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[WRITTEN FOR THE JOURNAL.]
OLIVE MARSTON,

OR,
The Country Schoolmarm.

BY LALA A.

CHAPTER FIRST.

In nevermore, there is despair; In fare-thee-well, a dirge-like tone; But agony too hard to bear. Breathes in that mournful word—alone. It tells of broken hearts and throes, Long absent lips, and curdled eyes; Of vanished birds, abandoned nests, And white hands clasped on silent breasts.

Blessed youth! With what longings for its happy thoughtlessness, its cheerful innocence, its ever elastic hope, its confidence in the future, its forgetfulness of the past, its enjoyment of the present, do we look back, when we have passed from the sunny side of the way, and begin to see our shadow lengthening before us. Curly-headed, handsome little Olive Marston, always declared there was never sorrow made for her; she was happy, and she had a right to be. She did not consider, that there are never hills without valleys, that the gilded mountain tops, are the colder and bleaker because they are high; and that the same elevation that is kissed by the sun is cooled by the sharp wind. Olive Marston had not yet seen nineteen years; all through her childhood she had been tenderly reared, but wasting disease had fastened upon her father, and just one year previous to the commencement of our story his sorrowing family had seen the cold earth heaped over his loved remains. The little cottage with its simple furnishings, and a few hundred, was all that was left them, and only by the strictest economy could Mrs. Marston hope to sustain herself and child.

Poor little Olive! Trouble never comes single-handed. Her mother was attacked with a fever from which she never recovered; now indeed was she an orphan; for a time, grief overmastered every other power, and she wept in bitterness of spirit. But Olive was not one to long give way to despair. Although tenderly reared, yet she possessed powers of mind of which she had before known nothing.

Thus it is, while sailing smoothly along the sea of life we exert not ourselves; but when adversity comes, this hidden power is revealed. There are few but possess it, and Olive Marston arose from the grave of her mother with a fixed purpose in her soul, Olive possessed qualifications that fitted her for teaching something beyond the rudiments of a common English education; but now that misfortune was upon her, when most she needed friends and sympathy, she was forgotten, and not one of all her former friends was sufficiently interested to assist the worthy orphan to employment better fitting her delicate organization. Cheerfully she had renounced one after another of the privileges to which she had been accustomed, and now without a murmur, even with a hopeful heart, she resolved to undertake the arduous task of teacher in a public school.

It was one of those changeable, uncomfortable days, when Old Winter seems struggling with newborn Spring; the sun looked down bright and warm, but only at intervals, for the cold north wind was drifting the clouds over the sky. Yet Olive Marston looked at the earth and sky as though she thought them full of beauty and gladness; and when the wind blew most coldly in her face, and the sky was most deeply obscured, a warm smile still rested on her lips, and she seemed to be thinking that the sun was brightly shining, though its rays did not fall on her. It could not be the thoughts which her anticipated meeting with friends suggested, however, which made the young lady look so cheerful, for whenever she looked in that direction big tears rushed suddenly into her eyes, and she would throw a longing, wishful glance back towards the fast receding hills of M—.

The stage coach, after several hours' travelling, ascended the hill which overlooks K—, and the driver informed Olive that in five minutes more it would stop at the Carlton's, her boarding place. The young lady pressed her hand to her heart, and then it touched her forehead, and she almost wished herself back at M— again. But it was now too late to repent, for the vehicle had left the public way, and was now driving up the carriage way to a noble looking edifice. Olive peeped from the window and though her head was dizzy and her heart was beating fast, she could not fail to admire the old fashioned, stately buildings, overshadowed by stately oaks, whose bright foliage was intermingled with the feathery branches of the evergreens; the large garden, nicely arranged, with shrubbery and gravelled walks. But Olive could not look long, for the coachman politely requested her to alight from the carriage, telling her that this was her boarding place, and he pitied her too. Olive jumped from the coach and ran up the broad stone steps to the entrance of the mansion, where an old vinegar-faced woman had made her appearance, with an ugly cur at her side, both of whom regarded the young lady with a fierce and menacing aspect. But Olive seemed not to observe their dislike; she approached the woman with such a smiling countenance and greeted her so cordially, that she received in return what might be called a civil answer; and the dog

not only ceased his growlings, and suffered himself to be caressed, but followed Olive into the room to which the serving woman conducted her, and quietly seated himself by her side.

As Olive glanced around the parlor, a chill ran over her frame, and she drew her shawl more closely around her; not a glimpse of sunlight was allowed to enter the room, for the blinds were always closed, and the high backed chairs were placed by twos at equal distance from each other and fronting each other so exactly, that one might have supposed they were about to do battle each with its partner. The carpet, like everything else visible in the room, except the black chairs was almost white, and made a singular contrast with the dark paper which covered the walls. There was not a book or paper, nor a single painting anywhere to be seen about the room; nothing to suggest a thought but of coldness and rigidity; and the young lady imagined if she did not incite the dog to do some mischief, or run about the room herself, upsetting chairs and tables, she might soon become an icicle herself, and thinking what would be the consternation of the housekeeper at these freaks, Olive burst into a fit of very loud and merry laughter, just as the door opened and admitted into the parlor a very tall and stately lady, followed by a gentleman not altogether so dignified in appearance as his companion, but sufficiently so it seemed, to check Olive's mirth. The gentleman easily comprehended from her words that she was the teacher of their school, and welcomed her cordially; but his sister returned her salutation only with a stiff bow, remained standing near the entrance of the room, as if undetermined whether to retire herself, or request her visitor to do so; but resolved, it would seem by her eager glances, to know her both by her features and dress, if she should chance to see her again; and Olive, too, though she did it more furtively, managed in a brief space to become pretty well acquainted with the exterior of her new friends.

The lady, we have said, was tall and also although "forty," she was "fat and fair," though the scornful expression of her mouth and the sternness she managed to exhibit in have designed should be gentle, detracted much from her beauty. Her brown hair, yet unmixt with gray, was unbecomingly arranged, being drawn back so as to reveal the whole of her very high and broad forehead, and though fashion wore the ladies' tresses into close braids and fastened them very low in the neck with pins, Miss Agnes' hair sat like a crown on the very summit of her head, and was fastened there by a large tortoise shell comb; notwithstanding the coldness of the season, the lady was dressed in white muslin, which was of the finest quality and richly trimmed with a great quantity of lace, with slippers and scarf of rich pearl colored satin; and Olive in thinking, as she stood there in that cold and darkened room, what an admirable figure Miss Agnes would make in a tableau, could hardly suppress another burst of laughter. But the brother, Mr. George Carlton, was hardly distinguished enough in his personal appearance to her inspection, unless it was in the character of a very idle and indifferent spectator; though he had many points indispensable to a good figure. He seemed to be very good natured and benevolent, yet nothing was more evident than that he expected no one to interfere with his wishes, or question his right to self-gratification. He had sauntered into the room and thrown himself upon the sofa, where he lay almost at full length, making the most common-place remarks to Olive, and appearing not in the least surprised at the conduct of his sister.

Miss Agnes, in a cold, commanding tone, requested Olive to lay aside her bonnet and shawl, and spend the night with them. Though the request sounded more like a command to quit the house, and make the most of her time before nightfall in "finding a shelter, Olive readily accepted the invitation, and began to make herself so much at home that Agnes seemed half inclined to recall it. She drew aside the curtain which shaded the open window, threw back the blind, and then dropped the sash, declaring that she was very cold, and looking around the room as though she expected to see a fire.

"Come Betty," said Mr. Carlton, "send us in a handful of coals, and then get us some supper."

Betty's countenance softened, and the order was executed with alacrity. The fire was soon blazing up cheerfully on the hearth, but none of the company except Olive seemed to feel its influence, and she could only manifest her increased comfort by playing with the dog which still kept near her.

CHAPTER SECOND.

Beside an unfrequented road, The rustic school-house stood, Its modest front and moss-grown roof, Half hidden by the wood. Around its latticed windows cling Sweet flowers, and fragrant vines, And just in front, like sentinels, Grow two protecting pines.

Just as the glorious sun was ushering in a bright spring morning, Olive hastened forth to view the surrounding scenery—Grove, hill and valley lay all around her in quiet beauty, with here and there a white-washed cottage or an old farmhouse. The

air was laden with fragrance, and the woods were vocal with the sweet songs of birds.—In her rambles she soon discovered the schoolhouse. Though rude and timeworn, she was charmed with its appearance. The shining oak and maple waved their bright branches around her, and the liquid waters of a little brook, with its low, soft murmurings, soothed her ear. She seated herself on the large flat stone step at the door. Engrossed in her own reflections, she did not chance to see an old farmer as he passed that way with his cattle.

"Well, mother," said the old man to his wife, as he entered the house, "I spose I've seen our new schoolmarm; and if it ain't the greatest imposition I ever see. Why, instead of a great strapping woman, they have sent us a baby. Pretty as a pink, to be sure; but what can she do with all these great boys? There's Jake," he continued, turning to their hired boy, "turned out of school last winter, and I have promised his father he shall go this term. It won't be the least use on earth to send him, and I shan't be surprised one bit if they put her out door before the week's up. We shall have a broken school, that's for sartin. Remind you, Jake, do you behave yourself," said he, sternly. "If the schoolmarm aint good for nothing, its no excuse for you."

"Jake was a noble formed and dark eyed boy, but his uncombed hair betrayed his negligence, and though his face was somewhat smutty, it was not wanting in intelligence.

"Hallo there, Lo Bixby," cried he, "have you seen our new schoolmarm?"

"No; I ain't, have you?"

"No; but old Speedwell has, and he says she is nothing but a baby; that we shall put her out doors before the week is up, and have a broken school."

"Is that a fact Jake?"

"Ha! 'tain't nothing else;" and off they went, swinging their hats and shouting, "Now we're the boys for fun."

Long before the hour for school, every boy in the neighborhood had been made acquainted with what farmer Speedwell had said, and many a mischievous plot had been laid by the rude urchins.

Olive's heart sank within her at sound of their boisterous mirth as they neared the schoolhouse; but she knew nothing of what had occurred, and it was well she did so. With all her delicacy and gentleness she possessed a keen vision, and a sound mind and strength of resolution seldom equalled by her sex. With the dignity of a matron she stepped to the platform and rang her little bell, and instantly the door was burst open and Lo Bixby was pushed in with such violence as to prostrate him on the floor, and immediately after some half dozen others following over him.

"Good morning, young gentlemen," said Olive, in her sweetest tone. "I am very glad to see you, but sorry for the accident, and hope none of you are hurt."

At sound of her gentle, musical voice, each boy rose, and taking off their hats stood looking at her.

"Then none of you have received injury, it seem," said she; "and will you be kind enough to leave your hats in the entry?"

The boys, without venturing a look at each other, did as they were desired, and then quietly seated themselves.

"And now young gentlemen," continued Olive with the greatest deference, "you are strangers to me, yet I have a favor to ask of you, which is, that you will assist me in my endeavor to maintain order in school. I did not anticipate the pleasure of meeting those of your ages here, and I expected some trouble with the little ones; but with your assistance, I think we shall succeed in being very happy here, and our happiness as well as progress depend upon our maintaining order here. I will pledge myself to do all that lies in my power to prevent the younger ones from disturbing you in your studies, and I read in your intelligent faces that you will do all you can to oblige me."

"While reading a portion of Scripture, no sound could be heard save her own impressive voice, whose tones seemed to subdue all hearts. She, however, observed that the boys, ever and anon, cast uneasy glances at each other, and then in the direction of the door. She was not long in doubt as to the cause, for soon a tall, spare-looking boy, whose eyes, though light, bespoke both mirth and mischief, walked into the room closely followed by a large watchdog. On his head he wore a paper cap, with one peacock feather towering from the top. His hair was combed straight down to his brows; the legs of his trousers were crowded into his boots, and his hands were thrust deep in his pockets. The girls and younger boys could not refrain a merry laugh at his ludicrous appearance.

Simon Spalding, for that was his name, looked at his fellows, but they did not greet him as he expected, while some faces were pale and other were flushed with mortification. A pleasant smile played around Olive's mouth, and when the noise had abated she quietly said:

"Young friend?"

"What," drawled Simon.

"I am very sorry you are late," said Olive, apparently heedless of his reply and appearance. You will however soon learn our regulations. The other young gentlemen have left their hats in the entry, and

you will please do the same. Simon hesitated but a moment, and then with a low whistle for his dog, he left the room in a very different manner from the one in which he entered.

"Aha!" said Lo Bixby to his companions, as they were returning from school, "what do you think now of our baby schoolmarm?"

"She ain't bigger than a doll," replied one, and I'll lick her yet."

"What's that?" said Jake, shaking his fist threateningly. "If you touch her I'll make you see stars."

"By gosh! ain't she pretty?" exclaimed another; "but there's Simon, he'll give us some for not being up to our word. I declare I never was so ashamed in my life, and I couldn't laugh to save me."

"Fools! Cowards!" shouted Simon angrily, "is that the way you keep your word? Get me in there in that shape, and then sit there as sober as deacons; you'll be sorry for it, every long-faced hypocrite of you."

"But look here," said Jake, in a soothing tone, "I hope you didn't feel no worse than we did, in a heap on the floor, and she feeling so bad for the accident, and hoping we warn't hurt, and looking so good and pleasant all the time."

"Then you didn't back out of that, too," said Simon, somewhat appeased.

"No! but I tell you what, we wished we could, as much as you did. If she had only taken out a cowhide and threatened to lick us on the spot, we should have tackled her at once as we did Miss Goodnoe; but I tell you what, they ain't a bit alike. And then, Simon, she never will know you again, and she will give you a seat with us young gentlemen," and he placed his thumbs in the sides of his vest, and strutted before them with mock importance.

"Didn't I look funny?" asked Simon, "and did n't I not like a fool, too? But what on earth shall I tell old Goodwell. I know, I'll tell him if she is little, she's spunky, and keeps a first-rate school, for I know he'll be trying to have her turned out; but I declare, I won't go a step if they do."

Soup and water were in great requisition that noon, for the boys looked with dismay upon their dirty hands, so much in contrast with the little delicate ones that had guided theirs in their awkward attempts at holding pens. Clean faces and nicely combed hair was the rage in the afternoon, and Olive could scarcely recognize in the tidy, pleasant looking little fellows before her, the determined rowdies of the morning.

CHAPTER THIRD.

Have faith, have courage, never fear, The promise is in sight; The lamp of Truth is shining clear To banish Error's night. Though trials gather thick and fast, And all the world seem wrong, Onward, still onward, till the last, And in the right be strong.

On the evening of that day all the principal men of the neighborhood were congregated at the store of Simon's father, and many of the boys were there likewise.

"Well, neighbor Goodwell, what's your opinion of our new teacher?" asked Mr. S.

"I ain't no opinion of her at all," replied the old man, striking the floor violently with his cane.

"Nor I."

"Nor I neither," was heard from several voices.

"The boys seem to like her, though," said Mr. S.

"Ha! we don't do nothing else," said Jake, "she is a first-rate schoolmarm."

"That's just it," said Goodwell, looking sternly at the boy; "if she had given you a confounded thrashing, as you deserve, you wouldn't like her so well."

"True, true, neighbor," was heard from several voices.

"And I think if we did have a broken school last winter, that Miss Goodnoe was one right kind of a schoolmarm; but this little Miss whats-her-name ain't nothing at all. Now here's these great rascals been out of school these two winters, because the mistress could n't do nothin' with 'em. But my boy won't go; 'tain't no use now, he won't learn nothin' that's sartin."

And before they separated it was determined that Olive should leave as soon as they could find another mistress.

In the morning a group of anxious looking boys assembled to see what could be done.

"As to going to school to be licked," said Jake, "I won't do it. I made up my mind to that long ago."

"But what can we do?" asked Simon.

"Let's think; I have it, we'll declare we won't go, and stick to it."

Thus one plot after another was tried and abandoned, until Simon exclaimed, exultingly, "Aha! boys, now I have it," and commenced turning surnames, and otherwise exerting himself to free his mind, as he said.

"Come, Simon, what is it?" they all eagerly exclaimed.

"Why," said Simon, "we must make our folks believe the schoolmarm thrashes us terribly, and declare we won't go to school."

"But she won't do it," said little Dick, opening wide his blue eyes.

"To be sure she won't, greeny; we must do that ourselves."

"But who'll bear the marks?" asked one.

"I," said Jake; "I'd rather have both hands blistered, than to lose our pretty little schoolmarm."

"Hurrah! for Jake," shouted the boys, swinging their hats; and sure enough, the boys went home at noon with their hands badly blistered, declaring they would not go to school another day.

"What now," inquired Simon's father, as he extended his blistered hands.

"This is outrageous," cried his mother as she saw here and there a touch of blood, which had been purposely applied.

"Just right," said the father, "and I believe she is a good schoolmarm."

"I won't go another one time; I say I won't," roared Simon.

"Yes you will, if I have to thrash you every step of the way."

"But, husband," interposed the mother, "this is too bad, for you know Simon does not need whipping half as bad as Goodwell's boy."

"Silence, I say; I don't want none of your interference. I know now we've got a good schoolmarm." But Simon was forced to go to school in the afternoon. The scene at Goodwell's had the same happy effect, for Jake had besmeared his nose with blood, and rubbed his dirty hands around his eyes, until he did truly present a pitiful appearance. "I won't stand by and see anybody licked at that rate. I'll come it on the old lady yet, that I will," and he raved like a madman.

"What," said the old man, "do you come here disturbing the peace of my house! If the schoolmarm has thrashed you soundly, I'm glad of it."

"I won't go to school to be licked, now I tell you."

"Yes you will go; if she licks you I've some hope for her;" and poor Jake was carried out of doors and forced to go.

The story of bloody noses and blistered hands spread rapidly, and that evening the same company, boys and all, were assembled at the store.

"Well, neighbor S—, have you sent the letter?" asked Goodwell.

"No, but it goes to-morrow."

"But I was going to say, you had better hold off a little; the examiners say our schoolmarm has a good education, and think she's showed the right stuff to-day, and made these boys toe the mark exactly."

"I won't go to school to her, so there," muttered the boys winking comically at each other from under their slouched hats.

"Do you hear that?" said one; "that sounds like it. I believe we have judged her too hastily; and here they described the manner in which their children were driven to school that afternoon."

During this, the boys were laughing; "But," said one, "don't laugh; there's danger yet." He had been detained from school the whole day. Then he added in a louder tone.

"I'm glad I don't go."

"But you will go, young man, and that to-morrow morning," said his father, threateningly.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

Be kind, if ye are young, and free, as yet, from cares; Remember, ye must walk among unnumbered ills and snares: "The small, sweet courtesies of life" for mortals were designed, To nurture peace, to banish strife; employ them, and be kind.

Olive, in her retired boarding place, heard nothing of all this. Though strife was without, peace reigned within, and she was surely testing the power of moral suasion. She was exerting a sacred influence over the long neglected minds of her pupils, stimulating and encouraging them. Her approach was ever hailed with grateful hearts and smiling faces. The scourge was seldom used, and instead of curses and groans wrung from indignant young hearts, the glad, free songs of childhood were echoed round. And why should it not be so? Why not render pleasant instead of irksome, the many school hours of ever restless childhood. Though prone to evil, the natural impulse of many a young heart is generous and kind. Parents and teachers, beware in your zeal, of blindly crushing these best and highest teachings of nature. But this is a digression, and we will return to our story. "A party in the grove," shouted happy voices, as the children rushed from the schoolroom.

"A party in the grove," reiterated Jake, "And Miss Marston is going; that don't seem much like our other teacher, does it, boys? She called us lazy good-for-nothings, and grown up babies, because we went for a walk in the woods one afternoon. I wonder what she would think of this?"

"Sure enough; and what would she think, to see my wise father, and the Doctor, and more than that, old Goodwell came go limping to the party," said Simon; "for I know my father will go. He likes Miss Marston so well."

"And farmer Goodwell shall go, too," said Jake, "and his wife; poor old folks; they don't take much comfort of life."

The day for the picnic arrived, and a fine day it was. The children, all cleanly dressed, and with bright, laughing faces, were assembled at an early hour. Olive, dressed in pure white, with a single moss rosebud peeping from her wavy brown hair, might

[Continued on last page.]