

She was gone, and Steve looked about him. The place, as she said, was in readiness for him. He couldn't notice the slightest change. It seemed now, as he gazed upon the familiar objects, that he had always intended to return. Somehow the last ten years appeared as one night. He felt as though he had fallen asleep on yesterday's eve, and had dreamed a dream of western lands and ranch life, from which he was awakened this morning by a wandering musician playing an 'Ave Maria.'

With the eagerness of a child he began going about the room, examining the familiar objects. Ah! his mother's picture! He looked upon it long and minutely, then kissed it. And this was his father—and this other one—why, yes, it was himself at nineteen, just after leaving college. He turned to the old familiar books. There they were, each on its accustomed shelf. Here hung the testimonial of his reception into the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary; beside it was the certificate of his First Holy Communion and Confirmation, signed by good, kind Father Ward. How had he been able to forget these things! How had he been able to forget the teachings of his youth! How had he allowed himself to drift on life's current! Yes, he had drifted, and the tide had carried him whither it listed.

He approached a desk in one corner. 'Her picture is here, somewhere,' he mused. 'Ah, yes, I remember—I put it in this desk-drawer. Here it is—the picture of Marie, Marie Whitely.' He was intent upon the picture, thinking of the place she used to hold in his heart. Mammy Liddy came in unnoticed.

'Here am somethin', Marse Steve. When I opened dat ar hall doah, dis 'pistle fell from de ole letter-box. I specs it am yourn. It 'pears as dough it war in dat box a long time, 'cause it looks ole. I never opened dat doah since you left, Marse Steve.'

Steve looked at the yellowed envelope, then hastily tore it open.

'My dear Steve,—I want you to come and see me, because I desire to tell you how sorry I am that we have quarrelled. I was wrong, and you were wrong. Come out to see me to-day, just as if nothing had happened. We won't explain; we will simply forget, and that is the best way. I feel sure that you will forgive.'

'MARIE WHITELY.'

He looked at the date. 'Thursday morning, October 10, 18—'. It had been written on the very morning he had left so hurriedly. Had he delayed his departure for six hours, he would never have gone. He sat very quietly amid the surroundings of his youth, holding her letter in his hand, while many, many thoughts sank into the sanctuary of his heart. He realised more fully now why something almost miraculous had called him home. It was to see this letter—this letter which had been waiting for him for ten years.

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It is evening time—evening time in the South, in the fall of the year. The rays of a setting sun cast a sheen over the golden-brown, red, and yellow-hued trees. A woman is standing on the open verandah of an old-time Southern home. She is gazing off to a little Southern city. The sunset glow as it falls upon her face reveals that she is no longer in her first youth. The face is somewhat commonplace, perhaps there are persons who would call it grave. But let that pass; her eyes are still in their fullest youth, and from their depths shine forth constancy, devotion, truth, and love—things not always in the possession of beauty, but things which remain long after beauty has been withered by the cares, storms, and winters of life.

Her attention is drawn to the figure of a man who is walking leisurely down the road. She looks more carefully. Can it be? Yes, yes, it is Steve—Steve returning after ten years.

When he turned in at the gate, she left the verandah and met him half-way to the house, with her hands extended in welcome. He took the hands tenderly in his own, and then she shrank back as though she felt she had been too impulsive. She looked into his eyes, half-afraid of what she might find there. What she saw must have reassured her, because she said:

'Steve, it is with joy I welcome you back.'

'I have come to be forgiven, Marie.'

'I knew you would come some day, because I prayed, and—'

She paused. 'And what else did you do?'

'I used to sing your "Ave Maria."'

'It was that brought me. I heard it a week ago, and I was forced to come. When I arrived home I found your letter—the one you wrote when I went. Here it is.'

He handed it to her. She read it; and then they walked towards the verandah.—*Benziger's Magazine.*

## MRS. LAVINIA'S MATCH

Mrs. Lavinia Nelson gave a last look round the room she had arranged for an expected guest. It was a small room; a fastidious person might have justly likened it to a cupboard, except that a good-sized window gave a cheerful light and a view of Mrs. Lavinia's garden.

But then neither the guest nor the owner was fastidious. To the guest it meant a shelter from the lonely world, where there was not a friend, nor a roof to cover her. To Mrs. Nelson, it gave a new vent to her charitable energy, and the pleasant prospect of a young girl's society. That the girl was an invalid gave her an added charm to 'Mother Nelson,' as the people of Vanburensdorp called her because she was the best-natured creature in the world.

There had come to this little South African dorp, a sick man in search of health, with his sister as nurse—a too-devoted nurse, people said, for when he died her health broke down, and the hotel people feared she would die too. Then it was that Mrs. Lavinia came to the rescue, as Ida said afterwards, like the good fairy in children's stories. Mrs. Nelson offered Ida Sinclair a room in her house.

'Payment? My dear, we can talk of that when you get well. It is a little box of a place, and I'm a homely old woman to live with.'

A quaint figure was Mrs. Lavinia, as she set off up the sunny street to bring home her guest. Her hat (though she was a milliner) looked for all the world like an inverted soup-plate covered with rusty black stuff and scraggy ostrich feather, which, even in its best days, would not have been fit to adorn a feather-brush.

Ida Sinclair had become familiar with the odd figure and kindly, humorous face, but she could not suppress a smile of amusement when the plump little figure whisked into her room at the hotel and carried herself and her belongings off in a covered cart to the door of the house that was to be her home.

It was a single-storey house standing half-hidden beside Van der Merwe's big grocery store in the main street. Two windows looked out on the street; one was Mrs. Lavinia's sitting-room, the other her show window, though all the show in it consisted of some boxes with glass lids, containing various colored rolls of ribbon. Mrs. Lavinia had no need to advertise. She was the milliner of the village and had no rival.

Ida was shown over the tiny house with some pride.

The shop was a long narrow room with a counter behind which ran shelves filled with boxes.

'Boxes, nothing but boxes,' thought Ida, 'it reminds one somehow of Dickens.'

The work-room looked out on the street, so that the busy little woman could see at once who was coming; a box-like bedroom, and a similar kitchen, with Ida's small room, completed the house. But the pride of Mrs. Lavinia's life was her garden—such a tangle of roses and mignonette and wall-flowers, and every one of Ida's favorites, reminding her of 'home' in far-away England. There was a rush of tears to her eyes as the fragrant perfume brought back the memory of a garden of happy childhood's days.

But here was Mrs. Lavinia whisking about like a very plump cricket, talking all the time with a happy irrelevance, and at last taking Ida's slender figure by the waist and drawing her into a cushioned chair in the sitting-room.