

ONE PENNY.

The Southern Mail

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"Natalie."

[BY A.Y.E.A.]

CHAPTER I.—(CONTINUED.)

"Never mind dear, if my friendship is any comfort to you you have it as you always have had since the first time we met—two little maids at school. But it will trouble me always to see you slaving and toiling through the long hot summer, while I will be sitting away my time and enjoying myself."

"Now Natalie, if I were suddenly left as you are, I would take help from you willingly and gladly, and feel no degradation in it, because I would know how pleasant it was to you to give it to me. You must care for me less to be so proud."

"Don't say that," interrupted Laurelle, lifting pained blue eyes. "You know your heart how much I care, but believe me dear if you were in my place you would feel as I do, and besides," laughing lightly, "we are not so penniless as at first supposed. Mr. Denton, mamma's lawyer, was here yesterday and he tells me there is a little remnant left out of the general ruin—some forgotten shares in something have come to light, and I have all mamma's jewellery, some of which is really very valuable. Mr. Denton assures me it would bring a lot of money if I were ever forced to sell it. So indeed we are not so much to be pitied as a great many others."

"Well, good-bye," said Natalie, kissing her friend wistfully. "I really must not keep you any longer, Stella will wear out her shoes stamping. I will write to you very often regular ten papers, and you must promise, Laurelle, if any trouble comes to tell me just at once; now I cannot be happy to leave you until you promise me that."

"I'll promise," answered Laurelle softly. "It will comfort me to know that there is always Natalie and Laurelle in the background if anything should happen."

"And then the girls parted, and Natalie, not altogether dry-eyed, climbed into the high seat beside her brother."

"Well, perhaps she is overdoing it a little, but I admit her plan, Laurelle always was an independent person I remember," was Tom's comment on Natalie's related rather delicately the failure of her mission. "You must keep your eye on them Tom and get them to see them and show them up," said Natalie, then suddenly, "I wish you were engaged, and then you could marry Laurelle, and we would all be comfortable together."

"Tom laughed. "Bovv I can't oblige you my love, I would be only too delighted, provided Laurelle would have me, but as you I'm already booked. Now, why don't you tell Andy to marry her? Andy has always obeyed you blindly since you were in long clothes; now he would be the very one with a sky little smile. "It only he would it would smooth away all the difficulties, but Andy is very obstinate," said Natalie with a sigh.

CHAPTER II.

"Like Dian's kiss unasked, tonight, Love given itself, it is not sought."

"It comes, the beautiful, the free, The crown of all humanity,"—Langfellow.

"And so you have not been having very exciting times since we have been away?" It was Natalie's voice, a little languid with the heat, for the day had been very hot, and even then though the sun was down the air was warm and breezy, and Natalie's Japanese fan was waving energetically. The verandah at Berardie's head station was the perfection of verandah—wide, tiled, and extending the whole length of the house, it was furnished with the largest and finest of hammocks, the widest, most luxurious of lounges, and all through the year creepers of some sort wreathed their green foliage round every post and, spreading from pillar to pillar, formed curtains of living green. A most enjoyable verandah truly. Here Natalie had her dainty little tea equipage brought out on warm afternoons, and here on these hot breathless nights the master of Berardie's Havannah and listening to the low sweet notes of Natalie's waltzes as they floated out to him through the open window, or discussing things in general with his over-zealous and nephew, Andy Dunbar. On the evening in question Natalie had been singing in a low dreamy fashion, then declaring it too hot for any exertion whatever had joined her father and cousin outside, and now lay swinging all her slender young length in a hammock and fanning herself.

"And so you have not been having very exciting times since we have been away?" she said, "the only thing that has saved you from positive extinction from ennuï has been the arrival of this banker—Mr. Cleveland—is that his name?"

"That is it," answered Andy, "I feel sure you will like him Natalie, he is a fine fellow. I never met a man I liked so much, and though he has only been here a month or so I know him well; he—"

"Oh spare me Andy," interrupted the girl laughing. "You have occupied the last three-quarters of an hour in describing this man; let me see," enumerating with her fingers as she spoke. "He rides like a Centaur, though you know I never quite understood which part of the Centaur it is that rides, still let us not digress—he rides like a Centaur, sings like a—nightingale, dances like a masculine Terpsichore, plays tennis like—Andy which of the heathen deities was it who played Tennis? and is as handsome as the Apollo Belvidere. I don't think the sum total of his excellencies, but you have forgotten two things my dear boy, you have not told me whether he parts his

hair in the middle or not, and what colour neckties he wears, and I am consumed with anxiety on those points."

Andy laughed, he always did laugh, this tall sunburnt young squatter at the unmerciful quizzing of this small cousin who ruled him with a rod of iron, as Tom said since she was in long clothes.

"Did I gush to such an extent as all that?" he asked, "that is something unusual for me isn't it! but wait until you have seen him and then we will see—what we will see; perhaps we may hear the sarcastic Miss Graham rhapsodizing over our new banker, one never knows you know."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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