

THE STORY OF ANNIE.



SILVERTON rolled his eyes in a contemptuous glance at his companion. "You know I told you," he broke out, angrily, "that I despised that gown! I thought you said that you would not wear it again. If you need anything why don't you—"

"I need nothing," she interrupted, quickly. A pale wave of color had come into her face and tinged the roots of her hair. Silvertown, with a suppressed shrug, looked away. There was a long silence between the two.

Silvertown rose roughly. The girl left the garden with him without speaking. Silvertown's moody glance then noticed that her boots and gloves were not as neat as formerly. Was she growing careless? That pretty daintiness about her cheap dress had been one of her attractions. And her youthful roundness, which, with all the gentle refinement of her appearance, was one of her claims to beauty, was that going too?

The August afternoon was stagnant and sultry. They left the overburdened elevated train at a downtown station, and, automatically, Anne stopped at the usual corner. The stale, dead odor of the crowded districts of poverty was in the air. And a new wave of disgust—for the Bohemianism of this latter life of his, for this tie he had contracted—swept over Silvertown.

"I—I want to speak—I want to tell you something—" She faltered and her sensitive color came and went.

"Well? What is it?" he savagely demanded, with a premonition of something unpleasant to come.

She glanced up into his face and then her eyes sank.

"There was something pitiful, terrible in the look that passed over her face. But Silvertown saw nothing."

"No. It is nothing. Never mind," she said.

He took her at her word, and nonchalantly went his way, leaving the girl motionless on the corner.

"Look here, Hinckney, this is not—not possible. Perfectly possible. No mistake. Here are the papers." The lawyer drew them out.

"Well, why are you surprised? Didn't you know old Josh Silvertown had no other heir-at-law?"

"To think of the old duffer dying off there on the Mediterranean, without a will, though! My mother, poor thing, never believed I'd have a cent of her bachelor brother's money. He always said he would make a will leaving it out of the family. And, so, behold me a millionaire!" Silvertown laughed shortly, nervously. His eyes gleamed.

"Yes." The lawyer's glance traveled the shabby room. "I don't say that this is not a queer abode for a newly hatched plutocrat. I say, Silvertown, you've lost your grip rather."

"ARE YOU THE MAN?"

more than was necessary in the last two or three years, haven't you? A man may not be particularly prosperous, but there is no need of his dropping out of his own place for all that."

"Men, you talk without knowing of what. True, Hinckney, I've been a d— fool, but there was a reason."

Hinckney rolled a cigarette. Then, laconically:

"Miss Eckroth?" he asked. Silvertown nodded moodily.

"Well," observed the lawyer, "Sybil Eckroth is a fine girl—as noble as she is lovely. She has exalted and strained ideas of duty, and she knows that it would kill that weak mother, and equally weak and silly father of hers, should she marry a poor man. Therefore she sacrificed you—and herself."

She is, in her way, a heroine. She devotes half of her life to doing good. Her works of charity are as beautiful as her face. That was not reason sufficient, her refusing you, for you to go down as you did. No, you are unjustly bitter toward her, I'm assured. Have you seen her since?"

"Once, six weeks ago. She did not see me. It was a random glimpse."

"Yes, she has been abroad two years." Phlegmatically Hinckney pursued: "Now that you're rich, why not try again. I see you have not forgotten her. She is at the seashore. I can give you her address."

"Hinckney! What do you take a man for?"

Hinckney did not heed the exclamation. He saw the look in Silvertown's eyes and he delivered the address in question.

"Now," he said to himself as he walked toward his fashionable club from the very unfashionable quarter of his client's late residence, "that idea will take root and start full grown into decided purpose by tomorrow."

"Hello!" said Hinckney, looking up from his desk one morning.

It was Silvertown—grown the man of fashion once more, the man of success, but at the moment, with a vague disquiet in his eye that disturbed the equanimity of his triumph.

"Do you remember a piece of advice you gave me last summer?" I followed it, with this result," Sybil Eckroth and I are engaged and to be married next month."

"Congratulations you—"

"Stop! There is one thing that troubles me. It's a little hard to tell."

Silvertown paused and collected himself before he went on to speak of one Anne. He believed, he said, that she worked in a shop. She seemed perfectly respectable; he had met her when he had, in mad despair, chosen to drop out of the world of his associates. She was a very quiet, reticent girl. She had never consented to tell him where she lived or how. He had communicated with her by letters sent to the general post-office under an assumed name. He had thought this odd, but had not cared enough about the matter to press the point. She was a faithful little thing; she loved him, and—she passed the time. Then, to the question of the lawyer, "Had he promised to marry this Anne?" Stockton was compelled to reply: "Yes."

He had so promised. The matter, briefly, now stood thus. He had written to tell her of his changes of fortune, and offered her almost any sum to keep quiet. There had been no reply and this disturbed him. What would she—what could she—do? The silence might be ominous and—

"With my wedding coming off next month—a scandal—in short, Hinckney, you understand."

Within three or four days a short note of summons reached Silvertown from the lawyer. Silvertown hurried to the latter's office.

"I have a clue by which we can find what we want—the address of a woman who knows the girl—has been seen with her. Suppose you come with me?" said Hinckney. When they reached a certain quarter, Silvertown remarked: "Yes, there is the corner—near here—where I frequently left her. But you must be on the wrong track as to the street. You're turning into how, Hinckney. These are tenement houses of the poorest class. She never lived in one of these."

"This is all the clue I have. We'll see."

They stopped before a half-open door, swarming with children in a varied assortment of faded rags. On the first floor a stalwart Irishwoman was weeping, with her apron to her eyes.

"Wait here and I'll go up to inquire," whispered Hinckney. "The woman—the friend—lived upstairs."

He disappeared in the malodorous gloom and as Silvertown stood there a door opened, and a voice with an inexpressible tremor in it, called the weeping woman in. The speaker appeared in the doorway, the light from behind her fell on Silvertown's face.

"Oh, darling!" came the soft call of Sybil Eckroth's lips, and trembling, with a look like that of a Madonna in her lovely eyes, she had seized the hand of the man she loved. She showed scarcely any surprise at seeing him there; she came from scenes so solemn that they absorbed all smaller sensations. In this exaltation of her mood, in the superhuman pity that filled her heart, she felt herself nearer to Silvertown than she had ever felt, she poured out her soul to him in a more tender love, with an assurance of finding comprehension. "Oh, beloved, a girl in there is dying," she murmured. "So young! And she must have been pretty—but she has been so poor—oh, so poor! How can the good Lord allow such misery? I found her by chance, through the good woman who was out here, and who, is now with her. She was so proud, this girl, she would not let any one know how destitute she was. She was dying of hunger, Henry!—hunger! And just now, at last, she told me something of her history—only because she wanted a picture to be buried with her—face downward, that none might see it. It is a man's picture, Henry. She loved him, and he—promised everything—and left her. She had lost her place in a shop, and was already in dire extremities before he went away. But she did not tell him, though she tried to, because she would not be a burden to him, and, she says, he had grown to love her. And, since, he has grown very rich, and offered her money for her silence, but she kept silent without the money, Henry! She is dying—with her ruined life and—Oh, think of what that man must be! Think what men are who do these things! A sound within made her start. She threw open the door and drew Silvertown into the wretched room.

An emaciated face on a ragged bed, was turning blue in death. The great eyes opened. An unearthly light came into them. A smile touched the mouth.

"Anne!" The cry left Silvertown's throat, hoarsely.

The face was still now. Hinckney, descending, stood transfixed at the door. The Irishwoman fell, moaning on her knees.

"The Lord and all the saints have mercy on her soul! 'Tis all over with her!"

Sybil Eckroth spoke slowly.

Silvertown's head sank on his breast.

She raised her arm. Her hand pointed to the door. Her voice was as that of a strange woman. "Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"

"Go!"



A SHADOW ON THE WALL.

A valiant youth was Tommy Strutt. As brave as any knight of old. He used to cut off giants' heads. He was so very bluff and bold.

Afraid! Ah, that he never felt— At least, this was what Tommy said. But please to note how Tommy looked! One night when he had gone to bed!

For there was something on the wall. And what it was he could not tell! But strong as he felt and dauntless To give one loud, terrific yell!

Light!—ah! The chamber of his teeth! His hair rose up and stood on end. Yet 'twas a shadow, nothing more. That so alarmed our valiant friend!

'Twas only Tommy's Cousin Dick. A wooden dagger in his hand. And why our hero looked so scared Is more than I can understand.

Racketer's Party.

Racketer, Miss Racketer, was a cat, a well-behaved, respectable tabby-cat, and she lived with the Van Blares in a grand house on Lexington terrace.

She had been named Miss Racketer when, as a kitten, she was brought to the grand house by the butcher's boy. She celebrated her arrival by jumping from his arms into the china-closet and knocking several costly plates to the ground, which made so great a noise that the cook screamed:

"Ugh, the nasty little racketer!"

Wherever the cook discovered this term I do not know, but it stuck to the cat and she was called by that name ever after.

This unfortunate affair came near causing Miss Racketer to be sent away;—in fact Mrs. Van Blare, who had run downstairs to see what the trouble was, did order the cook to send her away with the boy in the morning. The cook, however, had a motherly heart and she took pity on the homeless little thing; and, though she should not have disobeyed orders, she kept Miss Racketer hidden in a box in the pantry and fed her so well that in a short time she grew to be a very handsome cat and wore a pink ribbon around her neck. She always staved in the back part of the house, so that none of the Van Blares ever saw her again.

The cook told Miss Racketer that she must not, on any account, let any of the family see her, for if she did, they would both be sent away. The cook, herself, told me all this and said also that she understood the cat language and had had many a pleasant chat with Miss Racketer in the kitchen, and it was from the cook that I heard the story of Miss Racketer's party.

I asked the cook at what college she had studied the cat language, at which she got angry and wanted to know what I meant by talking to her in that way; so I quickly assured her that I intended no offense. Then she said that the language came natural to her; that she could not speak it, but could understand every word a cat said.

After that I coaxed the cook to tell me this story one night when I found her alone in the kitchen. Though she has a bad habit of dropping her 't's I will let her tell it in her own words.

"You must know, Master Robert," began the cook, "that it all happened at the Van Blares where I 'ad been living for nigh onto ten year, and I never was so frightened in my life as I was the night I first knew that I understood the cat language. I was sitting down in my chair in the kitchen, about 9 o'clock the night before New Year's, and Miss Racketer was purring by my side when all of a sudden she jumped right up in my lap and cried:

"'Cook, go to bed and go to sleep!'"

"I just opened my eyes wide and looked at that cat with surprise and fear. Then she laughed and said:

"'Don't be alarmed, cook; you've been a good friend to me, and any one who treats a cat extra well, as you 'ave me, is allowed to understand our language. Now I want to know what means all this bustle and confusion in the family—going to 'ave some kind of a party, ain't they?"

"Well, Master Robert, I didn't know what to say at first, being so surprised; but the cat got angry because I didn't answer at once, I suppose, and screeched:

"'Cook, I'll scratch your eyes out if you don't answer me quickly!'"

"Then I said, as polite as I could:

"'Oh, yes, Miss Racketer, to-morrow will be New Year's Day, and the family are going to give a grand reception and they will 'ave a lot of good things to eat and drink and plenty of people calling to see them.'"

"Indeed," said Miss Racketer, speaking in a sarcastic way. "Nobody ever comes to see me but that old black cat, John Thomas, and it's about time I gave my coming-out party and let some of the swell cats on Lexington terrace know who I am!"

"Well, when she said that, Master Robert, I almost burst out laughing, but as she looked as if ready to fly at me, I put on a straight face and appeared interested.

"'Yes,' said she, in a slow way, as if she were thinking about something. 'I will give a party—I will give it right away and I want you, cook, to set out some of the good things on the bench in the yard. I will go around after my friends in the terrace and bring

them ere in 'alf an 'our. Don't forget, cook, to spread the table, 'sue for my guests or I'll scratch your eyes out.'"

"And then she was gone. Land of goodness, Master Robert, I was most frightened out of my wits; I was that dazed and scared that I didn't know what I was a-doing. However, I got two cats and filled them with milk and put some minced salmon in a dish. There was a cold roast fowl and I cut it up in pieces and some nice cold liver in small pieces. I must 'ave carried one or two other little things out to the bench, also, but I was too dazed to know what they were."

"I just 'ad time to go, back into the kitchen and get ready to peep through the slats when I 'ard the cats a-com'ing. First came Miss Racketer, leaning on the paw of a black cat, who, I suppose, was John Thomas. Then came the cats from Lexington terrace—there must 'ave been a dozen of them; and the nine they put on as they took their places around the bench! Oh, but it was comical!"

"Thank you, cook," I 'ard Miss Racketer say, but I never let on I 'ard 'er—and then this company fall to at the good things, and it made my face and ears burn to 'ear the way they praised them and told Miss Racketer what a good and thoughtful cook I was."

"Well, Master Robert, the talk of them cats was something astonishing. They talked about the latest styles in winter furs, and they were very much set against a certain giddy young cat in the neighborhood who 'ad 'er 'air bleached, for they declared it made 'er look like a 'orrid fright."

"One of the cats told a story that made them all laugh. It was about a cat that got 'er back up every time she combed 'er 'air. Then they began to sing, and I must say I never 'ave before that there was so much music in a cat's voice! It was beautiful."

"I was just beginning to enjoy it all when there came a knocking at the gate and I looked up to see master carrying a candle and mince with him, standing back of me. Master ran out to open the gate and there stood my own cousin's wife, who 'ad called to pay me a long-promised visit."

"Then master says, kind of sharp like:

"'What 'ave we 'ere?' And the mince follows him with: 'Oh, cook!' and I see she was crying."

"'Oh, mum, I sobe in a dazed way. 'It was all on account of Miss Racketer!'"

"Then master came in with some little packages of tea and coffee which he laid on the table."

"'I 'ave caught you at last, cook,' says he."

"I saw it was no use stopping to explain about Miss Racketer to 'im, so I bundled up me things and asked 'im for me month's wages and came away. I wouldn't stay in any place where I was misunderstood and put upon."

"But cook," I asked, "whatever became of Miss Racketer?"

"Oh," said the cook, "in an off-hand manner, 'I 'ave never seen 'er since'—Philadelphia Times."

A Curious Case.

One of our most curious sports was a war upon the nests of wild bees. We imagined ourselves about to make an attack upon the Chippewas or some other tribal foe. We all painted and stole cautiously upon the nest; then, with a rush and a war-whoop, sprang upon the object of our attack and endeavored to destroy it. But it seemed that the bees were always on the alert, and never entirely surprised; for they always raised quite as many scalp as did their bold assailants! After the onslaught upon the bees was ended, we usually followed it by a pretended scalp-dance.

On the occasion of my first experience in this mode of warfare, there were two other little boys who also were novices. One of them, particularly, was too young to indulge in such an exploit. As it was the custom of the Indians, when they killed or wounded an enemy on the battlefield, to announce the act in a loud voice, we did the same. My friend Little Wound, as I will call him, for I don't remember his name, being quite small was unable to reach the nest until it had been well trampled upon and broken, and the insects had made a counter charge with such vigor as to repulse and scatter our numbers in every direction. However, he evidently did not want to retreat without any honors; so he bravely jumped upon the nest and yelled:

"I, brave Little Wound, to-day kill the only fierce enemy!"

Scarcely was the last word uttered when he screamed as if stabbed to the heart. One of his older companions shouted:

"Dive into the water! Dive! Dive into the water!" for there was a lake near by. This advice was obeyed.

When we had reassembled and were indulging in our mimic dance, Little Wound was not allowed to dance. He was considered not to be in existence—he had been "killed" by our enemies, the Bee tribe. Poor little fellow! His tear-stained face was sad and ashamed, as he sat on a fallen log and watched the dance. Although he might well have styled himself one of the noble dead who had died for their country, yet he was not unmindful that he had screamed, and that this weakness would be apt to recur to him many times in the future. Recollections of an Educated Sioux, in St. Nicholas.

A Wish.

I learn the rules of base ball, and learn them very quick; I wish I were the same with my arithmetic.

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