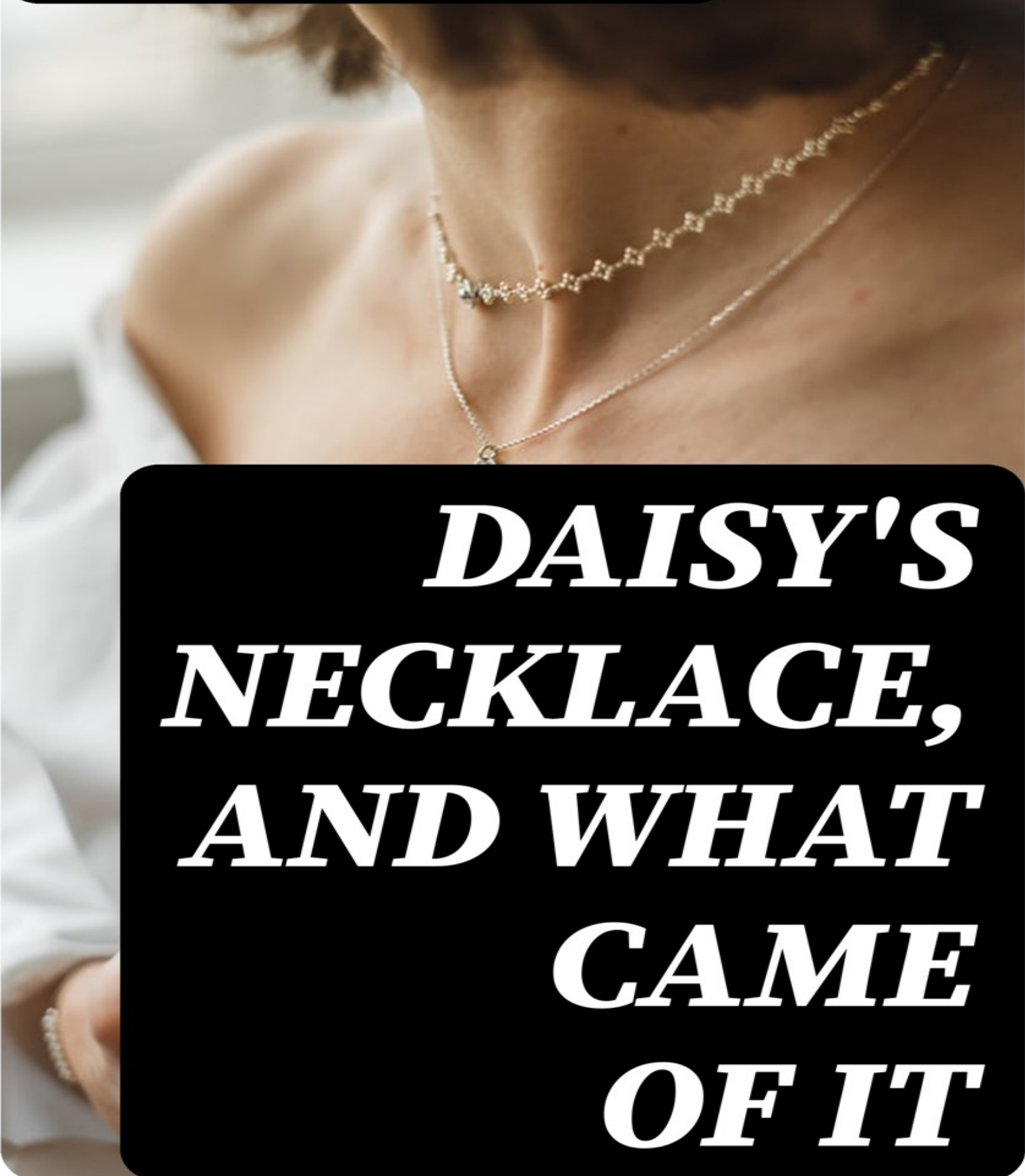


***THOMAS BAILEY
ALDRICH***



***DAISY'S
NECKLACE,
AND WHAT
CAME
OF IT***

Thomas Bailey Aldrich

Daisy's Necklace, and What Came of It

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



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TO THE UNFORTUNATE READER.

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In this little Extravaganza, I have done just what I intended.

I have attempted to describe, in an auto-biographical sort of way, a well-meaning, but somewhat vain young gentleman, who, having flirted desperately with the Magazines, takes it into his silly head to write a novel, all the chapters of which are laid before the reader, with some running criticism by T. James Barescythe, Esquire, the book-noticer of "The Morning Glory," ("a journal devoted to the Fine Arts and the Amelioration of all Mankind,") and the type of a certain class which need not be distinctly specified for recognition. I have endeavored to make the novel of my literary hero such a one as a young man with fine taste and crude talent might produce; and I think I have succeeded. It is certainly sufficiently unfinished.

In drawing the character of Barescythe, the point of my quill may have pierced a friend; and if you ask, like Ludovico,

"What shall be said of thee?"

I shall answer, like Othello,

"Why, anything:

An honorable murderer, if you will;

For nought I did in hate, but all in honor."

The only audacious thing I have done is the writing of this preface. If there is anything more stupid than a "preface," it is a book-critic. If anything *could* be more stupid than a book-critic, it would be a preface. But, thank heaven, there is not. In saying this, I refer to a particular critic; for I would not, for the sake of a tenth edition, malign in such a wholesale manner those capital good fellows of the press—those *verbal accoucheurs* who are so pleasantly officious at the birth of each new genius. Not I. I have

"A fellow-feeling"

and a love for them, which would seem like a bid for their good nature, if expressed here.

I have put my name on the title-page of this trifle from principle. My pen-children are all mine, and I cannot think of disowning one, though it may happen to be born hump-backed. But I beg of you, gentlest of unfortunate readers, not to take *DAISY'S NECKLACE* as a serious exponent of my skill at story-telling. It is *not* printed at the "urgent request of numerous friends"—I am so fortunate as not to have many—but a seductive little argument in the shape of a *cheque* is the sole cause of its present form; otherwise, I should be content to let it die an easy death in the columns of the journal which first had the temerity to publish it. If the world could always know, as it may in this case, why a book is printed, it would look with kindlier eyes on dullness bound in muslin. It would say, with honest Sancho Panza: "Let us not look the gift-horse in the mouth."

When the sunshine of this dear old world has reddened the wine in my heart—melted down its sparkles to a creamy

flavor, I will give you a richer draught—mayhap a beaker of Hippocrene.

Till then, may God's blessing be on us both, though neither of us deserve it.

CLINTON PLACE, 1856.

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It hath beene sayed, and it seemeth soe untoe me, that ye man who writes a booke maist have much vanitie and vexation of spirite.

YE TWO POORE AUTHORS.

PROLOGUE.

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"Mrs. Muggins!"

"Yes, sir."

"Say that I am sick. Say I am dead—buried—out of town. In short, say anything you will; but deny my existence to every one who calls, with the exception of Mr. Barescythe."

"Yes, sir."

"I am going to write a novel, Mrs. Muggins!"

That lady did not exhibit much emotion.

"Yes, sir."

And Mrs. Muggins ambled out of the room-door, to which she had been summoned by some peremptory appeals of my bell. I was somewhat shocked at the cool manner with

which Mrs. Muggins received the literary intelligence; but she, poor, simple soul, did not know that my greatness was a-ripening.

"Some of these days," said I to myself, turning toward the window, "some of these days, mayhap a hundred years hence, as the stranger passes through Washington Parade Ground, this house—wrinkled and old then—will be pointed out to his wonder-loving eyes as the one in which my novel was written; and the curious stranger will cut his name on the walls of the room which I never occupied, and carry away a slice of the door-step!"

I immediately fell in love with this fascinating thought, and followed it up.

The slender trees which now inhabit the Parade Ground had grown immensely—the trunks of some were three feet in diameter, and around them all was a massive iron railing. The brick and brownstone houses on Waverly Place and Fourth-street had long been removed, and huge edifices with cast-iron fronts supplanted them. I looked in vain for the little drug-store on the corner with its red and green bottles, and the fruit-man's below with its show of yellow bananas and sour oranges. The University, dimly seen through the interlacing branches, was a classic ruin.

Everything was changed and new.

All the old land-marks were gone, save the Parade Ground, and one quaint old house facing Mac Dougal-street: the which house was propped up with beams, for, long and long ago, before "the memory of the oldest inhabitant" even, an author, a sweet quiet man, once wrote a famous

book there, and the world of 1956 would preserve the very floors he trod on!

And so I sat there by my window in the autumnal sunshine, and watched the golden clouds as the wind blew them against the square white turrets of the University, which peered above the trees.

Ah, Mrs. Muggins, thought I, though you only said "yes, sir," when I spoke of my novel—though your name is carved in solid brass on the hall-door, yet you will be forgotten like a rain that fell a thousand years ago, when *my* name, only stamped with printer's ink, on ephemeral slips of paper, is a household word.

So I came to pity Mrs. Muggins, and harbored no ill feelings toward the simple creature who was so speedily to be gathered under the dusty wings of oblivion. I wondered how she could be cheerful. I wondered if she ever thought of being "dead and forgotten," and if it troubled her.

Lost in the aromatic fumes of a regalia, I sat waiting the advent of my friend Barescythe—Barry for short—to whom I had addressed a laconic note, begging him to visit me at my rooms without delay.

I like Barescythe.

He is conceited, but that's a small fault with genius. His idea of literature does not exactly chime with mine, for he believes that there have been no novels, to speak of, since Scott's, and little poetry since Pope's. But, aside from this, he is a noble fellow; he carries his heart, like a falcon, on his hand, where everybody can see it. Barry is fond of wine—but that's a failing *not* peculiar to genius, and *not* confined to book-critics. He is a trifle rough in speech, not always the

thing in manners; but "the elements so mix in him"—that I have a great mind to finish that excellent quotation.

I heard his familiar step on the stairs, and a second afterwards he kicked open my room-door with his characteristic disregard of ceremony.

"Ralph," said he, with some anxiety, "what's up?"

"Sit down!"

"Are you sick?"

"No."

"Are you going to be?"

"No."

"Then why, in the name of the many-headed Hydra, did you send me such an article as this? Read it."

The note ran as follows:

"Mac Dougal-street,

"June 30, 18—.

"DEAR BARRY,—

"Come and see me without delay. I have got a—

"Eternally,

"RALPH."

"O, yes!" said I, laughing; "I left out a word. I meant to have said, 'I have got an idea.'"

"Humph! I thought it was a colic."

Mr. Barescythe had left a host of editorial duties in the middle and busiest time of the day, expecting to find me lying at the point of death, and was quite out of humor because I was not.

There is something extremely human in Barescythe.

"Criticus," I spoke as deliberately as the subject would allow, "I am going to write a novel."

This unfortunate avowal was the rose-leaf which caused the cup of his indignation to overflow.

"If it had been a case of cholera," commenced Barescythe, with visible emotion, "or the measles, or the croup, or the chicken-pox—if you had broken your thigh, spine, or neck, I wouldn't have complained. But a *novel*—"

And Barry began whistling wildly,



as he invariably does when annoyed. After using up a variety of popular airs, the shadow of his good-humor returned to him.

"Ralph," he said, taking my hand, "I have a great respect for you. I don't know why, to be frank, but I have. I like your little song of—what do you call it?—in Putnam's Monthly, and your prose sketches in the Knickerbocker; but don't be a fool, Ralph!"

With which piece of friendly advice, he put on his brown felt hat, drew it over his brows, and stalked out of the room, with

"A countenance more
In sorrow than in anger,"

like Mr. Hamlet's father.

I saw no more of Barescythe for two weeks.

The summer months flew away.

The nights were growing longer. The air had a vein of sparkling cold in it; at every gust the trees in the Parade Ground shook down golden ingots; and the grass-plots, and the graveled walks, and the marble bowl of the fountain, were paved with emerald and amethyst—a mosaic flooring of tinted leaves. The clouds were haggard faces, and the wind wailed like a broken heart. Indeed,

"The melancholy days had come,
The saddest of the year,"

and Mrs. Muggins had made a fire in my grate!

Blessings on him who invented fire-places! A poor day-dreamer's benediction go with him! The world in the grate! I have watched its fantastic palaces and crimson inhabitants—dipped my pen, as it were, into its stained rivers, and written their grotesqueness! Dizzy bridges, feudal castles, great yawning caves, and red-hot gnomes, are to be found in the grate; mimic volcanos, and ships that sail into sparry grottos, and delicate fire-shells with pink and blue lips!

Crash!

The coals sink down, and new figures are born, like the transient pictures in a kaleidoscope. So it came to pass that I dozed over the metempsychosis of my fire-world, and commenced the novel.

Give me crisp winter days for writing, and the long snowy nights for dreamy slumber.

O antique humorist, quaint-mouthed Sancho Panza! with you, I say, "Blessings on the man who invented sleep!" Sleep, pleasant sleep!—that little airy nothing on the eyelids!—that little spell of thought which comes from no

place and goes nowhere!—which comes upon us silently and splendidly, like a falling star, and trails its golden fancies on our waking hours. Sleep for the young—fresh, dewy sleep! Sleep for the sick! Sleep for the weary and disconsolate—sweet dreams and sweet forgetfulness for *them!* Smooth the white hairs of the old; place thy invisible fingers on their lips; close their eyes gently, gently. Sleep, and let them pass into nothingness!

In a dreamy mood, half awake and half asleep, I filled sheet after sheet with my curious back-handed chirography. The white feathery snow came down cygnet-soft, and I wrote. I heard the wind ditties in the chimney, the merry wrangling of sleigh-bells, the sonorous clash of fire-bells, and the manuscript grew under my pen, as if by magic. I came to love the nurslings of my fancy as no one else will. I liked the cold, cynical features of Mr. Flint, with his undertaker's aspect; the child-spirit, Bell; Daisy Snarle's eyes; the heart-broken old sailor; the pale book-keeper; Tim, the office boy; Mr. Hardwill, the great publisher; Joe Wilkes, and all of them!

Mrs. Muggins occasionally looked in on me.

Mrs. Muggins' regard for me was increasing. She never left the coal-scuttle on the stairs for my benefit, as she used to; she was eternally hearing my bell ring when it didn't, and answering it so promptly when it did, that I began to think that she lived night and day just outside my door.

Pleasant Mrs. Muggins!

I tried not to feel elated at these little widowy attentions; but *los hombres son mortales*.

She handed me my coffee with a motherly tenderness that was perfectly touching. She looked at me with the eyes of Solicitude, and spoke with the lips of culminating Respect; and once, in a burst of confidence, she told me that she had six orphan sons, who were "sealurs."

My respect increased for Mrs. Muggins. My novel might run through only one edition, but she,—she had six editions of herself afloat! And I thought that, after all, a woman like her who had produced a half a dozen Neptunes, founded perhaps a half a dozen races, was rendering more service to this apple-like globe, than one poor devil of an author prolifically pregnant with indifferent books.

I spoke to Barescythe about it, and it was pleasant to have him coincide with me once.

It is an agreeable fact, that

"The world goes up and the world goes down,
And the sunshine follows the rain."

The new year was four months old. The flowers were teething: the tiny robins were able to go alone, and above the breezy hum of many thousand voices, above the monotonous and ocean-like jar of omnibus wheels, I could hear the babbling of hyaline rills in pleasant woodland places! I could not see the silver threads of water winding in and out among the cool young grass; I could not guess where they were; but through the city smoke, over the dingy chimney-tops, they spake to me with kindly voices!

I knew that daisies were fulling in sunny meadows, and that the dandelion trailed its gold by the dusty road-sides: for