

The Judge's Daughter
by Amy Randolph

“So you really think you’re in love with my little girl, eh?” said Judge Pelham.

He had a queer brown face, this old man, all ploughed and traversed with a fine network of wrinkles, and little black eyes, with a scanty allowance of lashes, that looked at you like hard, glistening beads. Not the sort of man to confide a love-tale to, nor to sympathize with the first tender outpourings of the heart-masculine; and how Judge Pelham ever came to be the father of a glorious girl like Kate, with the beauty of Hebe, and the winsome, poetic nature of Sappho, was a riddle that we leave to those learned in physiology and psychology.

“Yes, sir,” said Hugh Kearney, bravely, “I *am* in love with her, and if I am fortunate enough to gain your permission to pay her my addresses—”

“Stop! stop!” said the old gentleman. “Not so fast. One thing at a time, young sir. What have you got?”

“A strong arm, sir, and a brave, true heart, together with, I hope at least an average amount of brains.”

“Very good stock in trade, very good stock n trade,” answered the Judge, still regarding Mr. Kearney with the little hard glistening beads of eyes. “Aha, Mr. Carleton, is that you? Walk in and sit down. I’ll be disengaged presently.”

“Then you will give my cause a favorable consideration, Judge,” said Hugh, rising to depart.

“I will, sir.”

And Hugh went out—a tall, handsome fellow, with pleasant dark eyes, and a firm, squarely-cut chin, which betokens no ordinary amount of resolution and will.

Mr. Kent Carleton sat in the office, uneasily turning over the large russet-bound volumes of Blackstone and Cowen, when the Judge deliberately turned himself round in his leather-cushioned revolving chair.

He too was handsome, with straight, effeminate features, blue eyes, and fair, wavy hair, and his hands, white and well-shaped, always smelled as if they had been newly washed in *eau de cologne*.

“I have called, sir, on very important business,” began Kent, hesitatingly.

“Eh, eh! What may it be?” deliberately questioned the Judge; while Kent would have given all the sixpences he was worth if the brown old man would have put on a pair of spectacles or looked the other way. Those beady eyes confused and bewildered him.

“It’s about your daughter Kate, sir,” said Carleton, utterly forgetting the euphoniously worded sentences in which he had resolved to communicate his intentions. “I love her, and if you have no objections—”

“Aha!” said the Judge, “exactly so. But of course you have means to support a wife, or you wouldn’t have allowed yourself to think of taking one?”

“As to means, sir, I am as yet only beginning the world; but I have expectations, and, added to that, I am about to commence the practice of the profession in which you have reached so brilliant a position!”

He bowed to the Judge; the Judge took snuff, still transfixing him with the beady eyes.

“You may go home, sir,” said Judge Pelham. “I’ll let you know my decision tomorrow.”

Kent Carleton’s footsteps had hardly died away upon the threshold, when the Judge opened a door to the left of him and called:

“Kate!”

Miss Katharine Pelham came in—a tall, blooming young lady of eighteen, with eyes the soft liquid blue of old India china, damask cheeks, and hair of the real poet’s gold, tied with a black ribbon and floating down her back like a yellow-gleaming cascade. How strange and lovely she looked among the dry old law-books and baize-covered desks, and the packets of legal papers tied with faded red tape and splashed with scarlet seals like magnified drops of blood.

“Well, papa,” said Kate, scattering rose-leaves on the floor from the huge branch of double Michigan roses that she carried.

“Do you want to get married, pet?”

“Well, papa, I hardly know whether I do or not!” she answered reflectively, burying her pink nose among the roses.

“Because I’ve had two young men here asking permission to pay their addresses to you.”

“Two young men, papa! Pray, who were they?”

“Both eligible enough, as far as outward circumstances go; not rich, but smart, sensible, and enterprising I’ve reason to think; and for my part, I don’t believe in too much ready made money.”

“But you haven’t told me yet who they are, papa!”

“Hugh Kearney and Kent Carleton,” answered the Judge. “Which do you like better of the two?”

“Why, papa, I like them both. Hugh is such a good solid fellow, and Kent has so much style.”

“But you can’t marry ’em both!”

“Papa,” laughed Kate, coming close up so that her roses and her curls fairly overflowed the brown face with the beady black eyes, “you choose for me. I really haven’t any actual preference in the matter. I could learn to like either of them; and after all, it isn’t like selecting a lover, because I can make up my mind any time.”

“So you want the old dad to select for you, do you, Kate? Well, well, I’ll think it over, and let you know. And now go back to your posies and your worsted work.”

So the Judge put on his hat and went out for a walk in the summer twilight, to clear his brain of the cobwebs induced by his day’s work.

“Hallo!” cried Judge Pelham, as he nearly stumbled over a meditative old Irishman, who was standing staring about him with a ragged old water-proof coat hanging on his arm. “What do you mean by obstructing the public highways in that sort of fashion, Terence Hannegan?”

“Faith, it’s I that axes your honor’s pardon kindly, but sorra a bit I knows where I’m after goin.’ P’raps your honor could tell me.”

“How the mischief do you suppose I can tell you, if you don’t know yourself, you Irish blunderhead? Get out of the way and let me go on.”

“They’re lawyers, like your honor,” went on the persistent Terence; “and since Bidy Rourke—that’s me sister, your honor, that washes for all the quality—hurt her ankle-bone, she says, says she—‘Terry,’ says she, ‘if you’ll get the money they’re owin’ me, it’s I that’ll thank you kindly,’ says she, ‘and I’ll do as much for you,’ says she, ‘for it’s Mr. Carleton and Mr. Kearney—’”

“Oh!” ejaculated the Judge; “Carleton and Kearney, eh? Yes, I know where they live, and I’ll go along with you and show you, if you’ll lend me your overcoat and just change hats with me.”

“Sure, your honor, it’s too ragged-like for the likes of you!”

“That’s my business,” said the Judge, alertly transforming himself into an old loafer by the battered hat and rusty over-garment of Terence Hannegan. “Now look here, you rascal, if you call me anything but Larry Reirdon, I’ll send you to the lock-up for twenty days.”

Terence stared and grinned:

“All right, yer—”

“Stop!” roared the Judge.

“I mane Larry!” And is this the door, sir? I would be after saying, Misther Reirdon?”

“This is the door, Terry.”

And without knocking the Judge pushed Terry into the hotel reading-room, where he stood with his head drawn in between his shoulders, and nearly covered by the Irishman’s two-size-too-large hat, while Hannegan boldly confronted the two young men.

Carleton was writing a letter at the table, Kearney sat tipped back on his chair, looking over the paper, and one or two others, strangers to the Judge and his companion, were lounging about, grumbling at the dismal monotony of the overgrown village in which they found themselves becalmed overnight.

“Money!” ejaculated Carleton, irritably, as the Irishman volubly made known his errand. “What money? It’s but a little while since I settled that bill; there must be a mere trifle owing now!”

“It’s five dollars, sir—five dollars and siventty cents; and Bidy, she’s laid up wid a broken ankle and five little ones, sir, and Mike hasn’t done a stroke o’ work since the factory people failed, an’ if you’d plase to let me have the money, I’ve Bidy’s own receipt, sir—”

“Hang your receipts, man—I’ve no money to spare! Don’t bother me!”

“For shame, Carleton!” spoke up Hugh Kearney. “Pay what you owe the poor woman. Would you let her and her little ones starve?”

“It don’t hurt that class of people to starve,” heartlessly answered Carleton. “As for the little ones, the less we have among us to pay taxes for, the better! It isn’t convenient for me to settle the account today—that’s enough.”

And he turned away and bent over his writing again, perhaps a little uneasy beneath the withering look of scorn darted at him from Hugh Kearney’s eyes.

“Come here, my man,” said the latter, addressing Terry Hannegan, who stood scratching his head in sore perplexity. “How much do I owe Mrs. Rourke? I ought to have attended to it sooner; but I waited, as usual, for her to send in her bill.”

“It’s only two dollars and a half, sir, for yer honor,” answered Terence, “but—”

“Well, here’s a five dollar bill. Bidy can work it out for me when her ankle gets better. And look here, my man—if she’s really in want or suffering, tell her to send to me, and I’ll come then and see her.”

“Sure, your honor, and I’ll do that same; and it’s hopin’ the blissid saints may make your honor’s bed in heaven, and wishin’ there was many like you; and Bidy’ll be the thankful woman, that she will, and—”

But at this stage of affairs, Terry Hannegan’s companion, who had stood by the door motionless all this while, shouldered him out, still uttering thanks and blessings as he went.

“Here,” said the Judge, as they stepped out once more on the pavement, “take your overcoat, Terry, and let’s change hats again; for I begin to feel radical and revolutionary already.”

“Feel how, your honor?”

“Never mind. Here, give this money to your sister from me, and be about your business.”

So the Judge dismissed his ragged companion, and returned to the dining-room, back of the law-office, where Kate sat sewing by a shaded lamp.

“Well, papa,” said Kate, laughing, “have you decided yet?”

“Yes, Miss Puss, I have decided.”

“Which is it to be?”

“Kent Carleton is a heartless scoundrel, and will treat the woman who is his wife as no woman would wish or deserve to be treated.”

“Papa, how do you know?”

“No matter how I know. I’ve a way of finding out things for myself, child.”

“And Mr. Kearney?”

“If you can get him, Kate, take him. He is a fine fellow.”

And the Judge sat down to write two brief notes, one of which Kent Carleton read the next morning with contracted brow and savage eyes.

“What does the pedantic old fool mean?” he muttered. “What can he possibly have heard about me which convinces him that I am not the person to render his daughter’s future life a happy one?”

But that was exactly what Mr. Kent Carleton never learned.

And Kate Pelham, the Judge’s golden-haired daughter, was married, six months from that day, to Hugh Kearney.

The New York Ledger, March 13, 1869