

AN INTERLUDE.

Sighing, she spoke, and leaning, clasped her knees: "Well hast thou sung of living men and dead, Of fair deeds done and far lands visited. Stay now! ( things more marvelous than these: Of fruits ungathered upon wandrous trees, Of songs unsung, of gracious words unsaid, Of that dim shore where no man's foot may tread, Of strangest skies, and unbelov'd seas!

FRANCIA'S LOST LOVE.

The light in the parlor was dim, but not so dim that Rolph Essen could not see the look of fixed agony that Francia Randolph cast upon his face. Her face was white and drawn, her blue eyes were distended with a kind of horror, and tensely clasped hands were held out to him in mute appeal. But he went on, in his cold, unsympathetic voice:

"I have borne with your jealous outbursts as long and as patiently as I can. By your insane attack upon me today you have broken the last link that binds us together. I take my freedom and give you yours."

Rolph, you do not mean it! Take back your cruel words! I do not want my freedom, and I shall not give you yours. Only promise to forgive me, and I will never so offend you again.

She fell at his feet abjectly, she clung to his knees with trembling hands, she lifted her streaming eyes to the cold face above her. He was not a brutal man, but there seemed something brutal in the way he took her hands from his knees and firmly laid them by her side.

"It is useless to appeal to me, for your treatment of me has wearied patience and worn out love. We had better part to-day than link our lives together and separate afterwards creating a scandal. Now it will simply be a broken engagement, from which we will quickly recover without scars."

Francia rose to her feet. "You think that—and of me?"

He leaned back in his chair and gazed at her almost insolently.

"I think that of you—and of all women. There was never yet one who remained faithful to one love. In one year from now we will both laugh at our present position."

"You may, but I—never! Rolph, I can not—can not give you up! Say that you can forgive me! Say that I shall be your wife! Oh, don't you know, dear, if I were your wife I should never feel jealous again? Don't you know I would serve you on my knees—that I would be your slave?"

She approached him once more, leaning upon his shoulder with one hand peering into his impassive face with eyes whose expression he dared not read. He shook off her touch impatiently and rose.

"I might as well go now and end it. I shall leave the city to-night, so it will not be worth while for you to try to persecute me with insane letters. I shall not get them."

He picked up his hat and began fingering it uneasily, as if to avoid her passionate eyes. But she had grown suddenly calm. She said no word as he moved toward the door. When he arrived there he stopped.

"Will you not say good-bye?"

She crossed the room swiftly, and struck fiercely at his outstretched palm.

"No, I will not say good-bye! Hear me for the last time! I have loved you long and well. It may be that this parting will kill me, and so I wish to tell you that you have done ill to withdraw your heart from me supposing you ever gave it to me. You have done ill to permit my worship—such worship as few women can give to fewer men. Never again will you be loved as I have loved you; never again will you have such faith given you as I have bestowed upon you. Never, never again!"

He opened and closed the door rapidly after his retreating form. She moved sluggishly across the room, and fell like a clod upon a sofa.

"Never, never again!"

She repeated the words despairingly, with her lids closed tightly over her hot eyes, and her hands thrown rigidly above her head.

"I can not be that he has gone for ever! It can not be that he means what he says! It can not be that I am never to be his wife! Love, come back to me! Love forgive me!"

But in vain were her imploring words; vain were her beseechings. If only love and friendship were not one-sided things.

She rose and paced the room feverishly.

"My God, be merciful! Turn his heart back to me! I can not bear it! I will be so good and patient with him! I will do anything that he wishes, only bring him back to me!"

So she prayed, this girl who believed

in God and man, who had faith in love and friendship. The days passed and lengthened into weeks. There came no word nor sign from Francia's recreant lover. She had to tell her father and mother that the engagement which had existed between her and Rolph Essen was at an end. She gave no explanation, and they asked for none. Suddenly brain fever fell upon her, and her life hung in the balance for weeks. When health and consciousness returned to her, girlhood lay behind her. She was trying to gather up her broken hopes, her dead youth and slain faith, and weave them into comely garment which she might wear decorously before a critical world. All her friends now knew that her engagement was "off," and she seemed to feel the pity, the sympathy and the mockery which were showered upon her—behind her back.

Two years went by, and Francia Randolph was twenty-three. Her mother had the bad taste to give her a birth-night fete. The bad taste—we write advisedly—for where is the woman who likes to be reminded of her age, even if she still be young? But to Francia it mattered little, for youth seemed to lie far behind her, and the snows of sixty years seemed to freeze her heart.

"Francia, pray allow me to control your taste in selecting your dress to-night. You will never marry if you do not try to throw more animation into your manner and more girlish gayety into dress. You dress like a nun, except at such times as I insist upon the contrary."

"You may order any style of dress you choose, mother, and I will wear it; but if you think I shall strive for the admiration of men, you forget. You must know that I shall never marry."

Mrs. Randolph sighed: "I think you are foolish to let your broken engagement with Rolph Essen influence your future."

"It does not. Such natures as mine love but once, and—" then she bit her lip to control further speech.

"By the way, I hear he has returned. I hope you can meet him without making a scene. You know your weakness."

Francia's lip curled scornfully, then she looked steadily at her mother, who shifted her eyes uneasily.

"My weakness, then, is that I love him. Is that what you mean mother?" Mrs. Randolph responded faintly: "Yes."

"Then console yourself, for I neither love nor hate him. Mrs. Randolph said no more but left the room with a feeling of vague uneasiness.

"If she would only forget that man! How can I tell whether she loves him or not? How can I tell how she will meet him? But meet him she must, poor, passionate-hearted girl and no one can sustain her."

The birth-night fete passed off successfully. Francia was lovely in garnet velvet and cream satin, and her arms and neck gleamed like pink-tinted marble; but her face wore its usual statuesque coldness that had only become habitual since her recovery from her illness.

An English gentleman was much attracted by her great beauty, but her frigidity repelled him.

"She has no soul. She freezes me." "She is all soul. You do not possess the magic key to open the casket," said a friend.

The Englishman assented indifferently, and went his way; but fate had marked him. It was during the summer, while the Randolph family were residing at their country home, that Francia met the man whom she had once so madly worshipped. He came purposely to see her.

"I supposed, Francia, you had heard of my arrival, and I thought I owed it to you to see you once more," he said, as she entered the room and he rose to greet her.

"Why?" she asked, looking not at him, but at his card which she had brought with her. She did not take the hand he held out to her. Man of the world that he was, he seemed to become confused at her simple query.

"My reason should be plain to you." "Why?" she asked again, slowly tearing into bits the card in her hand.

He shifted his position, then came up to her and laid his fingers on her destructive ones.

"Sit down. It is ridiculous for us to go on this way, and I have much to say to you."

She freed her hand from his trembling fingers, and for the first time lifted her eyes to his.

"I can not understand what that could possibly have to say to me you would sufficiently interest me to such an extent that I should be kept standing long. Do you sit down, but I prefer to stand."

He wet his dry lips, and at first his voice was husky, but as he proceeded it became clearer and stronger.

"Francia, I have come to beg your pardon. You would not give me my freedom when I asked, or, rather, took it, and now I am glad you did not. I thought I was tired of your love—I thought I could easily forget you. I went so far as to make love to Genie Renard, the woman for whose sake you so bitterly upbraided me the day we parted; but she laughed at me, and then I knew how I had wronged you. I would have gone back to you then, but pride was stronger than love. I went

abroad, meaning to return in a year, but two years went by before I could decide what was best for me to do. Now I have come back—I ask you to be my wife—I ask you to love me and forgive any suffering I may have caused you."

He went closer to her, but she put out her hand imperatively. In the other hand the tiny bits of his visiting card lay in a confused mass.

"Do you think you could piece together this card and make it as spotless, as brilliant, as perfect, as it was an hour ago?" she asked.

His hand closed spasmodically over hers.

"Francia do not torture me—do not be cruel! I know that you love me—" "Stop!" she cried, imperiously, flinging out her hand and scattering the torn card in a white shower over the floor. Now I must speak plainly. Just as impossible as it is for you to restore the bloom to the grape which you have handled too roughly, just as impossible it is for me to love you. Once I would have given my life for you—once I would have been your slave for sweet love's sake. But you outraged my love, and turned my worship to indifference, which is more to be feared than hate. I gave you all—and lost all! And now I have nothing to give you, or any man. Despair has darkened my soul, slained my youth, killed joy, and hope, and faith! Never again will I love! Never again will woman love you as I did; but you threw it away—you trampled it under your feet as if it was something too base for use! And now you stoop to regain it, and I tell you it is too late, too late!"

Slowly turning, she left him. He stood with his head bent upon his hand for a moment, then he, too, left the room.

Too late, forever too late, to win the priceless boon of this "one that was a woman sir."

Five years afterward Francia Randolph married the Englishman, Frederick Leigh—he who had said she had no soul. She told him she no love to give him, or any other man.

"I would rather have your toleration than any other woman's love," he protested.

But she was not glad at his answer, for it seemed, indeed, as if she had lost the power to feel. But as the years passed, her tender affection for husband became a wonderful thing. If she had lost love she had gained broader virtue. Who is it that has said: "Love is best of all"? How little he knew! ANNABEL B. WHITE, in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.

Daniel Webster's Fame Near Home.

Riding to Boston from Duxbury one afternoon in the last autumn my attention was attracted to a lady in the opposite car seat who was evidently a stranger in the Old Colony, yet who with pencil and notebook in use, was endeavoring to acquaint herself with every object of interest, as her constant inquiries of the conductor of the train and of fellow-passengers indicated. When the train stopped at the station nearest the former home of Daniel Webster, called Webster's Place, the lady inquired of the conductor "why this station bore the name." He explained courteously the circumstances, and gave a description of the Webster farm. And then she asked solemnly: "Does Daniel Webster still reside upon the place?"

Evidently historical eminence had made no lodgement in the mind of this person. But it was simply astonishing to me that any man, woman, or child in this country did not know whether Daniel Webster was living or dead.—Boston Transcript.

A Curious Story.

A curious story comes from England (says the New York World), through a private source, that the Baroness Burdett-Coutts has something that no other woman in the world possesses—three skins. The third skin is made of silk, and is so exquisitely fine and close-fitting that few people have detected its presence. It is said to cover her whole body from her ankles to her chin; and they—for she has sets of them—are woven especially for her. They are flesh-colored, of course, and hide all wrinkles and ravages of time, with the natural discolorations of the skin that are the result of age. Where this artificial skin ends at the throat the Baroness wears a splendid collar of jewels or a velvet band, and she never takes off her gloves while in evening dress, not even to eat her dinner.

Trouble in the Trousers.

Webster had an anecdote of old Father Searle, the minister of his boyhood, which is too good to be lost. It was customary then to wear buckskin breeches in cool weather. One Sunday morning in the autumn Father Searle brought down his from the garret, but the wasps had taken possession during the summer, and were having a nice time of it in them. By dint of effort he got out the intruders and dressed for meeting. But while reading the scriptures to the congregation he felt a dagger from one of the enraged small-waisted fellows, and jumped around the pulpit, slapping his thighs. But the more he slapped and danced the more they stung. The people thought him crazy, and were in commotion as to what to do. But he explained the matter by saying: "Brethren, don't be alarmed; the word of God is in my mouth, and the devil is in my breeches!" Webster always told it with great glee to the ministers.—Boston Budget.

The Queen's Small Needle.

Queen Victoria owns a wonderful needle. It represents the column of Trajan in miniature. This Roman column is adorned with many scenes in sculpture, which tell of the heroic deeds of the Emperor Trajan. On the little needle are pictured scenes from the life of Queen Victoria, but the pictures are so small that it is necessary to use a magnifying glass in order to see them. The needle can be opened. It contains a number of needles of smaller size, which also contain small pictures.

The Appetite of Birds.

Of all animals, birds possess the quickest motions, the most energetic respiration, and the warmest blood, and they consequently undergo the most rapid change of substance, and need the most food. Although few creatures are so pleasing to the esthetic tastes of a poetically inclined person as birds, the breeder knows that most of them are to be looked upon as hearty or excessive eaters. Any one who closely observes birds and their conduct will soon remark that all their thoughts and efforts, aside from the few days they spend in wooing and their short periods of resting, are directed to getting something to eat. With what restless earnestness do titmice plunge through the bushes and trees! Not a leaf is uninvestigated, every chink in the bark is examined for whatever eatable it may be hiding, and a sharp look is cast into every joint of a branch. How industriously does the osprey turn and thrash the leaves on the ground of the woods all day long, spying its game with a glance of its sharp eye, and snapping it up on the instant! After observing a few such incidents we can easily believe the stories that are related of the fish-eating powers of the cormorant, and of the fruit-eating birds that are able to consume three times their weight every day.—William Marshall in Popular Science Monthly.

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ment visitors have odd experiences now and then when they seek the President's room of an evening and find a disconsolate graduate or two sobbing away in the darkness over a forgotten glove or a bit of lace while the unconscious owner is enjoying the festivities of the hour somewhere outside.

A Boston woman, shopping for a wrap, saw what she thought she would like lying on the counter, and, picking it up, said to the clerk: "I should like this one. It is very handsome except for all that common parasemeterie on the front." "Excuse me, madam," said a voice in cold displeasure behind her. "Excuse me, that is my jacket which I've just laid off to try on another!"

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