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THE JOURNAL

LATELY "THE DEMOCRAT"

Published every Thursday afternoon,

AT ST. CLOUD, MINN.

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Which will be let at reasonable rates.

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Leave your orders for livery with

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Produce of all kinds taken in Exchange for Goods. apr9-tf

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The undersigned are manufacturing all kinds of

LUMBER,

And Shingles of the very best quality.

The Best Common Lumber, $12

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THE LOVE KNOT.

Tying her bonnet under her chin,
She tied her golden ringlets in,
But not alone in the silken snare,
Did she catch her lovely floating hair;
For, tying her bonnet under her chin,
She tied a young man's heart within.

They were strolling together up the hill,
Where the wind comes blowing merry and chill,
And it blew the curls a frolicsome race,
All over the happy, peach-colored face,
Till scolding and laughing she tied them in,
Under her beautiful, dimpled chin.

And it blew a color, bright as the bloom
Of the pinkest fuschia's tossing plume,
All over the cheeks of the prettiest girl
That ever imprisoned a romping curl,
Or, in tying her bonnet under her chin,
Tied a young man's heart within.

Steeper and steeper grew the hill—
Madder, merrier, chillier still
The western wind blew down and played
The wildest tricks with the little maid,
As, tying her bonnet under her chin,
She tied a young man's heart within.

O, western wind, do you think it was fair
To play such tricks with her floating hair?
To gladly, gleefully, do your best
To blow her against the young man's breast,
Where he as gladly folded her in,
And kissed her mouth and dimpled chin.

O, Ellery Vane, you little thought,
An hour ago, when you besought
This country lass to walk with you,
After the sun had dried the dew,
What perilous danger you'd be in,
As she tied her bonnet under her chin.

APRIL.

I hear through all the solomn pines
The South wind's pleasant flow,
And see the clouds, like happy things,
O'er fields of azure go,
While all the sorrow from the earth
Seems melting with the snow.

The robin and the bluebird sing
O'er meadows brown and bare;
They cannot know what wondrous bloom
Is softly budding there!
But all the joy their hearts outpour
Seems pulsing in the air.

And we will sing, though all our days
Seem dark with pain and loss;
We know that Sorrow's furnace-heat
Consumes alone our dross;
We know that our dear Father's love
Gives both our crown and cross.

Oh, while beneath the snow-drift buds
The flower we love the best,
And on the wind-tossed bough the bird
Still builds its happy nest,
Praise God for all the good we know,
And trust him for the rest!

PROVING AN ALIBI.

PART I.

It was a warm August evening; the beach near Scudport was thronged with gay promenaders, who were strolling about enjoying the music of the band from the fort, that was playing on the esplanade near the shore. It was a pretty scene, the town in the distance half hidden away among the trees that were its great beauty; the trim fort, with its slopes of green grass and its irregular gray walls; the well-dressed crowd on the sands, and, beyond all, the sea rolling in all flushing with crimson and gold, under the level rays of the setting sun, that lit up the clear sky above into a dome of amber and rosy light.

Of course, in such an assembly as this there were a great many pretty women, but there was not one among them who was likely so to attract attention as the young widow, Mrs. Templeton, or Mrs. Flora Leroy Templeton, as she styled herself, not choosing that her friends should wholly forget the former gay belle, Flora Leroy, in the present quiet Mrs. Templeton. She was only twenty-four, though she had been a widow more than two years.—Her face always strikingly handsome, and had a look of character in its pensive beauty, that rendered it far more fascinating than in all its first bloom of girlish freshness. For in this country although we see scores of pretty girls with rosy cheeks and laughing lips, we rarely see that more mature and striking attractiveness that, consisting in regularity of feature and charm of expression, will survive the loss of the first rudiments of early youth, and charm with the lasting loveliness of intellect and character; when, therefore, such a face as Mrs. Templeton's appears amid more ordinary beauties, it charms with an irresistible fervor that is likely to produce an impression not easily shaken off.

The truth of this last assertion might have found attestation from a score of Mrs. Templeton's admirers, had they been willing to proclaim how powerful was the attraction of her gray eyes and soft voice, or how much more difficult it was to forget the magic of their fascinations than the more harmless assaults of a dozen ordinary girls. This afternoon her companion, Charlie Wentworth, could hardly help some such thoughts as he strolled by her side, and turn away now and then to admire the outline of her faultless profile, and the clear hue of the delicate rose tint in her cheek.

"She's very handsome," he thought—"a thousand times handsomer than any of the baby-faced girls that I dance with. If she only was not a widow, and had not that flaxen-haired little girl, I believe I should propose to her at once! Bah! I'm a fool!" he concluded, as he had in a score of similar reflections. "The idea of me at twenty-five, becoming a family man, with that little chit to call me 'papa.' No! it's too absurd; besides, I don't believe she cares a straw about me." And he sighed as he reached this climax, as if that idea was not a peculiarly agreeable or consoling one after all.

And then the band that had been giving the *finale* to *Lucie* so loudly that it was impossible to converse, finished with a grand flourish, and Flora looked up to speak to her companion. He was a handsome fellow, this Charlie Wentworth, with curling clustered hair, side whiskers and moustache of teeming gold, clear blue eyes, and a frank smile that displayed the regular white teeth, which were one of his principal beauties. He was tall and stalwart of proportion, and those who had ever seen the quick wrath that sometimes could flash from his azure eyes, had thought him an antagonist not lightly to be roused.

But Flora, when she looked up, caught his gaze so earnestly fixed upon her, that for a moment the words she had been about to utter died on her lips, and she flushed under that earnest scrutiny. Yes, Charlie was studying, as he had many times before that day, that faultless figure that was rounded to the full proportions of maturity, the wave in the brown hair that rolled back under the drooping straw hat; the contour of the lovely face, and the exquisite taste of the light mourning costume that suited so well with the half pensive cast of Flora's beauty. It was a dangerous study, but it was one of which Charlie had lately grown very fond.

In a moment Flora rallied and looked up again.

"How do you like your quarters at the Beach House, Mr. Wentworth?"

"Oh, I'm tolerably comfortable—that is, as much so as a single gentleman is ever allowed to be in a watering place hotel. I have a little room with five pegs in it on which to hang my entire summer wardrobe, and two drawers in which to put all the rest of it that won't hang up."

Flora laughed, a low silvery laugh, that showed that she had by no means lost all the power of enjoyment.

"Terrible suffering, truly," she said, "but it can't make much difference to you, as you have no crinoline to take care of."

"No crinoline, to be sure, but Mrs. Templeton, do you think it is no matter it Derby's best, cut coats are hung one over the other, till they are all in wrinkles, and that my white trousers never will come out fresh?"

"That is bad," replied Flora—"as bad for you, I suppose, as rumpled dresses and crushed muslins are for me. But how do you like the place otherwise?"

"Oh, it's tolerable—or rather would be but for that fellow, Anthony."

"What Anthony?"

"Simon Anthony—you know who I mean, of course."

"Yes," replied Flora—"I know him quite well. But why do you dislike him?"

"Oh, because he's so disagreeable.—He is stupid, and purse-proud, and overbearing, and, Mrs. Templeton, you know, by Jove! I detest that man."

"Why, did you ever meet him before?" asked Flora, surprised at the warmth of Charlie's declaration.

"Meet him before! Certainly—we lived in the same house all last winter, and I took an intense dislike to him; he was such a cub. We had one or two encounters there, so that now our acquaintance has dropped into a mere formal recognition. I thought I had gotten rid of him when I left the St. Basil last spring, but here, to my horror, I encounter him again.

"It's a hard case," said Flora, "but surely you are too amiable to allow such a thing to irritate you"

"I may be amiable," replied Charlie, rather gruffly, "but I've got a very quick temper for all that when I'm roused, as any of my friends will tell you, Mrs. Templeton, and somehow with regard to this man he has irritated me so often that I seldom see him without feeling as if I should like excessively to give him such a caning as would take the starch out of him for one while.

"And does he know of your dislike?"

"I suppose so, I have never made any secret of it; indeed I have so often uttered fearful threats against him that I believe the fellow is really afraid of me!" and Charlie laughed gayly at thought of the terror he had inspired.

"Then I dare say he was not very glad to see you when you appeared here?"

"No indeed, he turned a sort of sickly green when I entered the dining-room yesterday. But I beg pardon, Mrs. Templeton, here I've been abusing him shamefully, and yet you say you know him, and for aught I know you are a particular friend of his."

"No indeed," laughed Flora. "He comes a good deal to my uncle's it is true, but I don't like him much better than you do."

"I am glad of that."

And just then they reached a platform near the music, where there were benches, and paused there for a few moments talking to several acquaintances. After a little, Charlie found Flora a seat, and placed himself beside her; they were still surrounded by a party of friends, but it was to Charlie alone that Flora spoke, as she presently said,

"*Parley au diable*—there is Mr. Anthony, now."

"Yes," replied Charlie, glancing in the direction she indicated, with a quick frown, "and he is coming towards you."

"Very likely," said Flora, carelessly, "I had an engagement to drive with him this afternoon."

"And you broke it to come out with me!" exclaimed Charlie, all radiant with smiles.

"Not at all, Mr. Wentworth, I should not have done so unladylike a thing even had he been a great deal more disagreeable than he is. But my engagement with him was for six o'clock, it was nearly half past when you asked me to walk out, and I considered myself at liberty."

"What a puppy! to break such an appointment."

"Rather rude, I think. I wait for no man after the quarter of an hour's grace, and so came out with you without troubling myself about the matter."

Charlie began a speech to the effect that he hoped she had not regretted the change of escorts, but was interrupted in the middle of it, for just then the very handsome equipage of Simon Anthony, Esq., of —— William St, drew up beside them. He was a man certainly of no very prepossessing appearence, with sandy hair and white eyebrows, an ugly, ill-featured face not improved by the perpetual scowl on the low forehead, and the hard lines about the thin-lipped mouth. His turn-out was a stylish one, from the well-matched horses to the liveried groom who sat behind, though this last person was as ill-favored as his master, with an evil lowering countenance that made one pity the beasts committed to his charge.

Mr. Anthony lifted his hat to Flora as he reined up, without noticing her companion.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Templeton, for being behind hand this evening, but that stupid Thomas forgot all about the hour at which I had ordered the wagon and never began to get ready until six o'clock. I hope I am not too late, now."

"Thank you, Mr. Anthony, but you are too late," replied Flora coldly.

Anthony still lingered in spite of this freezing reply—he would perhaps have left at once had it not been that he caught sight just then of Charlie Wentworth's triumphant face.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Templeton," he persisted, "you ought not to be too hard on me—I assure you it was not my fault. Come, excuse me this once, and let me help you in—it is lovely on the beach now."

"You seem not to perceive sir, that Mrs. Templeton has another escort," exclaimed Charlie, starting to his feet in uncontrollable excitement, and looming up six feet of a very evident obstacle.

"Don't trouble yourself Mr. Wentworth," said Flora, turning upon him a half belligerent look at his somewhat hasty interference. "Mr. Anthony, my engagement with you was for six o'clock, you failed to keep it, and while I am quite willing to accept your apology, I must again decline to drive with you now that I have made other arrangements for the evening."

"Some other day then, I shall hope to be more fortunate," said Anthony; and after lingering a second and receiving no more encouragement from Flora than a polite bow, he drove reluctantly away.

"Confound the fellow!" cried Charlie, in a voice which he did not attempt to lower, "it will be best for him to keep out of my way if he wants to prolong his life."

He finished the sentence with a half laugh, for he was ashamed of his own vehemence before he reached the close, the flash of anger that had sprung up at Anthony's unwelcome intrusion had died out as quickly as did all such passing wrath in his generous heart, and neither he nor any of the half dozen persons who heard him thought of the deep significance those idle words might one day have.

As for Anthony he drove moodily away venting his ill temper as was his wont on his groom—

"It was all your fault, Thomas, hang you!" he growled, "you are such a stupid ass sometimes!"

Thomas made no reply only a darker frown gathered on his ugly brow.—Three years of this sort of thing had accustomed him to such treatment, and taught him how best to receive it.

As he and his master disappeared in the crowd, Charlie turned to Flora to apologize for his hasty anger.

"Forgive me, won't you, Mrs. Templeton, for my impetuosity just now, but really I have disliked that man so long, that everything he says irritates me, and it was provoking to have him keep at urging you to go off with him, without so much as noticing me."

"It was very rude," said Flora, "and I quite forgive your ready championship."

"Always, Mrs. Templeton, remember I am always at your service, and only too happy to be your knight."

Flora smiled her thanks, while Charlie blushed at his own enthusiasm. She liked this quick devotion in this handsome young man, and she sighed as she thought that some day he would court some fair young girl, and she would lose a friendship that had been very pleasant to her for the last year. As for herself she believed that love and all its possibilities were over forever, and she sighed again more deeply than before as she reached that conclusion. Then Charlie, who heard that last sigh, exerted himself to the utmost to be agreeable, and succeeded so well that Flora lingered there till the last light of sunset had faded away, and the young moon had begun to sink in the west, like a timid bride, following with white feet to see her royal bridegroom below the dark waters of the gloomy ocean.

At length, however, she started up; it was nine o'clock, and she must go home, although there was still a gay party of friends on the platform, and she was entreated to stay. But Flora who was very strict in her ideas of propriety always, was perpetually haunted by the face of Mrs. Grundy, and a dread that she should be called "a fast widow." Moreover, at this time she was staying with an uncle and aunt, Judge and Mrs. Dalton, only stately gentlefolks of the old school, and she thought it best on all accounts to leave the tranquil beauty of the summer evening for the close atmosphere of their solemn drawing room, and so resolutely refused to listen to Charlie's persuasions for "one more turn on the beach," and bade him good bye at her door before half-past nine.

As far as she herself was concerned, Flora would have thought she might trust herself safely anywhere and with any man for any possible danger there might be to her peace. She had married at twenty a young man who was the choice of her heart, and his death after a little more than a year of wedded happiness had seemed to her a blow from which she could never recover. But as the months passed, and formed themselves into years, the memory of her loss grew less intolerable; then the prattling of her little girl roused her into new interest in life, and now, after nearly three years of widowhood, she found herself looking back on the memory of her brief married life as only a tender episode of the past, and able to realize that the world was a very tolerable place even to a widow, when she is young, rich and handsome. Of course, she had not been without suitors even from her first appearance in society, but not yet had she admitted to herself that a second love might be possible. She had met Charles Wentworth a year ago, and he had almost from their first acquaintance made her the object of his attentions, but thus far neither of them had acknowledged that it could be anything more than friendship that drew them so constantly together. It was the attraction of her presence that had brought him to Scudport now, and when about a week after his arrival he heard that Flora was going with a party of friends on a trip to Canada, he immediately decided that his business would oblige him to return at once to the city.

It was the evening before Flora's intended journey; during the last week she had seen Charlie every day, and his enjoyment of her society would have been complete, but that despite his dislike for Mr. Anthony, Flora would continue to receive his visits, and had actually made Charley wretched for a whole evening by taking a drive in his handsome establishment. Charlie on that evening smoked quite a fortune in cigars, as he paced up and down the beach, wondering desperately if Flora would "marry that rich snob, confound him." Nor could he stop till he had resolved to fling himself at her feet at once and end this suspense. This had been the last night but one before Flora was to go, and Charlie was resolved to have her to himself on this last evening. He saw her in the morning, and she said she would be ready at seven o'clock to take a walk with him, as he proposed. Warned, therefore, by the example of Anthony, you may be sure Charlie was very punctual. He found Flora alone on the piazza.

"Aunt and uncle are out," she said, as she rose to meet him. "They were invited to dine at the Comrads; they would have declined, on my account, but I insisted they should go, as I told them I had an engagement for the evening."

"Thank you, I should have been so disappointed had you gone too.

"Oh! I was not invited. Gen. Comrad is an old friend of uncle's, and gives stiff, old-fashioned dinner parties; they did not know I was staying here. But Mr. Wentworth," added Flora, "what is the meaning of that huge pile of shawls you have with you? One would suppose we were going sleigh riding on a winter's night, instead of for a summer evening stroll."

"Oh! Mrs. Templeton, I brought these shawls because I wanted you to go sailing with me. You know you promised you would some evening, and to-night the moonlight is magnificent and the breeze just right; besides, its the last chance, as you go to-morrow."

Flora was taken by surprise by this proposal; but it was very tempting, and after a brief hesitation she yielded to Charlie's eloquent entreaties and said she would go.

"But we must not be out long," she added, as a final condition of acceptance.

"Oh, no, we can be back by ten o'clock easily, and that will be before your uncle returns."

So Flora, having made some slight changes in her dress, came out again on the piazza to join Charlie. As they walked away he said, "As for these shawls, I only wonder that I had sense enough to bring them; that miserable Anthony was in the entry when I came down, and put everything out of my head by some of his sneers. I did forget my cane and overcoat as it was."

"You have quite sufficient baggage, I should say," laughed Flora. "But why do you allow that melancholy man to put you so out of temper?"

"Oh, I can't help it. I know it is foolish, but to-night only think he had the audacity to walk out with me a little way!"

"Did he? and how did you get rid of him?"

"I told him that I wished he would leave me."

"Not really, Mr. Wentworth!"

"Indeed I did, and I told him it so decidedly that I think he'll not trouble me again."

"How you do dislike the poor man!"

"Poor man!" repeated Charlie.—"And you, Mrs. Templeton, do you *like* him?"

"Well, not very much," admitted Flora.

"Not as much as he likes you, I hope," replied Charlie, "for if you do I shall be wretched."

"Why?" asked Flora, with a faint tremble in her voice.

"Because then you would marry him," said Charlie; "and I should be miserable."

Flora did not pursue the subject, for she felt the stout arm on which she leaned tremble under her hand, and knew that it would be difficult to steady her own voice.

A brief walk brought them to the dock where the boat which Charlie had engaged lay, with sail set ready for the start. He had been brought up at the seaside, and accustomed from boyhood to the management of a boat, so that he felt not the slightest hesitation in taking a lady out and trusting to his own sailing. He helped Flora in, seated himself by her side at the stern, and in a few moments they were running before a fresh breeze out to sea.

It was a magnificent night. The moon just at the full, rising every moment higher and higher in the eastern sky, lit up all the broad ocean with sparkles of silver light that trembled on the crests of the waves as if each one were ridden by a fairy boat illumined by a magic torch. The heavens were immeasurably blue and clear, here and there sparkling with the few bright stars that alone ventured to dispute the supremacy of the Queen of Night, Orion's starry belt, the symmetrical cluster of the Great Bear, and the twinkling Pleiades shone faintly overhead, while low in the west Jupiter flashed his steady beam undimmed by the greater lustre that flooded the scene, and from afar the light of Sirius trembled through space with the scintillated splendor of a distant sun. Low in the north there was a bank of cloud, dark on the horizon, but growing white and fleecy, while its piled up masses caught the moonbeams, elsewhere the sky was serene, and ocean and air seemed lulled into enchanted beauty by the dazzling effulgence of the harvest moon.

For a while Charlie could speak of little but the beauty of the scene, it was a night when any ordinary commonplace conversation seemed utterly out of place, both of these two felt that under such circumstances alone, on the fair summer night, the more appropriate theme was love. Flora vaguely dreamed of this with a blush at her own folly, but Charlie thought of it every moment, for he had resolved this night to know his fate. He acknowledged to himself at last that this woman was beyond and above all others, that she was dearer to him than anything else on the earth, and undaunted by the remembrance even of the little flaxen haired child that had sometimes seemed to him an obstacle, he was resolved to woo and win her if possible.

Of course with this in his heart it was scarcely likely that he would be as usual, and so the two alone in the boat went on flying over the sea in a long silence that was in itself eloquent of happiness. Two or three times the words faltered on Charlie's lips, then he would glance at his companion, and resting the perfect beauty of her pensive face as she sat there in the moonlight, her fair hair shaded by some cloudy white mass, her eyes looking far off as if she were lost in shadowy dreams, something in the dignity of her air, the quiet loveliness that seemed almost too fair for mortal man deterred him. At last growing every moment more diffident of success Charlie resolved that he would say nothing till they were on their way home, as, if he were to be refused, the tortures he should afterwards endure in her presence would at least be brief, and having reached this conclusion he roused himself to win his companion from her reverie. His first word suffused her cheeks with a deep blush, for during that long silence Flora had begun to think that there was something rather unguarded as well as very fascinating in this entire *tete-a-tete*, far out there on the trackless sea, with no companions but the waves, and no chaperon but the moon. She was relieved by the light tone which Charlie assumed, and for the next half hour chatted with him as contentedly as ever in her life.

All this time they had been running off before a very fresh breeze. They had long ago passed outside the bay where Scudport lay, and were out on the bosom of the great Atlantic. Flora was a brave sailor, not given to foolish fears or afflicted by *mal du mer*, and she enjoyed keenly the dash of the waves on the prow, the swift motion through the moonlit sea, and the bright sparkle of the waters as they flashed like diamonds against the sides or gleamed brightly in the foaming wake. It was very delightful to be away on the beautiful sea, alone with the man whom above all others she liked, and Flora was perhaps excusable for forgetting for a little the lapse of time. But after a while it seemed to her as if their motion through the waters was not so swift as it had been as if the ropes hung slacker from the sail, and the sail itself fell more languidly towards the boat. She looked at Charlie with a sudden apprehension.

"Is not the wind dying down Mr. Wentworth?" she asked.

"It is not as fresh as it has been," answered Charlie, and at the same time he put the boat about and headed towards land.

Flora drew out her watch. The diamonds with which it was set gleamed in the moonlight as she flashed open the case.

"Half past nine!" she exclaimed in dismay. "Why, Mr. Wentworth, how far are we from home?"

"I don't know exactly," replied Charlie evasively, for Flora saw that he looked full as anxious as herself.

"You promised me I should be home at ten o'clock," she said reproachfully.

"I will do my very best, Mrs. Templeton. I never thought that the wind could go down, if it was as fresh now as it was half an hour ago, we might still be back by soon after ten."

"Soon after ten! Oh! Mr. Wentworth, I trusted to you when I came out, and indeed, indeed, I shall be miserable if we are not back before my uncle and aunt return."

"I am very sorry," said Charlie, in a tone of the greatest distress, "I should not perhaps have gone out so far, but the wind was so temptingly fresh, it did not seem possible it could fall so suddenly."

"And it has all died down now," exclaimed Flora, "look at the pennon, it absolutely hangs against the mast."

It was even so; the summer breeze had deserted them, and the little boat lay almost still in the trough of the slow rolling waves. Charlie was as much troubled as Flora, if possible more so, and the sight of his very genuine distress disarmed her anger, and made her so sorry for him that she found herself before long suggesting consolation instead of blame.

"There is nothing for it," he exclaimed at last, "but for me to pull in; I suppose there are oars here."

A brief search resulted in the discovery of two oars, but only one thole pin could be anywhere found; in vain Charlie looked in the cuddy, under the benches, and in every possible corner and cranny; there was evidently only one thole pin on board.

"Confound that Captain Jones," he exclaimed. "I asked him particularly before we started if there were oars and thole pins on board, and he assured me I should find everything all right."

"Well, you must do the best thing you can with one oar," said Flora; "I can steer tolerably well."

Charlie took up his oar and began his work.

"It is all that fellow Anthony's fault," he muttered.

"Anthony!" said Flora; "Why that man is your *bete noir*, what has he to do with the want of a thole pin."

"Why, if it had not been for him I should have brought my cane with me, and if I had that I could have rigged up a tolerable substitute for a thole pin."

Flora laughed and took her place at the tiller, while Charlie pulled manfully at the oar.

But it was very slow work, the boat was constructed for sailing, and pulling such a tub through the water with one oar was no light task; then Flora found it not very easy with her little experience to steer a straight course, and a good deal of time wasted by the running the boat off in all manner of wrong directions, and the necessity Charlie was perpetually under of glancing back to see that they were heading towards the land that seemed for a long time almost hopelessly distant. Poor young people! they were as utterly irritated in the next two hours, as they had been happy in the first two. Flora was perfectly miserable as moment after moment passed, and she was conscious that it was frightfully late, her uncle and aunt would have returned long ago, and been horrified to find her out. They were probably even now sitting up a prey to the most desperate anxiety, and when she returned how could she ever tell the story of the sail to them! would they now fancy that the excuse of no wind was merely invented to lull their suspicions? she could imagine the grave displeasure of her uncle's face and her aunt's stern frown. No one knew where she was, as she left the house she had looked for a servant to whom she might mention that she was going out, but there seemed to be no one at home, and thinking she should soon be back she had taken no especial pains to find one. If she was very late therefore, the uncle would probably be sending to the houses of various friends to inquire for her, and thus half Scudport would know of the adventure. At this suggestion Flora was wretched, she had always been so careful in her conduct, and here was an imprudence which would never be forgotten. How many sneers, how much animadversion would she be subject to, and her blood boiled with impatient indignation at the thought.

As for Charlie, he fancied all this dimly, and was in the deepest distress for her sake. He tugged at the oar with his eyes fixed on that fair face that was so sternly beautiful under the cold moonbeams almost in despair, he saw the anxiety on her expressive features, he knew that every moment she was growing more troubled, and he felt that she would hate him for having involved her in such a scrape. What hope could he have in now addressing to her those words of love he had once fancied she would kindly listen to; of course she must defer him for having by his inconsiderate folly involved her in this trouble, more than that she would doubtless think that he was taking a mean advantage of her in making a proposal at such a time, when her fear of being compromised might induce her to accept it. It would almost seem to her as if this had been a regular plan to entrap her into a fatal situation and thus force her to an engagement.

It is no wonder that under the circumstances, they were but silent companions for most of the return trip, hardly any words were exchanged but the necessary directions for steering. Flora sat there, her white hand on the tiller, her eyes fixed on the land, where at last they could distinguish the lights of Scudport. Only every now and then with a restlessness she could not restrain looking at her watch, and everytime feeling a deeper anxiety at the frightfully rapid flight of time. Yet if Charlie had known she was by no means so angry at him as he feared, she saw that he was miserable for her sake, and felt in her secret heart, below all her annoyance, a very tender compassion for him.

When they came up the bay the tide was against them, and the time tediously long that was consumed in dragging the boat to the shore. It was years since Charlie had pulled an oar, and stout man as he was, his arms ached and his hands were severely blistered by the toil. But all that he felt was nothing, he would have gladly suffered a thousand tortures to have saved Flora a moment's pain.

"You are tired, Mr. Wentworth," she said, breaking a long silence as they neared the shore, "I am sure you must be quite worn out."

"Not much," he replied. "But if I were Mrs. Templeton, it would be a pleasure to be fatigued in your service. I assure you if I could by any possible sacrifice have spared you the annoyance of this coming, I should have been only too happy to have thus proved to you my devotion."

"Indeed, Mr. Wentworth, I do not doubt that you have regretted this detention fully as much as I do."

"And I am afraid you will detest me for having thoughtlessly involved you in this scrape."

Flora colored, and under the moonbeams Charlie could see the rosy glow that overspread her face, just now so pale.

"Oh, no, Mr. Wentworth, I do not blame you at all, and I am sure it was in no wise your fault."

"It is very kind of you to say so," sighed Charlie, "and I hope you won't think unkindly of me in consequence of this."

"No, certainly not," Flora replied, and then, in a little confusion, she once more consulted her watch. "Five minutes to twelve!" she exclaimed with almost a cry of horror.

"Well, thank God, we are almost at home," said Charlie, and truly the boat was at last fast approaching the landing place.

A few more strokes, and they ran up alongside the low dock. The lights were all out in the boat-house; there was no one there to watch the tardy arrival. Both Flora and Charlie were very glad of this, and as he assisted her out, she stole with noiseless steps up the stairs, and under the piazza of the house. The clocks of Scudport struck twelve as she waited there, while Charlie tied up the boat and reefed the sail.

Midnight! She had actually been out till midnight, alone with this young man, and she wrapped her shawl around her with a chill as much of horror at her position as from the chill of the night air.

Charlie rejoined her with a step as noiseless as her own, and Flora could not repress a smile at their stealing off like two culprits, even in the midst of her excessive annoyance. But now the worst was to come. She was to face her uncle's and aunt's inquiries, and as she went towards the house, she felt each moment more like a criminal approaching his doom. Charlie employed the time in begging her to forgive him for his indiscretion, and Flora's kind words only half assured him, for he felt every moment the growing embarrassment of his companion.

"And you won't forget me entirely while you are away with your gay friends?" he said.

"No, indeed, Mr. Wentworth."

"Or remember me wholly as in connection with this unlucky night."

"Certainly not."

"And how long will you be away?"

"I hardly know—perhaps three or four weeks; though, for my own part, I should like to return sooner, as I already long to see my little girl again."

"But she was well when you heard from her, I hope," said Charlie, with an interest he endeavored to make as paternal as possible.

"Oh! yes, indeed! I know that she is always well and happy with mamma: but I cannot help growing impatient after being long away from her.

They had reached Judge Dalton's house now, and Flora's heart was beating very disagreeably. To her surprise, the house was all dark; not a ray of light shone out of the par or or second-story windows.

"Oh, dear!" whispered Flora, pale with annoyance, "they have locked me out."

"I am so very sorry," protested Charlie for the hundredth time. "But I can soon rouse them."

"Oh! that is so dreadful," said Flora. "What will they think?"

"Is there no way by which you could get in without their hearing you?" suggested Charlie. "They need not know how late you returned, if they do not know when you came home."

There was a ray of comfort in this. Flora hesitated a moment, and then said:

"My room is on the ground floor."

"And are the windows low enough for you to climb into them."

"Perhaps I could; but oh! Mr. Wentworth, this is all dreadful!"

And indeed it is very difficult to describe by any words Flora's painful embarrassment in view of her absurd and undignified position. If she could succeed in getting into the house without detection, it was certainly the very best and safest thing to do, but the situation for a lady who prided herself on her dignity, was surely very trying, to be clandestinely sneaking home at midnight with a young man was, to the last degree, unconventional, and her entire confidence in Charlie's honor alone reconciled her to the alternative, she was sure he would endure anything rather than compromise her, and that the secret of this performance would be safe with him under any circumstances.

The poor fellow was indeed very evidently overwhelmed with regret.

"I know it, Mrs. Templeton," he exclaimed. "It is very terrible for you, but I assure you I suffer more than you do in this, and for your sake; and as God is my witness, I will die sooner than that you should be in any way injured by having trusted to me."

"I believe you entirely," said Flora gently, and for a moment her hand trembled in Charlie's.

Then they stole noiselessly to Flora's windows; one of them was easily opened, the sash was up, and the blind not secured; but when she stood under it, the ledge of the window was above her head, and to effect an entrance seemed absolutely impossible.

"I will jump in and get a chair, and then you can climb up easily," said Charlie.

There was no time for remonstrance, and in a moment Charlie had disappeared through the window into Flora's room. She stood there in the moonlight, thinking with a vague horror of what would be said should all this ever be known, and then she drew out her watch once more. A quarter to one! Just then Charlie handed out a light chair and sprang down beside her. With his aid, it was quite easy to mount, and very soon she had taken the chair in after her, and was safe in her own bedchamber.

"And now good-bye," said Charlie. "I shall not see you in the morning, for I received a telegram this afternoon which will oblige me to leave in the four o'clock train, so I cannot have the pleasure of seeing you off as I intended. Good bye, and think of me kindly, Mrs. Templeton, in spite of this."

Flora's reply was very cordially satisfactory, for she found herself feeling a great regret now that the parting was inevitable. A moment she looked out at Charlie's handsome face, as he raised his hand to his lips with the gallant deference of a knight of yore, then he stole quietly off the grass and disappeared from her view.

The house was very quiet, no one seemed to have heard or observed her entrance, and without venturing to strike a light, Flora undressed very quietly by the glimmer of the moonbeams' and crept into bed.

The next morning when she came down stairs she hardly knew what her reception would be, but her uncle's cordial greeting immediately reassured her, and in the course of the first conversation she discovered that he and her aunt had supposed that she was in bed before their return from the dinner party, which had not broken up till quite late, so that evidently the escapade of the last evening was known to absolutely no one but the two concerned in it. Flora drew a long breath of relief as all the imagined scandal of the night vanished in the morning sunshine, and went to complete her packing with an easy mind. Last evening's adventure seen

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DEFECTIVE PAGE