

#### THE STATUE OF CLAY.

"Make me a statue, and the king,  
"Of marble white and gold,  
"I must be pure enough to stand  
Before my throne at my right hand;  
The sleeke is waiting! Go."

The sculptor heard the king's command,  
And went upon his way to work.  
He had no marble; but he went,  
With willing mind, an' high intent,  
To mold his thoughts in clay.

Day after day he wrought the clay,  
But knew not what he wrought;  
He sought the help of heart and brain,  
But could not make the riddle plain—  
It lay beyond his thought.

To-day the statue seemed to grow;  
To-morrow it stood still;  
The third day it went well again;  
Thus, year by year, in joy and pain,  
He served his master's will.

At last his lifelong task was done;  
It was a fateful day;  
He took his statue to the king,  
And trembled like a guilty thing  
Because it was but clay.

"Where is my statue?" asked the king.  
"Here, Lord," the sculptor said.  
"But I commanded marble." "True;  
I had that—what could I do  
But mold in clay instead?"

"Then that not unrewarded go;  
Since thou hast done thy best;  
Thy statue shall acceptance win;  
It shall be as it should have been,  
For I will do the rest."

He touched the statue, and it changed;  
The clay falls off, and lo!  
A marble shape before him stands,  
The perfect work of heavenly hands,  
An angel, pure as snow.

#### A NEMESIS.

"A bouquet, sir?"

Elmer Richards starts suddenly, and glances apprehensively at the speaker. Surely there is nothing to fear in the little pink-robed figure before him, with shyly drooping eyes, and white, dimpled hands that just now are engaged in wrapping a bit of silver leaf around the stems of a bunch of flowers.

"Bouquet, sir?" she repeats. "Here is one I am sure you will like, myrtle and tearesos. Shall I arrange it for you?"

He bends forward that she may pin the blossoms on his coat-lapel. He notices how small and white her hands are, and wishes she would raise her fringed lids.

"There: don't you like it?" she says. "The price is a trifle."

Elmer draws a sovereign from his well-filled wallet, and lays it on the counter.

"Keep the remainder for the cause," he says.

The young girl smiles, and raises her eyes to his.

Beautiful eyes they are, large and black, with a yellow fire smoldering in their depths like the gleam of a topaz. They thrill Elmer Richards' heart with a strange emotion.

Can it be that he, a blase man of the world, who has been admired and sought by dozens of beautiful women, has fallen in love with a pretty flower-seller at a charity fair?

He moves away, and accosts an acquaintance moving around the brilliant apartment.

"Who is that young girl with the handsome black eyes—the flower-seller?"

George Ellis looks up at his companion with an amused smile.

"What, Richards, are you smitten?" he says. "Well, you are by no means the first one with whom those eyes have made sad havoc. Her name is Beatrice Irving."

Irving Elmer gives an involuntary start. Irving! Ah, yes, that name is familiar to him! A sad, pale face rises before him, with wistful blue eyes and trembling lips.

It appeared to him once before this evening, when he first heard Beatrice Irving's voice; it haunts him all the evening, and when the fair is over, and he returns to his handsome apartments, he sees it still, and beside it glows the flower-seller's brilliant face.

He remembers the bright June evening when other white hands than hers had decked him with blossoms, and other eyes had smiled up into his. Ah! those little hands will gather flowers no more; those pretty blue eyes sparkle never again; they are closed in the deep slumber that knows no waking.

Elmer Richards starts like a guilty thing as this thought comes to him; he knows why the sweet life ended so early; why the little grave was made so soon for her whose last words were him—pretty Millie Irving.

"Why indulge in these morbid fancies?" he thinks. "It is a thing of the past now, and as such should be forgotten."

So he dismisses the sad, unpleasant memories, and, leaning back in his chair, lights a cigarette, and, watching the curling smoke-wreaths as they float upward, he sees in their midst a dim vision of the rose-tinted face of Beatrice Irving, the flower seller.

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"What, Richards! are you going to snub your friends in this manner?"

"Jerry, old boy, is it you?" he exclaims. "Pon my honor I did not know you! Step up into my room and tell me the news."

"Nice place you've got here," says Jerry, as they enter the luxuriant apartment.

"When did you return?" Elmer asks.

"Only two days ago," is the reply. "Been down to see the folks; lots of company there—a whole household. Oh, by-the-by, Richards, Esther sent you an invitation to come down and enjoy yourself! Nothing else on hand, have you? No? Then of course you'll accept. It will be a good chance for you. Almost a dozen girls, Esther says, and every one either a beauty or an heiress."

"What, are you married?" Elmer inquires.

"No, but engaged, and that amounts to about the same thing," Jerry replies. "Bessie Townsend—don't you remember her? Well, she's there too. But say, you haven't told me whether you are coming or not."

"Yes, I will come."

"Soon as possible, mind," says Jerry. "Esther will be looking for you. Au revoir!"

He goes out, and a few moments later Elmer, looking out of the window, sees his tall form striding up the street with the same carelessness, swinging gait he remembers of old.

A few days later Elmer Richards enters the train en route for the Trows' country residence. That evening he

makes a faultless toilet and descends to the lighted rooms.

Elmer presents him to the other guests, and soon he is engaged in a lively conversation with Jerry's betrothed, Bessie Townsend. Then Esther comes and carries him off to the conservatory. As they enter a recumbent figure rises, and in the dim light Elmer sees the yellow flash of jewels.

"Are you here?" cries Esther. Then, "Miss Irving, Mr. Richards."

The figure takes a step forward, and, a ray of light, streaming through the half-open door, falls upon her face, the brilliant face and lustrous black orbs of Beatrice Irving.

She bows, and her face dimples in a smile of recognition; she has not forgotten that evening at the charity fair.

Elmer gives an amused smile; he is thinking of the little bouquet, the roses and myrtle, and wondering what she would say if she knew of its fate.

Then Esther slips away, and they are left alone together.

Beatrice is a charming conversationalist, and Elmer thinks it is infinitely more agreeable to pass the time with her in the dimly lit conservatory than to chatter with this one and that in the illuminated room beyond.

At last they rise and join the company. As they emerge into the light, Elmer glances at his companion; she looks wonderfully fascinating to-night.

Early one morning, a few days later, Elmer, while strolling through the garden, sees Beatrice standing by a rosebush, endeavoring to disentangle her scarf from the thorns upon which it is caught.

"I am prisoner, you see," she says, with a smile, "and, like most prisoners, much against my will."

"Shall I release you?" asks Elmer; and, coming forward, he deftly disengages the delicate thing.

"Thanks. You should be rewarded for your handiness," Beatrice says, and plucks a white rosebud with a spray of dark green leaves for a background.

As she bends forward to fasten it in its button-hole, their eyes meet, and something in his causes the girl to blush slightly; and, making a hasty movement, a stray thorn pierces her finger. A tiny red drop falls on one of the petals and mars its whiteness.

"There!" Beatrice exclaims, in a vexed tone. "I have spoilt your flower. Let me get you another."

"Never mind," Elmer replies. "It does not show; and, besides, you may scratch your hand again."

"No; I hope I should not be so foolish another time," says Beatrice.

Then they stroll down the shady path together, and enjoy a pleasant chat, until the bell calls them in to breakfast.

The summer days pass quickly by, and some of Esther's guests take their departure. Beatrice Irving and Elmer Richards are among the last that linger; it has been a blissful summer for him—one he will never forget.

One morning Beatrice announces her intention of returning to her home on the morrow, and that day Elmer determined to know his fate. That evening Beatrice comes down stairs, arrayed in the amber dress that is so becoming, and for ornaments she wears her favorite topaz. Her oval cheeks are glowing with a warm rose hue, and her eyes scintillate like stars. As Elmer watches her, he thinks he has never seen her so beautiful, so fascinating.

During the evening he requests her to walk with him in the garden, and she consents; perhaps she has an intuition of what is coming. A few commonplace remarks passed between them; then Elmer Richards begins his passionate declaration of love, and Beatrice listens with clasped hands and downcast eyes. As he speaks, the whole scene passes from him, and he sees naught but the woman at his side. Ardently he pleads, for he loves Beatrice with all the depth and fervor of his strong, manly nature, and if he loses her, he loses all.

As he ceases speaking, he ventures to glance into her half-averted face. It wears a fierce, triumphant expression, a strange look that one would not expect a girl to wear when listening to a lover's pleadings.

She turns and faces him, and in the moonlight he can see the yellow lights in her eyes flame like those irradiating from her jewels.

"Mr. Richards," she says, calmly, "I can never be your wife!"

He draws back, and his face grows white. He is not prepared for this. He had expected a doubtful, wavering answer, a few months' probation, perhaps, but this cold, flat refusal, never!

"Then why have you led me on all these weeks?" he asks, hoarsely.

"Are you heartless; that you can so trample on a man's heart? Are you a coquette, a jilt? Oh, Beatrice, I cannot believe it! Tell me you love me."

"No, I do not," she replies, firmly.

"Listen, Mr. Richards. Five years ago there lived a young girl, a bright, happy girl whom all that knew her loved. One day a stranger came to the village, and—well, Elmer Richards, you know the story; it is needless for me to repeat it; you know of whom I am speaking—little Millie Irving.

Where is she now? Who ruined her, and broke her heart? You, Elmer Richards! Ah, you start and turn pale, and well you may, for you know you are guilty! At her deathbed I made a vow that if you ever crossed my path I would have my revenge. She was my sister."

"Your sister?" Elmer echoes.

"Yes. Did she never speak of me to you?" Beatrice says.

"Yes, yes," Elmer replies; "but she called you—"

"Tress," interrupts the girl. "Yes, that was her pet name for me."

There is a long silence; then Elmer raises his white, haggard face.

"Beatrice," he says, "I meant no harm to your sister. I did not dream of such a sad ending. I was young then, young and foolish. Can you not forgive me? Will you—"

But she interrupts him with a mocking laugh, and, turning, fits down the garden path. He sees her amber robe fluttering in the moonlight, and her jewels flash forth tiny flames of fire; then she is gone, and he is alone with his sorrow and despair.

They do not meet again, and the next

day Beatrice bids her hostess farewell, and returns to the city.

One year later, Elmer Richards goes to a second charity fair. He has been persuaded, much against his will, however, to attend, and now he saunters arm in arm with a friend, paying little attention to the gay scenes around him; they fail to interest and amuse him as they once did.

Only one year has passed since that night in the moonlit garden, yet there are deep lines on his handsome face, and his dark brown hair is streaked with gray. He has not outlived his sorrow; it has followed him and crushed him down, making him an old man long before his time.

Before a stand of flowers he pauses, and memory carries him back to the time when two white hands fashioned for him a fragrant bouquet, and two bright eyes flashed up into his. He hears the rustling of garments, and looking up, sees Beatrice Irving standing before him. She is attired in her favorite color, amber, and wears the old gleaming jewels.

Their eyes meet, and the yellow light in hers burns brighter. She leans over the counter, and her jewels flash in the gaslight.

At last they rise and join the company. As they emerge into the light, Elmer glances at his companion; she looks wonderfully fascinating to-night.

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