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AND

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"HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THEM THAT BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"

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MORNING STAR AND CATHOLIC MESSENGER.
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LOVE'S STRATAGEM.

BY JACQUELINE.

I.

"Love—life—what are ye? since to love and live
No surer record to our times can give."

Achille de Beaumont was a young French physician, with a great many days of leisure to be accounted for,—a title, a chateau, and innumerable fertile estates, to which, on the death of his father, he would fall heir; yet strange to say, with all these golden temptations, added to a strikingly handsome person, he stood that wonder of wonders in this degenerate age, the unspoiled possessor of gifts that have driven thousands to their ruin. Endowed with that high sense of honor and chivalrous sense of duty to God, his country, and fellow-man, for which the families of the *ancien regime* were renowned, he started in life with the determination to use his time, talents, and prospects as might best promote the fulfillment of these objects. Travel possessed great attractions for him, both for the development it afforded his own mental powers, as well as for the excitement and novelty with which each new scene seemed to invest his life. Europe he knew by heart; not that he ever wearied of its innumerable pages, fraught with all that can exalt the mind, glorify art, and hallow its remembrance; but there can be at times a satiety of the beautiful—times when the mind needs rest from too much thought, and the heart grows weary with its own weight of feeling—and laboring under some such influence, Achille determined to try a newer and less exciting scene, and with the prejudice so common among the most enlightened Europeans, he expected to find in America the repose of wood and hill, dotted here and there with peaceful hamlet and vale, little dreaming of the never-sleeping activity, noise, and confusion which would be his first greeting in the new world toward which he determined to trace his steps. It was the fourth evening of his arrival in the great Gotham, and we meet him sauntering along Broadway with his old American friend, Harold Egmont, whom he had not met since they parted last under the shadow of the mighty pyramids; and as they clasped then each other's hands for the last time, remembering all the pleasant days they had passed in travel together, parting now perhaps never to meet again, each felt that the shadow on their own hearts was as deep as that which for forty centuries these old-time monuments had thrown upon earth and sky.

"Well, Achille," said Egmont, "are you weary yet of the rush and whirl of our go-ahead people, or are you still lost in wonder at what you just called our giant strides to possess all the world?"

"Weary of this incessant, sleepless whirl—this wheel of Ixion—I must confess to being; but at the same time I must acknowledge that every moment only increase my amazement at the untiring velocity with which you Americans grasp everything, from a land speculation to a filibuster meeting. One might almost be tempted to think that when the archangel blows his note of doom, the American people will never think themselves included in the summons, for surely they never take time either to hear or think."

"You are mistaken, my dear fellow; there are plenty of thinking minds among our people," said Egmont, with some warmth, "otherwise where would we find the brains that furnish so many magazines, newspapers, etc., with such a fund of reading matter; beside, you must remember, that we are the greatest reading people in the world, though I must confess that an awful amount of trash is consumed in the process; but after you get out of this bedlam, and visit some of our interior and less cosmopolitan cities, your opinion will take a wider range and your views do us more justice. But let me see!—I think you are a little ennuied with being already lionized by Fifth Avenue eyes; what do you say to a look at Gris in "Norma" to-night? After that a *petit souper*, and a quiet *tele-a-tele* about home scenes and old times; just you and I alone?"

"That will suit me exactly. True, I have not much curiosity to hear Gris, because the critics say she is but the shadow of her former self; and as I last heard her in the very zenith of her greatness and glory, I do not quite fancy destroying the spell she then cast around me; but Gris can never be mediocre, and in "Norma," to see her is of itself a picture that needs no sound of voice to interpret its *vraisemblance*—so let's be off."

Arrived at the opera-house, finding it early and no sign of a crowd, they stood on the pavement watching the comers, and continuing their conversation, when their attention was attracted by a handsome private carriage, drawing up immediately under the gas-light by which they were stand-

ing. A middle-aged gentleman stepped out, and stood looking down the street, as if waiting for some one; in a moment two men, bearing an arm-chair, were seen to approach, observing which, the gentleman turned to the carriage door, saying audibly to some one within: "All right, Alice, they are here, and only a few persons about, so we are in good time, and you will not have many eyes to encounter." The curiosity of our friends was somewhat excited by this little occurrence, only however to be greatly increased when they saw the gentleman take tenderly in his arms the slight figure of an apparently young girl, and place her in the arm-chair, behind which stood respectfully the two men. As she was seated she raised her eyes and cast a hurried look around; both the young men uttered an involuntary exclamation of surprise, for from those eyes beamed forth a beauty rarely seen, and Achille felt that a face more beautiful in its wondrous regularity of feature and expression, he had never met even in his long wanderings, from the cold, stately English beauty to the warmer and softer loveliness of the daughters of Italy and Spain. Keenly impressionable to that type of beauty wherein the soul speaks through the eyes, he felt as he gazed that for the first time he beheld the ideal for which he had so long and vainly sought. Grasping Egmont's arm, he hurried him up the steps, his eyes fixed on the chair, which was borne to one of the private boxes. Gris was forgotten—he only thought of finding a position from whence he could gaze unnoticed upon this new-found revelation, and thus determine how far first impressions could be relied upon for future judgment.

They had not to wait long in the parquette before the party in question made its appearance within range of their unorgotten vision. The lady was again assisted from the chair in which she had been carried, to a large, comfortably-cushioned fauteuil, placed in front of the box, evidently for some such purpose. The palor of her face, and the anxiety of her friends in arranging her seat, spoke the invalid, and proved that she feared her strength being overtaken. In a few moments she raised her head from the back of the chair, where she had rested it, smiled upon her attendants, and then, as she was relieved of her wrappings, cast her large, black, luminous eyes around the house with evident curiosity and interest. A mass of white gossamer floated about and around her head like a cloud, here and there revealing a braid of black, glossy hair. A white opera cloak enveloped her form, just sufficiently bared at the throat to show its swan-like proportions, graced by a few strands of pearls, to which was attached a cross of the same. Her manner, her attitude, evidenced her nervous sensibility, and the eye of the young doctor saw with pain yet with interest the many sudden quick starts that every rush of the coming crowd into the fast filling house occasioned her. He had seen enough in the constant play of her expressive features to satisfy him of the truth of Lavater's theory, and the beauty and purity of the inner life seemed revealed to him as if by magic.

As he thus gazed, weaving his golden dream-woof, the overture began, but he did not hear it—the curtain rose, and the grand Druid chorus filled every ear and soul save one in that house. Finer and newer study for him was that nature, which, keenly alive to the highest sense of the beautiful, hears and sees for the first time its true delineation. He sees that every nerve pulsates to the great harmony; her eyes grow lustrous, her cheek flushes, her hands twitch nervously, and her whole being is alive with its new-found utterance. A shout of welcome, and behold—Gris. She might almost imagine herself amid the art-enthusiasm of her own bright land, rather than gazing into the faces of a strange people, reputed, too, as only a money-loving race.

Achille, for the first time in his life, felt as if he possessed a duplicate of the senses; his ears drank in every note of Casta Diva, so divinely rendered; he saw every pose of the priestess' pliant form, and yet he never lost a change in that other countenance, so varied by the new-dawning light with which this heavenly power, now for the first time flooded her soul. Gris was an old story,—but that fragile woman, so young, so beautiful, the victim of a hard fate, was a new leaf, never before turned for his reading. How eagerly, how anxiously every nerve strung to its utmost tension, did she follow the whole scene; now her face expressed admiration for the noble, gifted priestess, now sympathy for the forsaken, sorrowing woman; while horror depicts itself in every lineament, as she beholds Norma bend with her dagger over the sleeping babes, followed by triumph when she sees the avenger yield to the true and stronger instinct of the mother's undying love. When, in the last scene, Gris concentrates all the trusting, forgiving woman, the loving wife and mother led to sacrifice; all hearts forget, through the power of her matchless delineation, that the golden sickle no longer severs the mistletoe for propitiation, and that the sacred fire, with its attendant virgins, has, like those misguided hearts, consumed itself to ashes, leaving only a funeral urn, though everlasting mem-

ory of such scenes, the voiceless monument of Stonehenge.

With the fall of the curtain the spell is broken, and the crowd jostle each other as only an American crowd can; one might suppose the house on fire, judging from the eagerness each one shows to reach the open air. Not so Achille, who, insensible to the impatience of Egmont, kept his eyes still fixed on the private box, the occupants of which seemed in no hurry to move; and not until the house was nearly empty did the attendants of the lady envelop her in her outdoor wrappings, nor could Achille's attention be diverted from her movements until the carriage bore her from all further observation.

"Well!" exclaimed Egmont, as with a sigh Achille turned towards him, "if all Gris's audience heard and saw as little of her efforts as you did, I think she would not feel particularly flattered; truly, I never saw a man so completely bewitched in my life, and by a woman, too, in all probability, you will never see again, much less one that by any possibility you can ever know."

"Don't be too certain about that, my fast friend," said Achille, "I never yet was balked in any determination of my life, and I certainly do not intend to be in this. Unless the lady has her habitation in the moon, I shall see her again—aye, and know her, too."

"She don't live quite so high up, but she is almost as inaccessible in her present abode," answered Egmont.

"Can it be possible," exclaimed Achille, not giving his friend time to finish his sentence, "that you know aught about her? Tell me quick," seizing violently Egmont's arm, "don't keep me another minute in suspense."

"Gently, if you please, *mon cher*; my arm happens to be of flesh and blood. Here we are at Delmonico's, and if you are not hungry and thirsty, I am; and for your consolation I promise that the moment I appease these cravings, I will tell you all I know, and what Mrs. Grundy says, of your fair unknown."

Ordering a light but choice supper, seasoned with a bottle of champagne, Egmont found a great deal to say, while discussing it, of Gris and Mario, the opera in general, the growing musical talent of the people, evidenced by their appreciative conduct that night, continuing his discourse on a broader range of that and other subjects, when Achille, who had only been coquetting with the contents of his plate, suddenly asked him if he had forgotten his promise, or supposed his own patience inexhaustible?

"Why, neither one nor the other," said Egmont, "only I thought it a pity to damp your new-found ardor too suddenly, because a married woman—"

"Ciel!" exclaimed Achille, with a start that nearly upset the table, "why in the name of all the saints couldn't you have said that before, and then there would have been an end of the subject?"

"You Frenchmen are so rapid with your own language, that you cannot give a slower and more wordy individual a chance to say what he wants, before you are off with your own conclusions, and very often wrongones, too; so, with your leave, I'll just begin that sentence over, and if you can keep still long enough, perhaps finish it more to your satisfaction. Well, I was saying, because a married woman—that is, a widow, same thing to me—is not the one that I should think at all likely to suit your taste in the line matrimonial, therefore, as there were other more agreeable topics on my mind at the moment, I thought it better not to blast your *chateau d'Espagne* too suddenly by my premature information."

"A widow, you say?" spoke Achille, with a brightened countenance. "Well, as that piece of information has neither demolished my chateau nor dulled my curiosity, will you, now that you have discharged your duty to that last oyster, proceed with the story you promised?"

"I little thought, when I proposed this supper and *tele-a-tele*, that all the talking was to fall to my share," said Egmont; "au contraire, I was anticipating a long and interesting chapter from you on the many incidents of your life since we last parted, now two years ago. You, always so voluble; a moral or a *bon mot* equally at your listener's service; and I, only entrapped into long sentences, as in the present case, on compulsion! But as you have furnished the theme, I will try my best to do it justice. This lady, then, who has so magically taken possession of your heart, is, as I said, a widow—a fair young widow of only twenty-one years. Her father was a lawyer of fine talents, living, at the time of his marriage and Alice's birth, (for that is her name,) in one of our large Northern cities. From her mother, who was the daughter of one of the most distinguished French families among the many in Louisiana, Alice inherits much of that pure French type of beauty which has played such havoc with your heart. She was but five years old when her mother died, leaving Mr. Raymond almost a broken-hearted man. His health from that time rapidly failed, and the old scenes of his former happiness seemed rather to increase than allay his bitter memories. By the advice, then, of his physicians and friends, he was induced to leave the beloved

South and try the more bracing air of the North, hoping that such a complete change of scene and climate might restore his lost spirits and rapidly failing health; nor did their expectations prove vain. In a few months Mr. Raymond was once more able to resume his practice, and very soon found himself in a position which would enable him to reclaim the losses his ill-health had occasioned, and provide to his heart's content for Alice's future education. He could not bear the child out of his sight, yet his good sense and strong love told him that as a man he could not perform the duties so necessary for her health and the proper cultivation of her mind; so, like a sensible man, he determined to sacrifice his own pleasure to her interest—to accomplish which he made it his business to find such a home and such guardians as would ensure the fulfillment of his fondest wishes in her regard. After many inquiries and much deliberation, his choice fell upon a Catholic institution under the charge of the Sisters of Charity. They, he knew, would more nearly supply the dead mother's place to his little one than those who paid no heed to the promise: "Whatever ye do for one of these little ones, ye have done unto me,"—a command and promise which away the every act of these devoted women. So to their care he committed Alice, trying to soften the separation by frequent letters and visits. Well, to make a long story short, matters progressed favorably for both—Alice improving in health, beauty, and learning, beyond his most sanguine expectations, while his own prospects at the bar gave promise of rapid advancement, when, just as Alice entered her fifteenth year, Mr. Raymond again became so ill as to necessitate his immediate withdrawal from all business cares. Sadly against his will, Alice was brought home to take her place by his bedside and look after the comforts of his little home. Bravely, nobly, and well did she perform all her duties—her character and powers seeming to develop in accordance with each new claim upon them. There is nothing like trouble to bring out the finer qualities of a woman's heart; if there is any gold there, depend upon it, sorrow is the alchemy to extract it, what makes men cross, morose, and selfish, turns woman's finer nature into something very like an angel's.

"Thus eight months passed, and Mr. Raymond gave evident signs of failing rapidly. Seeing his little means not likely to more than last his own life, occasioned him many a bitter pang of anxiety for the future of his dear child. In the midst of the conflicting thoughts and vain efforts growing out of this subject, there arrived most unexpectedly from his old home a very dear friend, who had, by accident, heard of his illness, and had hastened North for the sole purpose of ministering to his necessities and looking after the future of Alice. You may divine the rest—how the friend's devotion won the daughter's gratitude; how her heart, hitherto, only occupied by the father, the good Sisters and her schoolmates, now found room in it for this stranger who had come in the guise of a ministering angel.

"A susceptible and tender-hearted girl can never withhold affection from those who show her kindness and consideration. It is this feeling, which many in their early life, who know nothing of the depth of their own hearts, mistake for love—learning, often when too late, their fatal error. No wonder, then, that the father, in answer to his friend's entreaties, begged Alice to consent to be his wife. Having before her eyes the hopelessness of his recovery, and seeing the eagerness with which he seemed to grasp at this promise of hope and protection from her, she gave her consent. What if she was but a child, just in her sixteenth summer, and Mr. Hampton twenty years her senior? More certain, thought Mr. Raymond, of her future life being guarded from temptation and shielded from care; so she was married—and in one short week after, Mr. Raymond folded his hands in peaceful serenity for his daughter's future, and closed his eyes upon a life which had been one of many cares and much deep-hearted anguish.

"Mr. Hampton lost no time in settling Mr. Raymond's affairs, and then started with his young, sorrowing bride for his Southern home. The climate proving too enervating for Alice, they returned within the year to the neighborhood of her old home, doubly hallowed now by her father's grave, where her husband purchased a beautiful house, surrounding it with every requisite of beauty and comfort. There he spent two peaceful and happy years, never wearying of his child-wife, or regretting any sacrifice for her pleasure or comfort. But the summons came for him, too, and he passed away after a few days' illness, leaving his fair young wife sole heiress to all his wealth. A few months after her husband's death, her health, never strong, began to fail, and ere long unmistakable symptoms of a spinal affection ripened into disease and comparative helplessness.

"All that medical skill could do was done, but in vain; and no wonder, for I believe that the species of living martyrdom that the doctors subject the victims of such diseases to, increase far more than they lessen the suffering.

"Now," continued Egmont, rising from his seat and walking the floor, "I have given you the veritable biography of your *inamorata*, and I am of opinion that even Thackeray could not have served it up in much finer style, only that he would have seasoned here and there with a cynicism or sarcasm, a species of spice that some people like amazingly; not I, for one, seeing but little use in snarling at all mankind, simply because there are wicked and disagreeable natures on the globe. I think if he would devote more time to hunting up the good that is certainly somewhere in human nature, he would find less of the evil at which he so constantly cavils."

"You have, indeed, done yourself and theme ample justice," replied Achille, "and after this sample I will never again doubt the superiority of your colloquial powers. But I don't see, in all that I have heard, any reason why I cannot make a nearer approach to the lady than I might to a wood or water nymph, for certainly she is flesh and blood."

"Oh, that part of the story remains yet to be told; only, as Mrs. Grundy stands godmother, I cannot vouch for the truth of all she says, though it is borne out in part by the lady's own conduct. Thus, then, runs the gossip, or rather the interpretation that people give to what they can't understand: because Alice is a widow it does not follow that her heart is dead; on the contrary, the supposition is that she has never yet experienced the *grande passion*, and knowing herself susceptible, young, rich, and beautiful, only makes her feel more keenly her suffering and helplessness; she feels that she has no right ever again to think of marrying, and so, to escape temptation, she scrupulously avoids the acquaintance of, for instance, such fascinating individuals as you or me, and only receives a few old friends, married ladies and their husbands, with such young girls as have got sense and feeling enough to appreciate her society and sympathize with her musical and literary tastes. She is not one to lower herself to the level of the common herd; indeed, from all accounts, she is rather above the world than of it; for this reason she is called selfish and affected by those who cannot comprehend a nature so elevated. Unfortunately there are people, you know, who would like to drag every one down to their own level, and when they fail they take their revenge in a variety of spiteful and malicious acts and words—shafts that are as apt to hit home as elsewhere. When I meet such specimens I must confess that I do rather admire Thackeray's slashing style. But to return to this protracted subject: I trust that you can now comprehend the hopelessness of your views. Can you suppose for an instant that, however ethereal she may be, the little spark of humanity that is left could stand the full blaze of such a splendid fellow's charms, to say nothing of the prospective coronet? After cloistering herself from such every-day mortals as myself, it is not likely that the drawbridge will be lowered and the citadel surrendered at your word of command. No; no, my friend, turn your attention elsewhere, for depend upon it, you will find the spirit of a Penelope in that fragile form."

"Certainly, I now see, that a man would possess great temerity to pursue this modern Daphne, if all you say is true; so let the subject rest," said Achille, with a strange and somewhat perturbed expression of countenance; "but it is very late, and as I have still a letter to write before the mail closes, I must bid you good night."

"So saying the friends parted—Achille for his room at the St. Nicholas, and Egmont to his own home, where we will leave them both to the train of thought and of dreams that their night's adventure and conversation may produce.

[To be Continued.]

WHO ARE THE ENLIGHTENED?—Dr. Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, lately delivered an address before the Roman Catholic Young Men's Association, in the course of which he said:

He held that true enlightenment was essential to religion, and the more enlightened people were the better Catholics would they make. The most learned people—he did not mean in philology or such like, but the people who were the most intellectually enlightened—in the world were the Italians. And why? Simply because they had the light of faith handed down to them in one unbroken line from its first revelation to the world. He took another example. It was a nation which had been oppressed and down-trodden beyond any other people of the earth. He meant Ireland. The Irish people had been persecuted in every way for years; and yet in all intellectual pursuits they left the English immeasurably behind them—for they had preserved throughout their religion, and the enlightenment which it brought to their minds.

Good breeding is a guard upon the tongue; the misfortune is, that we put it on and off with our fine clothes and visiting faces, and we do not wear it where it is most wanted—at home.