

### If I Should Die First.

If I die first, dear love,  
I feel that this shall be,  
For heaven will not be heaven  
Until it's shared with thee—  
Until it's shared with thee, love,  
I'll linger at the gate,  
Or be thy guardian angel,  
To teach thee how to wait.

And when thine hour shall come,  
And through the yielding night  
I see thy happy spirit  
Upsoaring, robed in light  
Mine shall go forth to meet thee  
And through the eternal door  
Pass in with thee rejoicing,  
Made one, forevermore.

### Postage not Stated.

I was tall, overgrown, and sixteen, with a prevailing consciousness that my hands and feet were very large, and the added mystery, in the case of the former members, that they were always red, and I never knew what to do with them in company. I was making a visit at grandmother's delightful, old-fashioned country home, when one morning the dear old lady called me to her.

"Here is something for you, Jim," she said; "an invitation to a children's party at Mrs. Edwards'."

"Children's party!" I repeated, probably with a shade of scorn in my voice, as indicating that I was no longer to be placed in that juvenile category.

"Not children exactly," corrected grandmother, with a smile at my masculine dignity. "Young people, I should have said. Mrs. Edwards' daughter Florence is fourteen, and Tom Byrne and all the boys—young men, I should say," with a twinkle of amusement, "will be there."

I had sundry misgivings that I should not enjoy the party at all, being as yet very much afraid of girls, though beginning to admire them as mysterious and fascinating beings. However, I accepted the invitation, as I found that all the boys I knew were going, and the party was to be quite a "swell" affair for the village.

When the evening came it found me with the rest, seated in a large parlor, very unhappy because of my arms and hands, which would by no means arrange themselves in any graceful or becoming manner, and extremely bashful, but full of admiration for a lovely black-eyed girl, about a year younger than myself, whom I knew to be Tom Byrne's sister.

She sat some distance from me, but she had given me a sweet smile when I first came in, and now from time to time cast glances at me which increased at once my bliss and my confusion.

Various games were suggested and played, but they were of a quiet character, such as "Twenty Questions," "Proverbs," etc., so that I had no opportunity of approaching any nearer to Mabel who showed herself very brilliant in her questions and answers during the progress of these intellectual amusements.

Then somebody suggested that we should play "post office."

"Post office! What is that? How do you play it?" I whispered to Tom Byrne, my next neighbor.

"Don't you know how to play post office?" he asked, with a scorn at my ignorance. "Oh, well, I suppose you city fellows don't know anything."

"I never heard of this," I assented meekly.

"Well, I'll tell you how it is: A girl asks for a letter for some boy, and then you have to ask how much postage, and if she says one cent you have to kiss her once."

"Oh!" said I.

"Yes," said Tom, "and you kiss her twice for two cents, and three times for three cents. It's quite fun if it's a pretty girl," he added judiciously.

"I suppose so," I replied vaguely.

"But I forgot to tell you," he added, "if she says 'postage not stated,' then you kiss her as often as you like. Hush! they are going to begin."

To be sure one of the oldest boys was appointed postmaster, and one girl after another went out into the entry, each presently knocking at the door, asking for a letter, whereon the boy called for sheepishly followed her into the hall, and to judge from the sounds of screaming and scuffling which generally followed, paid his postage under considerable difficulties.

I watched the game in a state of bewildered alarm. What if a girl should call for me! But no one did, and I was half disappointed, half relieved, that I was exempt, when at last it was Mabel Byrne's turn to go out.

She left the room with a lovely blush on her beautiful face. The door was solemnly closed upon her, and then, after a brief pause, there was a faint knock. The postmaster opened the door a few inches.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"There is a letter here," she replied.

"For whom?"

"For Mr. James Hill."

"How much to pay?"

"Postage not stated," was the faint reply.

They all laughed loudly and looked at me, for that was my name. The door

rushed in crimson floods to my face. I got on my feet somehow, and with my heart torn between a wild desire to go into that hall and a wish to sink utterly away from human kind I stumbled out of the room.

The door was closed behind me and I found myself almost in darkness, as the hall was but dimly lighted. I paused a moment and then I heard the faint sound of quick breathing; another heart was beating as violently as my own. For once in my life I knew what to do with my arms. I caught hold of her, I scarcely know how. The darkness gave me the courage and I held her in a close clasp and pressed my lips to her cheek in three or four rapid, half-frightened kisses, before she could free herself from my embrace.

"There, there! Mr. Hill," she said, with a faint merry laugh, "don't be so bashful again. I'm sure you are bold enough now!"

"Have I paid my postage?" I stammered.

"Indeed, yes; enough and to spare. Come, let us go to the parlor."

She led me in a willing prisoner, and the rest of the evening I was her bound slave; her partner in all games, her companion in the dance (wherein I excelled the country boys and glorified in my accomplishment), and, at last, crowning delight of the evening, her escort home.

This was all. The next day I returned to my home in the city, and Mabel Byrne became only a memory; strong at first, fainter as the time went on, but sweet always. When I saw other girls I compared them mentally with the picture my imagination painted of Mabel, and they never seemed half so fair and sweet as she.

But then I did not see many other girls. My bashfulness, instead of diminishing, seemed rather to increase upon me as the years went by. I avoided society, and was so much of a recluse from the ladies that my mother was quite worried lest I should become a confirmed old bachelor. Perhaps one reason why I retained my diffidence was that my pursuits were among books, and not among people. I had made the science of geology my study, and at the age of twenty-seven found myself in a comfortable position as assistant professor in one of our best colleges, the salary of which, with my own income added, making me so far as ease that I decided to devote my summer vacation to a tour in Europe.

Equipped with bag and hamper, August found me making a pedestrian tour of Switzerland, with a special view to the study of its glacial system and lithology. I avoided the well-traveled ways, thus escaping the society of all other tourists, and I was therefore utterly amazed when one evening, as I drew near the little house which was my temporary abiding place, a tall form strode toward me out of the darkness, and a hearty voice cried out:

"Jim! Jim Hill!"

"What is it?" I replied, with a half-nervous start.

"Ah! I thought it was my old friend. Have you forgotten Tom Byrne?"

Of course not, for I had met him occasionally since we were boys, and I was heartily glad to see my former comrade, always one of the best of companions.

"I saw your name on the book at the inn," he explained; "was sure it must be you. At any rate, I thought I would start out to meet you."

"But how came you here?" I inquired, "in this out of the way corner of the world?"

"Because it is out of the way. Mabel and I are making a trip in search of the picturesque. You know she is quite an artist."

So Mabel was with him. My heart gave a curious thump, and for a moment I could hardly make a sensible reply.

"Yes," he went on, "she is so devoted to her art that it seems to quite absorb her life. She has not thought of marriage, and does not care in the least for the ordinary run of society. She will be glad to see you, though, as you are a man of science," he added, consolingly.

We walked back together to the little inn, and presently I was shaking hands with a beautiful and stately woman, whose bright, dark eyes flashed with the intensity and fire that I had never seen in any other eyes but those of Mabel Byrne.

She greeted me very cordially, and after we three had taken an evening meal together, there followed a delightful evening in the little parlor which Tom and his sister had secured.

For once in my life I felt myself quite at ease in a lady's society. In the first place there was Tom to keep me in countenance by a predominance of my own sex in the company, then Mabel did not expect me to talk of airy notions, that light foam of the social whirlpool which I had never yet been able to skim. She spoke first of my scientific pursuits; she showed so much knowledge of the subject that I really found myself talking with an eagerness and enthusiasm of the formation of the

country, and especially of the glacial system and the curious marks of its action borne by the specimens I had collected.

She in turn contributed to the evening's interest by telling me of the work, and showing me her sketches, which were really of a very high order of artistic merit. There was no school girl weakness in her handling of the brush, but a force and poetic thought that had won her honorable recognition in the world of art.

"And you have never heard of Mabel's paintings until now?" said Tom.

"No," I confessed. "You know I have been quite absorbed in my special studies."

"Yes, and you have not seen Mabel for ever so long, have you?"

"No," I replied, "not since that summer ten years ago, when I was at my grandmother's."

"Jolly times we had, too," said Tom, reflectively. "Do you remember that party at Mrs. Edwards'?"

A sudden rush of blood to my face utterly confused me. I stammered a reply, and Tom, to my relief, went on with some rambling reminiscences. It was some seconds before I dared to look at Mabel. Surely she was blushing, too.

The next morning we all went on a trip up the slopes of the mountain. Mabel was in a short gray suit, with alpine hat, and stout boots, Tom carrying her drawing materials. Thus we made this, and many another, delightful expedition.

Life took on new colors for me. There was a radiance and glory about it that I had never dreamed of before. Every day I found fresh reason for admiring my beautiful companion, and our walks through the deep valleys and up the rough mountain sides were to me like enchanted journeys through a realm of fairies. In this loveliest country in the world, with this most glorious woman by my side, I was, indeed, as one transfigured by the light of the grand passion that took possession of my soul.

At first I knew not what had befallen me. I thought only that my pleasure in Mabel's society sprang from a similarity of tastes and pursuits; but gradually I woke to the overwhelming fact that I loved her with the one great love of my life, that seemed to me now to date from the days of long ago, to have been always with me and to stretch out into the future to make it transcendently glorious, or a long despair.

And yet as soon as I had learned my own secret, my former bashfulness came back upon me with tenfold intensity, and I found myself often embarrassed in her presence, while at the thought of telling her my heart's story, though my brain was smitten through with dazzling delight at the dream of successful wooing, yet I was so overwhelmed that utterance would, as I was sure, be an impossibility.

And Mabel? Her eyes were very kind to me. They turned to me with softened lustre that thrilled me with hope, and yet, if I attempted even a compliment I blushed, floundered, and was lost.

One evening we were talking of all manner of subjects, grave and gay, and so strayed to marriage in general, and especially to the matrimonial lot of some of our old friends.

"You remember Boyd, don't you, Hill?" asked Tom.

"Tall, bashful fellow, like me?" I added.

"Yes," replied Tom, laughing. "He married Miss Cutting, our former school teacher. I always thought she proposed to him."

"Sensible girl!" I exclaimed. "I positively think it a woman's duty sometimes to help out. You remember that book of the late Dr. Horace Bushnell, published some years ago, called 'A Reform Against Nature?' In it he denounced the whole woman's rights movement, but maintained that every woman ought to have the right to propose marriage to the man she liked. I think he was scientifically correct."

I spoke with great eagerness, looking always at Tom; but at the last words my glance turned to Mabel. Her eyes were fixed on mine, and the look I met there sent the blood to my heart with such a swift, tumultuous rush that I grew faint with confusion, and presently rushed out of the room and to bed—though not to sleep.

The next day I went out in the afternoon by myself for a scramble through a damp and very rough gorge, where Tom and Mabel did not care to accompany me. I was half glad to be alone for I was nervous over my audacity of the night before; yet at thought of Mabel's kindly eyes, so overwhelmed with blinding happiness, that I had to look many a time at a bit of rock before I could see the striae that denoted glacial action.

It was late sunset when I reached the inn. The last rosy light was flushing the distant mountain peaks with that marvelous beauty which is one of the wondrous charms of Swiss scenery. I made my way without pause to Mabel's parlor, led there by a force that seemed to draw me by a power beyond my con-

trol. The room was quite dusk and she was alone. As I entered she came toward me with a quantity of letters and papers in her hands.

"These came while you were away," she said.

Mechanically I took the papers. Among them there was a large package on which I dimly discerned the word "Due," followed by an illegible stamp.

"You have paid something on this," I said, "how much was it?" and looked up.

"Postage not stated," replied Mabel. Promptly, smilingly she uttered the words. Then her dark eyes softened, and faltered. The papers and letters were scattered over the floor. I had caught her in my arms with all the audacity that had been once before mine in boyish days.

Only now, as I pressed passionate kisses on her brow and lips, I found voice to utter the yearning that was consuming my heart.

### Items of Interest.

The little folks of Williamsport says the *Times*, by each donating a potato, presented to the Home for the Friendless over seventy bushels within the past year. This is certainly an easy way to "raise potatoes," and the home is willing that it should be repeated often.

Twelve million dollars worth of property was burned up in the United States in January. The losses by flood in February will hardly fall below this sum. If this sweeping gait of wet and dry misfortune is to be kept up for the balance of the year it will cut a big slice out of our profits.

The supreme court of Iowa decides that a wife deserted by her husband without her fault, and left with no means of providing for her young children, has authority to sell the personal property of her husband to obtain money.—*Washington Press*.

Boston has a religio-philosophical society that believes that disease is caused by the absence of God from the body, and can be cured by the passage of the divine effluence from the well to the sick as they sit with the raptines in contact. It numbers among its adherents "people of influence and prominence" and some whose names are as familiar as household words.

Treasurer Wyman of Washington, D. C., received last week, from a bank in Ohio two express packages, each purporting to contain \$1,000 in money. On being opened one was found to contain only \$470 and the other merely two small pieces of ordinary flannel. It is supposed that the money was stolen either before shipment or in transportation.

Geo. Davidson, chief clerk of the substance department, United States army stationed at Chicago in 1879 and 1880, was arrested last week on the charge of embezzling \$3,600 during the years named. Davidson confessed his guilt and was held in jail at \$5,500 for trial.

Among the journals recently started in Germany is a comic paper called *Mixed Pickles*.

Count Manski, who blew out his brains at Monto Carlo recently, was well known on the boulevards in Paris. He lost a hundred thousand francs at the gaming table in one night.

The *Boston Post* says: Two young doctors were recently comparing notes in the office of a well-known hotel in this city, and one of them was heard to say: "In a case of that kind you use (a certain drug) and it will have a certain effect) or it won't, I am not sure which!"

The *Syracuse Standard* relates that a lady now living at Sodus Village, Wayne county, at the age of 60 years, is the mother of two sons and four daughters, the grandmother of 18 children, and great-grandmother of two, and has had eight son-in-laws, four of whom are living.

Senator Vest writes on the question of prohibition to a friend in Clay county Mo., thus: Where the people of any community are overwhelmingly in favor of no license dramshops, the law is always a success; but in a community where public opinion is equally divided or against the law the result is always a disregard of the statute and a mean evasion of its provisions."

An exchange says it is a puzzle to many why on some pieces of silver money directly under the eagle appears a small s, others an o, others c. e. and others without such mark. It shows at what mint the money was stamped. S, stands for San Francisco, for New Orleans, c. e. for Carson City, and at the Philadelphia mint the money is not marked.

A medical man in California gives a curious prescription as a safeguard against smallpox when he says: "Place one ounce of cream of tartar in sixteen ounces of water and take a tablespoonful three times a day, and you may sleep with a small pox patient with perfect impunity. If every citizen would do this for fifteen days there would be an end of smallpox in any city."

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