

by another. Now as the car drew nearer, Anthea, with a thrill of pleasure, recognized the Sergeant standing very much as though he were on parade, and with honest-faced Peterday beside him, who stumped joyfully forward, and, — with a bob of his head, and a scrape of his wooden leg, — held out his hand to her.

Like one in a dream she took the sailor's hand to step from the car, and like one in a dream, she walked on between the soldier and the sailor, who now reached out to her, each, a hand equally big and equally gentle, to aid her up certain crumbling, and time-worn steps. On they went together until they were come to a place of whispering echoes, where lights burned, few, and dim.

And here, still as one in a dream, she spoke those words which gave her life, henceforth, into the keeping of him who stood beside her, — whose strong hand trembled as he set upon her finger, that which is an emblem of eternity.

Like one in a dream, she took the pen, and signed her name, obediently, where they directed. And yet, — could this really be herself, — this silent, submissive creature?

And now, they were out upon the moon-lit road again, seated in the car, while Peterday,

his hat in his hand, was speaking to her. And yet, — was it to her?

“Mrs. Belloo, mam,” he was saying, “on this here monumentous occasion — ”

“Monumentous is the only word for it, Peterday!” nodded the Sergeant.

“On this here monumentous occasion, Mrs. Belloo,” the sailor proceeded, “my shipmate, Dick, and me, mam, — respectfully beg the favour of saluting the bride; — Mrs. Belloo, by your leave — here's health, and happiness, mam!” And, hereupon, the old sailor kissed her, right heartily. Which done, he made way for the Sergeant who, after a moment's hesitation, followed suit.

“A fair wind, and prosperous!” cried Peterday, flourishing his hat.

“And God — bless you — both!” said the Sergeant as the car shot away.

So, it was done! — the irrevocable step was taken! Her life and future had passed forever into the keeping of him who sat so silent beside her, who neither spoke, nor looked at her, but frowned ever at the road before him.

On sped the car, faster, and faster, — yet not so fast as the beating of her heart wherein there was yet something of fear, and shame,

—but greatest of all was that other emotion, and the name of it was — Joy.

Now, presently, the car slowed down, and he spoke to her, though without turning his head. And yet, something in his voice thrilled through her strangely.

“Look Anthea, — the moon is at the full, to-night.”

“Yes!” she answered.

“And Happiness shall come riding astride the full moon!” he quoted. “Old Nannie is rather a wonderful old witch, after all, isn’t she?”

“Yes.”

“And then there is — our nephew, — my dear, little Porges! But for him, Happiness would have been a stranger to me all my days, Anthea. He dreamed that the Money Moon spoke to him, and — but he shall tell you of that, for himself.”

But Anthea noticed that he spoke without once looking at her; indeed it seemed that he avoided glancing towards her, of set design, and purpose; and his deep voice quivered, now and then, in a way she had never heard before. Therefore, her heart throbbed the faster, and she kept her gaze bent downward, and thus, chancing to see the shimmer of that which was

upon her finger, she blushed, and hid it in a fold of her gown.

“Anthea.”

“Yes?”

“You have no regrets, — have you?”

“No,” she whispered.

“We shall soon be — home, now!”

“Yes.”

“And are you — mine — for ever, and always? Anthea, you — aren’t — afraid of me any more, are you?”

“No.”

“Nor ever will be?”

“Nor — ever will be.”

Now as the car swept round a bend, behold yet two other figures standing beside the way.

“Yo ho, Captain!” cried a voice, “Oh — please heave to, Uncle Porges!”

And, forth to meet them, came Small Porges, running. Yet remembering Miss Priscilla, tapping along behind him, he must needs turn back, — to give her his hand like the kindly, small gentleman that he was.

And now — Miss Priscilla had Anthea in her arms, and they were kissing each other, and murmuring over each other, as loving women will, while Small Porges stared at the car, and all things pertaining thereto, more especially,

the glaring head-lights, with great wondering eyes.

At length, having seen Anthea, and Miss Priscilla safely stowed, he clambered up beside Bellew, and gave him the word to proceed. What pen could describe his ecstatic delight as he sat there, with one hand hooked into the pocket of Uncle Porges' coat, and with the cool night wind whistling through his curls. So great was it, indeed, that Bellew was constrained to turn aside, and make a wide detour, purely for the sake of the radiant joy in Small Porges' eager face.

When, at last, they came within sight of Dapplemere, and the great machine crept up the rutted, grassy lane, Small Porges sighed, and spoke:

"Auntie Anthea," said he, "are you sure that you are married — nice an' — tight, you know?"

"Yes, dear," she answered, "why — yes, Georgy."

"But you don't look a bit diff'rent, you know, — either of you. Are you quite — sure? 'cause I shouldn't like you to disappoint me, — after all."

"Never fear, my Porges," said Bellew, "I made quite sure of it while I had the chance,

— look!" As he spoke, he took Anthea's left hand, drawing it out into the moonlight, so that Small Porges could see the shining ring upon her finger.

"Oh!" said he, nodding his head, "then that makes it all right I s'pose. An' you aren't angry with me 'cause I let a great, big gnome come an' carry you off, are you, Auntie Anthea?"

"No, dear."

"Why then, everything's quite — magnificent, isn't it? An' now we're going to live happy ever after, all of us, an' Uncle Porges is going to take us to sail the oceans in his ship, — he's got a ship that all belongs to his very own self, you know, Auntie Anthea, — so all will be revelry an' joy — just like the fairy tale, after all."

And so, at last, they came to the door of the ancient House of Dapplemere. Whereupon, very suddenly, Adam appeared, bare-armed from the stables, who, looking from Bellew's radiant face to Miss Anthea's shy eyes, threw back his head, vented his great laugh, and was immediately solemn again.

"Miss Anthea," said he, wringing and twisting at his hat, "or — I think I should say, — Mrs. Belloo mam, — there ain't no word for

it! least-ways not as I know on, nohow. No words be strong enough to tell the J-O-Y — j'y, mam, as fills us — one an' all." Here, he waved his hand to where stood the comely Prudence with the two rosy-cheeked maids peeping over her buxom shoulders.

"Only," pursued Adam, "I be glad — ah! mortal glad, I be, — as 'tis you, Mr. Belloo sir. There ain't a man in all the world, — or — as you might say, — uni-verse, as is so proper as you to be the husband to our Miss Anthea — as was, — not nohow, Mr. Belloo sir. I wish you j'y, a j'y as shall grow wi' the years, an' abide wi' you always, — both on ye."

"That is a very excellent thought Adam!" said Bellew, "and I think I should like to shake hands on it." Which they did, forthwith.

"An' now, Mrs. Belloo mam," Adam concluded, "wi' your kind permission, I'll step into the kitchen, an' drink a glass o' Prue's ale — to your 'ealth, and 'appiness. If I stay here any longer I won't say but what I shall burst out a-singing in your very face, mam, for I do be that 'appy-'earted, — Lord!"

With which exclamation, Adam laughed again, and turning about, strode away to the kitchen with Prudence and the rosy-cheeked maids, laughing as he went.

"Oh my dears!" said little Miss Priscilla, "I've hoped for this, — prayed for it, — because I believe he is — worthy of you, Anthea, and because you have both loved each other, from the very beginning; oh dear me; yes you have! And so, my dears, — your happiness is my happiness and — Oh, goodness me! here I stand talking sentimental nonsense while our Small Porges is simply dropping asleep as he stands."

"'Fraid I am a bit tired," Small Porges admitted, "but it's been a magnif'cent night. An' I think, Uncle Porges, when we sail away in your ship, I think, I'd like to sail round the Horn first 'cause they say it's always blowing, you know, and I should love to hear it blow. An' now — Good-night!"

"Wait a minute, my Porges, just tell us what it was the Money Moon said to you, last night, will you?"

"Well," said Small Porges, shaking his head, and smiling, a slow, sly smile, "I don't s'pose we'd better talk about it, Uncle Porges, 'cause, you see, it was such a very great secret; an' 'sides, — I'm awful sleepy, you know!" So saying, he nodded slumberously, kissed Anthea sleepily, and, giving Miss Priscilla his hand, went drowsily into the house.

But, as for Bellew it seemed to him that this was the hour for which he had lived all his life, and, though he spoke nothing of this thought, yet Anthea knew it, instinctively, — as she knew why he had avoided looking at her hitherto, and what had caused the tremour in his voice, despite his iron self-control; and, therefore, now that they were alone, she spoke hurriedly, and at random:

“What — did he — Georgy mean by — your ship?”

“Why, I promised to take him a cruise in the yacht — if you cared to come, Anthea.”

“Yacht!” she repeated, “are you so dreadfully rich?”

“I’m afraid we are,” he nodded, “but, at least, it has the advantage of being better than if we were — dreadfully poor, hasn’t it?”

Now, in the midst of the garden there was an old sun-dial worn by time, and weather, and it chanced that they came, and leaned there, side by side. And, looking down upon the dial, Bellew saw certain characters graven thereon in the form of a poesy.

“What does it say, here, Anthea?” he asked. But Anthea shook her head:

“That, you must read for yourself!” she said, not looking at him.

So, he took her hand in his, and, with her slender finger, spelled out this motto.

Time, and youthe do flee awaie  
Love, Oh! Love then, whiles ye may.

“Anthea!” said he, and again she heard the tremour in his voice, “you have been my wife nearly three quarters of an hour, and all that time I haven’t dared to look at you, because if I had, I must have — kissed you, and I meant to wait — until your own good time. But Anthea, you have never yet told me that you — love me — Anthea?”

She did not speak, or move, indeed, she was so very still that he needs must bend down to see her face. Then, all at once, her lashes were lifted, her eyes looked up into his — deep and dark with passionate tenderness.

“Aunt Priscilla — was quite — right,” she said, speaking in her low, thrilling voice, “I have loved you — from the — very beginning, I think!” And, with a soft, murmurous sigh, she gave herself into his embrace.

Now, far away across the meadow, Adam was plodding his homeward way, and, as he trudged, he sang to himself in a harsh, but not unmusical voice, and the words of his song were these:

"When I am dead, diddle diddle, as well may hap  
You'll bury me, diddle diddle, under the tap,  
Under the tap, diddle diddle, I'll tell you why,  
That I may drink, diddle diddle, when I am dry."

## CAPILLA ALFONSINA

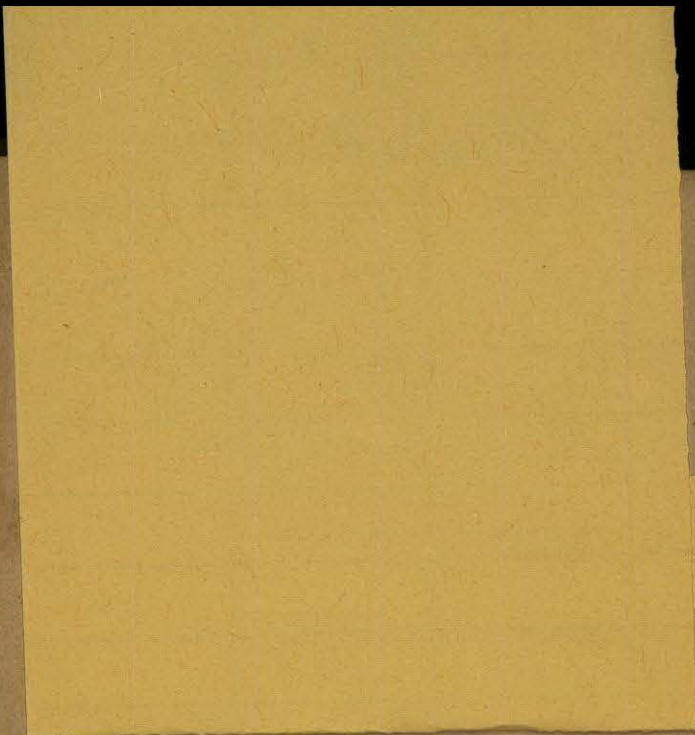
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