

the shadows and the silence of the heavens. The vapor was chilling, and we pressed nearer unconsciously. Her little hand rested on the rail, where I might crush it as her violets. Did she sway toward me?

"Gods, little one, how I could love you!" I cried.

"Yes, dear man, that is the pity of it all," she whispered, and her voice was as soft and rich and mournful as that of the evening wind when it stirs the rose-leaves."

"And you dared to ask me to marry you!" Phyllis can sit so erect that I often mean to search her ancestry to learn, for my own satisfaction, if some of those saintly souls were not reformers.

"Yes, dear," I replied gently, "I dared more—I married you. Phyllis," I continued severely, "you asked for the tale, and I gave you warning; but consider—this woman can mean nothing to you."

"You loved her!" Evidently breakers and a hard sand-bar were ahead in our matrimonial sea. I must be cautious.

"Well then, we shall not finish." "Of course, you must now!" said Phyllis in her most emphatic tone.

"I prowled my room's length till morning, railing at luck, at destiny and at human nature. Here was a woman to be worshiped, and who was chained to a cold, phlegmatic husband. Why shouldn't I prove that the age of chivalry had not passed? I would sacrifice myself to her. I would suffer with her. She should know there was a man in the world. Phyllis, I was very young.

"I did not see her, although she had promised to take the trip around the gorge with me, until the next evening at dinner-time. This retirement on her part, while it made me miserable, betokened a modesty that pleased me. She consented to dine at my table, and through the meal she chatted gaily, as though she had not known our Niagara madness. At coffee she complained of a slight headache, and left me with my cigar. Through its rings of smoke I blew excited thoughts of the many plans that I should tell her, as we should lean once again over the precipice. You must remember, Phyllis, that I was not yet out of the 'Lalla Rookh' period. So, my spirits were considerably dampened when, upon reaching the hall after passing down the colored battalion, a porter handed me a note. Its pages exhaled the familiar perfume, which for some reason depressed me.

"I do not feel well enough to walk to-night. Will you come to my sitting-room at nine for a chat?" her letter read.

"Poor little woman! I thought the strangeness and happiness of our meeting had upset her. I threw away my cigar, lighted another, and went outdoors. There I counted the skins of fur in the shop window opposite, and thought how regal she would appear in sables. I paced off the veranda—its width and length. I numbered the red arm-chairs against the wall. Finally, my watch said two minutes of nine. I dashed to my room and examined myself critically in the glass. My hair, always rebelliously curly, angered me—it seemed so boyish. At last I approached her door. It was ajar, and I entered after a gentle tap. She had turned the lights low, so as not to tire her eyes, I suppose, and dressed in a dainty negligé was lounging in a big arm-chair. There was no doubt that she was very beautiful, yet it surprised me to find her so extremely regardless of the conventions.

"We have much to say to-night," she murmured.

"Yes," I stammered, and felt for her hand.

"With a sudden rush she closed the door, turned its key, and then faced me, with that graceful head defiant and her lips compressed. Gods! They say we have two soul-sides—may I never see such a desperate look on a woman's face! My heart pounded! What was the matter? Had she lost her reason? A thought of the possible arrival of

Uncle Abner on Opportunity

By Nixon Waterman

I like the man who's wide-awake and grabs the first good chance That comes along invitin' him his fortune to advance. I want him born with sense enough to take the truth to heart, That they're the likeliest to win who get an early start. But after all, if he should let his first good chance slip by, He mustn't feel that all is lost and just give up and sigh; Well, I guess not! And so I preach from this old-fashioned text: If one good chance gets by, you just brace up and grab the next.

The dreamy poets somewhere in their versifyin' state That Opportunity knocks once at every mortal's gate, And if the gate ain't promptly swung wide open there and then, Why, Opportunity feels huffed and never knocks again. Well, that's the doctrine, seems to me, to preach to them that's slow And sort o' careless and disposed to let their chances go; But notwithstandin' all they say, I'm clingin' to the text: If one good chance gets by you, just lay low and grab the next.

You look about, and everywhere you're pretty sure to see Some weak-kneed men just plumb knocked out by that "one chance" idee.

They missed it at the very start, and all their lives since then They've set around a-tellin' of the things they might have been. I don't believe an all-round man who wants to travel far Will stay at home forever cause he missed the first through car. It ain't the way real men should do, for, 'cordin' to my text, If one good chance gets by you, why, you ought to grab the next.

I say that Opportunity is knockin' at the gate 'Bout all the while! She's far too kind to leave us to our fate. Because you spurned her offer once she doesn't stay away, But every mornin' comes and shouts: "To-day, to-day, to-day!" And here and now she offers you her prizes great and small; Pick out your choice and make it yours! Don't try to win 'em all. But if you fail, why, don't give up, but stick to this old text: Whenever one chance gets away, brace up and grab the next.

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her husband flashed across my mind. "Is anyone else here?" I demanded.

"Young man," and her accents were icy, "as you are aware, I know that you are carrying valuable papers in that left-breast pocket. Kindly lay them on the couch, together with two hundred dollars, or I shall shoot."

"Oh, how terrible!" exclaimed Phyllis. "Why did she act so?" When the note crept into Phyllis' voice, I felt myself a sinner.

But I only said: "Listen, sweetheart, let me finish."

"Don't speak," my adventuress continued. "There is little truth in what I have told you. I am sorry, but I like you—that is the wretched part—but it is business to me, and it is a case of my life as well as yours."

"My tongue clove to my mouth, and my eyes, fascinated, gazed at the new weapon in those flower-like fingers. Was it a pose? She might be an actress rehearsing for a play. No, the decision of her eyes was too apparent. Great heavens, how my airy castles and noble resolutions crashed! What a monstrous demon this creature was!

"It was a nice predicament. If I picked up the papers, it meant disgrace for my firm and myself; and if I didn't, she undoubtedly would shoot, and I would be equally disgraced and in her future power. Home thoughts crowded my mind, and the situation became horrible.

"My dear lady, you shall neither have the papers, nor shall you shoot. An hour ago, I might have become a latter-day Fenton; but that moment is gone."

"You have sixty seconds in which to decide," and there was an ugly menace in her tiny revolver.

"Let us discuss the situation," I replied. "My check-book and the papers happen to be in my room. I will call for a porter."

"No, indeed, she would have none of that. She had not lost her cunning.

"I will go with you to your room; but the money must be in bills."

"Very good," I answered, satisfied for much could happen between her door and mine; but you will kindly tell me why you played the ruse by the fall. It must have been tedious.

"I had to gain your confidence."

"Why do it that way?"

"I liked you. I am a woman as you are a human."

"She trailed her skirts down the hall beside me. How that abominable perfume nauseated me. My room was at the farther end of the corridor. To reach it we had to pass the wide steps leading to the entrance-hall. There was my chance.

"We neared the flight, and I, with my heart in my throat, and my eyes shut, plunged aside and down, any way, bunkety-bunk to the bottom when I heard a scream.

"I opened my eyes, expecting to see her ladyship in some tragic attitude when lo! before my dazed stare was the bit of ribbon which decorated the tattered hat of the little old lady who occupied the section ahead. We were just pulling out from some stopping place. The whistle of the engine had awakened me. With a shudder I looked for the beautiful demon, who had brought me such joy and horror. She was not in her seat, and there was no trace of her existence, except a gentle odor of violets. I glanced down—on the seat beside me lay a sad little bunch of blossoms."

"And you really never knew the woman?" Phyllis' voice heralded me.

"No, dear."

"I think you are detestable to make me suffer so."

"But you wanted the story."

"Didn't you ever kiss her?"

"Only as I told you, sweetheart."

"I don't believe that's the end and I am wretched!"

After all, we never can gauge how a woman is going to take things, even when we are trying honestly to please her. Would Phyllis have been better satisfied if I had met milady?