

The Bloomfield Times.

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BY

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ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR!

IN ADVANCE.

Susie Scott's Promise,

—OR—

OUGHT I NOT TO HAVE DONE IT?

THE circumstances of this affair cannot be presented in all their enormity unless the peculiar relation in which I stood toward Dick Farrel is first fully understood. It will therefore be necessary to go back to the period of my first acquaintance with that individual. I met him in thiswise:

Undoubtedly you remember the ravine in which is situated the town of St. Jean de Maurienne, formerly the terminus on this side of Mount Cenis on the railway from Paris to Turin. I had reached this one morning on my way to Italy, and I found owing to some accidental delay, no diligence would start to cross the mountain till evening. Consequently, having several hours at my disposal, I devoted them to an exploration in the valley, and finally attempted to climb up the steep face of the northern side of the ravine. Now, I had never been a good climber, even in my boyhood, and, as I was at this time more than—well, I was in the prime of manhood, at all events—I ought to have known better than to have made the attempt. However, I did not know better, and so laboriously climbed up the precipice, until I found myself on a narrow ledge where further progress upward became impossible. To my great annoyance, I found, too, that I could not retrace my steps, since any attempt to look down in the valley; which lay two hundred feet below, made me excessively giddy. At this distance of time I am willing to confess I was dreadfully frightened, as I thought on the probability of my remaining a hopeless prisoner starving to death in full sight of the hotel—which had an excellent *table d'hôte*,—and of the railway station. Hope, which we are led to believe springs eternal in the human breast, fortunately inspired me with the happy thought of firing my revolver as a signal of distress. No sooner had I acted upon this idea than the entire population of St. Jean appeared to become simultaneously aware of my situation, and flocked to the foot of the precipice to watch my anxiously expected fall. Owing either to their natural stupidity, or to their reluctance, to spoil a prospective tragedy, these people did not make the slightest effort to rescue me. Finally, after they had waited two hours in the vain hope that I would loose my foothold, they set up an idiotic shout at the appearance of a young man carrying a coil of rope on his shoulder. Presently he disappeared, followed by the greater part of the crowd; and I was about to resign myself to despair and an utterly hopeless attempt to clamber down the rock, when I was delighted by the re-appearance of the young man, who landed suddenly behind me, having been let down a rope from the top of the precipice.

"Now, old boy, he remarked with indecent familiarity, he unfastened the rope from about his waist, "let me just fasten this around you, and you'll be all right in a couple of minutes. Tell them not to forget me when you get to the top, for I haven't had my dinner yet!"

So saying he tied the rope under my arms, shook it as a signal to those above, en-

couraged me with the remark, "Steady, now, old fellow and good luck to you!" and calmly proceed to relight his cigar, while I was rapidly hauled through the air to a place of safety.

This young man was Dick Farrel.

The rope was again let down, and he soon made his appearance beside me. Luckily he could speak French of which I did not know a single word, and I appealed to him to rescue me from the police, who had promptly arrested me on a charge of having attempted to commit suicide. Dick's persuasive oratory secured my release, and being thus doubly indebted to him, I felt obliged to invite him to the hotel and to dinner.

He proved to be a painter of some sort—I know nothing about art—on his way to Rome, and though he was in the main honest, and always good tempered, he was altogether too much of a vagabond to be a suitable companion for a gentleman of my age and position. I felt this strongly, when, after much champagne, he proposed that we should journey to Rome together.

But what was I to do? Clearly, I could not say to the man who had just saved my life: "Sir I cannot consent to travel in your company, because you wear a preposterous hat, and are addicted to perpetual smoking and untimely singing." Of course I lacked the courage to say this, and hence it followed that for the next two weeks we were constantly together. I will do him the justice to say that he never attempted to borrow money from me, and he rendered me considerable service by acting interpreter between myself and the natives. Still his undignified habits were a constant source of annoyance to me. He would insist upon my accompanying him into third class cars, where he smoked, and sang, and drank cheap wine from casual bottles, with chance acquaintances, in a manner disreputable in the extreme. I acquit him of any intentional disrespect in representing to the police of St. Jean that I was a lunatic, and he was my keeper, since he solemnly averred that by no other pretence could he have saved me from arrest. I cannot however, excuse his habit of calling me "old boy," and the gross familiarity with which he criticised my personal appearance, and what he was pleased to call "my jolly greenness."

After we reached Rome, as was quite natural we saw a good deal of each other. It so happened that we one day visited the Catacombs of St. Calixtus. The guide who was with us was explaining the skeletons and things with great apparent eloquence, and Dick was translating his remarks to me with comments and additions of his own, when we came upon another party, consisting of a middle aged lady, her daughter, and, of course, their guide. As they were evidently Americans, we stopped and conversed a few moments with them, ultimately accepting their invitation to accompany them through the rest of the catacombs—Dick escorting the mother, while I walked by the side of her pretty daughter.

Pretty is just the word which described her. She was not strictly beautiful, but her manner was extremely attractive, and she had, moreover, an idea of the respect due to a man of character and position in life, which I have found that young girls, as a rule seldom have. I soon learned that her mother was a widow from New York, and that they were both well acquainted with the family of my business partner. We therefore rapidly became as familiar as old acquaintances; and presently, while Dick, with his accustomed impudence, was giving the old lady a history of the catacombs—of which I am certain that he knew absolutely nothing—the daughter drew close to me and whispered:

"Would you dare to get me a little piece of bone out of the niches? They are all saints, bones you know, but the guide won't let me have any, and besides I can't reach them, tho' I do so long for a piece of saint?"

I need not say that I stole some saint—a

rib I think it was—and my new acquaintance was delighted with it. The girlish pleasure with which she hid the bone in the folds of her dress, and insisted that she was ever so much obliged to me," together with the childish eagerness with which she had whispered her request completely charmed me. In fact I fell in love with her on the spot, and determined that I would marry her if she would give her consent. When we parted at the entrance of the catacombs I was warmly invited by both ladies to call upon them and to bring my friend with me.

To visit Miss Scott in company with Dick was precisely what I did not wish to do. But here, again, I could not help myself. Though Dick professed to be a warm admirer of the widow, it always happened that soon after our arrival at the Scott's apartment he would manage to be in close conversation with Susie, while I fell a prey to the mother, whose conversational powers were of the most oppressive character. The same thing used to occur when we visited ruins and places together, which we did nearly every day. Still I felt no fear in his rivalry. Susie evidently liked me, and always appeared delighted to see me. Besides I never for a moment supposed that she could prefer a penniless vagabond to a man of means and recognized respectability.

All this is merely introductory, and although the preceding statements have a tendency to make a short story long, still it was necessary, as I have said before, that the precise nature of my intimacy with Dick should be set forth before I could ask the question, "Ought I not to have done it?"

One day we prevailed upon the ladies to make a visit to St. Peter's. In order to make the excursion partake somewhat of the nature of a picnic, it was agreed that we should take our lunch with us, and eat it on the immense roof of the church. In order to make sure of securing Susie for myself, I prevailed upon Mrs. Scott to invite the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, who was then in Rome, to accompany us; intending to inveigle that worthy divine into acting as an escort to the widow. I never thought what would become of Dick if thus left without a lady companion, nor were my suspicions aroused by the sarcastic smile with which he praised my forethought in inviting the clergyman.

"If any accident should happen—if you break your neck, for example," he remarked, "it would be so handy to have a clergyman ready!"

The appointed time for the picnic, arrived. Never shall I forget the sensations with which I ascended the long, winding inclined plane which leads up to the roof of the church. I had determined to offer myself to Susie in the course of the day; and though I had no doubt as to the result, yet the novelty and importance of the step I was about to take made me somewhat nervous. I had, too, an undefined and wholly unacknowledged feeling that she was not after all, precisely the sort of wife for me. She knew absolutely nothing of business, and was about as ignorant of the duties pertaining to the position for which I intended her as a girl could well be. Nevertheless, I had so strong a fancy for the gay little butterfly, that I felt the impossibility of existence apart from her. For weal or for woe she held my fate in her hands, and I determined that those dear little hands should be mine, come what might.

Before we had our lunch we were to ascend the dome. At this stage of affairs I succeeded in placing the widow in charge of the clergyman, and, with Susie began the ascent of the countless stairs. Dick, however, followed so closely behind us—in order, as he pretended, to keep Susie from falling—that I could find no opportunity to ask her the question which was on my lips. At last we reached the lantern and only the great copper ball remained to be explored. As Mrs. Scott declined to

enter the ball. I waited with Susie until her mother had gone out upon the outer gallery, vainly hoping that the long sought for moment had arrived. But scarcely had her mother disappeared when the young lady announced her intention of climbing the ball, whereupon the officious Dick ran up the ladder to assist her. When they both had succeeded in entering that stifling den—where no man of sense willingly placed himself—she cried out that no one else was to come up on any account, for she was afraid the ball would break loose under any additional weight. I was thus forced to stay at the foot of the ladder while they remained in the ball, engaged—during what seemed to me an intolerable length of time—in an animated conversation, conducted in a tone so low that I could not hear a single word that was said.

When they finally descended, Susie's face was flushed—by heat of the place she said—while Dick looked uncommonly grave, and gnawed his moustache with a nervous dissatisfied air. Had he been any one else—the Rev. Mr. Smiley for example—I should have believed that he had offered himself to Susie and been rejected; but being simply the penniless vagabond that he was, the idea of any such conduct on his part was too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment.

At last we turned to descend to the roof and I saw that the moment for me to press my intentions toward Susie had arrived. Lingerer dexterously in the rear until the widow and clergyman were safely out of sight, I led Susie out upon the gallery under the pretext of showing her a part of the landscape which she had not noticed. As we leaned over the railing, I looked around to make sure that Dick was out of sight, and then began; "My dear Miss Susan, I have something to say to you."

She looked at me a moment with startled eyes, and then putting her hands together with an imploring little gesture, she cried: "Oh! please don't!"

"Don't what?" asked I, quite puzzled by her conduct.

"Don't please say anything; I mean don't!—oh! just look what a pretty flower! How I wish I had it!"

The child was evidently confused and frightened. I was about to explain myself more fully, when Dick appeared upon the scene, carrying upon his arm a shawl belonging to some one of the party, and asked what was the matter.

"That beautiful little pink flower, there on the dome," she answered—"if I could only reach it!"

"You shall have it," he replied; and then tossing one end of the shawl to me, with the request that I would hold on to it he seized the other end and was over the railing and sliding down the slippery surface of the dome before I knew well what was his intention.

The flower was growing on a little projection not more than twelve feet below us. Dick, however, had placed himself in a

horribly dangerous position; although he could remain for a time resting with one foot on this projection, it was impossible for him to gain the gallery without the aid of the shawl to which he was clinging.

He paid not a particle of attention to my peremptory demand that he should come back at once, but, quietly seizing the flower and putting it temporarily into his bosom he looked up to Susie, who was watching him, silent with excess of terror, and said:

"You know what I asked you just now. Will you promise?"

She only replied: "Come back, Mr. Farrel, do, please. You frighten me to death!"

"Susie," returned the scoundrel, with the utmost solemnity, "unless you give me the promise this moment, I will let go the shawl, for I don't care a straw for my life."

"Come back directly, sir," I shouted, "or I'll let go the shawl myself! Don't you see how you alarm Miss Scott with your confounded nonsense?"

The villain never heeded my existence. "Promise me, Susie," he repeated, "or I swear I'll let go."

"Yes, yes, Dick, I promise," she cried "Dick, do come back. I will marry you." This then, was the result of my months of devotion to that shameless girl. This was what came of my condescension, toward a miserable, unprincipled painter. Before my very eyes, in my very hearing, he had gained a promise of marriage from the lady whom I intended to marry myself.

Before I could fully realize his astounding villainy, he had climbed back again and had Susie in his arms. I blush for human nature when I mention the fact that he actually kissed her in my presence!

I tossed the shawl down, and turned away without speaking. Before I had gone many steps Susie overtook me and said: "Please forgive me if I have given you any pain. Mamma wouldn't let me see Dick unless you were by, and so I had to be civil to you. Besides, I do like you ever so much, and if you would only marry mamma it would be so nice."

"I really think you'd better," chimed in Dick. "There's a clergyman here, and it could be done at once."

There! I have told the whole story, and the facts have been stated precisely as they occurred. It only remains for me to ask the question. Would I not have been perfectly justified in letting go the shawl, and thus putting a sudden and an effectual end to my treacherous rival's suit? To be sure, he had on a former occasion saved my life—doubtless for purposes of his own, and certainly without waiting for me to request that favor from him. And did that excuse his subsequent conduct? Just look at in all its hideousness. While I held his life in my hands—for nothing could have saved him had I let go the shawl—he dared to ask my intended wife to marry him, and what is worse, actually gained her consent. Could any one have blamed me had I let go my hold? Ought I not to have done it?

The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that justice to myself, pity for the unfortunate girl whom Dick cruelly made a sharer in his poverty, as well as a due sense of the guilt of his outrageous conduct, demanded that I should have dropped the shawl. And I don't hesitate to say that I am confoundedly sorry I did not do it.

A sailor was called upon to stand as a witness. "Well sir: do you know the plaintiff and defendant?"

"I don't know the drift of your words," answered the sailor.

"What! not know the meaning of plaintiff and defendant?" continued the lawyer, "a pretty fellow you to come here as a witness. Can you tell me where on board the ship it was that this man struck the other one?"

"Abaft the binnacle," answered the sailor.

"Abaft the binnacle!" answered the lawyer, "what do you mean by that?"

"A pretty fellow you," responded the sailor, "to come here as a lawyer, and don't know what abaft the binnacle means!"

From Estville, Va., comes news of a singular affair which occurred recently between a number of women. They met at a prayer meeting, at the close of the services Miss Polly A. Hart, having started for home, was overtaken by Nancy Johnson, when an altercation took place between them, and they got engaged in a fight, when Polly A. Taylor, a daughter of Nancy Johnson, ran up behind Polly Hart and stabbed her in the breast with a penknife, with a blade some three inches long. Polly Hart died in about three-quarters of an hour. The other two women have been committed.