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SELECTED TALES.

EMILY ALLISON;
OR, THE SEWING GIRL.

BY CAROLINE ORNE.

"Well, Elsy, what do you wish for?" said Elvira Belmont to a girl who had been waiting some five or ten minutes for her to finish an animated discussion between herself and Adeline Bradford, relative to the most fashionable and becoming material for a ball dress.

"The girl that sews for you is below," Elsy replied, "and wishes to know if it is convenient for you to pay her to-day. Here is her bill."

As Miss Belmont unfolded it, exhibiting a long catalogue of charges, she exclaimed, "What does the girl mean by sending me such a list as this? I don't believe she has done half what she has charged me with." And she ran her eyes over the different articles, though without repeating her accusation. Having examined it—"Only think, Adeline," said she, "here is a bill amounting to fifty dollars, for working caps, capes, collars, and flounces. Mrs. Allen was here a few days since, soliciting charity for one of those sewing girls, but I am sure there could be little occasion, when they can earn such large sums."

"Does she charge high for work?" said Adeline.

"I cannot say that she does. She worked me a cape for three dollars, which was quite as beautiful as those which are selling for ten or twelve."

"What induces her to work so cheap?"

"Why, to confess the truth, I threatened to quit employing her if she did not come down to my prices. Here, Elsy, take back Miss Allison's bill, and tell her to call again next week. If I pay her to-day," said she, turning to Adeline, "I shall not have enough left to purchase the elegant ball dress we have been talking about."

Elsy, after an absence of a few minutes, returned. "Miss Allison," said she, "wishes to know if you can make it convenient to let her have a few dollars, if you cannot pay the whole."

"No, not a cent. I don't choose to take the trouble of paying her by driblets. Tell her to call next week and she shall have the whole."

Miss Allison, who had called regularly for the last six weeks, and uniformly received the same answer, had followed the girl up stairs, and taking courage from despair, now entered Miss Belmont's dressing room. Adeline Bradford was much struck with her appearance. She was a tall, graceful girl, apparently eighteen or twenty, with a profusion of light brown hair, and the finest blue eyes she ever saw, with those long, curved lashes, which impart to eyes, of whatever hue, one of their most seductive charms. Her whole countenance, indeed, was of rare beauty, though very pale, and marked by that worn and haggard look, occasioned by privation and severe toil. At the sight of Adeline Bradford—for she expected to find Miss Belmont alone—a hectic flush flitted over her cheeks, which, for the moment, made her almost radiantly beautiful.

"Could you not be content to receive my answer through my waiting maid?" said Miss Belmont in a tone of anger.

"Pardon me," she replied, her voice trembling with agitation, "but I am in such pressing want of a few dollars."

"Well, you can certainly wait till next week. I have not a single cent that I can spare to-day."

Miss Allison, though she made no reply, did not leave the room.

"You may go," said Miss Belmont, "I have given you my answer, and shall not recede from it."

"Miss Belmont," said the poor girl, in a voice half choked with tears, "I have neither father nor mother, and have a brother and sister who are too young to work. This morning, I divided the last piece of bread between them. It is now more than a year since you commenced employing me, and I have often, for the sake of not disappointing you, sat up all night; but, as yet, you have paid me nothing."

"I am very sorry that I cannot spare you the money to-day," said Miss Belmont. "You must call on some one else who employs you."

"I have been able to obtain employment from only one lady besides yourself, and she has been absent from the city several weeks. Had it not been for her, who has always paid me when the work was finished, the children—as I have often myself—must have suffered for food."

"Well, there is half a dollar, and as bread is cheap now, it will purchase a good deal."

As she spoke, she carelessly threw it on the table, when it rolled off and fell upon the floor. Another hectic flush passed over Miss Allison's countenance, as she stooped to pick it up.

"I will credit it on my bill," she said to Miss Belmont—then turned and left the room.

"I found she was determined not to go till I had given her something, so I threw her the half dollar to get rid of her."

"If she were not so very pale, and had not such an anxious look," said Adeline, evading a reply to what Miss Belmont said, "she would be one of the most beautiful girls I ever saw."

"She looks well enough, but I cannot endure to see a person in her situation so bold and impudent."

Before Adeline had time to reply, Elsy re-entered the apartment, saying that Mr. Lester was below, and wished to see Miss Belmont. Elvira's countenance brightened, for Herbert Lester was the person whose regard she coveted above that of all others. In this respect she showed taste and discrimination, for in elegance of person and manners, as well as intrinsic worth, he had no superior. He was wealthy, likewise—he and Lucilla, his only sister, having shared between them the princely fortune of a deceased relative.

"Come, Adeline," said Miss Belmont, after hastily adjusting some portions of her dress more becomingly, "will you not go down and assist me in entertaining Mr. Lester?"

"I will go down," returned Adeline, "but I have already made a long call, and must return home."

As she walked slowly towards home, the image of Emily Allison was constantly in her mind, and she was determined as far as her means would permit to endeavor to relieve her wants. These were comparatively limited, for her father, though a man of considerable wealth, had a large family to support, so that she not only found it necessary to work her own capes, but with the assistance of her mother, to do the plain sewing for her family. When she arrived home, she examined her purse, which she found contained only a few shillings, her quarterly allowance, with which her father regularly supplied her, having been expended in the purchase of a more expensive dress than she had ever indulged in before, to wear at the anticipated ball. She now regretted that she had not listened to her mother, who always advised her, never, on any occasion, when she could well avoid it, to go to the full extent of her means, in purchasing any article of dress; but always, if possible, to retain something by her for purposes of charity. What little she had, she enclosed in a blank envelope, and sent to Miss Allison.

While Miss Braford was thus employed, Herbert Lester, who had been for some time attracted by the brilliant beauty and graceful manners of Elvira Belmont found, during an hour's conversation with her, that she acceded so cordially to all his favorite opinions and most cherished sentiments that he took leave of her with the full determination to win her, if possible for his bride. When he returned home he found his sister had been absent several weeks, on a visit to some friends in the country. After those many questions had been asked and answered, which often follow each other in quick succession, when friends who have been separated again meet, Herbert, leaning his head upon his hand, remained silent several minutes. He then said—

"I am glad you have come home, Lucilla, for I wish to know your opinion relative to a certain lady, who, I am half afraid, will steal away more than her due portion of the heart which has, as yet, been exclusively devoted to you."

"And respecting whom you have already decided in your mind, I dare say," said his sister.

"Very nearly, I confess; but still, I should like to know what you think of her."

"You must first tell me her name."

"Elvira Belmont."

"I would rather you had said Adeline Bradford."

"Adeline is a very pretty girl, but not half so brilliant as Elvira."

"Certainly not; but her beauty is of a kind that improves upon acquaintance, and I have reason to believe that her moral sentiments are purer and more elevated."

"That cannot be. I spent an hour with Elvira this morning, and found her sentiments in every respect, as elevated as your own. When I informed her that you had it in contemplation to raise a fund for the relief of indigent widows and orphans, she was enthusiastic upon the subject, and her fine eyes actually filled with tears.

"I am delighted at what you say, for I had formed the opinion that she was selfish and unfeeling."

"I told her that you would probably call on her when you returned, for the purpose of consulting her relative to the most judicious and practicable method of carrying your plans into operation, and she replied that she trusted you would find her with a well filled purse and a willing heart."

"When I intend to call on her, I suppose I must let you know, so that you may accompany me."

"Certainly. But to change the subject; do you know there is to be a splendid ball a week from this evening, and that you must go?"

"Yes, I heard there was to be a ball; but so far from knowing that I must go, I had concluded in my own mind to remain at home."

"I shall insist on your going, for Elvira Belmont and Adeline Bradford will both be there, and I want you to compare with them, now that I have as I hope, removed the strange prejudice you had imbibed, that Elvira was selfish and unfeeling."

"Well, I will agree to attend the ball, on condition that you will walk with me as far as Miss Allison's this evening, and call for me when it is time to return."

"Who is Miss Allison?"

"A young girl who sews for me.—She works lace and muslin beautifully; but I make a point of giving her plain work principally, as it does not require such close attention, and is less trying to the eyes."

Her brother promised to go with her, and at seven o'clock they stood before one of those miserable habitations of the poor, which, in greater or lesser numbers, may be found in the dark and obscure alleys of all our large cities. Herbert knocked at the door, which was opened by a blue eyed, curly-headed boy, almost seven years old, who had been weeping, for bright tears were on his cheeks. Her brother now left her, having promised to call for her in about an hour.

"Is your sister Emily at home, dear?" inquired Miss Lester.

At the sound of her voice he sprang forward, and clasping his arms round the skirts of her dress, exclaimed—

"O, Miss Lester, how glad I am that you have come, for Emmy does nothing but cry."

Emily, when she heard some one knock at the door, made an effort to compose herself; but her feelings were in that peculiarly excited state which made her as unable to bear kindness with composure as "the proud man's contumely," and when Miss Lester took her by the hand, and with an air of unfeigned interest, inquired respecting her health, and how she was getting along, she burst into such an uncontrollable agony of tears, that she was obliged to leave the room. This caused the tears of little Edwin to flow afresh, and his little sister Lucy, only three years old, who knew there was sorrow, though she could not comprehend the cause, hid her face in his bosom and wept from sympathy. It was not long before Emily returned.

"Excuse me, Miss Lester," said she, "my firmness seems utterly to have forsaken me to-day, and although I knew it distressed these poor children, I could not prevent tears from flowing."

"I am afraid that your health has suffered in consequence of applying yourself too closely to your sewing."

"It is true that I have found myself failing of late, but it was not that. There are times when some trifling incident will cause all our sorrow, past and present, to rise up at once, and like a swollen tide, threaten to overwhelm us.—For a whole year I have worked early and late for a lady, who now owes me fifty dollars, and who has never paid me a cent till to-day, when, after much solicitation, she threw me a half-dollar, as a person would throw a bone to an ill-natured dog. Thinking of the careless, disdainful manner, in which she threw me the money, gave the impulse, and many, many painful and bitter things rose up before me with all the vividness of reality. I thought of the days when I was surrounded with as much splendor as she who had the heart to treat me with so much scorn, is now; and when I had a father who would not suffer "the winds of heaven to visit my face too roughly;" and of the time when by the failure of othes, and injudicious investment, he became a bankrupt, and finally sank into a state of hopeless imbecility. I thought, too, of my sainted mother, who, with no one to assist her but me, and with scarcely bread to eat, watched over him a whole year, as she would over a helpless infant, and when he was gone, how like the vine uprooted and broken by the fall of the decayed tree round which it had twined she, too, drooped and died. All the agony and desolation of that hour came back to me, as did the voice that mingled its tones with her funeral knell, as it told me that the vessel was lost in which he sailed, who would have protected me from all I have suffered."

Miss Lester did all she could to soothe her excited state of feeling, but finding that the feverish flush on her face increased rather than diminished, and that her pulse was wildly throbbing, she began to be seriously alarmed, and, having persuaded her to lie down, took little Lucy in her arms, who soon fell asleep. A few minutes afterwards her brother called for her to return home, and she requested him to go for a physician, who in the course of fifteen minutes was at the bed-side of the sufferer. He informed Miss Lester that there was every symptom of inflammatory fever, and unless the most energetic means were resorted to, there was every reason to apprehend that her disease would terminate fatally. Miss Lester remained with her all night, and in the morning procured her a good and careful nurse.—She likewise took the children home and committed them to the care of her housekeeper.

"I believe I shall call on Miss Belmont," said she to her brother, "and as you will, of course, go with me according to promise, I advise you to look particularly to the tie of your cravat, and see that your hair is arranged in the most becoming style."

"How soon shall you go?"

"In half an hour."

"I shall, without fail, be ready to escort you."

They found Miss Belmont alone, and looking as—Herbert Lester thought—beautiful as an angel. The conversation took a literary turn, and he was charmed to find that she had read extensively, and that his favorite authors were hers. In poetry, particularly, he found that they agreed not only in admiring the same authors, but the same poems, and she recited several pathetic passages which he named with so much taste and feeling, that he began to imagine that his sister, though her hand was "open as day to melting charity," was dull and frigid when compared with Elvira Belmont.

As soon as Miss Lester found opportunity, she brought forward the subject which her brother had mentioned the day previous, and was pleased to find that Elvira entered warmly into her plan. When Lucilla Lester rose to go she remarked that she intended to call on a young girl, who was sick, and an orphan, whom she considered one of the most prominent objects of charity within her knowledge, and invited Elvira to go with her. She readily assented and fifteen minutes' walk brought them to the dwelling of Emily Allison. Herbert Lester left them at the door, and Elvira followed her conductress into a mean apartment, where, to her inexpressible consternation, she beheld in the patient her whom the day preceding she had treated not only with incivility, but rudeness. Her first impulse was to go to the bed, and in a whisper to entreat her not to appear to recognise her. It was a useless request, for delirium prevented her from recollecting either her or Miss Lester. When Elvira became aware of this, emotions of joy succeeded the feelings of fear and shame which had at first assailed her. Her joy, however, was of short duration, for soon her own name was pronounced by Emily, sometimes with epithets of reproach, and then in accents of entreaty, though in language too incoherent to reveal distinctly any circumstances which had taken place. But soon there began to be method in her madness, and seizing Miss Belmont by the wrist with a frantic grasp, from which she could not break, she recounted minutely all the incidents which she had the evening previous told Miss Lester; only now, instead of suppressing Miss Belmont's name, she revealed it.

"And yet," said she, when she had finished, looking up in Elvira's face, "for all she was beautiful as you, and very rich."

Lucilla, who could not help pitying Miss Belmont, in whose countenance feelings of shame amounting almost to agony, were depicted, succeeded in addressing the poor girl, who was perfectly insensible of the retributive pain she was inflicting, in a soothing, conciliating manner, to prevail on her to release her reluctant auditor.

"I hope," said Miss Belmont to Lucilla, after somewhat recovering her self-possession, "that you will not be so ungenerous as to suffer the ravings of a maniac to influence your opinion concerning me. It is true I owe her for work, and that she called yesterday for her pay, when I happened to be totally unprepared, but I promised to pay her next week, and she would have found me as good as my promise."

Miss Belmont had the discernment to see at once that her explanation failed to reinstate her in Lucilla's good opinion, and saying something about her nerves being unequal to bear such a scene, she coldly bade her good morning, and left the house.

She had been gone only a short time, when some one rapped at the door, which on opening, Lucilla found to be Adeline Bradford.

"I am much pleased to meet you here," said Adeline, "for you may be able to tell me whether it will be likely to wound Miss Allison's feelings to offer her a few dollars without requiring her to sew for it in return?"

"Your aid will be very acceptable," replied Lucilla, "though Miss Allison is unfortunately insensible to what might either wound or give her pleasure."

"She cannot be dead!" said Adeline, starting.

"No, but she is in a burning fever, and totally deprived of reason. But how came you to know she needed pecuniary aid?"

"She called at Elvira Belmont's the other day, when I was there, and I inferred from her appearance and what she said, that she was not only in indigent circumstances, but actually suffering from privation. Unfortunately I had parted with all my money except a trifling sum, to purchase a ball dress and several other ornaments, more expensive than I could well afford. One of these, a beautiful bracelet, Elvira coveted the moment she saw it, so I let her have it for eighteen dollars, the same I gave for it, one half of which I intended for Miss Allison, the other for a poor widow I chanced to meet with last evening. But you will begin to think I don't pay much attention to that portion of Scripture which forbids, us when we do alms, to sound a trumpet before us. The truth is, Lucilla, when I am with you I feel as if I was in the presence of a sister, and I feel sure that you will not impute my telling you to motives of vanity."

"I wish you were my sister," said Lucilla, "and I think you will be one day." This remark brought a crimson glow to the cheeks of Adeline, which did not fade at the appearance of Herbert Lester, who at that moment came in view, and approached the door step where they stood. After greeting Adeline with much politeness, he inquired of his sister for Elvira.

"She has been gone this half hour," she replied. "Some more convenient opportunity I will tell you the reason why she did not wait for me."

Though it was a painful duty to disclose to her brother the unfeeling and selfish conduct of Elvira Belmont, it was one which Lucilla felt bound to perform, and simply stating the facts, she left him to draw his own inferences.

In five or six days Miss Allison's disease had performed its crisis, and her physicians pronounced her out of danger. As soon as this was the case, Lucilla assisted by Adeline, commenced carrying into effect a plan which had been formed for her benefit. Neat and convenient apartments were taken for her in a more open and airy part of the city, which were comfortably furnished, and several ladies, who considered it not only dishonest, but cruel to delay paying the hard earnings of the labor of seamstresses, &c., when it was in their power to pay, promised to give her sewing.—The better prospect which thus dawned upon her, contributed to the restoration of her health, and at the expiration of a few weeks, she, with Edwin and Letty, took possession of their new abode. She found not the least difficulty, now that she was promptly paid, to procure a comfortable subsistence for herself and them, without working at unseasonable hours. She even found leisure to devote an evening, now and then, to the friends whose exertions had so effectually ameliorated her situation in a manner that suffered her to live independent of charity.

Miss Lester, her brother, and Adeline, had dropped in one pleasant but cold winter evening, and were enjoying the comfort of a good fire, and the pleasure of an interesting conversation, when a quick, smart rap was heard at the door, which Miss Lester remarked had the sound of impatience in it.

"Shall I go to the door, Miss Allison?" said Herbert.

"I am obliged to you," she repled, but as it is probably some one who has brought me work, I had better go myself."

"Is Miss Allison at home?" they heard a voice enquire.

"My name is Allison," she replied.

"Will you permit me to come in?" said he, "I have important intelligence to communicate."

She, of course, assented, and the next moment a man, somewhat above the middling height, wrapped in a cloak which was so disposed as to muffle the lower part of his face, while a cap concealed his forehead and eyes, entered the apartment. Having arrived about midway, he changed his voice to its natural tone as he said—"Really, do you not know me?"

The name of Edward Tracy burst from her lips as she sprang towards him, but failing to reach the arms open to receive her she fell at his feet in a swoon.—Throwing from him his cloak, he knelt down and supported her while Lucilla and Adeline administered the proper remedies, the young stranger, in the meantime, bitterly reproaching himself for his want of consideration. She soon revived, and the remainder of the evening was spent in listening to the perils and escape of Tracy, who, as may be surmised, was the betrothed lover of Emily Allison, who, she believed, had long since found a grave beneath the waves of the ocean.

He and two others, he informed them, left the ship in a small boat. Both of his companions perished, but he was at length picked up by a vessel belonging to Europe, bound on a voyage to some of the South Sea Islands. Here, in consequence of a long and severe illness, induced probably by the injury his constitution had sustained from hunger and exposure while on the wreck and in the boat, he was obliged to suffer the vessel to sail without him. He was unable even to write a letter to his friends, though he gave the captain the address of Mr. Allison, who promised to forward a line the first opportunity after his arrival. As no such letter was ever received, he probably forgot to perfom his promise.

As the wrecked vessel, of which Edward Tracy was the captain and principal owner, was insured, his loss was trifling; and though he was not rich, he possessed a competency which would enable him to give Emily Allison a comfortable, if not a splendid home. He therefore urged her to name an early day for their bridal.

"I have reflected much," said she, one day when he had pressed the subject with more ardor than usual, "as to what course I ought to pursue, and have decided that in justice to you, I ought to remain as I am, for I shall be not only a portionless bride, but these dear children—I cannot leave them—"

"Leave them! Could you for a single moment imagine that I wished you to leave them?" said he, interrupting her with much vivacity, "I have enough for all; our home shall be their home, and I doubt not but that they will bring a blessing with them."

Emily wept, but her tears were not those of sorrow, and before they parted, it was decided that their marriage should take place in three weeks. Herbert Lester and Adeline Bradford officiated as groomsman and bridesmaid on the occasion, and Lucilla, who arranged every thing with the propriety and fine taste peculiar to herself, had the gratification to perceive that her brother's unfortunate attachment to Elvira Belmont, was slowly but surely giving place to an affection for one lovlier, though less brilliant, and who possessed those gentle and truly feminine virtues, which were a source of happiness to herself and those within the sphere of her influence.

AN ELOQUENT INAUGURAL.—A western editor has the following burst of patriotism in his prospectus:

"Devotion to the land that gave me birth, and the principles under which I have been reared, has forced me into the ranks of her illustrious champions.

"I shall continue to defend her rights unawed by power, unseduced by wealth.

"But if the cash don't begin come in, darned if I don't have to slope."

Somebody says that candles may be made to burn their own wicks, and thus save the trouble of snuffing, by saturating them with a strong solution of nitre, and then thoroughly drying them. The cause of wicks refusing to burn is, that the air cannot get access them. The nitre, however, at a high temperature, will supply oxygen enough for that purpose.

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