NORTHWEST ENTERPRISE

And The News of The Georgian Gulf, The Fuca Straits and Puget Sound

Vol. 4 — Anacortes W. T., Saturday, June 27, 1885. — No. 15

THE NORTHWEST ENTERPRISE

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY AT ANACORTES, WASHINGTON TER

—BY—

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PROPRIETOR.

Entered at the Post-office as second class matter.

Subscription Rates

One Year	$2.00
Six Months	$1
Three Months	50

Legal Advertising Rates.

One square (13 lines) first insertion	1.00
Each subsequent insertion	50

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THE WEDMORES' "HOP."

A JERSEY STORY.

"My dear, they are as good as engaged; they always were together even before Gertie was in her teens; and two years ago, when she was sixteen, there was a tremendous row. Miss Fox, in her usual amiable way, congratulated both Colonel Moray and Mrs. Clive on the engagement. Of course the result was astonishment, indignation, Percy and Gertie called up to judgment, vows of eternal constancy, Gertie sent to school for six months; and ever since then, whenever Percy has been over here, six 'rounds' together at every hop, and all the squares sat out in the garden, whether Mrs. Clive liked it or not. I suppose, now Percy has this money left him, it will be all right."

So spoke Miss May Faulkner, a Jersey belle, aged twenty, to her companion, Clare Grattan, a girl two years her senior, who had come from England on a visit to the Clives above mentioned.

The girls were strolling slowly along the St. Helier's broad white sands; they were lagging rather behind the rest of their party, which had split itself up into two other couples.

Clare Grattan's heart was heavy with a dull oppression of pain, the result of a fear become a reality, as she answered:

"Then you think Mr. Moray" (there was a momentary pause before she spoke this name) "and Gertie care for one another?"

"Think so? Look there!"

As May spoke she pointed to the figures of a young girl and man who were standing apart at the water's edge, their outlines sharply defined against the sunset glow. Their faces were turned toward the sea, away from Clare; but she, looking at the young man's bent head, the girl's upturned one, could fancy only too well the look of Percival Moray's brown eyes. Had she not known it to her own cost?

She had been a fool, she thought, and only that afternoon had been happy in her folly. Clare Grattan had only been six weeks at Jersey but that time had been fuller and more intense to her than all the years of her yet early womanhood; she had learned her own heart at length; had grown into love.

For the last month she had found herself, whenever she was at a dance, waiting with a feverish impatience for the advent of a tall, slight figure, with a bright, honest face, the charm of which it was difficult to analyze, but impossible not to feel. She had listened every morning, as she sat in the breakfast room with Gertie, for a cheerful voice calling them from the garden below, and begging them to come out for a practice at lawn-tennis; and she had felt a new intense pleasure in the rare talks in which Percival seemed to show her glimpses of that other "soul side" which a man keeps to show a woman when he loves her." He suited her as no one else had ever done, and she had fancied that he wished to let her know that he loved her.

And yet she had feared sometimes—and, as it had proved, had had reasons for her fears—that Gertie and Percival had loved one another; and now, thought Clare now, could any girl who had once cared for Percival Moray become indifferent to him?

Clare still was pondering when Gertie turned her steps toward her friends.

"Do you know that it is near seven o'clock, Clare? We shall have a nice scolding from mamma if we are late for dinner, and we promised to be at the Wedmores' by a quarter to nine."

Clare smiled faintly.

"How horribly fagged you do look! Not at all like dancing. These last three nights have been too much for you."

"Are you tired?" asked Percy of Miss Grattan, bending toward her.

If he had only known the sharp thrill of pain the tone of his voice caused her! She was glad to hear her own sound unconstrained as she answered:

"Not at all, thank you."

"We have come too far along the sands; I ought to have remembered. Won't you take my arm?"

"Oh, no; I am all right."

He said no more, but, turning again to Gertie, called out to two other individuals who had apparently forgotten everything else in the contemplation of a dead starfish at all events they had been gazing at it for full five minutes when Percy's voice reached them.

"Halloo Rashton! come on; it's getting late."

Thus addressed, the two defaulters moved slowly toward the rest of the little group. The conversation, as they strolled along, was after this wise:

"Be a brick, Miss Wedmore, and try to give a miserable wretch a chance."

"How can I? I can't make Gertie like you."

"Keep that fellow Moray out of the way, so that I may try my luck at least."

"You're doing your very best to ruin it by seeming to flirt with me Gertie is awfully jealous, mind."

"Hang it! I beg your pardon, I mean——"

"You needn't, I don't mind it."

"I think I have most reason for jealousy. Why, I know that she and Moray were spoons once, even if they are not now."

"Yes, but Gertie can't know that I am only playing confidante."

"Never you mind; only help me, and you shall see what the bridesmaids' lockets will be like."

"For shame, Captain Rashton! bribery and corruption! By the way I have a weakness for opals."

"I'll make a note of that," answered Captain Rashton, taking out his pocket-book for the purpose.

Certainly, to an unitiated eye, the two had decidedly as much the appearance of flirting as Percival and Gertie had, and a keen observer might have connected that fact with the wrathful flash of Miss Clive's blue eyes, and her sharp, petulant answers when addressed. Clare did not do so, but imagined that these signs of ill-temper in her friend were owing to some fault of Percy's, and inwardly determined, now that she knew of the understanding between Mr. Moray and Gertie, to abstain even from any appearance of intimacy with the former, lest it should wound her friend, whom she knew was a little inclined to be exacting.

"She needn't be afraid, though," thought poor Clare to herself. "I know he is true. If he loved me, I would trust him entirely."

The party broke up at the top of King Street, Florence Wedmore going one way, and the three other girls holding the opposite course.

"Good by for an hour and a half," said Florence. "Captain Rashton and Percy, you are to come back home with me and give the floors a last polish."

If Gertie's face could be said to be dark at any time, it certainly was as she, with Clare and May, turned toward that quarter of St. Helier's popularly known as "the Shingles."

"What a flirt Florence is!" she remarked, with virtuous indignation.

"People who live in glass-houses," answered May. "The idea of you accusing any one of flirting, Gertie, is rather too fine, considering the way you have always treated Percy."

"Percy and I understand one another," answered Gertie, curtly.

Meanwhile Clare, in her room, was trying to convince herself against her heart's assurance that Percy did not love her, and that if he did (illogical but girlish sequence), it was her duty to Gertie to reject his affection, and bid him render it to her to whom it was due.

She would be loyal to her friend at all costs to herself.

A light tap at the door, and Gertie entered, looking very pretty in a soft white silk, much smothered with lace.

"How shall I do, Clare?"

"I never saw you look so well," said Miss Grattan, and she spoke the truth. Gertie's eyes were shining like bits of sunlit summer sea; her cheeks "as crimson dyed ingrain;" her fair hair was ruffled in that sweet order of disorder which best suits a Greuze face and low white brow.

"Will you put in my flowers?" said Gertie, holding up the great pink bells of the belladonna lily for Clare to fasten in her hair.

"Thank you, dear," as it was accomplished, and the little lady pirouetted round, humming a waltz in a manner which caused Clare to exclaim:

"Gertie, are you bewitched? What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," said Gertie, bursting out singing in her sweet, rather small soprano:

"Si vous n'avez rien à me dire,
Pourquoi venir suprès de moi?"

Oh, Clare, how badly Miss Fox sang that the other night, like a peacock with the influenza! And she needn't ask the question, considering how people avoid her."

"Oh, the question is rather a pertinent one sometimes," said Clare lightly, yet with a ring of pain in her tone

"Yes," said Gertie bitterly; then with a sudden faltering of her voice, and a burst of tears, "Oh, Clare, I am so unhappy!"

Clare put her arms around her and let her sob for a few moments in silence, then she spoke.

"I am very sorry; but, Gertie, you needn't be afraid; I am sure he cares for you." Her words were very brave, and her lips did not tremble as she spoke.

"Do you think so?" and Gertie lifted her head from where it rested on her friend's breast. "But why does he flirt so? I am proud and don't show it, but it pains me dreadfully, Clare. I feel sometimes as if—oh, why should he hurt me when I love him?"

"Is she trying to ask me not to flirt with him?" thought Gertie's friend, and the hot glow of wounded pride, far deeper and stronger than that of the younger girl, burned her pale cheek at the idea that she, Clare Grattan, should be suspected of flirting. It was some little time before she slowly answered:

"I should trust him and be sure he deserves it; and, Gertie"—she spoke nervously and as if frightened lest her friend should be offended "I wouldn't give him any cause for jealousy by being too much to-night with——"

"There's the carriage," said Gertie, springing up. "I am very sorry, dear, I can't take your advice, as it's the exact opposite to what I mean to do. I shall treat him just as he treats me."

With which words Miss Clive ran down stairs, and Clare had no opportunity for saying more.

Percival Moray was a lieutenant of Hussars whose father lived in Jersey. The boy himself, when a child, became a favorite with his mother's brother, who proclaimed him as his heir, petted him as a child, sent him to Eton, bought him his commission, only asking in return that he should spend half of his holidays and leaves with him, and who had died a twelve-month ago, leaving Percy two thousand a year, and a pretty old house in Kent.

So two months before this evening, Moray sold out and came over to Jersey to win the old love; when, to his great disgust, he discovered that he no longer cared for her, nor she for him. Still they went on playing at love till Clare Grattan came on her visit to the Clives and Percy felt honestly, heartily in love with her.

Nevertheless, he felt he was, in a manner, bound to marry Gertie if she wished it—and it was hardly likely, he thought, that she did not; for the girl was full of wounded pride and indignation against the man she loved, and held the sweet jest up by dancing, talking, and flirting with Percy so desperately that she deceived both him and Captain Rashton into the idea that she was in love with the former.

It was full half an hour before Percy was able to gain Clare's side and ask for "the dance you promised me."

She knew it would be far more marked if she refused, so took his arm as the first bars of the waltz sounded.

Clare was fond of waltzing, and Percy's long, swinging, yet perfectly smooth step suited her better than any other. She could not help enjoying the swift motion, and the certainty that under his guidance she was safe from the merciless knocking and bumping against other couples to which many men subject their unfortunate partners.

The last slow chords sounded, and they stopped.

"Ah," said Percy, drawing a long breath, "it's warm."

"It is," assented Clare.

"But the garden is cool," said Percy.

"So people seem to think," she answered, laughing.

For every one had poured out of the ball-room to the cool night air, and the white dresses gleamed dimly among the trees on the small lawn.

"They have placed the refreshment-table out there," said the young man. "Don't you want some claret cup?"

The want was supplied, and they sat down on a rustic seat near the table. The lawn seemed nearly as full as the dancing room had been a few minutes before; and Clare watched Gertie, as she was evidently engaged in a furious flirtation with a man whom she knew Percy disliked.

"She must do it to vex him," Clare thought, quite ignorant that Gertie had not once thought of Mr. Moray this evening.

From the veranda sounded the warning bars of a galop, and the lawn began to be deserted. Clare would have risen, but Percy stopped her.

"Don't go yet," he said; "at least, if you are not engaged for this."

"But I am."

"Then let your partner find you."

"No, I really must go I want to——"

"Oh, I know what you want—to avoid me."

"Mr. Moray!"

"I beg your pardon if I am rude; but how have I offended you?"

"You have not."

"Then why do you always try to escape speaking to me? What have I done?"

"Nothing. I——"

"Why do you stop? Oh, Clare, Clare! don't you know that I love you?"

There was silence. For one moment a great pulse of joy throbbed through the girl's whole being; then came the sickening remembrance of Gertie.

"You don't speak; you do care for me! I knew it, my Clare!"

He would have taken her hand, but she withdrew it.

"How about Gertie?" she said, quietly. "Are you not engaged?"

He did not answer for a moment; then said:

"Is that childish bond to stand between you and me? Clare, Gertie and I are nothing to each other now; we have outgrown our fancy long ago."

"You may have; she has not. Percy, if I trust you with her heart secret, respect it. She loves you, and all her gayety is put on to hide her pain at your neglect. Oh, think how base I must feel—her friend whom she trusted—to let you speak so to me!"

"*You* base! you, Clare darling! I've been a thoughtless brute; and I see it now. Forgive me!"

"Yes."

"And love me?"

He spoke timidly, as knowing he would be denied. Her answer came very low.

"I shall have to learn not to do so."

"Then you do?" he said, quickly.

"I cannot help it;" and there was a break of a sob in her voice.

"And you ask me to give you up, knowing that—to win my heaven on earth, and turn away from it? Clare, you cannot."

"I must!" and the bitter agony of the tone only showed the firmness of her resolve.

"Percy, you are honorable; don't make me despise you, as I should if you were false to Gertie."

"But, Clare, I love you, not Gertie."

"She loves you," Clare answered, with the sublime unreasonableness of a woman. "And right is right, though it is hard—oh, so hard!"

"It is something to hear you say that it is hard," he answered, in a smothered tone. "But you don't know how cruel you are to me, or how you have grown into my life. I never meant to love; but this evening, when I saw you I felt I must speak and know if you——"

She laid her hand on his.

"And you have made it all the harder for me," he said. "If I had still thought that you did not care for me, I might have turned to Gertie; but now——"

"You will do what is right," she answered, while the tears would spring to her eyes.

"Right! Is it right to marry a girl I do not love?"

"You will learn to do so; she is so dear you cannot help it."

"Cannot I? Clare, your face is the one face for me on earth; you the one woman."

She rose, blindly, nobly wrong in her self-denial.

"I cannot listen to more," she said, in a choked voice; to her own heart she added, "I dare not."

"Clare!" he rose and caught her wrists. There was no one to see; the garden was again dark and silent, except where the light streamed from the veranda "I only want to say good-by."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you think I could go on as I am doing now—see you for the next month every day, and know that you love me and that you will never be more to me than now? It would drive me mad. No, I shall leave here by to-morrow's boat."

"But, Percy——"

"You need not think that," he said, with a sudden fierce burst of anger; "if she and I were alone on this earth, I would not marry Gertie. You have done her no good—or, rather, no harm. Dear little thing, she deserves a better fate than a husband who does not care for her."

There was silence; then Percy spoke again, his voice strangely humble and gentle:

"One kiss, Clare for our good-by; only one, my dear."

"No," she said; and her tone was both stern and surprised.

He said no more; side by side they returned to the house Clare's heart was full with the unutterable longing to turn to the man beside her and say "Stay;" Percy's with a wild turmoil of anger and love. He felt dimly that his love gave him a right over Clare; that her power, "woman-like to weave sweet words," had been exerted wrongly; that her sacrifice was a needless one, which would mar both their lives, and for no good.

A hard grasp of her hand, a low spoken good-by in answer to her whispered "Forgive me!" and he was gone. When would she see him again? Dizzy and faint with dull misery, she sat down in the veranda.

The dance was over. The two girls climbed rather wearily up the bedroom stairs of the Retreat.

"Come in here, Clare," said Gertie, as they reached the latter's door.

Clare's wearied eyes looked piteously at her friend, as her lips repeated for the third time that evening the excuse, "I am so tired."

"Only for a minute, dear." Gertie drew her in and shut the door; then said, "You were right."

"What do you mean?" asked Clare stupidly amazed.

"He loves me," said Gertie, pressing her small hands close against the faded pink lilies on her breast; "he always has, and I was only a little fool to think he was flirting with Florence."

"He! Who?"

"Robert—I mean Captain Rashton. Clare, are you ill?"

For Clare's face was white, her eyes closed, the heavily cut lips closed together.

"No, Gertie, I am quite well. But I don't understand. Don't you love Per—Mr. Moray?"

"Love Percy! I left off doing so more than a year ago. I only used him as a decoy-duck to draw Robert on."

"And in doing so may have unknowingly wrought evil to two people," thought poor Clare.

Percy was to leave Jersey on the morrow; she might never see him again; he might go abroad, and never hear of the real state of things.

But she remembered it was hardly likely that a man possessing both relations and friends in Jersey would not hear very quickly of his old love's engagement to another man; and she wished Gertie happiness very warmly, and was glad in her gladness, staying with her more than half an hour, listening to her talk about Captain Rashton.

She was glad to be alone, though, in her own room—alone, free to thank God for the great happiness which yet might be hers.

And was; for in less than a fortnight later Clare was standing under the shade of a tall flowering myrtle, the aromatic scent of which filled the autumn air with bitter sweetness Percy was beside her, very gravely contented, and on her left hand was the shimmer of a sapphire ring she had only worn a week.

"You came back very quickly," she said "Were you afraid I should forget you?"

"I wanted to be sure," he answered.

"You needn't have been afraid," and her face glowed a little. "Percy?"

"Clare?"

"Do you know, I almost think I was in the wrong that night."

"I am sure you were."

She laughed, but her tone was grave as she said, "Are you angry with me?"

"Angry with you for showing how strong you were to do what seemed right to you? You must think me a brute, Clare!"

"It seemed to tear my heart out to have to deny you; and I see I was wrong now."

"So do I; but I am not sorry for it, Clare, for it taught me"—he drew her closer to him as he spoke—"how far above myself is the woman I love."

THE *Freie Presse*, of San Antonio, tells of a species of ants found in this State which make a honey equal to any that is produced by bees. The little insects store the honey, as they gather it, in a pouch about the size of a small pea that is attached to their bodies. When this is full they march into the cells of their subterranean habitations, and there unload. The *Presse* says that these ant-hills are as full of honey as beehives, and suggests that they could be turned to the same practical food-producing use if similar care were taken in breeding and cultivating the insect

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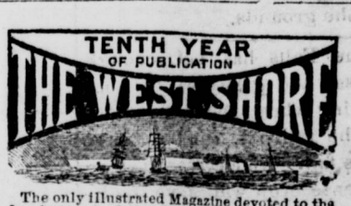

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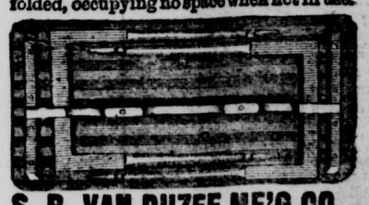

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