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Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
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Chamberlain Tersteegen Gilm Grillparzer Georgy
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates
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The Girls of St. Olave's

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"In the centre of the group was a little figure in a short, black kilted frock." — Page 247.

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CHAPTER I.

AS GOOD AS GONE.

"You won't be any more use to us after this," said Gertrude positively.

A quick flush coloured Denys's cheek.

"Oh, Gertrude! why not?"

"Engaged girls never are the least use to their families," reiterated Gertrude. "All they think about is the postman and their bottom drawer. The family goes to the wall, its interests are no longer of interest, its sewing is no longer necessary, its duties— —"

But Denys's good-tempered laugh rippled out and interrupted the flow of eloquence.

"Really, Gertrude! you are too funny!"

"I don't feel at all funny," grumbled Gertrude, half laughing and half ashamed of herself, "only I'm quite busy enough, and I can't be piled up with any of your odds and ends! Talking of bottom drawers," she added, more contented now she had said her say, "if I were you I would put away all your ornaments and vases, or Pattie will break them all before you are married."

Denys's eyes wandered round the room, the dear old night nursery where she had slept with one after another of the babies. The walls were adorned with coloured prints, of which the stories had been told and re-told to Tony and little Jerry and baby Maude, and the odds and ends of little ornaments and carved brackets had each its own history of a birthday or a holiday or a keepsake. There was nothing of value, except in the value of association, and Denys smiled tenderly as she shook her head.

On this evening, when she was just engaged to be married, every association in the room was tugging at her heart, and weaving its threads into the new fabric of joy that was spread out before her.

Gertrude's glance followed hers round the room.

"It isn't a half bad room," she remarked, "only those rubbishy old pictures spoil it. When you are gone I shall have this room and you will see the difference I shall make. What a joke it will be to see you come poking round to see all our arrangements then!"

With a gay little laugh, she rubbed her pretty round cheek against Denys's in a sort of good-night salute and departed, shutting the door behind her.

A moment later she opened it a crack.

"Don't lie awake thinking of him," she said, "you know Conway wants breakfast early."

Left alone at last, Denys gave a sigh of relief. It was just like Gertrude to come up and make arrangements not to be overworked! How Conway would rage if he knew! And this night of all nights in her life!

And then Denys forgot all about Gertrude, and sitting on the rug in front of the fire gave herself up to thinking of her happy future.

It was just like her mother to have lighted a fire for her to sit and dream by. Mother always seemed to think of little bits of comfort to give people.

And she was engaged to be married!

She got up hurriedly, unlocked her desk and took out a little pearl ring which had been her mother's. In the firelight she slipped it on to the third finger of her left hand, and sat down again to contemplate it and all that a similar ring given her by Charlie could mean!

And she would have to call Mrs. Henchman Mother, and Audrey would be her sister!

Her eyes brimmed over with amusement.

What would they all say! Would they be pleased and surprised—her grandmother and Mrs. Henchman and Audrey? Had they ever guessed at what Charlie had made up his mind to three years ago?

Mrs. Henchman had seemed to like her then, but then she had been an ordinary chance visitor coming in for a cup of tea, the granddaughter of Mrs. Henchman's old friend Mrs. Marston. What would she think of her now as her only son's future wife?

The fire was sinking down and Denys rose and lit a candle and looked at herself critically in the glass, and then she laughed into her own face at the ridiculousness of the position. Who would have believed that she, Denys Brougham, on the evening of her engagement day, would have been staring at her own reflection in the glass, trying to find out what her future mother-in-law would think of her!

And Charlie's words came back to her, a fresh and tender memory to be treasured for ever.

"I want to say something to you which I have waited three years to say. I've loved you ever since I've known you."

She slipped her mother's ring from her left hand and put it away. She unbound her bright brown hair with its curly waves, turned by the candle light into a halo of red gold, and laid a happy face upon her pillow.

Not a pretty, piquant face like Gertrude's, quickly smiling or quickly clouded, but a cheerful, reliable face with a pretty, good-tempered smile and kind, gentle eyes; a face that little children smiled back at, and which invalids loved to see bending over them. But the looking-glass did not tell Denys anything of all that.

Upstairs in the so-called spare-room where Tony slept, Charlie was standing at the tall dressing chest trying to describe Denys to his mother.

"I have got the berth I came for," he wrote, "I'll tell you all about it when I come, and I have got Denys! I'm so happy, mother darling, I can't write about it, but she is the prettiest, dearest, sweetest girl, and I know you'll love her."

He could not think of any more to say and he fastened his letter and opened his door a crack. Seeing a light still in the hall, he crept downstairs to find Conway just locking up. He held up his letter with a smile.

"The midnight post?" asked Conway, "not a love letter already!"

"It's to mother," answered Charlie simply.

"I'll show you the way," said Conway politely. "I have my latch-key and it's a lovely night."

It was not far to the post office, and the two young men walked there and back again in silence. Conway, always a silent boy, could think of nothing to say. He felt towards this stranger who, twenty-four hours ago, had been nothing but a name to him, as he might feel towards a burglar who had just stolen his greatest treasure, and who yet had to be treated with more than mere politeness because he now belonged to the family—a combination of feelings which did not tend towards speech.

But Charlie was too engrossed in his happiness to heed either silence or conversation. His mind was busily planning out trains and times for the next day's journey home. What would be the last possible minute that he could give himself at Old Keston?

They reached the house and Conway opened the door with his key and held out his hand.

"Good-night," he said.

Charlie's handshake was a hearty one.

"Good-night!" he said. "Good-night! How long do you reckon it takes to walk to the station?"

Conway smiled to himself as he put up the bolts.

"I wonder," thought he, "I wonder if my turn will ever come!"

CHAPTER II.

LOVE AND MONEY.

"I think," said Charlie, looking across the luncheon table at Mrs. Brougham. "I think that in about five weeks I could get a Friday to Monday, and come down if you will let me — —"

"Why, certainly," answered Mrs. Brougham, smiling back at the bright open face opposite her. She really liked him very much, but she shared something of Conway's feeling about the burglar. The idea that Denys belonged in any sense to anybody else, needed a good deal of getting used to.

She had certainly wondered once or twice in the last three years whether young Henchman, who wrote so regularly to Denys, would ever become more than a friend.

Charlie's telegram three days ago saying he had passed his final, and was coming up from Scotland to see about a post and would call at St. Olave's *en route*, had rather taken away her breath. His call had been only a short one, but he had asked if he might return the following day and tell them whether he had obtained the post.

He had duly returned—successful—with a good berth—with prospects—with life opening out before him, and she had been surprised at the gravity and anxiety that had shadowed his face even when he spoke so hopefully of the good things that had come to him.

But the shadow and the gravity were all gone now. It was only his fear that Denys would not see anything in him to love, that in the three years in which he had worked, and hoped, and loved her, she might have met someone else who was more worthy of her, and to whom she had given the love he so longed to gain. That very evening he had put his fate to the touch, over the nursery fire, while

Denys waited to fetch away Tony's light, and now he was bubbling over with fun and laughter, and acting more like a big schoolboy than a sober young man who was contemplating the cares of matrimony.

It seemed to Mrs. Brougham that the world had gone spinning round her in an unprecedented manner in the last twenty-four hours, and she was not sure whether she was on her head or her heels.

Suppose Conway—or Gertrude—why, Reggie Alston wrote to Gertrude as regularly as the weeks went round!—or Willie—

She gave herself a mental shake and scolded herself for letting her head be turned with all these happenings. Why, Conway was only nineteen and Gertrude just eighteen, and what would schoolboy Willie say if she put him into such a line of possibilities!

She brought her thoughts back to the conversation round the table, and found that Charlie was still in the full swing of plans.

"Easter will be four or five weeks after that," he was saying, "and I shall get mother to have you down then, Denys—and Gertrude too," he looked across at Gertrude—"and it will be so jolly, because I shall get a whole week, I am sure, and we should have a lovely time. I'm ever so glad mother has moved to Whitecliff; it won't be nearly such a journey for you as Saltmarsh was."

Denys had opened her lips to reply, but before she could get out a word, Gertrude had answered for her.

"That will be very nice," she said eagerly, "I always count to get a holiday at Easter and I always want to go to the sea, whatever time of year it is. It's very kind of you to ask me."

Charlie's eyes were on Denys. It was his first invitation to her to his own home and she guessed that he felt a great happiness in it, but how could she tell him that while Gertrude always took the Easter holiday because of the school term, she herself always stayed at home then, so that her mother should be sure of having one daughter to help her—and Gertrude had already accepted the invitation!

Before she could frame any answer, a small voice chimed in.

"Maudie wants to go too! Maudie's got a spade and a pail."

There was a laugh all round the table, and Mrs. Brougham said, "My dear child! Mrs. Henschman can't ask *all* the girls of St. Olave's!"

Her glance met Denys's, and Denys understood that it said, "Accept, darling, I shall be all right!"

Denys looked up at Charlie and accepted the invitation with her own sunny smile. "I feel dreadfully frightened, but I should love to come," she said. "Oh, I do hope your mother will like me!"

"Like you!" echoed Charlie, and then he went crimson to the roots of his hair. "*Like you*," he repeated half under his breath.

Easter was a long way off, and Denys thought very little more about the proposed visit to Mrs. Henschman, and the present was very full and very interesting. She decided to make some quiet opportunity to speak to her mother about it, but before this opportunity could occur, Gertrude took time by the forelock, as she always did when she was set on a thing.

The two sisters were making marmalade in the kitchen on the morning following Charlie's departure, when Gertrude brought her guns to the attack.

"I say, Denys," she began, "it was very civil of Charlie to invite me to Whitecliff. I saw you opening your mouth to say we could not both go, so I just whipped in and accepted."

"I don't see how we can both go," said Denys gravely.

"No?" said Gertrude, raising her pretty eyebrows. "I suppose not! but you had your chance, and went to grandma's for three months and picked up a good match. Charlie is a very good match and he will be quite comfortably off, and he is pleasant and good-looking and all that! Oh! you have done very well for yourself, Denys, and you are not going to prevent my having my chance."

Denys's cheeks were scarlet. She literally did not know what to say!

Had she made a good match? Had she done very well for herself? Such a view of the case had never entered her head. She thought of

what Charlie's prospects had been when she first knew him on that long ago visit to her grandmother.

Who would have said then that Charlie was likely to be comfortably off? How well she remembered Gwyn Bailey's picnic, when Charlie had told her that the positions he had hoped for were closed to him, and that he had no money to enter a profession! She remembered the hopeless ring of his voice as he had said, "now there's nothing."

No! she had not chosen Charlie for any such reason as Gertrude suggested.

She was standing with her back to the scullery, and was quite unaware that behind the half closed door Pattie was quietly peeling potatoes, but her answer could scarcely have been different if she had known it.

"I wish you would not talk so, Gertrude," she said.

"Very likely," said Gertrude calmly, "people often do not care to hear what is nevertheless quite true. And I mean to be pretty well off when I get married, and not to have to scrape and think of every penny, and wonder whether you can afford a new dress just directly you want it. I think it's horrid, and I have always thought it horrid."

"I don't," said Denys, "it seems to me that we have been as happy at home here as any family I know, even though we have had, as you call it, to scrape and think of pennies, and manage our clothes and work hard. I've liked it always and if I loved anyone I would not mind being poor. Mother did not marry anybody rich and *she* is happy!"

"Ah!" said Gertrude, "it is all very well for you to talk. You have Love *and* Money. And that's what I mean to have! So I shall go to Whitecliff and get to know fresh people and see what turns up!"

"What about— —" began Denys, but she did not finish her sentence. She disliked putting names together, but her thoughts flew off to a Scotch town, where a boy with a merry face and dark twinkling eyes, was working his hardest as a bank-clerk. Reggie Alston had been Gertrude's chum since they were children, and he had

never made any secret of the fact that Gertrude was the one girl in the world in his eyes.

But Gertrude divined what Denys had meant to say, and with a light laugh she went away to wash her sticky hands. She was not going to have Reggie Alston thrown at her. Reggie was all very well and Reggie might mean Love, but Reggie would not mean Money.

Turning to see what had become of Gertrude, Denys caught sight of Pattie's interested face.

"I've got a young man, Miss Denys," she said importantly, "he's such a nice, steady young man, Miss, your Mr. Henchman just reminds me of him, and he's just as fond of me as anything, but" — her face fell — "he's not very well off, Miss, not at all, and — and — well! it's rather a pity, as Miss Gertrude's been saying, to marry poor."

"Oh, Pattie!" said Denys earnestly, "don't say that. If you love one another, you can be so happy even if you are poor. If he is steady and nice, that is much more important than being rich."

But Pattie's shake of the head was only the echo of Gertrude's words.

"Love *and* Money. Love *and* Money." "It's all very well for *you* to talk."

CHAPTER III.

A GREAT BIG SHAME.

"It's a shame! that's what it is, a downright shame," cried a woman's voice angrily, "and it's just like you, Jim Adams, to put upon a poor woman so. As if I had not enough trouble with one child, and you want to bring your sister's brat here. I never heard of such a thing."

Jim Adams stood with his broad back turned towards her, and he made no reply.

"Yes! much you care!" she scolded, "but I tell you, Jim Adams, I won't do it! You can write and tell your precious sister she can make other arrangements. You are married now and you can't do just as you like; you've got a wife, and I won't do it! There! you've waked the baby, shouting at me about your sister; but I won't have anybody else's child, so there!"

The lusty crying from the adjoining room continuing, she went in, banging the door behind her, and Jim was left alone, staring doggedly out at the tall houses opposite.

Should he write to his dying sister at Whitecliff and tell her to make other arrangements? What other arrangements could she make? Could she bring back her young sailor husband from his grave in the Red Sea? Could she stay the progress of the cough, the outward sign of the fatal sickness which was bringing her to an early death? Could she send the child, her treasured little boy, to any other relative? Jim knew she could not. Nellie and he had been alone in the world since they were children. If he did not take little Harry, the boy must go into the workhouse.

Should he tell Nellie that she must make that arrangement? He was an easy-going chap, this Jim Adams, too easy-going. He stood

six feet one in his socks and was big and broad in proportion, a veritable giant in looks, but his strength was mere physical strength, and he knew it. He was not strong in himself. This was the very first time, since he had known and courted Jane Green, that he had resisted her will for twenty-four hours, and even now he was contemplating the possibility of giving way.

Jane could make herself very disagreeable indeed if she were thwarted. He had had nothing but storming since yesterday morning when Nellie's letter had come, and he had had two half-cooked suppers and a miserable cold breakfast. He did like a good supper, and if this was what it was going to be if he had Harry —

The sound of a gay voice singing on the pathway below, startled him. There were always noises in the street, but this song caught his attention.

*"They had not been married a month or more
When underneath her thumb went Jim,
It can't be right for the likes of her
To put upon the likes of him.
It's a great big shame, and if she belonged to me
I'd let her know who's who;
Putting on a fellow six foot three
And her only four foot two!"*

Jim smiled grimly to himself; it was so absolutely true. Then his wrath rose. What business had Jack Turner to be singing that ditty under *his* window? He supposed all the neighbours laughed behind his back at the way his small wife ruled him. If they only had a taste of her nagging tongue they would not, perhaps, laugh so much. He would let them see he was not under Jane's thumb!

He turned at the opening of the bedroom door, prepared to have his say, and there was Jane with their big bouncing baby in her arms. "Here!" she said crossly, "you just get this kid off to sleep, I'm going for the supper beer. I've minded him all day, and I'm tired of him. I believe he wakes up in the evening just to spite me!"

Jim took his baby and his eyes softened as he cuddled the little fellow in his arms. He thought of Nellie's beseeching letter, and he thought of himself as dead and of Jane as dead, and this baby left to