

# Love Finds A Way.

BY JEANNETTE H. WALWORTH.

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(Continued.)

It was Jimmy Martin, who was mending the bean arbor that day. He carefully wiped the garden soil off his clumsy feet before advancing farther into the neat sitting room. It was his second invasion since Miss Malvina's departure. "Mother" Spillman greeted him tartly.

"How much work are you likely to get done prancing in here every minute or two? I hired you to mend the bean arbor, not to nurse me, James Martin."

"This is only twice, missis, and my word's out. I was to look in on you occasional. I've found something out yander that maybe you have lost. That's what brought me this time."

"What is it?"  
"A letter—a long, big letter. Mighty mussed up it is, though. I'm thinkin' the old sow must have snuted it under the fence when she was makin' up her bed. I saw a bit of white gleamin' when I went to nail on a new base-board to the fence."

Mrs. Spillman put out a withered hand eagerly.

"What's written on the back of it, James Martin? My eyes are not what they used to be."

"Nothin' as I can make out for the dur-r-t. It's just a long, big, thick, dirty envelope, and it may have been there months from the looks of it."

"I know. It's mine. Give it to me. And, James"—the old lady fumbled in the long pocket of her wrapper—"here's half a dollar. I pay you that for bringin' me this paper and for holdin' your tongue about it. Do you understand?"

"But, mum—"  
"I pay you to hold your tongue, James Martin. One word about this envelope, and never another hour's work from me will you have. Now get back to the bean arbor." And James, knowing the minister's widow to be a woman of her word, pocketed his half dollar and shuffled back to the bean arbor.

Long before Miss Malvina got home, walking this miss, with her brown serge held carefully above her dusty shoe tops, her mother had mastered the contents of the soiled envelope and secreted it between the back of her chair and its chintz slip cover, where, she declared, with a triumphant chuckle, it should stay, Matthews or no Matthews, Malvina or no Malvina, until she had decided for herself whether it was for Tom Broxton's good to have it found or lost.

## CHAPTER III. WAS IT A GHOST?

"Could ye not watch for me one hour?"

With a sense of fright and recreancy impelling him, Tom Broxton deserted his bed at a bound, to stand, dazed and trembling, amid the familiar surroundings of his own bedroom.

Had he dreamed the utterance, or had the reproach been whispered into his slumber dulled ears by voice of mortal or spirit? He passed his hand rapidly over his bewildered brow and tried to pierce the encircling gloom with startled eyes. Was it a part of his hallucination that the gloom increased as he stood and stared?

A dim, faint radiance seemed to recede slowly from him, leaving his chamber in the absolute darkness that had enshrined it when he retired. Presently everything came back to him—the

utter weariness that had overtaken him when the minister's monotonous droning of his father's summarized merits had come to an end; his sickening sense of the futility of all the wordy condolences pressed upon his shrinking ears; his longing to be alone and in utter darkness, alone with his grief, veiled by friendly darkness; his turning away with a sense of dismal relief from the neighbor crowded parlors and halls, conscious of having paid the last outward show of respect to the only friend the world held for him.

Even Olivia Matthews had been an unwelcome intruder upon his solitude when, with a sweet womanliness that quaintly crowned her childish head, she had followed him up stairs with a motherly injunction about not sleeping in a draft and had placed on a table by his bedside the cup of tea she had brought him herself. Ollie was not much given to serving others, and even in his exquisite anguish Tom realized this unusual element in her hovering attitude.

Had he ever shown her the grace of a word of thanks? He could not recollect. The awful irrevocableness of his loss, the terrifying stretch of his companionless future, had swallowed up thought for anything else.

A portrait of his father stood on an easel in one corner of his room. He had knelt before it as soon as Ollie had left him and communicated the desire of his lonely young heart to the father who had been father, mother, sister and brother to him.

"I should like so to carry out your slightest wishes about everything, father, if only you had waited for my coming. If it is permitted the angels to stoop to poor mortality, guide me still, so that I may not miss the turning in the road that shall finally bring you and me together again."

That had been his last thought before falling into a sleep of utter exhaustion. It was his first recurrent one as he stood pondering his sudden awakening. The easel that held his father's portrait was hidden from him by the tall footboard of his heavy four-posted bedstead. How long he had slept he could not compute.

On retiring he had topped his bedroom candle with the extinguisher and had excluded every ray of light from the moon flooded world by drawing the heavy brocade curtains. His eyeballs were hot and swollen with the tears that lay too deep to moisten his dry lids.

In the first second of his startled awakening he did not speculate upon the dim light that pervaded his large room briefly nor upon its gradual withdrawal. He was wide awake now and self-reproachful. He had fully meant only to take a short, needful rest before joining the watchers down stairs.

He had thrown himself upon his bed half dressed. He lighted his candle now and passed beyond the high carved footboard. He would look once more upon the dear, familiar face from which he had drawn strength and inspiration all the days of his short life.

Conscience smote him for a coward. He had purposely turned himself on retiring so that he should not see even the pointed tips of the easel that held the portrait.

Death is very awe inspiring to the young and the lusty. The revolt against it is natural and strong. It is only as we grow older and the prizes we have failed to grasp show their tinsel side that we come to think of the great Mower and his personal attitude with a friendly tolerance born of a sense of the inevitable.

The boys at Andover college would have stared and perhaps protested to hear Tom Broxton called a coward. Among his fellows he was esteemed one who was not a provoker of quarrels, but quite incapable of quailing in the face of danger.

And yet with his first glance toward the easel that held his father's portrait he recoiled with an audible cry of terror, but only for a second. Then he advanced resolutely toward it.

The easel was not as it had been when he fell asleep. Drooping over the broad, calm brow of the pictured face it held was a bunch of white cosmos flowers precariously clinging to the frame of the portrait by a twisted stem or two. Tom touched the flowers with a skeptic finger. Were they real or a part of his troubled fancy? They fell to the floor at his touch, and from about the green stems a twisted paper uncoiled in their descent. He stooped and picked the paper up.

Some one of his many kindly intentioned friends had stolen in with flowers and more empty words of condolence, he told himself, and held the paper behind his candle. Again that low

suppressed cry of terror from the boy's startled lips!

Whoever had woven that loosely bound wreath of white cosmos, his mother's favorite flower, with which to crown his father's brow had wrapped about it a bit of his father's own handwriting, a careless, heedless mistake. Even as he pondered the mystery of the cosmos he was greedily reading the contents of the paper.

It was only a page of an unfinished letter, but the date made it precious. The habits of a lifetime had held good in the hour of extremity. His father never failed to date. Only two nights before that letter had been begun—and ended—when the pen had dropped from a nerveless hand. And yet, even as he read, Tom was conscious of a perplexing discrepancy. His guardian had said no letter had been written to him.

But thoughts of his guardian were violently shoved aside. This letter, unfinished, but priceless—where had it come from? He read and reread it standing there before his father's picture, unconsciously crushing the forgotten cosmos under his feet:

"My boy, soon to be my lonely boy, the last of the Broxtons, I have prayed very earnestly to be permitted to stay until you reached my bedside, but the sands are running out of my glass too rapidly. Let me try to write what I may not be permitted to say."

"My son, I am leaving you in a perilous condition—young, unformed, the possessor of accumulating wealth, which means accumulating temptations and responsibilities."

"I have desired for you a practical rather than a classical education. I anticipated, being a vigorous man and not burdened with years, that I should be in the flesh when you came to the time of life demanding a parental interest in your affairs. I have looked forward to many years of good comradeship with my boy. Heaven has decreed otherwise."

(To be Continued.)

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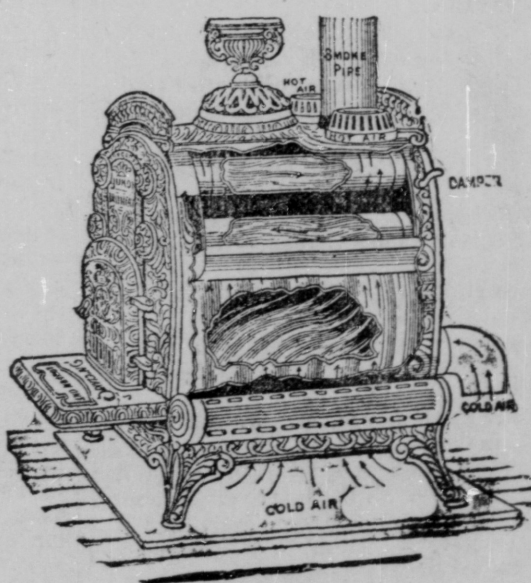
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Accommodation leaves for the east.....	6 00 p.m.
Accommodation arrives from the west.....	1 55 a.m.
Accommodation arrives from the east.....	2 25 p.m.
Express leaves for the east.....	7 05 a.m.
Express arrives from the east.....	9 10 a.m.
Accommodation leaves for the east.....	3 00 p.m.
Accommodation arrives from the east.....	4 50 p.m.

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