

## THE MAIL

A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

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UNDER THE CHIN.

Tying her bonnet under her chin  
She tied her raven ringlets in,  
But not alone in the silken snare  
Did she catch her lovely floating hair,  
For tying her bonnet under her chin  
She tied a young man heart within.

—Nora Perry.

And many a time that little chin  
Has been from you, but a boy and win!  
And many a time he's been a bear,  
And now she's throwing her ringlets back,  
And says she shall have a sealskin sacque!

—[Courier Journal.]

Buttoning the sealskin up to her chin,  
She gildeth out and she gildeth in,  
And the eyes of women with envy are green;  
But the first young fellow is seldom seen,  
For in a dark office he labors like sin,  
And the fairy who tied and roped him in.

—[Chicago World.]

Tying her bonnet under her chin  
Is not where the harm to that youth comes in  
Nor an office dark; but a big airy hall,  
With green covered tables and chairs,  
Some friends, a supper, and a little gun—  
There's where the harm to the youth comes in.

If a man can enjoy the good things of life,  
Why should he grow at the hands of his wife,  
And lay all the ills of the world at her door?  
And why should the fairy have roped him in,  
By tying her bonnet under her chin?

—[One of the Girls.]

## IRMA DOWEL;

OR THE

## Wronged Wife's Vow.

BY MORRIS REDWING.

Author of "Blind Nell," "Beggar Prince," "Joella," "Silver Dagger," Etc.

## CHAPTER I.

## LOVE IN THE WILDERNESS.

It was the 13th of June, one of the pleasantest of the usually pleasant days that month contains.

The 13th of June and Irma Dowel's birthday, her wedding day, the happiest day of her whole life.

"I am sixteen to-day," said Irma, as she stood before the glass in her low-ceiled bedroom, coiling her long, wavy, black hair over her plump, brown fingers.

"Sixteen and a woman," mused the little beauty, a soft, lustrous love-light beaming from her liquid black eyes. "It seems like a dream, the past month of my life. How strange that poor, little, ignorant me should attract such a grand, brave, generous man as Noel. Noel! How sweet the name. I have known him scarcely a month, yet—yet I love him so much. It seems as though I had known him all my life, and now my life and love is to be blended with his. Oh, I am so happy!"

The girl had fastened her midnight hair in a heavy coil at the back of her regal head, and stood regarding the picture with clasped hands and half open lips, revealing a wall of pearl beyond their portals.

Irma Dowel was wondrously beautiful. Even she had waked to the fact under the flattering tongue of Noel Nelworne, who had come from the great, busy, outside world only a month before, into the quiet forest life of Irma Dowel, the squatter's darling niece, the only stay and comfort of a widowed mother's heart.

Only sixteen, unused to the wiles of a wicked world, with a nature as free from guile as a dove, little gipsy-faced Irma had been overwhelmed with surprise and gratitude at the friendly notice of this splendid city fellow. He praised her eyes, her hair, her faultless form, and flattered her trusting heart until her grateful feeling merged finally into the deeper feeling of love.

"Nowhere in the wide world have I met your equal, my precious forest bird," said Nelworne, in his soft, thrilling accents, that lulled the maiden's senses and bent her weak nature to his will.

While Irma stood motionless before the glass a step sounded without, and the next moment the door was opened softly.

A woman's face was reflected in the glass.

The girl turned to meet the anxious gaze of her mother. Mrs. Dowel was taller than her daughter, and at one time had possessed all the remarkable beauty that was prominent in her child.

There was a tired, weary expression resting on the face of Mrs. Dowel, a sad longing, touching the inner depths of her black, mournful eyes.

"Irma, my child, what are you doing? Dawdling your time away before the glass, I was once as simple and trustful as you are now, and learned only by bitter experience the cruel nature of the world, the treachery and deceit of man."

The forest girl opened her eyes wide in astonishment.

"What are you croaking about now, mother?" she said lightly. "I thought you approved of my choice. I thought you were proud of the grand, noble man who has condescended to make me his wife."

"Condescended to make you his wife?" with a bitter laugh. "Irma, no man should stoop to win a woman. If Noel Nelworne has made you believe that he is coming down from—"

"No, no mother," cried Irma, quickly. "Noel has never intimated such a thing. He thinks I am a queen among women. He loves me to infatuation; but I know how he has stooped from his high position and raised me to his level."

"We are poor, mother, wretchedly poor. Noel knows it. He is rich, the pride of the circle in which he moves. For such a one to come to a poor forest girl and make her his wife and place her in a home of luxury speaks well for his generous heart."

Mrs. Dowel sank into a seat and brushed a stray tear from her eye.

Somehow a strange foreboding of coming evil oppressed her.

"I am afraid you are deceiving your self, Irma."

The young girl's face grew troubled. She went over and laid a soft, brown hand on the gray head of her mother.

"Mother, why have you said nothing of this before? Why have you allowed me to go on, basking in the sunshine of the greatest happiness of my life, never uttering a word of remonstrance until it is too late, until I am bound hand and foot in the chains of love? It is too late now to influence me. Once, before I learned to love Noel, you might have interfered and prevented this marriage; now I shall die if Noel is driven from me."

There was a deep earnestness in the maiden's voice as she spoke, her hte form trembling visibly under the influence of powerful emotion.

"It is indeed too late," murmured Mrs. Dowel. "You will marry this man and

go from us forever. In your new home you will forget your humble friends; even your mother will no longer hold a place in your affections."

"Mother, never speak like that again. You know me better," and Irma bent with tear-wet eyes, and kissed her aged parent fondly. "While life lasts you are the dearest of earthly friends. When I am once settled, my home shall be yours, and you shall bid farewell to this lowly cabin forever. Do you doubt me? Have I not been a dutiful child in the past?"

"Indeed you have, Irma," murmured Mrs. Dowel. "I will say nothing more to cloud your wedding day, Irma. Do you think your cousin Gerald will be here?"

"Ralph promised to return inside of six weeks. To-day is the date set for his return," answered the girl, a sudden tinge of red dying her olive cheeks.

"If he does not come?"

"The marriage will take place all the same. In fact, I think it would be as well that Ralph was not present."

"Irma!"

"I understand what you would say, mother," returned the maiden quickly, "but Ralph knows nothing of Noel. Explanations would be disagreeable."

"I had once hoped that you and I

"I understand. Ralph is but a boy, and that little love story he once whispered was forgotten even before Noel came. Ralph will feel the better for not being present. I hope he will not return until after I am gone."

"Perhaps it is best so," returned Mrs. Dowel, with a deep-drawn sigh.

Voice were now heard outside the cabin.

"There's Noel now!" exclaimed Irma, springing to the low window and peering out.

In the front yard she saw three men.

The tall, gray-bearded, middle aged man ahead she knew to be her uncle, Hiram Dowel. One of the others was easily recognized by his tall form, rich dress and aristocratic bearing. The third man, a small, weazened-faced individual, with black hair and eyes, carried a small book under his arm and strode along with a pompous air.

He was the justice whom Nelworne had employed to perform the ceremony of marriage.

With a fluttering heart Irma turned from the window.

"Oh, mother, they've come."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Noel, uncle, and the—the justice," a slight blush mantling her cheeks as she uttered the words.

The wedding was to be a quiet affair.

The Dowels had no near neighbors, and as Nelworne had decided on having a regular wedding, his will was law with the residents of the forest cabin.

We shall not attempt to describe the affair that came off in the front room of the squatter's cabin. Suffice it to say that the ceremony was very brief, and that an hour after Irma's interview with her mother she was the wife of Noel Nelworne.

The month of Nelworne's sojourn in the woods had been a month of unalloyed happiness to Irma Dowel.

Now the fruition of all her dreams was attained. She was the wife of the grand, noble man whom she looked up to with a feeling akin to reverence.

He was the king among men.

If she once thought of her boyish cousin Ralph, it was only to think of him as a friend.

Ralph and Irma had been warm friends for years.

Deep down in the heart of Ralph Gerard there lurked a tender feeling, a feeling that grew apace as his dark-eyed bewitching cousin grew to womanhood.

Even now, on Irma Dowel's wedding day, Ralph Gerard was speeding across the State toward the home of his charming cousin, little suspecting what had occurred during his six weeks' absence.

Three days went by.

Three days of the purest happiness Irma Dowel had ever experienced.

Out under the spreading branches of the forest trees that shaded the waters of a babbling brook the married lovers wandered on the afternoon of the third day after the marriage.

"I am so happy now," murmured the blushing, sixteen-year-old bride, as she leaned confidingly on her husband's arm, looking up into his dark, handsome face trustfully.

At last Nelworne sprang from his couch, drew on his clothes and lit the lamp.

"I've been a fool," he muttered, as he seated himself at a small table near the window. "This child-woman fascinated me beyond measure. I was mad, blind, idiotic to think of binding myself to her by the marriage tie. The thing is done, but I must escape from the bonds, which are galling me to the quick. My infatuation is gone. I am myself once again. Poor little fool!" turning toward his sleeping bride. "She thinks me a paragon of excellence. That cousin of hers loves her. That is good; he can have her for all of me."

"Even now Virginia awaits my coming. Virginia, my peerless hot-house flower. This mad escapade shall find a fitting burial this night."

"It's lucky I did not reveal my true name and place of residence. Noel Nelworne, of Cincinnati, will never be heard of after this night, while Angus Barnwell, of Detroit, will walk the streets free from danger of discovery. I will leave a line for my wife," a sinister smile gleaming his mustache as he whispered the name.

Tearing a slip of paper from a notebook which he had drawn from his pocket, the man hastily scrawled a few lines thereon and rose to his feet.

"One farewell kiss, my pretty bird," he muttered, crossing the floor and bending over her, his lips touching her cheek.

"Sleep on, sweet girl," he muttered. "You will wake to trouble and woe soon enough."

Snatching another kiss, Nelworne grabbed up a small, leather-bound book and crept softly from the room, carrying the lamp to guide him to the outer door. Here he extinguished the light and passed out into the shadows of night.

As he glided away a dark form crept stealthily after him.

Ralph Gerard had watched the light as it left the bridal chamber and flitted to the front door. As it was extinguished, the youth crouched low beside the corner of the cabin.

He saw the door open and Nelworne pass out.

"What cruel play is this, Irma?" said Gerard, his boyish face white to the lips, not taking the proffered hand of Nelworne, but gazing sternly into the face of his fair cousin.

The lady has spoken the truth, sir," he said, rather curtly. "I don't see anything in the fact that she is my wife to call for such rudeness from you. I judge you are one of her low relations, whom she will have the good sense to shun in the future."

The white line about Gerard's lips deepened, and his white hands were clinched tightly.

"Irma, Cousin Irma, is this true?"

"It is true."

"And you are this man's wife? In mercy's name, Irma, what have you done?"

Nelworne advanced angrily in front of his shrinking wife.

"That will do, sir," he said, sternly.

"It will not allow you to insult my wife. You will please me by departing at once."

Ralph Gerard turned toward the speaker, a threatening look in his blue eyes.

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Ralph Gerard turned toward the speaker, a threatening look in his blue eyes.

"You are her husband," he muttered through close shut teeth. "Your relationship only saves you from the chastisement you richly merit;" then turning to Irma once more:

"Irma, Cousin Irma, this news is a terrible shock to me. I can't reconcile myself to believe that you have madly thrown yourself away on this man. Had I known what was going on during my absence I should have hastened back weeks ago. Heaven grant that you may never live to repeat this mad freak."

Ralph Gerard turned on his heel and walked rapidly away in the direction of the house.

"And that impudent fellow is your cousin, Irma?"

"He is my cousin," she returned, her face white to the lips, "but I do not think he meant to be impudent."

"Perhaps not. You will have nothing to do with such low people when we are once settled in our city home."

The tone was anything but pleasant.

Irma grew pale, a sudden pain clutching her sensitive heart.

"He is my cousin," she returned, her face white to the lips, "but I do not think he meant to be impudent."

"Oh, Noel, you can not mean that I am to ignore the friends of my childhood. Cousin Ralph—"

"I mean that when you go to Cincinnati with me you cast your past life and its associations forever behind you. Is that sufficiently explicit?"

Ralph Gerard had had enough. He had his suspicions, and with close-shut teeth he glided from the depot and hastened on his return.

It was almost night when Ralph Gerard entered the house of Irma Nelworne.

After supper the youth strolled out in the wood. He had seen his cousin walking among the trees, and wished to speak with her.

"Good evening, Irma. Why are you looking so sad? What has happened?"

"Where is your husband?"

She looked up in his face, a moist light in her dark eyes.

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph, won't you forgive me?" I could not help it; I loved him so!" cried the young wife, laying both brown hands on his arm.

"You speak of Nelworne?"

"Of my husband, yes."

"Where is he to-day, Irma?"

"Gone to prepare for my removal to his city home."

"What preparation is needed?"

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