

### SLUMBER SONG.

Come, then drowsy slumber fairy,  
Noiseless elms of the night,  
Come to eyes that open tarry—  
Draw the fringed curtains white.

Weave about the closest window—  
Spells that open Fairyland—  
Charm away whatever hinders—  
With the magic of thy wand.

Through the land of peace and resting—  
Where the sunbeam waters roll,  
Every tiny care is resting,  
Lead the baby's spotless soul.

When again shall come the dawning,  
Sleepyland must lose its charms,  
Rosy fairies of the morning—  
Bring the child to mother's arms.

Mary Wilson, in *Good Housekeeping*.



### CHAPTER VIII.

Oliver wondered if the Frenchman had come to kill him. There was no time to cry out or to move in self-defense. If De Restaud came to murder, he was prepared to do it quickly; up in the valley of the Troublesome he had been called a good shot. A vagrant ray of sunshine filtered in between the slats of the closed blind, resting on a faded spot on the carpet. Oliver gaily watched it, while thoughts of his past, the present, the woman who had just written him, went through his mind swifter than ever electricity carried a message.

A lamp lit and bright, a flash, a crash and darkness. Oliver's fingers tightened on the arm of his chair. His lips quivered. He seemed to be gazing down the unfathomable depths of eternity. The sins of his past came and leered at him; the awful, unanswered question of the centuries, of all recorded time, haunted him. "And afterwards?"

He had heard that madmen quailed at bravery, were deterred from evil purpose by quiet common sense. So he looked steadily at his visitor. What a dreadful creature he had become! Nor was it liquor alone that had crazed his brain. There is a drug so easy of purchase, so pleasing of effect at first, that insensibly it steals away reason, caution, decency. On the hairy hand of the Frenchman were tiny red dots; and similar dots tattooed all his body. He had not learned to take morphine in the convenient capsules, and his dissipation was attended by a tiny pain like the prick of conscience. He was terribly pale, with the glazed pallor of a corpse, his eyes weirdly bright, his hair, a few months ago untouched by time, streaked with gray. Of all sad drift on the shores of time a human wreck like this is the most dreadful.

"You are surprised to see me," De Restaud said, calmly, but his long thin fingers trembled, showing the agitation he strove to repress.

"I should be glad to assist you in any way," Oliver answered, his voice strangely hoarse, the words coming with difficulty.

"I think you can," said the other, slowly, "for you seem to have influence with her and that old she-dragon, her aunt. I know all about that night, your visit down the railroad. I know I have a son, and for his sake I want you to help me."

"What can I do? Surely you must have a lawyer of your own. I would not undertake your case for any consideration."

"Do not be too hasty, Mr. Oliver. I do not require your services in any legal capacity, but, as you say in this country in your labor difficulties, as an arbitrator. My nephew in France is dead, and my father writes me to come home and bring my wife and child."

"She will never consent," Oliver said, hastily. "Her aunt would not let her go."

"I think a husband has some rights, Mr. Oliver. You see I am very temperate in the matter, though I have cause



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for anger. Now, my son has a future; my father will make him his heir, for my brother is rich, and, besides, none of us are long-lived. I shall not last long; you see I have failed very fast. I want to go back to my own country and live the few days left, and I—want you to help me." He broke down then in a womanish way and took out his handkerchief. Oliver had felt contempt before; it turned to pity now for the shambling creature so wretched in his mental degradation. "I am willing to forgive her the disgrace she has brought upon me," he sobbed, "even that application for divorce. My father will overlook the fact that I married out of my station—beneath me; though never before would he notice my marriage. The child has made all the difference in the world, and I haven't even been allowed to see him. It is a crime to treat a father so. Even an American court must recognize my rights."

"I have no confidence that you would treat your wife decently if she came back. It would be an unwise experiment." Oliver said, coldly.

"But I give you my word I will. She can have that awful aunt with her al-

ways. I will not say three words to either of them. She can have her own house in Paris, or live with my father; only I ask that my child shall be brought back to me and my father shall be his guardian. You can see yourself I am fair and generous in the matter. There is a great difference between the heir of the De Restaud millions, one of the finest names in France (I know I am not a worthy representative of the family, monsieur), and the child of a divorced woman in that frightful Maine town, where they go to sewing societies for one pleasure and to prayer meetings all the week. You know my wife is not fit to bring up a child. How did she act with you? Was that right and proper even in an American young lady, eh?"

"I fail to see anything in the conduct of Mrs. de Restaud that would not stand the most searching investigation," said Oliver. "Your own case would not be so clear; and I warn you an American jury is always on the side of a woman if she is good and has been wronged."

"You are on a very high horse, Mr. Oliver. Perhaps I can assist you to dismount. My wife's lawyer writes me she will sue for a divorce. Very well, so shall I myself."

"Really, Mr. de Restaud, this is none of my affair," cried Oliver, impatiently. "I refuse to listen to you any longer."

"You will, monsieur, because it shall be your affair."

"How?"

"I shall name you the co-respon-

dent. Your drive with my wife that

night will have no romance for a jury

of sober-minded citizens. Do not be too

hasty. I have listened to conversation

at a club political here, and I have

heard you desire office some time, to

be governor of the state. The scandal

which you cannot silence will hurt

your chances, eh? I find the world

eager to hear such things—the news-

papers of the opposition most anxious

to publish ugly stories of an opponent.

You have made many enemies in your

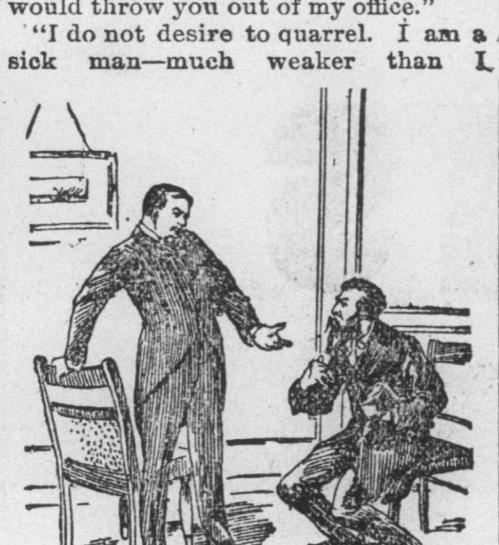
profession; this will be their oppor-

tunity."

"You are an infernal scoundrel!"

said Oliver, white to the lips. "If you were anything but a morphine wreck I would throw you out of my office."

"I do not desire to quarrel. I am a sick man—much weaker than I



### "YOU ARE AN INFERNAL SCOUNDREL," SAID OLIVER.

thought." De Restaud paused and wiped his wet forehead, breathing heavily. "This has been a task. You know the consequence; you persuade my wife to come back to me, with the aunt if she desire, but my child, and go to France, or I bring suit for divorce and the custody of my child and tell all the facts."

"It is utter folly," cried Oliver. "What can I do? I have no influence over your wife; I hardly know her; and the aunt will never permit her to return."

"The old lady is strict; she is proud, too; and a young woman who has been through a divorce trial seldom comes out with a good name—not without reproach. Consider it well, and write Miss Patten what I say. Truly I think my wife has a great fancy for you."

Oliver rose and opened the door. "Mr. de Restaud, I will write you my decision. I really must ask you not to prolong this interview. There is a limit to my forbearance."

De Restaud bowed, mockingly. "I shall look for your answer soon. Perhaps the doctor also could influence Mrs. de Restaud. I esteem the doctor; he is an honest man, and has been good to my son."

With a polite bow the Frenchman disappeared, and Oliver went back to his desk. What should he do? What could he do? De Restaud would carry out his threat, there was no doubt of that. And, after all, would it not be better for his wife to return? If the family in France would care for her and the child they would be safe, and most women would look forward to such a bright future. If she refused to come to a trial, the publicity of a courtroom, the newspapers, a lifelong something to be whispered about her by some one who had heard. How explain that daring ride across country? Viewed in the cold light of reason it was a foolish thing; and he, Craig Oliver, must go on the witness-stand and be questioned. A lawyer is a poor witness, and he would be. A man of his age doing such a romantic silly action. Then that story to the conductor. The other side would find him, of course, and perhaps a passenger who had seen Minny's farewell. The whole thing was unexplainable. Then his own past—the life of a wifeless man of the world—how would the jury of hard-working men view that? They had families and no temptations, and he was rich and had enemies. It was social and political death to him and he knew it as he sat there, yet he did not write.

A week later Dr. John came in. There was no need of telling him. He had met De Restaud, and had come to see what Oliver would do.

"I have not written her," said Oliver, awkwardly, "except a little note thanking her for her letter. I shall not write what he wanted."

"I have, though," said Dr. John;

"both to Mrs. Minny and her aunt. The Frenchman cannot trouble them long, and after a year or so Mrs. Minny will be a Parisian. All I know of Paris and life there is from novels. Gad, I think if they are true Mrs. Minny will be quite at home in France. She likes things different, you know."

"I should be a coward to advise her in this matter," cried Oliver. "I shall have nothing to do with it."

However, after an hour's talk with his sensible old friend he changed his mind and wrote a severely formal letter to Mrs. de Restaud, advising her to return to her husband. Her answer was a pitiful appeal. "What did he mean?" After all that had happened, did he think she should trust herself with a man who everyone said was crazy. Dr. John read and shook his head. "She won't come," he said; "but you keep on writing, for the Frenchman means what he says. I see him often as he comes to my office. She need not say three words to him, and her aunt can be with her always until she is safe at his father's."

This was duly written, but the answer—both from Miss Patten and her niece—were unsatisfactory until a few days before the time set by De Restaud. Oliver, maddened by her disregard of his warning, for he learned De Restaud had his lawyer engaged and the case would be presented, telegraphed her: "Are you coming or not? I beg you will come at once. We cannot face the consequences." He felt like a coward, but what else could he do? Fight with a madman in a courtroom? It was horrible. The answer came promptly from Mrs. de Restaud; she would start at once.

Oliver took the telegram and went to find De Restaud. The suit for divorce must be stopped. He had done his part, and there was no need for further anxiety. He drove to Dr. John's office, but the doctor was up in the mountains attending a case, and would not be back for a day or two. He knew where De Restaud lived—a furnished house he had hired for a few months—and he drove there. After some delay, Annette, more corpulent than ever, opened the door in response to his ring. She seemed worried and timorous in her manner, and looked at him blankly as he asked her in English if monsieur was at home. Then Oliver remembered, and tried in imperfect French. She brightened up.

"No, monsieur," she said, eagerly; "he is seldom here; and Louis is always away. I like the farm better. I am alone always, always. Monsieur is so bad, too—oh, dreadful! even Louis is afraid of him."

Oliver hesitated. The poor soul was even friendly, she was so lonely. Perhaps she was not bad-hearted.

"Do you think it would be safe for madame to return?" he asked, slowly, recalling each word from an imperfect memory. He repeated it, as she did not comprehend; then her manner changed.

"Oh, monsieur," she cried, in horror, "never, never! He has said he will kill her. He walks all night, sometimes and raves about her, and looks so dreadful. Louis said he did not like madame, but for the general's sake, she must keep away from monsieur. There would be a crime; and the De Restauds are so proud. I think monsieur is quite mad now; and he is so thin; he eats nothing, and some nights there are two men to hold him, he sees such things. I did not like madame, she was not a French lady, but I wish my worst enemy no such fate as to be here."

"You knew," said Oliver, "there was a baby, a little boy?"

"Yes, monsieur, and I am thankful. Madame may have a good heart; she loved the little dog. I think she would do right to go to France—to the general; he is a grand man, and now there is no one of the name; little Alphonse in Paris is dead, and his beautiful mother is dying of grief, they write us."

Oliver slipped a dollar in the woman's fat hand. "You are a good soul," he said, kindly. "I trust some day you will be back in France and have a farm of your own."

"Thanks, monsieur—and the beautiful poultry I had such comfort with in the mountains; it was better there."

He heard the bolts rattle behind him as he went to the waiting carriage. The poor soul was almost a prisoner from her fears. What should he do? Mrs. Minny had started, and he could not reach her by telegraph. He told the driver to go to the different gambling houses, and at each one he got out and searched for the Frenchman. He was not gambling, the dealers told him, all knowing De Restaud only too well, for the mad Frenchman had been a familiar figure in the night world of Denver for years. At the police station Oliver could learn nothing; De Restaud had evidently bought immunity from arrest. Sick at heart, Oliver gave a description of the object of his search to a detective and went home. In the early morning the man came to his house. He had not found De Restaud, but had learned and told such a story of depravity and vice that Oliver's half-formed purpose became an instant decision.

"You see," the detective said, coolly, "when a gent gets down he's apt to be a sight lower than jest a borned tough; and, as I can learn, this pertikler one has set out to see jest how quick he kin ding away what little life he's got left in him, an' how low he kin git in it; an' this, isn't har! I've learned."

"It is enough," Oliver said, briefly, as he paid and dismissed him. Then he hastily ate breakfast, left directions for his clerks, and took the train for the east. He had written Mrs. de Restaud what road to come to Chicago, for he might wish to telegraph her there, and he reckoned there was yet time to meet her before she took the train for Denver. He would tell Miss Patten the whole story and send her and her niece back. He would advise them to go direct to Paris. Annette's advice was good. He was careless never to have thought of it before.

Oliver shuddered at the prospect of the case in court. He would have to endure it if De Restaud would not

listen to reason. Perhaps he could keep it out of the papers. But he knew in his heart not; he was well hated. "All for the Troublesome little lady," he sighed. "A pretty mess I got myself into, assisting distressed damsels. And yet what man situated as I was that night would have done otherwise?"

In the depot in Chicago a pretty young woman was frantically searching for a particular baggageman. She had on a neat blue gown, a seal-skin jacket, and a jaunty hat set over her curls. She was so sweetly pretty that several iron-hearted train-employees were moved to interest and sympathy.

"He was quite short and fat," she said, anxiously, "and Skye really seemed to like him, and he said he would take the very best care of him."

"What is the matter, Mrs. Minny?" said Oliver, delighted, giving him both her hands.

"Oh, Mr. Oliver!" she cried, delightedly, giving him both her hands.

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