

Love and Honor

It was back in those guileless freshman days when it all still seemed worth while; 'twas on one of those golden afternoons that I fell in love with a smile. It was just a fleeting little smile, but its radiance fell on me like the breath of new spring blossoms reborn on an old apple tree.

Then ah, those feverish days that passed, while I sought for a glimpse of the fair, and O, the brightness that lighted the world when I knew that she was there. Her eyes were large and frank and blue and filled with an infinite trust, and her lips were not for mortal man who has his source in the dust. Her face was turned like the ripened peach, too delicate for the earth and her smile that moved all things to joy was more than the world is worth.

For days I sought an introduction to the girl that I adored, but one by one the weeks went by and weighed on my soul's discord. Then one fond night in early spring when all the lights were soft, I met her there at a brilliant dance and my spirit soared aloft. Her speech was fair and sweet like her and it tripped from her lips unafraid, so I feasted that night in her presence awhile, my debt to myself repaid. Then when the strains of the last soft waltz had died on the warm night air, I trod my way on dreamy clouds home to my lonely lair.

How can I tell of those sweet days that followed that great night — the budding things, the long long rides, and love and my heart's delight. O, how can I tell of that wonderful night when she said her love was mine — life with all its wonderful works paints only one picture so fine.

Thus the spring days passed and the summer came, and still love ruled all things, till the college year drew near its close with exams and all that it brings. So we signed the honor pledge we two, and took the exams side by side, and I held my faith in all that was good and all that was true to abide. But a shadow came like a raven dark and spread its wings in the air, for though I knew English from Chaucer to Noyes, it was not known by my fair. Her brows that were never made to frown were wrinkled in deep distress, and a crystal tear ran down her cheek and lost itself on her dress. Then my heartstrings snapped, and I groaned aloud to see that dear heart despair, and thus I consigned my honor pledge into the devil's care. I placed my paper before those blue eyes — she looked but a little while, but from that time on she wrote and wrote while her lips wore again their smile. Though I had done wrong I was yet at rest, and my soul knew a tranquil peace, for I had done wrong in a worthy cause a greater wrong to decrease.

So the next day dawned and fairer it was than all the days that had gone, but a cloud sprang up when I met the fair and she murmured, "It won't be long."

And God, she was right for that very day I received a note from the dean; my vision grew black before my eyes and my world fell dream by dream. I read my note while my senses reeled, while the sunshine turned to rain. My fair had reported my giving her aid, and inclosed was a berth on the train.