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### "GOD'S ENDORSEMENT"

BY PETER STANLEY.

It was a cool, calm afternoon, not too cold for strolls to be pleasant along the big white woods that led through the tangled vines and snarling old trees that grow along the rippling streams that cut their crooked paths deep into the sides of the West Florida—yet cool enough for the big oak wood fires to burn with a brilliant welcome in the open fire places of the happy cabin homes where live some of the most interesting types of citizenship that have ever illustrated the pages of history or characterized the story departments of the metropolitan journals.

Two human figures followed with patience the winding path that led from the village in the river valley, climbing the long incline until they had reached the scene of an odd old country place deeply hidden away in a secluded corner of Nature's garden. It was odd to me—because there was nothing remarkable about it on first sight, as in a casual passing it by. But pause and observe it for a moment and it begins to create interest. And the deeper one studies the premises—and the people—the more romantic it appears, the more realistic any truly historical it grows. Just an humble little cabin country home almost hidden behind a grand old picture of nature, yet beheld under the penetrating light of a golden winter sunshine one reads love and devotion linked with life and labor. It's where Grandpa and Grandma live, and labor and love and the old place is a sacred spot of earth. God is there, too, for Grandpa talks with Him every day and Grandma says "His presence is ever with us." And then His glory is written upon the flowers and the trees and His love is reflected in Grandpa's and Grandma's faces and dim old eyes.

Before passing under the tangled rose vine that arches the front entrance of the premises Vivian turned an interesting face toward the village the valley. With one sweeping arch of her large brown eyes she held the entire picture of beauty, neat pillars of blue smoke had ascended from the chimneys in the village and, like ships anchored on a calm sea, lay quietly just above the tops of the tall trees that grow along the river's bank, adding a deeper tinge to the foliage of evergreens.

Raising her eyes from the pretty white cottages that dot the map of green, looking steadily at the pillars of smoke, Vivian drew one long draught of evening air into her nostrils, held it in her lungs for a moment, and suddenly let it out again. Then she drew in another and discharged it in the same manner, repeating the operation several times, seemingly unconscious of everything in the big wide world except the object before her eyes.

"Vivian, dear little sweetheart! Are you taking a scientific lung exercise?"

Or are you sighing for a ride upon those airships yonder?"

"My lungs are too perfectly developed to require additional exercise, and the thought of a ride upon airships is a new one; but I wouldn't mind it—in fact, I would be happy floating up there with you, Charley. We could breathe those ringlets of smoke into our lungs and taste the rich fragrance of a thousand good things to eat."

"Explain yourself, Vivian. I never heard you indulge so freely in such odd foolishness before."

"Well, Charley, you see it's this way: Those pillars of smoke yonder—that lovely blue veil hanging over the face of Nature—accumulated there from all those busy happy homes huddled there by the river's edge like a cluster of grapes hanging to a long crooked vine. Every kitchen there has been a busy one today—everybody cooking Christmas dinners. Seems to me I can smell the delicious fragrance of country cured ham, baked pork and mild pepper, turkey and cranberry sauce, pumpkin pies and cakes and—"

"Hush, Vivian; you'll make me so hungry until I'll disgrace myself—and you—at the wedding supper tonight." Vivian's large brown eyes flashed with an electric brilliance that penetrated Charley's very soul. The dynamo of love—a genuinely pure love—was set in rapid motion within her heart. The current was quickly carried to every portion of her body and her half girlish and half womanly form quivered, for a moment, under the influence of its sudden and powerful shock. Her dimpled cheeks flushed to a dark crimson, then began to pale. She turned her eyes toward the young man's face and in a tone of voice that was the sweetest music he had ever heard she said: "Dear Charley!" then her tumbling form dropped carelessly upon the brown leaves and straw, and Vivian began shedding tears.

Charley knelt close beside his little sweetheart. Vivian was his first love. When the firm of his heart was exposed to the hearty of God's creation, her image was reproduced there—engraved there forever. He timidly raised her hand to his lips, and kissed it. The little shower of tears was like a summer rain from a cloudless sky. In point of sorrow, sadness or trouble, Vivian herself could find no cause for them.

But we should remember that summer showers are the overflow of Nature's happiness—the tender buds smile and the flowers laugh. There is a ripple of delight in an April rain and the giant of gladness glistens on the golden summer clouds—but when the trees have shed their leaves and the flowers have returned to mother earth—when the bright warm shores

of heaven are hidden behind a dark, cold cloud, and the icy breath of Nature groans from a frozen heart, we can read her real sighs and see her real sorrows illustrated in a rainy winter day.

Vivian and Charley pass under the rustic old gateway and enter the queer little cabin home. Grandma was busy putting the Christmas pies into the old-fashioned cupboard, while Grandpa read a favorite chapter from the Bible. "Christmas gift! Christmas gift!" exclaimed the two happy young voices as they entered the house. One of the kindest, most sincere, genuine Christian women the world has ever known—one whose life (I assert with profound regret) can only be reproduced in history, not in a living character—folded her little granddaughter in her faithful old arms and plead God a blessing in her behalf that, although may, or may have been, foreshadowed with sorrow, put a sublime endorsement upon a period of happiness for her that cannot be de-throned.

Three human figures traced the dim road that leads from the queer old country place to a large, comfortable home a mile away. They were wedding attaches. Vivian and Charley were chosen to "stand up" with the bride and groom while the good old man was to tie the matrimonial knot. It was old-fashioned Christmas weather, dark and damp; and when they had gotten straight upon the road the old gentleman began: "Listen, children, and take due notice of what I am going to say. It is with regret that I must perform this marriage ceremony tonight."

"Why Grandpa! What on earth?" exclaimed Vivian with much surprise. "Because, my daughter, I have failed to get God's endorsement to the union, and I have been talking with Him about it all day. God Himself is love, and a love so supremely pure that He sets His seal of endorsement upon it as genuine and will live throughout an earthly life, blending itself with parental happiness and issuing in perfect form and beauty into coming posterity. But there is a delusion called love that is of the devil and nothing but sin can result from it. Such is unworthy the official seal of our state, for it is endorsing and making lawful in the sight of man that which is unlawful in the sight of God. It's God's will that we be happy, even here on earth, but it's the devil's business to have it otherwise if he can, and there are sad instances of the devil's success."

A pitiful picture made up of a combination of innocence and ignorance in the form of a young girl was officially declared the legal wife of a rough, unrefined combination of crude flesh and bone, and, like a cork thrown upon the strong current of a stream, they were turned loose upon the sea of life to drift with the waves and the winds. No guiding star of hope to pilot them to a happy endless shore; no power of knowledge to propel them; no corresponding magnet of love within their souls to bind them closer together and closer to Thee.

But there were two happy souls who retraced the winding roads and crossed the silvery streams on their way back

to the village that memorable Christmas eve night. They were Vivian and Charley. Love ran smoothly with them now, regardless of the future ways. When they reached Vivian's happy home down in the little village by the river's edge they entered the house and found that they were there alone, the other members of Vivian's family having gone to an entertainment of some holiday nature at a near-by neighbor's house. The fireplace was sending forth a cherry warmth of welcome from a large heap of oak coals and they seated themselves comfortably in front of it. For a few moments they sat there in silence—happy in each other's love. Vivian was looking steadily into the burning coals, while Charley's blue eyes were searching her every feature and expression. And his soul was worshipping her—even the very air she breathed was his whiskey. Then, with a golden happy hour there alone; and God's endorsement was ready with His holy seal.

The following day—Christmas—the devil got busy. Among the many sad things he did was to moisten Charley's eyes with a drop of whiskey. Then, with a full bottle of red wine, he led him along new paths richly illustrated with dazzling pictures. The devil is a cunning artificer. He has especially prepared scenery for screening the way of just such pure-hearted and noble-minded boys as Charley was, and then he employs the most proficient experts as agents, both male and female, old and young, rich and poor.

Through the devil and his agents poor Charley was led on and on to the bad. Of course, Vivian didn't go. She remained with God's people. Another shower of tears came, but not from a cloudless sky. There was a cause, and deep down in an innocent heart that was breaking—a heart as pure as the driven snow, there was a love that would not be de-throned.

Disregarding that corresponding magnetic power that continually drew him up to love's throne; disregarding from time to time the strange presence of an unseen hand intervening between him and trouble; disregarding obedience to the frequent pleadings of the sweetest voice he had ever heard, as she prayed and her prayers were transmitted through a divine power; disregarding even the influence of God Himself working in Charley's own mind and conscience and offering him happiness on earth, he went down and down, until his very soul was bathed in the flames of hell and his life was robbed of its brilliance and worth.

But there is a love so supremely pure that God sets His seal of endorsement upon it. It lives in poverty and wealth; in sickness and health; in youth and old age; in honor or disgrace. It lives throughout an earthly life and endureth beyond the grave. From the royal throne of such a love came the strange presence of an unseen hand, one day, and raised the physical wreck from the debris of hell and saved the soul from eternal unhappiness.

### BIRTHS AND DEATHS MAKE AN INTERESTING STORY

OFFICIAL RECORDS SHOW WHITE BIRTHS AS 337, WITH 174 DEATHS, WHILE COLORED BIRTHS NUMBERED 260 AND DEATHS REACHED 293.

Vital statistics in any community are always interesting, and the

Christmas Journal would hardly be complete without a summarized story in this line for the city of Pensacola. The white deaths for the first eleven months of the year and December of 1908 numbered 174. The colored deaths for the same period numbered 293, making a total of 467. The white births for the first eleven months and December, 1908, numbered 337. The colored births for the like period

numbered 260, making a total of 597 for the twelve-month period.

Comparing this with a record for the previous year, the white deaths numbered 190. The colored deaths numbered 225, making a total number of deaths 415. The white births for like period numbered 350. The colored births, 247, making a total of 597. The white deaths for the first eleven months of 1908 and December, 1908, are sixteen less than for the entire twelve months of the year 1908, while the white births for 1909 are 112 more than the total for 1908. The colored deaths for the first eleven months of 1908 and December, 1908, are less by 57 than the record for the entire year of 1908, while the colored births for the year 1909, thus far, are but 13 in excess of the entire year of 1908. The average number of white deaths per month in the present year was 14. The average white birth record by the month thus far has been 27. The average colored deaths for the year up to this time has been a little over 24, while the average monthly number of births with colored people has been about 20. It will be seen that up to the time of this compilation, mortality with colored people is much in excess generally than that of the white people. Pneumonia and consumption are two diseases which are fatal and are easily contracted, it seems, by negroes, but the infant mortality is much in excess of that of their white neighbors. The monthly average of white births has been about 27, while the average for colored people is figured as 20. By the above compilations, the average white birth record exceeds largely that of the negroes, while the average death record among colored people is far greater than that of the white people. Taking it as a whole, another interesting feature of the statistics in this line is the comparison of the white and colored births and deaths. There were 119 more negroes died in Pensacola during the past year than there were white people, while there were 77 more white children born in the city than there were colored people.

The above statistics are compiled from reports which are filed weekly in the office of the city clerk. This is how the vital statistics were reported by the month at office of the clerk, including December of 1908:

	White Deaths.	White Births.	Colored Deaths.	Colored Births.
1908—				
Dec . . . . .	18	27	23	17
1909—				
Jan . . . . .	15	22	22	25
Feb . . . . .	22	25	44	41
March . . . . .	18	28	29	17
April . . . . .	7	25	15	14
May . . . . .	15	29	23	17
June . . . . .	9	21	16	10
July . . . . .	9	28	17	22
Aug. . . . .	8	40	17	20
Sept. . . . .	22	27	34	19
Oct. . . . .	20	32	23	18
Nov. . . . .	11	25	25	29
Totals . . . . .	174	337	293	260



O H, Christmas is the children's day, Made purposely for all of them, And he who fashioned it that way Was once a child in Bethlehem! Those who still the holy vigil keep Hail him as the shepherd of the sheep.

Read The Journal's Want Columns for bargains.