CONTENT.

My days have been so filled with joy
That should the balance of my life be spent
In anguish unknown and unrelieved misery,
I should still live in sweet and blest content

The pleasures I have tasted cannot be
The memory of my joys must ever last
Nor can Fate wring from me one bitter sigh
While fond recollection's present to my past.

—John Kendrick Bangs in Harper's Weekly.

TOM'S MONEY.

Mrs. Laughton had found what she had been looking for all her life—the man to love her.

Every night of her nearly thirty years of existence this pretty little person had stooped on her knees, before sight her prayers, and had fervently asked the Spirit beneath her bed, but then peered beneath the dark recess of the dressing-case and hunting looked in the deep drawer of the bureau and into the closet, she listened for, and felt as secure as a child in a house, she never, in this particular business, seemed to have any confidence in Mr. Laughton, in spite of the fact that she admired him and adored him, neither to preserve nor his absence ever made any variation in the performance. She had gone through the mechanic, however, so long a time that they had come to be in a manner perfunctory, and the start she received on this night of which I speak made her prayers quite impossible.

What was she to do? She, as a matter of eminence, known to be the most timorous of the whole family, and here she was alone, the two maids away in the close with locked out in the back house alone with a burglar, and not another being nearer than the works, a half mile off.

How did this man know that she was without any help here? How did he happen to be aware that Tom's money was in the house? If that money was taken nobody would believe the story. They would be cashiered. She never could live through the disgrace, he would die of a broken heart, and she of another. What a miscarriage for her to be left with the whole thing in her hands, her life's work, trembling, frightened, only there, the good name, the sincerity, their fortune, the welfare of the whole family, the livelihood of all the men, the safety of Uncle Prosper. WHY made Tom risk things?

It was worse than any loss of money to have such a wretch in the house, and, so shudderingly she swung in the direction of the door as thin as the bottomless pit, itself. Light and electricity are swift, but thought is swifter. In the fraction of a second Mrs. Laughton was on her feet, and before a pendulum could have moved half a swing backward she took the light, brass, sedated and neat it ruthlessly away from her with all her might—and again, leaving the creature uncovered. He has really on one side a stout little club in his hand, some weapons gleaming in his belt.

"You look pretty, don't you," said she.

Perhaps this was no matter of a shock to the man as his appearance, at the doorway.

"Get up," said she. "I'll be a great deal more a man. Get up. I'm not afraid of you."

The idea of this little fairy quaint woman, almost small enough to have stepped out of a rain-lily, startling. But it was a fact. Great fun about to be, been revolving that, so near, so near. It was no use feet now. Everything over.

"No," said he quietly, "I don't think you're going to hurt me. And I am not going to hurt you if you hand over that money."

"What money?" opening her eyes with a wonderful sort of astonishment.

"Come! None of your!" I want that money!

"Why, I haven't any money! Oh, you have, I'm sure, but—"

"I thought you'd remember," said the man, with a grin.

"But I want it!" she exclaimed.

"I want it, too!" said he.

"Oh, it wouldn't do you any good," she reasoned. "Fifteen dollars. And this—all the money I've got in the world!"

"I don't want no fifteen dollars," said the man, "and I don't want none of your cash, nuthing. I want the money your husband's going to pay off with!"

"Oh, Tom's money!" in quite a relief. "Oh, I haven't anything to do with Tom's money. He never gets any money out of me—you're more than welcome!"

"No, I see you," with her squirrel, his eyes coming back to her from a survey of the room. "But you've got Tom's money in the house here, and we'd like to throw me off the scent."

"If I had," said she, "you'd only get it across my dead body."

"Come," said he again. "I've had enough of your talk."

"You're not very polite," she said, with something like a pout.

"Prope in my line," he, in a quaint way. "I want that money, and I'm rather come by it peaceably. Be reasonable, girl."

"Well, you can take it of course, against the stronger. But I hold you before all I have and I've my patience to be."

"You lost, sir, I'm a person, in taking a chance with the chance of calling being been some [illegible] regards as to be [illegible] to talk to, and throw it herself into the fire one opposite, because [illegible] could not stand up against my mental.

"There it is," said she, [illegible] under your hand all the time. You don't [illegible] to rip up the mattress for it, or rummage the clothes press, or hunt through the broken crockery on the top shelves of the kitchen cupboard," she ran on to a [illegible] delighted to [illegible] down, and [illegible] "I always leave my purse on the dressing-case, though. Tom has told me time and again it wasn't safe. But old habit—

"Stop!" considered the man. "If you know enough to stop. Stop or I'll rest your corset together on. I'm sure who I want, though I'll take it. I've told you time and again that I want the paymaster's money. I'll put daylight through that little false heart of yours if you don't give it to me without five more words."

"And I've told you just as often that I've nothing to do with the paymaster's money," and with one great limpid tears overflowing her blue eyes. Rose Laughton knew that the face she turned up at him was enough to melt the strongest heart going.

"Do you mean to tell me—" said he, evidently wavering, and possibly inclined to doubt if after all she were not telling the truth.

"I don't mean to tell you anything," she cried. "You won't believe a word I say, and I never had any one doubt my word before. I hate to have you take that fifteen dollars, though. You never would in the world if you knew how much self-denial it represents."

"Every time I think I would have ice cream out here in this wilderness I've made Tom give me the price of one. You wouldn't understand anything but ribbons there. And when I've felt as if I should go wild if I couldn't have a box of Lily Bell's candy I've made Tom give me the price of that. Theatre tickets, dances and concerts and things in those towns, I've worked over the top of the mantel, and still I've got a book-mark, [illegible] I wish you would—I mean, I'm [illegible] I don't believe you have any sense. What makes you look at me so?" For the man had left his seat, and, as she spoke, was peering her through. "Oh, your eyes are like mirrors trying to live coals," she cried. "Is that the way you look at your wife? Do you look at your little children the same way?"

"I ain't got no wife or kids."

"I'm sure that's fortunate," said Mrs. Laughton. "A family wouldn't have any peace of their lives with you following such a dangerous business. And they couldn't see much of you either."

"Look here!" cried the man, his patience gone. "Are you a fool, or are you bluffing me? I've led to induce to kneels, you bound up." he cried, "and that's the house over for myself."

"You wouldn't find anything if you did," she returned, leaning back in her chair. "I've looked often enough, when I thought Tom had some money. I never found any. What are you going to do now?" with a cry of alarm at his movement.

"I'm going to the you hand and foot."

"Oh, I wouldn't! I'd rather you wouldn't—really! I promise you I won't leave this chair"—

"I don't mean you shall."

"Oh, how can you treat me so?" she exclaimed, lifting up her streaming face. "You don't look like a person to treat a woman so. I don't like to be tied; it makes one feel so helpless."

"What kind of a dum fool be you, anyway?" said the man, stopping a moment to stare at her. And he made a step then toward the high chest of drawers, half bureau, half writing desk, for a ball of tape he saw lying there.

"Oh," she cried, "don't! Don't go there. For mercy's sake, don't go there!" raising her voice till it was like the shriek of a [illegible] "Oh, please don't go there!" At which, as if feeling morally or rather immorally, sure that she, he had come for was in that spot, he seized the candles of a dress, ground down fell the I'd upon his head with a shriek that jammed his hat over the eyes and blinded him with pain and fury for an instant. "I knew it!" she cried. "I knew it would!" Hold you and bring it!"

"You shut your mouth quick!" roared the man, with a rapid mice-o-scythe.

"That's right," the sight, her face like a [illegible] "Don't wind me. I'll always tell him to swear when he jams his thumb. I know how it is myself when I'm driving a nail."

The man meanwhile, down in an chair on a [illegible] "Don't know what to make of you," said he, [illegible] "Thing, do I look like [illegible]?"

"You look like a [illegible] with me," said she. "Tie me up, if you feel [illegible] I never [illegible] I'm [illegible] you [illegible] I'm [illegible] I'm [illegible] I'm