

Ladies' STORY Column.

TOM, DICK, AND HARRY.

BY ANNA SHEILD.

LADIES! Dick is my brother, and we are the orphaned sons of Richard Hope, who went down with the Sancy Jane with his wife and the fortune he had made in California, when we were but six years old. We were twins and, clinging to each other, were picked up by a passing steamer and carried to Sydney. I was old enough to know and tell that we were going to visit our aunt, Mrs Dredale, of Oakhill, and kindly strangers saw that we arrived there safely, forlorn little orphan beggars. But fresh misfortune met us, for our aunt died one week after she gave us a tearful welcome.

We had no real claim upon Uncle Dredale, being only his wife's nephews, but out of his great, generous heart he gave us the place of sons in his home. Dear Uncle Cy! Never were boys made happier than he made us for four years, sending us to school, and giving us every pleasure boys delight in, and, above all, such loving companionship as few enjoy, even with their own father.

Then the change came. Uncle Cy married again, and his wife could not endure to have two great rude boys about the house. Every day, every hour, we committed some unpardonable offence, and found all our pleasures restricted. First, our ponies were sold; then our guinea-pigs were killed; then we were moved from our large, beautiful room to a miserable little attic, where we baked in summer, and froze in winter.

Uncle Cy stood by us as far as his quiet, peace-loving disposition allowed, but his new wife ruled with a rod of iron, and, at last, seeing we could not please her, he sent us to a boarding-school. Homesick for a week, we were thoroughly happy afterward, and wanted for no pleasure Uncle Cy could give us. I cannot dwell too long on our boy-life, but we, Dick and myself, can never forget the kindness of Uncle Cy Dredale. We came to Oakhill sometimes for a brief holiday, and this brings me to Harry.

Harriet Dredale was the only child of our dear Uncle Cy, and was born just one year after his second marriage. It was uncle himself who gave her her nickname, greatly to Mrs Dredale's disgust, but, as she said:

'Really, my dear, I must complete the trio, Tom, Dick, and Harry.'

We were twenty-one years of age when Uncle Cyrus took us into his study one morning and made a brief speech that I shall never forget.

'My dear boys,' he said, 'for you are as dear to me as sons, and have made me proud of you many times, I must send you away once more. We will not talk about the reason, but you know it is not because I do not love you. You have good education, good morals, and I am not afraid to trust you. You, Tom, will practise your profession, and Dick can go into business, since he wishes it; but you will each find two thousand pounds in the G— Bank that is your own. It will keep you from want, until you make more by your own talents and exertions. Come sometimes to see me; do not forget that I love you.'

He broke down there, and we hung about him as if we were still little boys, full of love and gratitude, and keenly aware of the cruelty of separating us from him.

Off to the great city, where Dick opened a drug store and I put out a doctor's sign. We had both studied medicine, but Dick would not practise. His was a delicate, sensitive nature, most unlike my own, and he could not bear the sight of suffering. We were unlike in all things, and no one would have guessed we were twins. I was tall, strong and dark, not in the least handsome. Dick was slender and fair, with a rare beauty of face and a gentleness that was almost womanly.

We had been seven years in the city, and once more were at home at Oakhill, when we could spare a vacation, for Mrs Dredale was dead. There was nothing said, there could not be, but we knew that we were welcome, and we stole many a day to run down and visit dear Uncle Cyrus, and, it must be told, fall in love with Harry. Can I make you see her, this cousin who was not our cousin? Brown, curling hair shaded a face of pure oval shape with delicate regular features. Great blue eyes, soft, wistful, innocent as a babe's, lighted her beauty, and her smiles displayed perfect teeth. She was not tall, but her figure was graceful and prettily rounded, and her hands and feet were dainty as a fairy's.

She was frank and sisterly with us and always gave us cordial welcome, and we never guessed each other's devotion, because we could not well leave the city at the same time, Dick leaving me in charge of his store and clerks, and taking my practice in return.

Not until Uncle Cyrus died did we know that we both loved Harry, and then a crushing blow fell. For it was found, after our uncle was buried, that he had left nothing of a once noble fortune. Nothing for the delicately nurtured child who had never known a wish ungratified. Harry's aunt, Mrs Leyburn, took her home, and the beautiful house at Oakhill was sold. After all the confusion was over and there came a breathing spell, Dick took me into his confidence.

Like blows from a hammer his words fell on my heart. 'Tom,' he said to me, 'I have been over to see Harry. Poor little girl, she is very miserable. All her bright, pretty smiles are gone, Tom. It would make your heart ache to see how pale and sad she is.'

'Ah! Had it not already made my heart ache?' 'She has lost the kindest father, Dick,' I said. 'And, as if that was not sorrow enough,' said Dick, 'they are not kind to her at Leyburns.'

'Not kind to her?' I cried. 'I thought they fairly worshipped her.'

'So they did when they thought Uncle Cyrus was wealthy. Now they tell her every day that she must find something to do—some way to earn her living.'

'Never!' I cried. 'Why, Dick, we owe everything to Uncle Cyrus, and we are not poor men now.'

Then Dick said, in a faltering voice:

'Do you think, Tom, it is too soon after her loss for me to tell Harry how I love her—to ask her to be my wife?'

The room seemed to be reeling around me; Dick's face grew dim; his voice sounded far away. He loved Harry! And I was only waiting until the first bitterness of her grief was over to ask her to be my wife. Fool that I was! What was my homely face compared to Dick's beauty; my quiet ways against his grace and tenderness. Before he spoke again, I had recovered from the shock his words gave me, and resolved to keep my secret. Let him win her if he could. I dared not think of my own chance if she refused him. Time enough for that.

Day after day he sought her, yet kept silent. Little guessing the torture he inflicted, he told me of his wooing, but ever with the same refrain.

'She gives me no chance to tell her how I love her, Tom! She is like a sister only.'

I kept away, but my hope grew stronger. If she loved Dick as a sister, might it not be that I—homely and quiet as I was—had won the deeper love I craved. My patience must have been great in those days. Every lonely hour was filled with dreams of Harry's fair, sweet face, her low, musical voice, her bright, winning grace. I recalled every loving word she had ever spoken to me, every caress she had given to me. I knew that even in her childhood I had given her more than a brother's love, and I saw that her mother had doted less than she should love one of the penniless boys who were so dear to their adopted uncle.

We had begun, Dick and myself, to turn some of our investments into ready money, to make a fund for Harry.

'She shall have the four thousand uncle gave us,' we said, although it would cripple us somewhat for a time to take so large a sum out of our fortunes. Nothing had been said to her, for we were afraid she would refuse to take it. We waited for Dick to speak, but we gathered the money together in bank.

We had no home to offer Harry, even if Mrs Grundy would have permitted her to accept one. The store was a store only, with a small back room for storing larger quantities of drugs than were in daily demand. Dick and I had a large room in a boarding-house opposite the store.

It may have been the longing for a home that first suggested to us the idea of investing part of Harry's money (we always spoke of it as hers) in a house and some furniture each hoping to share it with her. The first real brightness that came into her dear face after her father died was when we told her we were going housekeeping, and begged her to help us select and furnish a home. Again, I starved my own heart, and sent her with Dick house-hunting, until they selected a house that seemed the perfection of a modest home, most unlike the beautiful Oakhill mansion. But it was Harry's own taste that selected the furniture, suited to the small rooms, but good in quality, and Harry said: 'Ever so pretty!'

It was all ready and paid for, and some money still in bank, when we all went over to admire the final effect.

We were standing in the pretty drawing-room when Harry said, softly:

'I hope this will be a happy home for you, boys, and that there will soon be the sweetest of wives to share it with you. And now, to-day, you must give me your good wishes, too. I am going to be married.'

'Married?'

Who said it? The voice was choked and very hoarse. Not mine; surely not Dick's.

'Papa knew,' said Harry; 'but we were to wait until Charlie was a little more prosperous. I was not sure—and Harry's eyes dropped—'whether my loss of fortune would not make me less attractive to Charlie, but I wronged him. We will be very poor, but I hope I can help him, and we have made up our minds not to wait for money. Some day we may invite you to our house, but, in the meantime, you will come to see us where we are boarding, will you not?'

I answered, pitying the ghastly white face that Dick had turned to the window. And I continued my answer by asking:

'Who is Charlie? You forget we have not seen him, nor, indeed, seen you as much as we would have wished.'

'Charlie Foster, a clerk in a bank. Dick has met him.'

'Yes,' Dick answered in a low voice. 'A fine fellow he is, too, Harry. Come, Tom, we must be going.'

Not a word was spoken until we stood face to face in our own room. Then Dick looked me in the eyes.

'You, too, Tom?' he said. 'I never dreamed of that.'

'I wanted you should have the first chance, Dick. But it is all over. Shall we take Doctor Merton's offer?'

For we had an opening that promised well in another city. It had scarcely been considered, but it came as a relief, and we accepted it. Our wedding present to Harry was the house and the four thousand pounds her father's generous gift to us in the past. It is many long years since that wedding day that we faced manfully, and we are rich men—Dick and myself. But we never married, and our money will go to Harriet Foster's three boys, Tom, Dick and Harry.

A LUCKY GOVERNESS.

ALICE VICTORIA MURPHY, daughter of Captain Murphy, once secretary to the Prince of Wales and a favourite of Queen Victoria, has fallen heir to sixty thousand pounds, while following the humble occupation of a governess and seamstress in America. She is a tall, handsome brunette, about 25 years old, who has visited almost every country in the world during her romantic life.

Born and reared in London, her father was an officer in the English army who achieved fame during the Crimean war. Her mother was a Spanish woman whose parents were Protestants, while her father was a devout Catholic.

When Miss Murphy was quite young her father quarrelled with his mother, and thereafter would not allow her name to be mentioned in his presence. The Captain's mother then went to Australia in company with a wealthy brother.

Last January she died, and Miss Murphy has just received word from her attorneys in England stating that she is one of the four heirs to a fortune of about two hundred and forty thousand pounds, consisting partly of land in the city of Melbourne.

She is in poor health at present, but will soon make a journey through the West, thence to England and probably from there to Australia.

A PERFECT FOOD.—Aulsebrook's Digestive Biscuits a certain remedy for indigestion.—(ADVT.)

LONDON AND PARIS FASHIONS.

LATEST PARISIAN STYLES.

(SEE FASHION-PLATE, PAGE 323.)

THE illustrations this week represent several charming novelties recently seen in Paris. A lovely mantle in grey-blue cloth (A) is made with a trimming of dark indigo and white astrachan fur as designed. This is bordered with astrachan fur as designed. The bonnet is in dark indigo cloth with silver stars on it, an astrachan border, and black feathers. Mdlla. Berthier, in *Les Douze Femmes de Japhet*, at the Renaissance Theatre (B), wears a pale pink *crêpon* gown, the bodice having an *empêchement* in white guipure; the braces, epaulettes, and ceinture, as well as the borders of the petticoat, are in pink silk. A beautiful evening or ball gown (C) is in a combination of pale sulphur *peau de soie* and tulle *broché*, trimmed with dark green velvet trellis work and a bordering of zibeline fur, as designed, outlining the pale green velvet train. A white *peau de soie* gown (D) is trimmed with cameo pearl designs and borders of white pearl embroidery. The train is in sapphire faille. A pretty gown for a young lady (E) is worn by Mademoiselle Darland, at the Gymnase. It is made in white *crêpe*, with braces, sleeve *entredoux*, ceinture, and collarette in white satin.

HOW HE COLLECTED IT.

A HAMPSHIRE boy started one morning for Portsmouth, where he meant to study law. He wore a homespun suit, took a change of clothing in a bundle, and had ten shillings in his pocket. His father carried him part of the way, but left him at the top of the hill, and he made the rest of the distance—forty miles—on foot.

That night he stopped at the house of a Mr Coe, with whom he had some acquaintance. As he was starting in the morning, Mr Coe said, laughingly:

'You're going to be a lawyer; now remember, if any of my husband's notes ever come into your office, you won't sue him without giving him notice.'

Mr Coe was then doing a large and flourishing business as a country trader, and had good credit. Five years afterwards, hard times came on; everyone was distrustful of everyone else, and failures were numerous.

One day a man brought to our young lawyer's office a batch of notes with instructions to sue; among them was one signed by Mr Coe. Mr Hackett—that was the lawyer's name—drew up the necessary papers, and was on the point of putting them into the sheriff's hands, when he noticed Mr Coe's signature and remembered Mr Coe's request.

Immediately he took a horse and drove out to Mr Coe's house. Mr Coe himself was absent, but Mrs Coe declared that an attachment just then would be his ruin, as it would bring all his creditors down upon him at once. Something must be done without delay. Mr Hackett hastened back to Portsmouth, drew out of the bank a hundred pounds,—all the money he possessed,—raised as much more on his own notes, and went to meet his client.

'Well, squire,' said the man, 'have you secured my note?'

Mr Hackett took the two hundred pounds out of his pocket.

'Why, what does this mean? If I'd supposed he was that kind of a man, I wouldn't have sued him.'

'You, or anybody else, ought to be ashamed to sue a man like Mr Coe, when you could get your money by calling for it.'

Mr Hackett told him further that under the circumstances it was no more than fair for him to pay the expenses of the process, and he agreed to do so.

The next day, or the next but one, Mr Coe appeared, pale and agitated.

'Have you sued me, Mr Hackett?'

'Oh, no, was the cheering reply.'

'I'm all right, then,' exclaimed the merchant. 'I've got the money; but if you had sued me, 'twould have started every body else.'

He begged Mr Hackett to accept a handsome fee, but Mr Hackett assured him that he was already paid; he had shamed a foe out of his client.

HOW CANST THOU KNOW?

SIT not down with idle hands,
In thy self-righteous way,
And wonder how, with frowning brow,
So many stray.

Thou with comfort, health, and friends,
How canst thou know
What bitter dregs hath filled the cup
Of other's woe?

Hedged with care and love so safe,
How canst thou feel
The frenzied driving up and down.
By tempter's heel?

Thou with plenty and to spare,
Heat ever known
What 'tis to stoop for crust of bread,
By Pity thrown?

Knowing well the soft caress
From loved ones near;
Canst know the loneliness of those
With hearthstones dear?

Ah, rich and happy in thy home,
Thou'nt'er canst know,
The emptiness that made a place,
For bitter woe!

XENIA.

ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS, PLANTS AND FERNS for the drawing-room, dining-room, and hall. MRS POPE has a splendid assortment. Art Needlework and Fancy Repository Merten's Buildings, CHRISTCHURCH.