THE GREY REVIEW

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ALLAN McFARLANE, Proprietor.

Twice Wooed, Once Won.

A woman of fifty was his goal from the timer. He was rich, prosperous, cultured, honored, prominently; he was envied bitterly. And yet he was not happy.

As he paced the floor of his private office on the afternoon of a sultry summer's day, it was neither happy nor ever satisfied. His hands were clasped behind him, his head bent in deep thought, his face drawn with care. At last, the fear that had been fighting for months had possessed him; he knew that his life having failed, the world deemed it, it had been an utter failure. He looked round on the luxurious fittings of his office, he thought of all his wealth, and an exclamation, half impatient, half despairing—escaped him as he realized that not all the wealth of all the world could purchase for him that which was more than life itself—the love of a wife.

He had married at a comparatively early age, but Fate had not blessed this love. Marriage with him had been a business, not sentiment. He scoffed the idea of such nonsense. He had asked and obtained Laura herself, for her hand, and Mr. Leigh had not hesitated to bestow his daughter. What was the consideration? Beauty of flesh and blood was never known, and, indeed, was never considered. But so it came about that Laura Leigh, whose girlish charms had ripened and heightened the charm of her budding womanhood, whose loyal heart and spotless soul shaped the glory of her form and lighted her beautiful eyes, was wedded to Reginald Mortimer, upon whom the pleasures of life had commenced to palle.

Laura, rightly or wrongly, had been too dutiful a daughter, and with all woman's unreasoning fondness, she had loved her selfish father too tenderly to think of withstanding his wishes, and with the best grace possible, after many tears, she had schooled herself to the sacrifice, and had submitted herself to the sacrifice. Her wedding was a brilliant affair, and the bride looked the star of the occasion. But after the ceremony, in the quiet of the supple, yielding girl that he expected, Reginald Mortimer, much to his mortification, had found himself face to face with a strong-souled, perhaps, self-possessed woman.

"I do not love you," she explained.

"Why on earth did you not say so before?" he asked savagely.

"When did you ask me?" she replied, and swept from his presence.

Left alone, his first impulse was to rage and curse. But somehow the picture of her standing before him, erect, unflinching—the matchless magnificence of her beauty heightened by the intensity of the moment—insinuated itself into his soul, and shamed and quieted him. And after that day he had never found the face to reopen the question.

So for months they had lived their lives—together, yet separated by an impassable gulf. And during this time the heart, the whole nature of Reginald Mortimer was in perpetual protest. Sometimes he fumed with fury at the thought of having been thwarted, sometimes he cursed himself for a fool in ever marrying her. But as he lived daily in the presence of her radiant beauty, as the graceful tenderness of her daily life sank into his soul, as his ears caught daily the haunting music of her voice and speech, gradually he was delivered from the gross materialism into which his love of money had dragged him. Her purity purified him, her nobility ennobled him, and his life insensibly began to shape itself anew.

He began to feel in his heart strange, unreasonable stirrings—to linger over things that she had touched, to long for her presence, to be happy in her happiness. He fell into the habit of going straight home from business, that he might have dinner with her. When she spoke he hung upon her words, and her voice soothed him like simple music; he found delight in watching the flexible play of her delicate lips. It became his joy to lavish his great wealth upon her, to anticipate her wish.

In all the growing love there was no material hope. There was that in her which forbade it utterly. The slightest hint of a desire to pass the boundary that divided them, and instantly her eyes were filled with a hard and dangerous light, her flexible lips were rigid, and her head was poised erect and defiant. And so gradually he schooled himself to the inevitable; he learned to put out of his heart, all the selfish hopes he had ever cherished regarding her.

But as his love grew, so did his vision clear, and it dawned upon him that though she smiled radiantly and thanked him graciously, nothing that he ever did availed to make her happy. The love that made him keenly anxious to gratify her every wish was revealed to him, deep hidden beneath all the outward seeming, a need that he could not reach, and in her heart a despair that he could not heal. A pang of remorse chilled him as these facts came home, for it was then he realized what he had never thought of before—how cruelly and irreparably he had wronged her.

To have taken advantage of her dutifulness and her father's worldliness he had come of late to see this as a crime black enough; but to have thus cut her off from all hope of what is best in a woman's life, and to have bound her for all time to himself, whom naturally she loathed, the realization of these things made him hate himself utterly.

"If only it could be undone!" he thought. "If only I could set her free!"

To have been able to tell her that she was as free as if he had never been—that, unless she wished it, she need never look upon him again,—this would have gladdened his soul, though it had wrung his heart. But it was impossible.

And so his thoughts were full of anguish that summer afternoon as he paced the private room of his office. He would do for her his duty, he felt; he would make any sacrifice. But that he can do he groaned, as he sank in a chair and buried his face in his hands. "If there no way out!" he groaned, as he sat there we cannot pry. From time to time, at longer and longer intervals, a heavy sob shook him. But when he rose, after a long hour had passed, there was no trace of tears in his eyes, on his face the glow of a hope and a resolve.

"That is the way," he mused, as he began to open some letters. "I'll do it—I must do it—there is no other way."

It was rather late when he reached home that evening. Laura met him as usual, with a sweet, sad smile of welcome. He felt that he welcomed a brother. As he looked at her he almost faltered in his purpose—how could he be cruel? But the pursuit of wealth had taught him tenacity, and so when they were parting for the night he said:

"I must be off early, I'll as good night. I expect I shall be off before you are awake in the morning. I shall be away for a few days."

"Indeed! How is that?"

"I have to go off early on urgent business."

"Oh, well, good-bye." And she held out her hand.

He retained it one moment longer than was necessary and looked at her. Then he dropped his eyes, like a man dazed, and muttered his good-bye hoarsely.

"Laura, if—if I may—kiss you—" he faltered, looking in the direction of the window, well to the woman's heart, and, in spite of herself, made her hesitate, for one startled instant. But then the memory flashed back upon her, the old overwhelming sense of the wrong he had done her, and the old intense repugnance toward him, and she felt more than willing to allow her lips to touch his. Unconsciously she became distant and hard, she drew her hand out of his, and her voice was cold as she replied:

"I think that question was settled between us long ago."

He bowed his head.

"Good-bye, Laura," he said again.

"Good-bye, Reginald," she answered.

And he was gone.

Mrs. Mortimer, like all young widows, was charming. She was not yet more than three or three years out of her teens, but her exquisite beauty and healthy vivacity were shadowed by an imperceptible air of matronly dignity. In addition to this there was that halo of domestic romance about her which made her at once interesting to whomsoever heard her story.

She had been married, at the whisper went, whilst still a mere girl, and against her own good will, to a man at least twenty years her senior. But though the marriage had been one of convenience, they had lived together not unhappily for a twelvemonth, and people who had known Reginald Mortimer in those days spoke of the great change for the better that had been gradually coming over the man. But one morning he left home early on urgent business, and nothing was heard or seen of him for a month.

At last he was found—at least, there was no doubt it was him,—in a dirty canal, utterly unrecognizable, save for his clothes, having apparently been stuck fast in the mud for some considerable time. How he had got there was never discovered, but murder for the purpose of robbery was hinted. Be that as it may, the whisper generally concluded that he had left her piles of money; and he would be a fortunate man who could persuade her to enter for the second time into the holy and blessed state of matrimony.

Nevertheless, five years after the announcement of her widowhood, she was still Mrs. Mortimer. Amongst the men who paid their court to her, were few who even interested her; fewer still who inspired her with any regard; one only whom she could possibly love. She had known him more than a year, and from the first moment of their acquaintance something about him had struck her as inexplicably reminiscent. She was certain she had never seen him before. Why, then, was it that she never met him but her mind involuntarily went groping blindly amongst the dead ashes of her memory? What was it in his eyes that haunted her? What in his voice that echoed and re-echoed through the silence of the past? Could it be that she had known him before, or was it simply that an ideal of manly beauty, cherished in girlhood and forgotten, had returned embodied before her?

Such were the questions his presence, and indeed the memory of him started in her mind. And she could not answer them. She could only tell herself that he was a man of whose love any woman might be glad and proud. Not tall, but broad, and bronzed with health. Once, as she thought of him, the memory of her late husband seemed to come back, somehow upon her, for no reason at all that she could think of—his eyes bright and alert, his face strong and kind.

Ah, she would confess it to herself, for where would be the harm? She could love this man, should it be his will. But he differed from the mob of men who crowded round her in that sometimes he seemed to shun her. She could not understand this; she did not like it, and if she had not been on the point of loving, she would have hated him for it. As it was, there were times when she could not help a feeling of anger that he, of all men, should seem indifferent to her beauty—though again, at other times, she was consoled by the fact, which she did not fail to discover, that when they were under the same roof, he never took his eyes off her except when she looked at him.

And so, marked thus by the ebb and flow of hope, time passed and destiny tarried not. On the evening when she found herself under his escort, she was conscious of being aware that something critical was about to happen. Rashful almost as a schoolboy, he had ventured to solicit the privilege of attending her, a privilege which, indeed she had graciously granted and had even, with a consciousness that she was doing something remarkably bold, but which she could not help doing, suggested a walk instead of the cab he was on the point of hailing.

It began to seem, however, that her expectation would not be fulfilled, and, in the fading light, the place, and the hour between twilight and dark, as it passed, with a sigh, as it seemed, with a shiver, by his side, of that strange reminiscent feeling—more than ever aware of something in his voice that seemed to echo like forgotten music in her heart.

"I know, I know, I know," she said suddenly, and apropos of nothing. Sometimes have the feeling that the person I am speaking to has been familiar to me in some strange, forgotten, fashion. Do you think other people have such a feeling? Does it ever come to you?"

He looked down at her mind-lighted with a sort of grave tenderness.

"Yes," he replied slowly, "I think I know what such an experience. But what makes you ask that now? May I flatter myself that you have that feeling only when I am with you?"

"What a horrible compliment," she replied, laughingly. "I hoped it was for my charms."

"Ah," he exclaimed, "you take it, I was helped by the fact that I have the same feeling when I am with you."

"Indeed! how strange!" she exclaimed.

"Not strange at all, if you will only take me," he replied, "not strange at all, since to me it is only natural."

"Well, I confess, that to my mind the explanation is hidden."

"Don't you think that it is the meeting of two souls toward each other that causes this feeling? Don't you think it is love? Forgive me, Mrs. Mortimer, I love you. I have almost begun to hope that you may love me, not mistaken—say you will be my wife!"

She put her hand in his. "I understand now, I understand," she said. "Do you understand," he asked, taking and Twice Wooed, Once Won, taking her other hand in his and looking full in the face. "Are you sure you understand fully, and can you forgive me the past, Laura?"

"The past—the past—forgive you?" she repeated reflectively, and in that moment the recollection of Reginald Mortimer, which had come upon her once before, came again, and would not be shaken off.

"The past, the past," she still repeated, looking earnestly at her lover, the first faint conception of the truth growing gradually yet rapidly to conviction.

"Reginald," she said. And she hid her face in her hands, and staggered as if she would fall.

He caught her in his arms.

"Look up, my love. Kiss me, and say you forive me. I was wrong to start, I was wrong. Kiss me, my wife."

He pressed his lips to hers, and this time she did not shrink from the touch.

ADVENTURES OF MISSIONARIES.

How Dr. Lowry Defeated a Chinese Mob in the Streets of Peking.

War itself does not afford occasion for greater deeds of valor than the life of a Christian missionary in pagan lands. Often he must face great odds and defend those near to him at the risk of his life. The recent assault in the streets of Peking, upon the family of Bishop Earl Cranston of the Methodist Church, shows how the perils of the fight for the faith may come to missionaries even in the streets of a great capital.

On September 30, 1893, Bishop Cranston brought his family to Peking from Tien-Tsin. The bishop had been staying at the house of Doctor Lowry in Peking, and proposed to take his family there. There was some difficulty in obtaining chairs and vehicles to carry the family from the station, Bishop Cranston remained at home, and Doctor Lowry, who knew the city, took his little daughter Mabel and went with the chair-bearers to the railway station.

In the square near the Chinese Temple of Heaven a mob hurled stones at Doctor Lowry and his daughter. Mrs. Cranston and her three daughters were at the station. She and her daughter Ethel started home in a chair borne by coolies, behind them came Mabel Lowry and Laura Cranston in a donkey-cart, and Doctor Lowry and Ruth Cranston followed in another donkey-cart.

Having been attacked at the square, Doctor Lowry ordered his drivers not to go back that way, but they disobeyed and did so. Seeing the mob, they then turned out of the square into a side street not more than eight feet wide. The mob followed, throwing mud, cement and pieces of brick, and finally bearing down on the carts.

Doctor Lowry dismounted and, the coolies having deserted him, faced the mob alone with one of the rods which he had broken off the Sedan chair. Several Chinese he knocked down with this weapon, and belabored others. The street was so narrow that he could thus fight to advantage; his daughter Mabel stood at his side, while the other women of his party crouched behind the carts.

A brick thrown by the mob broke one of Doctor Lowry's ribs, but still he fought on, his daughter refusing to leave his side. At last he succeeded in beating the mob back so that a start could be made for home.

Then, under her capably directing, giving Mabel [illegible] distinguish herself. The donkey which she was driving [illegible] ran away, whereupon she climbed on its back and brought it to a stop by pulling the reins.

PROOF POSITIVE.

Miss Sprocket—Are you sure he love me for myself more than for my wealth and real estate possessions?

Mr. Wheeler—Of course I am. Why, I love you more than the ground he bike over.

NOT AMUSING TO HIM.

It is very amusing to see those women across the street looking at the bonnets in that window.

Brown—Amusing? Why, that's my wife and daughter.

LAWS.

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