

TRUE TO THE TEST.

"There is one reason, my dear boy, why you and I cannot marry for the present. I have been brought up to do nothing but play the piano, entertain company, and try and look pretty, and I should only be a drag on you. Artists, you know, have no time to bother with wives."

In such language did I, Julian Vancourt, receive my dismissal from Elizabeth Shinstone, whom I had been engaged to for three years and fondly hoped to marry.

That I was a painter whose pictures did not sell was true; when I got home and thought the matter over I even saw that she was right and concluded I would try a new tack, for I couldn't give her up.

I had a friend, an old college chum, Fred Denbigh, a royal good fellow, free-hearted, open-handed, and as royal as a Scot. Putting aside my brushes, I sought Denbigh; then we dined together, and soon afterward I returned to my rooms alone. Late that evening, when I went out again, I could have met my principal creditor and safely defied the danger of recognition. I had sacrificed my beard—that profusely flowing beard which, if somewhat untidy, was also of that picturesque kind most affected by artists. I had sacrificed it with a pang, and by so doing had completely destroyed my own identity. In point of fact, I was now a tall, well-built, and clean-shaven young fellow, not altogether bad looking, and certainly attired with the most scrupulous regard to neatness and refinement.

Nor was I Julian Vancourt—I was plain John Warner, and I was to start at midnight for the West, commissioned by Denbigh to look after certain claims in which he had an interest. Two weeks later I read in a New York paper a long account of the mysterious disappearance and supposed suicide of Julian Vancourt, an artist of recognized ability, who had attained an enviable position in his profession and bade fair to become one of the greatest historical painters of the age. I laid aside the paper with a curious sort of shiver; I felt like a man might feel who has just seen his own tombstone. But, then, I was dead you know—legally so, at least. A letter from Denbigh followed close upon the paper. Here is an extract:

"The pictures went off like wildfire. Each brought a fabulous price. Everything is sold, and Col. Shinstone brought four 'Jeppha's Daughters,' because it resembles his daughter, I suppose. 'At any rate he has it. He was at the sale, looking grimmer and sterner than ever. I have heard that—is ill. No one seems to see much of her, and her friends say some spiteful things about her and the dead man, poor girl!'"

In a few years, having accumulated a fortune by hard labor, I hurried back to New York and at once sought my old friend, Denbigh, in his studio. He seemed very changed, I thought.

"And Elizabeth?" I had questioned as our hands met.

"She is well," he returned, briefly. "And not married yet," he added, answering the eager inquiry in my eyes.

"Well, I shall see her presently; but first we will dine together, my boy, you and I."

For a moment Denbigh was silent, then he suddenly exclaimed:

"Julian, we can never break bread together again. I have been false to my trusts. God help me, I love Elizabeth Shinstone!"

"You love Elizabeth Shinstone?" I repeated. "You?"

"Could I help it? Was I to blame? Am I more than a man? And the wrong-doing was yours—yours alone! An angel tood in your path, and, blind fool that you were, you turned aside from it. An angel, I say! Oh, Vancourt, old friend, tell me if you will, but don't look at me like that. Before heaven I swear that I have fought against this thing, but—"

"And she—Elizabeth?" I interrupted.

"I have never breathed a syllable to her that you might not have heard. You see, there are still greater depths of treachery than I have reached. No, I have not told it to her."

"Then you must tell it to her." Denbigh's haggard eyes met mine questioningly.

"Go to her," I continued. "Tell her and hear her answer." "Are you serious?"

"As if I stood upon the threshold of eternity. If she is what I believe her to be I need not fear. If she is not, well, even then I shall know it at once. Go!"

"Julian, surely you love her still?"

"Yes, I love her, but the woman I marry must come to me without the shadow of a doubt to cross our lives. For but remember this: Say nothing of my return, not even if—if all is as you wish it!"

So I waited there in Denbigh's studio while he went to win the one for whom I, in earnest faith and true loyalty, had worked so long and so patiently. How those three weary hours of my solitude dragged on I cannot tell; but ah! what tender memories, what frightful forebodings, what glimpses of heaven, what tortures of the nether world were mine! Had I but known her better, known her as she was, a weak, vain, frivolous creature! Ah, had I been less of a fool! A fool? Ay, yes, thrice soddan, for who but a fool would have exposed the woman he loved to such a temptation?

At last there came a step upon the stairs, a hand upon the door-latch. I rose. It was Denbigh's servant, and he gave me a sealed envelope. I tore it open and read:

"Go to her. She does not know you are here. Do not wait for me. Go at once."

And so at once I went the way I had

so often dreamed of going. It was almost night and the gray ghosts of houses loomed up like spectral shapes in the long white streets. Looking back at it all now, it seems like a dream just as it seemed then, when at last I stood in Col. Shinstone's drawing-room and some one was coming toward me with a wondering in her beautiful eyes.

Not a pale, unhappy, simply attired creature. That I detected at the first keen glance. Not a nun, a recluse, a sweet, sad saint, but a girl in all the flush and glory of early womanhood, whose rich attire seemed but the fitting frame for such radiant beauty. My heart gave a great bound, but I took courage and called to her:

Elizabeth!

She sprang to me with a glad little cry. Ah, yes my beloved was in my arms. I felt her warm breath upon my cheek and felt her eager hands were clasped about my neck, while away behind us—far, far behind us—fell all the ugly shadows of our lives.

"I have come for you," I said.

"And I have waited for you," she answered. "Ah my dear, my own, own dear! I do not know what you have been doing all this while away from me, but I am sure that it is something great and noble."

Well, she is mine at last. My sudden disappearance and long absence were plausibly explained to the public and I am bound to acknowledge that the critics were quite kind. They retracted nothing of all they had written in my favor. Still, I cherish a firm conviction that they are only awaiting their opportunity to fall upon and demolish me; hence I am exceedingly wary. Let me add that my wife came without a penny. It was my will and hers, as well. And our home is like heaven. I suppose that is the reason why when, whenever the old fever seizes me, I paint angels only—angels that look like Elizabeth, every one of them.

Doctors in Germany.

A strange difficulty has arisen in Germany with regard to the medical profession. It seems that the public authorities are much concerned on account of the very great number of physicians and of the ever increasing lists of students in the medical faculty. Not only does the government refuse to open new schools, but also the Landtag has shown itself unwilling to allow the credits necessary for the doctors' chairs at Halle and Magdeburg. There are now in Germany, as in France, many young men holding diplomas who have no position and who have in vain applied to the state. Steps are therefore sought to be taken which shall destroy the evil at its roots.

Infringing on Her Rights.

Alfred (rapturously)—Now, darling, please name the happy day!

Minnie (blushingly)—Three weeks from next Thursday, Alfred.

Norah (through the keyhole)—Av you please, miss, that's me regular day out. Yez'll have to get married some other day o' the wake.

Hopeful.

The proprietor of a "matrimonial establishment" in Europe was one day visited by a lady of such extreme plainness that he was at first aghast. He managed, however, to collect himself, and assuming his usual courteous manner.

The lady proceeded to state that she had a considerable fortune, but that, from some unaccountable reason, she had been unable to find a husband to her liking. She ended by asking, "Now don't you think you could find me a good party, sir?"

"Ah, yes, madam!" said the agent, very politely. "There's no telling; there may be a blind man in at any moment!"

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Chevreul and the Photographer.

The late centenarian, M. Chevreul, although one of the patrons of photography, refused during the greater part of his long life to have his picture taken. Not until 1883, when in his ninety-seventh year, did he overcome this antipathy. It happened, as he wrote a friend, in the following manner: "I entered the carriage to go to the institute, when a gentleman in the politest manner possible addressed me: 'Monsieur Chevreul you can do me the greatest service.' I replied that I was in a great hurry, but he persisted and begged permission to accompany me in my carriage. I acceded to his request. He had scarcely taken his place at my side, however when he said: 'Monsieur Chevreul, you can be my fortune or my ruin. I am a photographer. I trembled, but he added: 'The Emperor of Brazil (you know Dom Pedro, who is a true saint and who decorated me with the Order of the Rose), wishes to have your photograph, and if I succeed in obtaining your permission, my future is assured.' I could not resist him, and in the name of Dom Pedro accompanied the photographer to his studio."

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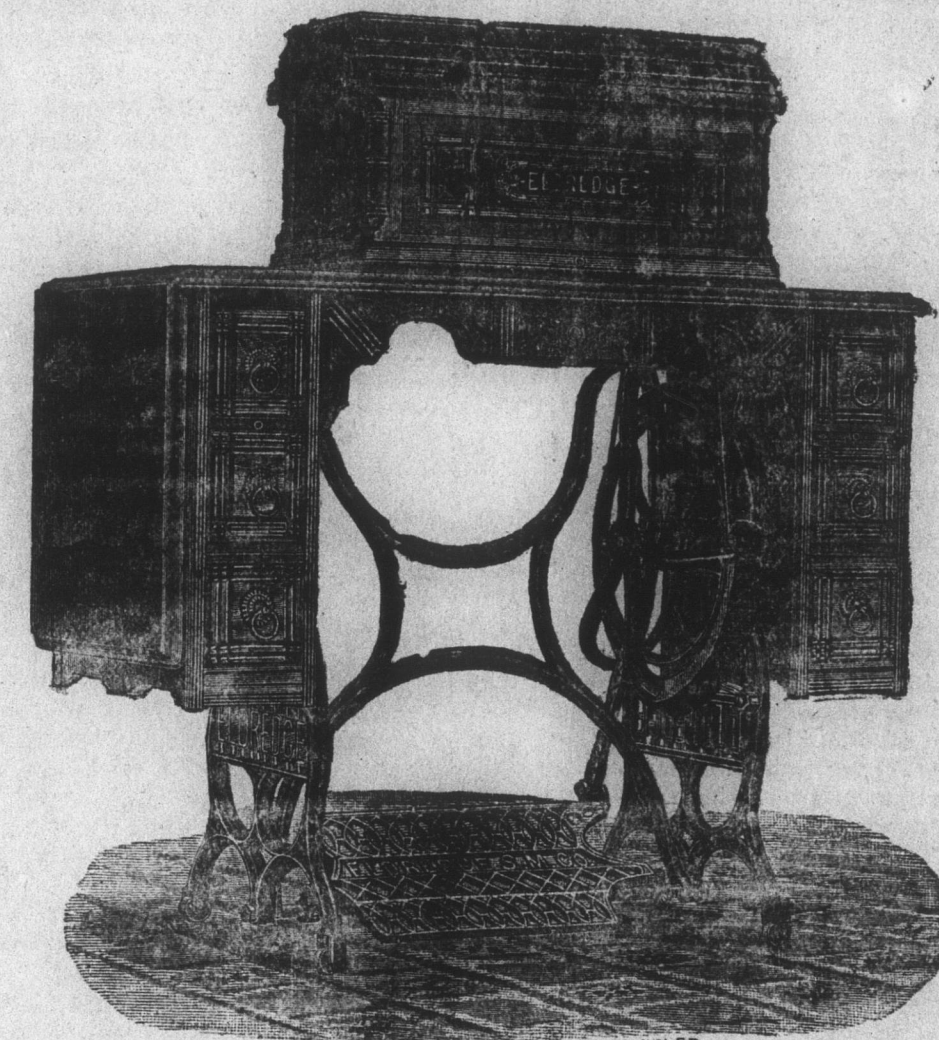
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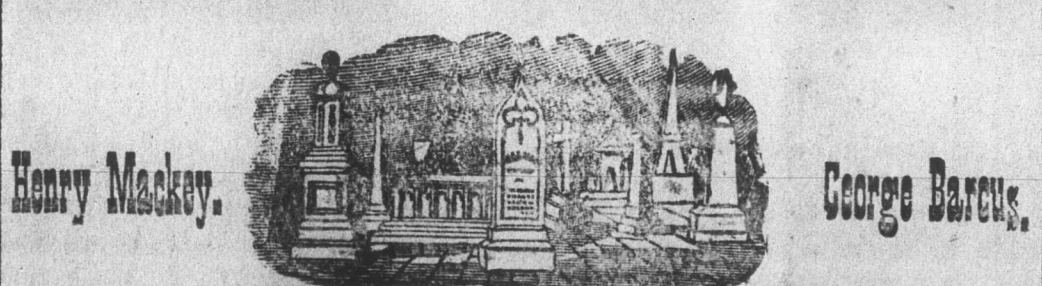
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