

"SOMEBODY'S MOTHER."

The woman was old and gaunt, and gray, And bent with the cold of the winter's day; The streets were white with a recent snow, And the woman's feet with age were slow.

At the crowded crossing she waited long, Just as the day was at its darkest hour; For I saw her, who passed her by, Unto the silence of her anxious eye.

Down the street, with laughter and shout, Goad in the freedom of "school let out," Came happy boys, their faces a sleep, Bounding now, puffed white and gray. Fast the woman, so old and gray, Hastened the children home.

Now off at a hard, long hand to her, So weak, so weary, afraid to stir, Let the carriage wheels or the horses' feet Should trample her down in the slippery street,

At last came out of the merry troop The gayest boy, who had whistled low, "I'll help you across, if you wish to go!"

Her aged hand on his strong, young arm She clasped, and so, without him or harm, He gave her a kiss, and then a smile, Pround that in own were firm and strong; Then back again to his friends he went. His young heart happy and strong.

"Somebody's Mother" bowed low her head, In her home that night and the prayer she said Was for the kind of love which she had known, Who's Son is a Son's, and pride and joy.

Paint was the voice, and worn and weak; But Heavens lit when its chosen spake; Angels caught the faltering word, And "Somebody's Mother" a prayer was heard.

ST. MARIE.

I was engaged. I never could tell exactly how it came about. My betrothed was high-bred, beautiful, belonged to aristocratic circles, and declared by those who had become sufficiently acquainted with her of what risks, whether socially and politically ostracized, I would direct my energies toward the total demolishing of all conventionalism which presented a decent man's enjoyment. There was nothing selfish, of course, in this view of the case.

"What do you imagine, mother, to be the result?" I asked of this august individual, as she stood warming her feet at the grate, "that I could not persuade Miss de Vere to spend the evening with me in the library?" She ran away like a frightened fawn.

"Do you mean to insinuate, Frank, that you extended an invitation to Miss de Vere to that effect?" inquired my mother, looking straight into my eyes with her keen black ones.

"Indeed, mother. But I distinctly declare that I did extend an invitation of that character to Miss de Vere, which invitation she declined."

"Which distinctly proved that the governess had more correct idea of propriety than a gentleman, born and bred, whose education has been conducted with the strictest regard to the demands of society. This only adds another proof of Miss de Vere's fitness for the position, and furnishes the first testimony ever received of my son's fitness for the company of his equals and superiors."

And my mother, without another word, sailed majestically from the room.

"Knocked my head against a rock! Might have known it!" was my inward ejaculation as the door closed between us.

The next evening I spent with my betrothed. She was as cold, dignified and formal as ever. Some way I began to be dissatisfied with the manner of my treatment, and, though I found myself unable longer to wish two hours on the same sofa with a woman who invariably withdrew her hand from my clasp as soon as it was taken, and insisted that a kiss upon the cheek at coming and going was all the caressing allowable between engaged parties.

"Is this the way lovers usually behave, Miss Marian?" I ventured to inquire, after several ineffectual attempts to keep her around her waist.

"I presume so," was her reply, without the least heightening of color. "All well-bred and refined young men in regard to the requirements of propriety, I presume," and then adroitly changed the conversation; but I was not to be driven from the new platform. I had taken my stand upon any such article.

"And you are positive that all well-bred and refined persons, as you call them, are able to conjugate the verb 'to love' to themselves?" Then engaged persons between well-bred and refined persons are founded upon love?" I am to judge from your behavior that you are deeply in love with the individual now addressing you?"

"I can, I think, refer you to some sort of philosophical treatise on the subject, if there might be a soul behind them. I was tempted to some sort of understanding with myself; but family ties, her restrictions, and the absence of real dependence, mainly kept me in that narrow, contemptible groove of prejudices, dividing between the two cases—but the reader is mistaken.

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I was possessed of \$50,000; my affiance would have as much more when her father died; and so our general future was assured.

Sometimes, as I looked into the mirror, and surveyed the features which appeared as if there might be a soul behind them, I was tempted to some sort of understanding with myself; but family ties, her restrictions, and the absence of real dependence, mainly kept me in that narrow, contemptible groove of prejudices, dividing between the two cases—but the reader is mistaken.

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