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Maxham & Wing

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A GIRL'S A GIRL FOR A THAT.

Is there a lady in the land
That boasts her rank and a that?
With scornful eye, we pass her by;
And little care for a that!
For Nature's charms shall bear the palm—
A girl's a girl for a that.

What though her neck with jewels she deck;
With folly's gear and a that,
And gaily ride in pomp and pride;
We can dispense with a that.
An honest heart acts no such part—
A girl's a girl for a that.

The nobly born may proudly scorn
A lowly lass and a that;
A pretty face has far more grace
Than haughty looks and a that!
A bonnie mind needs no such aid—
A girl's a girl for a that.

Then let us trust that come it may;
When faith and love, all arts above,
Shall reign supreme and a that!
And every youth confess the truth—
A girl's a girl for a that.

GOING HOME.

A wet, dismal night—a night when, tempted by the first warm days of Spring, people who had left off fires looked dubiously at their polished grates, and shuddered as the faint beat heavily against the windows and the wind howled in the chimney—a night when not a star was visible, when the gas lights flickered and flattered in a misty, uncertain manner, and the pavement was covered with a greasy agglutination of sludge and mud—a night when sudden gusts took pedestrians almost off their feet, and sent the blinding drizzle into their faces till they could hardly see their way; when umbrellas were a myth, and waterproofs a fop delusion; and a light fog, strongly suggestive of sore throats and rheumatism, hung over the marshy districts of London.

Three o'clock in the morning, and on Waterloo Bridge—silence over the great city—the great dark hive that loomed so grimly against the leaden sky, while the busy brains of ever-restless men kept feverish watches through the still small hours.

Not a sound save the splash, a flash of the river, as it swept under the cold stone arches, sucking and licking the piers with its furtive, hungry tongues; the distant rumble of a market wagon, or a horse retreating cab; or the chiming of the city churches, telling how time was passing away.

And a woman, weary and foot-sore, with garments that hardly protected her from the rain, a shawl so thin and ragged that it required all the strength left in her long, lean arms to prevent its being blown away, offered a silver three-pence to the toll man at the gate.

A bright fire was blazing in the little room—cozy and warm it looked compared with the dreariness without; and the man, as he held his coat tight up in his neck to shield him from the piercing blast, looked askance at the wayfarer.

He was used to these tramps; they would sleep in the recesses of the bridge on the warm summer nights, and in the bitter winter, too; they swarmed on the water steps, where they lay huddled together, old and young, a loathsome, hideous mass. He had grown quite accustomed to the tide of human misery that crept so closely to the dark silent river. Did they think, these poor offcasts of humanity, that when life was past beyond even for them to bear there was rest beneath those cold, turbid waters, a home somewhere below their Stygian obscurity?

He was wont to see all phases of squalid wretchedness and vice, yet something in this woman's hurried manner, her evident desire to be unnoticed, added to the lateness of the hour, caused him to look closely at her before delivering her change. She didn't seem exactly like a pauper; there were signs of delicacy and better days in the white scarred face, whose outline he could scarcely catch through the dark, wavy hair, which was pushed in such disorder beneath the faded bonnet.

He was a kind-hearted man, one who had gone through suffering himself.

"It's a bad night for you to be out in, my girl; a terrible bad night."

The woman drew her shawl tighter round her shivering form.

"You needn't tell me that," she replied with a ghastly smile, "I know that as well as you."

"Take care you don't get blown off the bridge," returned the man, "there's wind enough to do it."

"There's no such luck," retorted she bitterly. "Don't don't come to those who seek it."

"Well, it's a bad lookout when one wants to seek it. I suppose you are going home?"

This was a side hit.

The woman drew herself up.

"What's that to you?" she flared out.

"What business is it of yours where I am going? Can't you give me the money and let me go, and not keep me here in this villainous rain?"

"Well, you needn't be so sharp. Surely a fellow could ask a question without being snapped up like that. It ain't no matter to me where you goes."

"Then what did you ask for?" she retorted, impatiently, taking the coppers; then, as if she regretted her rudeness, she said more gently: "Yes, I am going home. It that will satisfy you—such a home as it is. Good-night, my old fellow."

The wind and the rain shut the door for him; the wind and the rain beat against the toll-house windows, like angry spirits clamor for entrance, and the wind and the rain sent the poor wanderer far on the bridge out of his sight.

He sat down again in his wooden arm chair beside the genial fire. He could not rest, however, but started nervously as the north wind howled louder around his little cabin, or a sound to which his fancy gave a hideous shape fell on his listening ear.

Twice he rose, and peered out through the misty panes of glass that constituted the toll-house windows as if he could see anything but the drops of rain that trickled in rivulets down the dim transparency, as if he could see anything but the murky darkness, the bitter, cruel night.

"I wish I'd followed her," he muttered to himself; "I'm blast if I don't. It's queer to me if she ain't a run up; but, dash it, what is a fellow to do?"

He couldn't run after every tramp that chose to go over the bridge, he thought. With this reflection he endeavored to soothe the uneasy mind that would not allow him to be at peace.

And the woman or girl—for in spite of her squalor and misery she looked youthful, even now—saw swiftly on till she reached the middle of the bridge. There was no one to stay her; the recesses were all deserted; she was there in the darkness, the silence and the rain, as lonely as though she were in an eastern desert. Alone in the very heart of London, midway between those two great masses of habitations that stretch on either side of the wonderful, regal river. To her left, amidst the gaunt, tall houses, whose reflection made the waters blacker still, towered St. Paul's Cathedral, England's heroes' mausoleum; while far above, far past the graceful bridges, with

their avenues of twinkling lights, lay the old Abbey, in the solemn shadow of its sanctuary, like a voice from the past, with the hollows of ages around it. There were lights in many a window yet, telling of those for whom there is no night—the sick, the dying and oppressed—telling of those to whom night brings no repose, no significance, but a season for harder work flched from the over-excited brain.

The silence was all exterior. She knew well, vagrant as she was, that there are hundreds of dwellings in which night was the real day, during which men work and toil and fight, conquer and fail, in the great battle of life. She knew, God alone knows how bitterly, that Hell held high carnival during these midnight hours, and that while the innocent and good slept the calm sleep of the just, devils incarnate laughed over the ruin of immortal souls.

But all this was nothing new to her. There was no hand, devil's or angel's stretched forth to help her in her fearful need. She stood for a moment on the parapet, her hands—those thin, attenuated hands—clenched tightly together.

There might be a better world she thought; there couldn't be a worse. The God who made her could forgive her if she were doing wrong. And a wild scream mingled with the sobbing wind, as the cold waters parted for a moment, and then went rippling on, over a broken heart.

A policeman heard the scream as he stood at the other end of the bridge, vainly endeavoring to shield himself from the storm. He turned his bull's eye on, and looked up and down the road. Some poor "unfortunate," he thought, engaged in a drunken brawl. Best to let her fight it out herself; he would get no good by interference.

A large man heard that scream as he lay dozing in his barge. It seemed to sound close to his ear.

And the angels of God heard that scream as they hovered over the sin-stained city; and they bled it upward on their snowy wings through unutterable space, through the golden floods of light that fit beyond all human thought, irradiate the confines of eternal bliss, till it woke the echoes of unutterable love at the mercy gate of heaven.

A fortnight later, and another night in London—a soft, balmy, spring night, when myriads of glittering stars lighted the heavens with their beauty, and shone down upon the sleeping earth like the eye of an ever-watchful Providence—a night when hundreds of pedestrians thronged the brilliant streets, when carriages full of lovely women rolled along the causeways, and through the squares, and the flaunted its paint and feathers in the dust, the thoroughfares of virtuous London—a night when the clubs at the West-End were all illuminated and handsome dissolute men stood on the steps, or at the open windows, discussing the last new opera, or the characters of their female friends—when in the alleys and corners of the old metropolis small thieves, with children's bodies, and old cunning faces, plied their unlawful trade, and from out meretricious splendor of the gin palaces that, like enchanted mansions in the Arabian Nights seemed doubly dazzling amid the dinginess around, rose discordant voices, while hellish laughter mingled with the pure still air.

There were lights in one of the large houses in Belgrave-square; a carriage and two stood before the door, and in one of the splendidly-furnished drawing rooms within sat a young girl, dressed for a ball, fastening the buttons of her tiny gloves. She was very fair—fair with the pale, Saxon beauty so distinctive of our race; delicate, aristocratic face, large, dreamy, pensive eyes, and lustrous, wavy hair falling over the white, shimmering silken robes like golden sunshine on the snow-clad Alps.

"Beautiful exceedingly," she seemed to say, and so the fine, tall man thought—her brother evidently, by the likeness between them—as he entered the room, and stood for a moment gazing at her.

He smiled approvingly as, taking up her fan and bouquet, she advanced to meet him; and then a shadow of something like anxiety fell over his face. It was gone however in an instant.

"I am afraid we shall be late, Constance; it is nearly twelve now," and Lady Churchill begged us to come early.

"I am ready, William," she replied; "but there's plenty of time. We shall be weary enough before it is over." And she shrugged her shoulders with a charming gesture of indifference.

"No revel is complete without its queen," replied her brother, gallantly. "Your adorer will have been fasting themselves to death for the last two hours, fearing that you would not come."

"It will do them good," she replied, with a laugh; "they will learn wisdom in time."

"And Sir Richard?" questioned her brother, looking earnestly into her smiling face.

She crimsoned—a flash of anger, not of love, and turned emphatically away.

"Sir Richard may wait forever. He has had his answer already."

Her brother bit his lips.

"I think you are foolish, Constance—Sir Richard loves you, and would make you a very good match."

Constance twined her hands around her brother's arm, tears trembling in her eyes.

"I shall never marry, William, never. Please don't ask me, dear. I am very happy here with you."

He stooped and kissed the piteous face that was turned so timidly up to his.

"There! Don't spoil your pretty eyes," he cried; "some one will induce you to change that resolution, I hope."

He drew her hand within his arm and led her down the broad staircase into the hall, where a powdered footman stood with wraps upon his arm, ready to see them into the carriage.

The street door was partly open, and an altercation and rough voices speaking sharply caused the gentleman to hesitate.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance, Barnes?" he asked.

"It is a man, sir, as is himpertinent, and won't go away; and John is making him."

"What does the fellow want? What business has he here?"

"He says he wants to see Miss Power, sir."

"To see me?" exclaimed Constance, while her brother frowned.

"To see Miss Power? What insufferable

insolence! And at this time of night too!" "He is most howdacious, sir, and says he knows she was a coming out, and would wait until she did."

"Constance, my love," said Mr. Power, "you had better step into the library. I will soon settle this affair."

He opened the room door for her, and then going out on the steps, stood for a moment in angry amazement at the scene before him.

An old man, bareheaded, was struggling with two of the most servants of the house, gesticulating violently, while a small crowd of curious listeners, collected by the uproar, were grinning and laughing and shouting to the combatants to have fair play.

"I will see her! I will see her!" the old man was explaining. "It's a matter of life and death, and I'll stay till I do."

"John, go for the police!" shouted the stentorian voice of Mr. Power.

At the sound of their master's voice the men let go their hold of the man, while four or five young urthins started off in search of the missing functionary. The old man, half exhausted, staggered to the pings.

"Don't send for the police," he cried; "I ain't a going to rob. For God's sake, sir, tell me, if the young lady is coming out?" This to Mr. Power.

"What business is that of yours?" angrily replied that gentleman. "How dare you create a disturbance in a respectable neighborhood? I will have you imprisoned."

"Prison me if you will," cried the man earnestly; "but let me speak one word to the young lady, sir, for the love of heaven."

"The man is mad," muttered Mr. Power to himself; "mad or drunk."

The old fellow caught the last word.

"No, I ain't drunk, yer honor," cried he; "I earn my honest livelihood, and that's more than every finkny can say; and he glanced indignantly at the footman who still kept by his side.

"I'm in my sober senses, and I know what I want. I want to see Miss Power."

"It is one of those beggarly puppers Constance is so fond of," thought Mr. Power. "This is the fruit of ladies going about visiting the sick—a precious piece of business to be sure."

"If you will promise to go away quietly, I will let you off," he commenced; but at that moment a hand was placed upon his arm, and a soft voice questioned:

"What is the matter, William?"

At the door stood Constance, in her snowy opera cloak and golden hair, her sweet eyes turned wonderingly on the spectacle before her.

With a cry of joy the old man struggled up the steps.

"O Miss! are you Miss Power? It's you I want to see."

"Really, Constance," he said in a low tone, "you are forgetting yourself. To come out here before all these people—really—"

"O William," cried the girl, "don't be cross; but Barnes tells me the man said it was a matter of life and death. Do see him, dear, if only for a moment. It must be something very serious to bring him at this hour of the night."

Mr. Power, though hasty in his temper, was a just and reasonable man; he saw plainly now the man was not intoxicated; and though he was annoyed at being disturbed at this unreasonable hour, he could not but acknowledge the fluency of his sister's argument, and that the man was at least entitled to a hearing.

"Well, Constance," said he, "let it be so. Go back into the library; and I will question him first myself."

He told the footman to call the man inside and close the door. After a while Mr. Power came to his sister.

"I cannot make him out," he said, in answer to her anxious glance. "He tells a rambling story about some girl he has picked out of the water, and whom, he says, you know. You had better see him, Constance."

"O yes, yes! Ask him to come in at once."

He was an old, gray-haired man, whose garments betokened extreme poverty, but whose face looked honest and sincere, despite the fit of that excitement had given it.

"Are you Miss Power?" he exclaimed hurriedly, without waiting for her to speak.

"Yes, I am Constance Power; what can I do for you?"

"O, then, if you be her, I was to give your ladyship this bit of a letter," taking a dirty scrap of paper from his pocket; and you'll have to make haste, please, if you want to see her alive."

Constance opened it in profound astonishment, which increased to a look of intense horror as she read the contents.

"I am dying, dying fast," it said; "but I cannot go till I have told you what is on my mind. Please don't refuse, but come as quickly as you can. The whole happiness of your future life depends on your seeing

"O my poor Pauline!" exclaimed Miss Power. "The girl that let me so suddenly four years ago. Where is she, my good-girl? I will go at once."

"She's in my house, my lady, close by the water-side. She had been and drowned herself, and I picked her up, and me and my Missis has minded her ever since; they'd have taken her to prison if we'd peached on her, Miss, you know, and she's so quiet and good; and the doctors has been so very good to us, and given us a bit of money, and—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the trembling girl; "you shall tell me all about it as we go."

"Nonsense, Constance!" exclaimed Mr. Power. "Who is this Pauline you are talking about?"

"Have you forgotten her, William? The girl who was my companion when poor papa died. Ah, I forgot; she left us just as you returned from abroad; but you must have heard me speak of Pauline Barry. I loved her like a sister. She is ill—dying; I must go to her at once."

"You will do nothing of the sort," retorted her brother. "I shall not allow you to be so foolish."

"I will—I must!" she said; and the little white teeth were set determinedly, and strange defiance flashed in the violet eyes. "It will be too late in the morning."

"You will go, and in these trappings!" and he pointed contemptuously to the clouds of lace that floated round her fairy form, and the pearls and opals gleaming on her fair white neck and arms, and in the tresses of her amber hair.

"I will cover them all over with my large waterproof cloak," she said, entreatingly. "No one will recognize me, and Phillips can go with me!"

"And I will also, if you will be so insane."

"No, no; you would only be in the way!" she exclaimed hurriedly. "Do be sensible, darling! I am not afraid with Phillips. Be quick; dear, and ring the bell; every moment may be too late."

"And it will, Miss," cried the man, respectfully; "if we doesn't look sharp. My Misses said as how she couldn't last long."

"You are decidedly out of your mind, Constance," said Mr. Power, when he saw she was determined; "going off at this time of night to listen to the rhapsodies of a dying woman."

"Which is the most mad," she retorted, flushing—"wasting God's holy time in frivolous amusements, or soothing the last hours of the souls for whom Christ died?"

Mr. Power shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please," he cried; "but I insist on your taking one of the men with you as well. I will send away the carriage; you had better have a cab, it will attract less attention."

A short time afterward a cab drew up before a dingy looking house in a narrow, dirty street running parallel with the river on the south side of the Thames, and a man, descending from the box, assisted a veiled and muffled figure to alight.

"Wait for me here," said Constance in a whisper to her maid; there is no occasion for you to come inside."

"But Master said—"

"I am your Mistress," replied Constance, haughtily; "do as you are told."

The girl shrunk back. To tell the truth, she was quite as ready to stop as to go; far preferring a chat with the footman to witnessing the death struggle of the poor; she saw plenty of that when Miss Power dragged her into the loathsome alleys and wretched streets to be found even in Belgrave.

The old man—Parker, he said his name was—opened the door by means of a string pulled through a hole. No need of bolts and bars there, except to keep the thieves inside when justice demanded them.

"Mind the step, my lady," he said. "It is not often the likes of you come to such a place as this."

"I'm not afraid," said Constance, gently; yet as she spoke she trembled, and her heart sank at the impenetrable darkness before her.

The noise they made had evidently been heard, for a door opened, and a woman came cautiously down the stairs, carrying a sweating candle in a broken candle-stick.

"Is that you, Jim?" she called in a loud whisper.

"Ay, my gal; and I brought the lady with me."

"That's right," cried the woman.

And Constance found herself face to face with a poorly-dressed but motherly looking woman.

"How is she?" was the first question.

"Very badly, Miss, very badly. She's been dropped into a daze; but they say she can't last till morn. She's been asking for you, Miss, all right long."

Up two flights of creaking, rickety stairs, and they stopped at a door in the back part of the house, which the woman opened, and, holding the light above her head, suffered Constance to pass through first. A dirty blanket thrown over an old clothes-horse served as a screen to prevent the drafts that whistled through the crannies of the door from reaching the bed, on which lay the pallid face of the dying woman, breathing heavily. The tears rolled down Constance's face cheeks as she gazed on the altered features, the thin, wasted figure of one, who when last she beheld her was radiant with youth and health. Large drops of perspiration were on her forehead; her nose was drawn and pinched, her eyes sunken, her lips livid and swollen with fever, her hair lay in a tangled mass around her haggard face, over which was gradually creeping that mysterious ash grey—the bridal veil of death.

"She has suffered a deal, poor dear!" said the woman in a low tone; "it will be a blessing when the Lord is pleased to take her. Will you sit down, Miss?"

Constance looked around and shuddered. Bare boards, a broken table, two more broken chairs, some wooden boxes piled up in a corner to form a cupboard, a rusty fender and a row of saucepans, jugs, and physic bottles, were all the furniture of this miserable abode. Across the room on a line composed of pieces of rope knotted together, hung some indescribable articles of human clothing, (there is no fashion-book for the poor.) And in the midst of all this squalor and poverty, three pots of white and purple hyacinth stood in the narrow window-sill, filling the air with their delicious fragrance.

As she looked she thought how from the simple hearts of these poor people rose up daily from the incense of the flowers, the sweet perfume of a noble self-denying charity, the whiteness of truth and the purple of sacrifice, to the feet of the living God.

Suddenly the dying girl started convulsively, and opened her large, dark eyes.

"Who is that?" she cried, wildly, as her gaze fell on Miss Power's muffled form.

"I, Constance Power, your friend, Pauline. O my poor girl, what has brought you to this?"

"What brought me! The blackest hearted villain that ever trod God's earth. Thank heaven, you have come. O how terrified I was that they would not find you! I can die—I can die happy now."

Constance was terribly affected, her tears rolled over the thin and wasted hand she held in hers, while she strove to comfort the unhappy woman.

"Hush! don't excite yourself," cried she; "you shall tell me all about it by-and-by. How often have I thought of you, dear Pauline, and wondered why you left us so mysteriously."

"Yes, I will tell you all," replied Pauline, striving to raise herself in bed; "I must be quick. I know there is not much time. Then she snatched her hand from Miss Power's grasp. "Don't touch me," she cried; "I'm not fit to be touched by you. Miss Constance, you were always good—do you think God pardons such as I?"

"Of course he does," replied Constance, weeping. "There are none so vile that His mercy cannot reach if they only repent."

"I think I've repented," murmured the girl.

"If I had been spared, I would have led a different life. They told you, didn't they, I tried to drown myself? It was an awful sin; but I was driven mad. Yes, I'm sorry now. Miss Constance. They have been so kind to me here—the poor old man and his wife. And they showed me how wicked and wrong I was for wishing to take my life, and I want to repent. Hush! what is that?"

Constance listened, but heard nothing; she had been too engrossed with the poor sufferer to heed extraneous noises.

"It is nothing, dear."

"I thought I heard a step," murmured Pauline, speaking with difficulty. "O this pain—it if it would but cease."

She fell back exhausted, and Constance held a taceup, containing a little cordial, to her lips; it revived her, and she opened her eyes once more.

In her agitation and anxiety, the head of Constance's cloak had fallen back, and the sweet, fair face, with its halo of golden hair, was revealed to Pauline's view.

"Take it all off," she said, presently; "I want to see you as you are."

With a blush at the strange request, and yet not liking to refuse a dying woman, Miss Power undid the clasp, and let the cloak fall to her feet.

Pauline gazed at her for a while in silence, excitement working in her features.

"You are very beautiful," she said at last, "more beautiful than ever. Miss Power, I have ruined all your life. Can you forgive me?"

Constance thought she was wandering in her head, and laid her hand soothingly upon her.

"My poor Pauline," she cried; "what have I to forgive? If you could only be moved from here, perhaps you might get better, and then—"

But the girl laughed a wild, hoarse laugh.

"I am dying," she cried; "dying fast; I only hope I shall live long enough to tell you all. Take away your hand; it burns me; I cannot bear."

And again she fell exhausted on the pillow.

Presently she spoke again, and the words she uttered caused Miss Power to start and tremble, while the blood rushed to her face.

"You had a lover once—Captain Stapleton?"

"Ah, yes, you knew—but what of him? He never loved me, Pauline." And the sweet face was bowed in her jeweled fingers.

"He did, Constance Power, he loved you dearly; he wrote letter after letter, and—I destroyed them."

With a wild cry of anguish Constance started to her feet. "O Pauline how could you be so cruel?"

"Because he tempted me—he, Sir Richard Ashford, the man I loved, who swore he would make me his wife—told that I was to believe him—tempted me with false oaths and deceitful promises to destroy Captain Stapleton's letters. He told me that he hated him, that he wanted to ruin him with you, and I lent myself to the scheme."

"O sinful, wicked woman!" moaned the wretched Constance; "you know not what you have done."

"Yes I do, replied Pauline; but I did not care. I would have broken all the hearts in England if it were in my power and he had bid me do it. I would have killed my own sister," she hissed. "But I was justly served. He loves you, Constance Power, and would marry you if he could. Shall I tell you what he did to me? He kicked me out into the street, and I

