made as to the probable time appointed for their marriage.

The night of the last ball of the season was a time of unusual gaiety. The array of beauty and talent was dazzling and rarely equaled, for there was assembled in one room all that represented the intellect, fashion and wealth of a noble State, and as the full swell of music rose upon the air, and perfumed tresses floated over white shoulders in the dance, and the expressive eyes that said so much in a glance flashed their various messages to and fro, none save a cynic at heart, or one constituted by nature unimpressible as stone, but would have acknowledged the magic of the scene.

May, with her quick, appreciative temperament, excited by the surrounding brilliancy, was unusually animated, and in her splendid dress of glittering white silk, with its flounces and trimmings of rich and costly lace and profusion of drooping, graceful flowers, was dazzlingly fair.

Judge Hawthorne himself seemed to catch youth and ardor from the occasion, for never since his sojourn in Montgomery had he been so entire and impressive in his devotion to female beauty.

There was present a lady of well-known and widely-admired personal charms and talent, the widow of a man distinguished in his State—wealthy, and not at all unwilling to attract and win Judge Hawthorne.

As she that night found him so constantly at her side, her lustrous black eyes flashed with a triumphant glance, and her superb form was proudly lifted to a more stately height, while she used every fascination of voice and mien and intellect to enthrall him more entirely.

As the evening drew to a close, May and Alfred were participating in the last dance, the privilege of which he had claimed, when in one of the pauses, glancing across the room to where they stood in conversation, he said to May, it must be confessed with a somewhat covert design,

"What a splendid looking couple, and what a suitable match, Mrs. Blande and Judge Hawthorne would make."

A jealous suggestion of May's own heart had said the same thing repeatedly during the evening, and when it received confirmation from the observation of another, it struck like a keen knife to the deepest center of her breast; but with womanly pride she lifted her head and said, unhesitatingly—

"Yes."

The triumph of nature, though, was complete; for a second after, Alfred felt her weight increase on his arm, and as he turned to her, but for his supporting clasp she would have sunk insensible to the floor.

Yes, she who never fainted in her strong, healthful life before, was struck down by what seemed to her a death-blow.

Sweet young flower! could she have seen how quickly the syren was abandoned—how unhesitatingly he made his way through the crowd—how he would not even leave her in Alfred's supporting arms, but lifting her as a child, asked way to the door, and bore her to the privacy and fresh air of the dressing-room—could she have seen the speechless tenderness with which he hung over her and pressed back the wealth of ringlets from her white brow—could she have felt that her hand lay in his clasp until the remedies employed caused evidence of returning animation—she would have known that all that remained of love in this world for Clarence Hawthorne was centered in herself.

This she did not see and know, though; and as there were many assignable causes for her sudden indisposition—"the heat of the room," "fatigue," and so forth; and as he, in punishment for having yielded to his sudden and overpowering fears, forced himself to conduct her to the carriage with an appearance of nothing more than ordinary interest and attention, they came no nearer together for the convincing proof that each had had of the existence of an earnest and absorbing love for the other.

The next morning the carriage and baggage-wagon were prepared for the homeward trip, and that night they assembled once more under the sheltering roof of River Home.

CHAPTER VI.

Just at this period the alarm notes were sounded of the Mexican war, and, as too many desolated hearth-stones can yet show, and too many grief-scared hearts can yet testify, the flower and chivalry of our young men eagerly volunteered to fight their country's battles.

Alfred Livingston, with his enthusiastic and impetuous temperament, soon woke to the desire to seek fame in the shadow of the national standard, and flew in haste to place his name on the enrollment list.

The military ardor which lies dormant in our militarian but patriotic breasts, increased to fever heat, and every were was to be found the recruiting officer, everywhere to be heard the inspiriting music of the drum and fife, and many a fair sward was graced with the white tents and paraphernalia of incipient warfare.

The time of departure for the scene of action soon rolled round, and Alfred's regiment, which was to descend the river to Mobile, and there embark for Vera Cruz, was to leave Montgomery in two days.

He had procured leave of absence to say his farewells; and as the spring moon, at its glorious full, lifted itself, large and round, above the horizon's verge, to find its prototype in the blue waters of the Coosa, he stood with May and Judge Hawthorne on the steps at River Home.

After a few minutes conversation relative to his departure, Alfred turned to May and said:

"There is one place I have not visited. The summer-house on the river's side. Put your shawl around you, and come with me to it, I have a fancy to carry a spray of the honey-suckle blooms that cluster on it, as a fragrant memento."

May hesitated; she had seen the fire in his blue eyes, and a purpose fix itself in the lines of his flexible mouth. She cast about her for an excuse, but Judge Hawthorne, after he had once walked the length of the gallery, seconded Alfred's request, by saying in a low tone as he drew near them:

"It is the last time, May, probably for many months, that you will visit it with Alfred for a companion."

"Possibly the last time forever," said Alfred, with deep feeling, and as Judge Hawthorne placed around her the shawl he had stepped into the hall to procure, Alfred drew her hand in his arm, and they went slowly wandering down the broad walk, and finally disappeared in the tangled maze of the shrubbery.

As Judge Hawthorne watched them down the path, and then turned and paced the gallery, he obtained over himself an entire self conquest, and believing, as he did, that Alfred sought the interview alone with May for the purpose of the more explicit arrangement of their engagement and future plans, he prepared himself for the abnegation necessary to give them his consent and approbation.

An hour passed away, and Judge Hawthorne awaited their return, yet still another, and even a third, and the grand old moon had wheeled itself majestically into mid-air, and off in the distant woodland that crept down to the water's edge, there wailed the despairing note of that bird of night and wo, the whip-poor-will, and near was the stilly chirp of the cricket, and the ear-piercing rattle of the locust.

At last, fearful that they might linger so long, indulging the grief of parting, or their joy at the interchange of mutual vows, that May would be made sick by tarrying in the drenching spring dew, he resolved to seek them.

If you might know all that he felt in that walk, and the mobility of nature that remained to him after the struggle with love and self, you would count him a hero, indeed—a victor on a moral battle field.

As he drew near the summer house, instead of hearing the "lovers' tongues," which the immortal bard tells us sound "sweet by night," his ear was met by the unmistakable sound of the outpouring of a passionate, and apparently irrepressible grief, and as he stopped for a second he recognized it to be May.

Filled with concern and solicitude, he entered hastily, and found her upon the rustic seat of the bower, with her head buried in her arms as they rested on its rough back, while sob after sob of convulsive force mingled with her tears.

"May, dear child," he said in his low, tender tones, "why this great grief? Alfred will return covered with laurels. Be br