

[D 28719]

THE DECISION
OR
THE VACILLATIONS OF AMELIA.

A SKETCH IN ONE ACT.

Persons Represented:

Amelia Maynard - A handsome woman of thirty years of age.

Anna - Her maid

A Voice.

THE DECISION
OR
THE VACILLATIONS OF AMELIA.

Curtain rises, disclosing Amelia's boudoir - knick-knacks about. Open fire - glass over fire-place L - divan with cushions back L at right angles to fire. Writing table R front, with elaborate furnishings and telephone instrument - chair behind table facing audience. Table R of fire-place, with tall vase. Door centre back. Easy chair beside table.

Amelia enters dressed in handsome ball gown - carrying evening wrap. Throws evening wrap across easy chair and takes up book from writing table - and seats herself on divan, end nearest fire, and lounges toward it. Opens book and turning pages, stops and reads silently for one minute.

Amelia: (aloud) "I know not how it is with men;
For women (I am a woman now like you)
There is no good of life but love -- but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never cheat yourself one instant! Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!"
(Half closing book and leaning musingly toward fire)

Love, give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
(sighs and pokes the fire)

If only one could have some infallible test, some serum to discover if alleged love, be love indeed, or only near-love.

It is so near at times that even the expert in love may be deceived, it seems to me. (Knock at door). Come in.

(Maid enters with half a dozen letters and notes on a tray. Amelia takes them lazily.

Amelia: Thank you.

(Maid retires - Amelia looks over envelopes and drops one on floor.)

Amelia: A dinner, two teas, Ammetta's wedding - (throwing them aside) Ah, Margaret! what has she to say -- advice -- no doubt. (Opens letter and reads)

"Washington, December 30th, 19--.

My dear Amelia:

You are the very dearest girl I ever knew, so I feel sure you will not MIND if I give you the least little bit of good advice - (turning to audience) - "Good advice; did anyone ever hear of any kind of advice being given except good advice, and advice when taken always turns out to be bad." (Resumes reading) I saw Frederick Lane just as he was coming out of the War Department about an hour ago, and he said if he could only get leave he would be at Sophie's to-morrow night. Now, I want to implore you -- not -- (exclaims) Oh, pooh! (skimming down the page and turning over -- resumes reading) You know I am only thinking of your happiness, so please don't think me brutal when I say -- Fred never did really love you or he would not have given

you up to marry Jamie Cox, even if he was engaged to her before he met you, and I know perfectly well, and so do you, that you may be the wife of the man everyone says will be the next President if you are only a sensible woman and don't lose your head when you see Frederick Lane. Please don't be angry with me when I tell you I gave him to understand you were engaged to John Strange as I thought it best to fore-stall his certain visit to you, for I am sure he will come back to make love to you now he is a widower. You know how much I care for you and I did it only for your good."

(Tears up letter and throws it into fire.)

Amelia: (leaning on elbows and gazing into fire) Frederick Lane a widower! (Poking fire again and leaning closer to it, sighs) Love, give love - ask only love - and leave the rest.

(Telephone bell rings)

(Amelia does not move)

(Telephone bell rings)

(Amelia does not move)

(Telephone bell rings)

(Amelia rises and goes to instrument)

Amelia: Yes? - This is Mt. Vernon 7781 - Yes - This is Amelia, Annetta - Yes, I received your wedding invitation a few minutes ago - yes - no - I have not seen him yet - I had a letter from Margaret in the last mail saying he was expected here this evening - What? One of your ushers? Best man? Oh yes, I remember, he was a great friend of Henry's - What? I am to walk with him! I thought I was to walk with

William Thayer! Why on earth should I mind? You - did - WHAT? - You - told - him - I was half engaged - to Frederick Lane!!! Don't get mad!! (furiously) I am not mad - I'm furious!! Not such a fool! - What do you mean? - You mean William Thayer only wants me because my voice will help him make a name for himself? (Sarcastically) You flatter me! Fred loved me? Loves me? And will always love me? You look ahead with an assurance that would not be wisdom for any woman to assume in regard to a man's affection!!! Someone told you they heard him say so? Now look here, Annetta, a person can HEAR almost anything they choose to invent!!!!

(Hangs up receiver)

Amelia: (walking back and forth rapidly.) Love, give love, ask only love, and leave the rest. (With gesture of impatience) If one could only live in a sound-proof world perhaps the wall's ears might not hear quite so much. (Discovers letter on floor, picks it up and tearing open, reads -- throws letter on floor and sinks back on divan, punching pillows vigorously.) Heaven defend us from our friends; our enemies we can take care of ourselves -- they sleep sometimes but our friends are always on the alert for what they call our good! (picks up letter again and reads)

"Baltimore, December 31st, 19--.

Dearest Mink:

I saw John Strange last night in Washington. He had just come from a cabinet meeting. He would not say one word about the situation except that he is dead against war, as the country is in no state for war - all industrial

conditions being so delicately balanced at the present time that even the rumor might be sufficient to destroy returning prosperity. It has, however, leaked out that strong pressure is being brought to bear upon him to declare himself for war, or at least to remain neutral. Even the President himself, they say, cannot afford to disregard his opinions, and war would be a most popular move in certain powerful quarters. He said he would come over for the supper to-night if things were settled, but that he would not leave Washington even for an hour with the question unsettled.

He asked for you and I told him you were reported to be engaged to William Thayer, and we were all rejoicing, as with William's music and your voice the world would hear from the combination.

I am awfully afraid of John Strange! O Mink dear, don't be a fool, remember those grey locks on your temples and don't be the worst kind of a fool - an old fool. John knows you can help him more than any other woman of his acquaintance and you know his ambition will drive him where he would never allow his heart to lead him; ---- and William would always be first of all, your lover" ---- (throws letter on divan and rising picks up a song from writing-table and reads silently.)

Amelia: I wonder who William was thinking of when he wrote these words (reads aloud) "Ah, young Love came in merry guise
To me, one bright Spring day;
And madly did I, gladly did I
Bid sweet young Love to stay.

But in the bleak grey Winter time

I saw the young Love die ---

I wonder which was happier then,

That sweet dead Love or I."

(pause)

Amelia: (speaks) Ask only love, (pause) Here are my three best friends spreading the reports broad-cast that I am going to marry - each - a different man - because each is absolutely certain that her choice loves me and only me; which man I may love or hate does not seem to matter much to any of the three, but each is sure that her man is best for my happiness, though each seems to think I rather care for someone else.

(Knock at door) "Come in."

(Maid enters with huge box of roses, hands it to Amelia and goes out. Amelia puts it on divan and, cutting the string, opens box, which contains letter on top of paper folded around flowers. Amelia, examining writing on envelope starts, opening letter slowly, speaks)

Amelia: From Frederick Lane (reads letter, sits down on divan beside flowers, still reading letter, turns back to beginning, reading)

"Beloved:

I saw Margaret yesterday and she says you are going to marry John Strange. I do not believe it - you would have told me first of all if it were so. I have not written you before, for I wanted you to be free till I could be sure you were waiting for ME; because when you sent me away to marry another woman, I went with the conviction that you loved me as much as I loved, and do still love, and will

always love you. Do you remember that you said something about helping me to keep my word of honor to the woman I had pledged myself to before you crossed my path? -

I said I could look after my honor myself and you replied that when a man told a woman he loved her, he placed his honor in her keeping for all time and against all circumstance. The thought that my honor was in your keeping has kept me pretty straight in the time I have been waiting for you, and I am not a bit afraid of John Strange. Now I have come back free and I want you; with all my soul I want you.

Who is it that says "There is no good of life but love?" Did you know Janie left me a little son? He needs you nearly as much as I do. I have just succeeded in getting twenty-four hours leave from 6 P. M. to-day, as we are all being detained here at head-quarters pending the decision of the Cabinet in the matter of war. I will be at Sophie's, but we will not have the chance to talk things over till very late. Wear one of the white roses I send on your heart, so I may know, the moment I see you.

Always your lover,

Fred."

"P. S. - Before leaving Manila, I was appointed on the Governor's staff and I have tied the roses with my sash because I want you to have it."

Amelia: (opens paper and discloses a tremendous bunch of white roses tied with a red sword sash; lifts roses from box. Clasping roses in her arms and inhaling the perfume, speaks very softly) Do I love you, Fred -- Is it love for which I have waited all these years? Or was it circumstance (despairingly) Oh, how

can I tell? - How can I know? (Rises and goes to table carrying roses. Holding roses in left arm begins to arrange one or two in vase. Knock at door.)

Amelia: Come in!

(Maid enters with sheet of note paper, torn from back of letter, on tray - hands to Amelia.)

Maid: Mr. Thayer is in the music-room; I told him you was dressing for the party. He said not to come down but that you should listen to the new song he has just wrote. These is the words on the paper.

(Amelia takes paper in free hand. Maid goes out. Amelia goes toward door and stands in listening attitude, still clasping roses in left arm. Voice below sings. Amelia follows words on paper - voice ceases. Amelia looks at paper thoughtfully; inhales perfume of roses -- half recites, half reads, from paper.)

Amelia:

"Soft leaves, sweet breath, red rose,
Folded with Summer they lie
Warm round thy perfumed heart
Swiftly they fade and die.

Fond eyes, fair brow, dear heart,
Where all my sweet love lies
Trembling I place it there
Lest, starving, it lonely dies."

(Kisses roses)

Amelia: (slowly) Ask only love, - and leave the rest.

(Looks at paper again)
Lest starving it lonely dies. (Pause)

What is this written below? (reads) "Annetta says you are engaged to Fred. Is it so? I am sending you some red roses. Wear one on your heart to-night if there is still any hope for me. With them is a little wreath they gave me at the Musical Art Concert in Chickering Hall. I worked for it for you. I want you to have it. William."

(Knock at door)

Amelia: Come in!

(Maid enters with huge box of roses. Amelia throws white roses on divan and takes box -- places it on end of writing-table.)

Amelia: More roses! (opening box) Red ones!! (inhaling perfume) (Maid retires) How delicious. (Lifts gold laurel wreath from box.) Ah, here is William's wreath. (Reads inscription on blue ribbon tying wreath) "To the best one." (Puts wreath down on table and takes up bunch of roses from box -- inhales perfume. Crosses to divan and puts bunch of red roses on divan near white ones and takes up one red one and inhales perfume thoughtfully, examines it carefully, puts red rose back on bunch, takes white one up and goes to glass over fire, holding rose thoughtfully against heart, starts to pin it on, hesitates, returns to divan, putting white rose with the others and takes up bunch of red ones, smells red roses and holds them off admiringly, puts them on divan, separates one from bunch and holds it off, looking at it thoughtfully; sits down on divan, twists rose in fingers for a moment, then drops hand listlessly. Gazes into fire with elbows on knees.)

Amelia: (speaks) Love, give love, ask only love -- (Strips leaves from stem of red rose.)

(Knock at door)

Amelia: Come in!

(Maid enters with box of violets. Amelia takes it from her)

Amelia: Thank you. (Maid goes out.)

(Amelia opens box, takes up card, reads) "Mr. John Strange."

(Puts down card and takes violets from box.)

(Telephone bell rings)

(Amelia goes to instrument carrying violets; takes off receiver.)

Amelia: Hello, -- Washington wants to talk to Miss Maynard? This is Miss Maynard -- Hold the line? Yes ----- Yes, this is Miss Maynard -- Oh, how are you John -- I thought you would be over for Sophie's supper this evening - Could not get away? Too bad! Sent me a special delivery earlier, explaining? It ought to have been here by this time? No, it has not come -- You could not get to the telephone before, so wrote when you could? Must say good-night and a Happy New Year? Good night - sorry you can't come. (Hangs up receiver.)

(Knock at door.)

Amelia: Come in!

(Enter maid with special delivery book and letter on tray - hands it to Amelia.)

Maid: A special delivery letter, Miss Amelia.

(Amelia takes letter and book and signs book; returns it to maid, who retires. Amelia looks at letter.)

Amelia: From John Strange. (Opens letter and reads) "Only a word to say I cannot leave Washington to-night. We are stopping for half an hour only and I just have time for a cup of coffee before going back to work for perhaps all night. I expected to get to Baltimore to take you to Sophie's, for I wanted to ask you to be my wife. I hoped to have it all settled to-night, so I might begin my happiness with the New Year, if you will have me. I wanted to come and ask you myself, but I see no light ahead in this business and I do not feel that I can leave, even to go to you, till I make them see reason. I am longing, starving, for a sight of you. Wear my violets anyhow and think of me at the supper to-night when you stand to greet the New Year, and say to yourself as the clock strikes twelve "I will, John", for I shall stand and say with all my soul, 'Amelia, will you be my wife?' Send me a little letter to-night, if only a few words to say you will. John."

(Amelia takes up violets, smells them, goes over to divan and lays them down with the other flowers; picks up white roses.)

Amelia: Ask only love (pause) One offers me a sword knot and, incidentally, another woman's child, (lays down white roses) another, his golden wreath of success -- (takes up red rose, lays it down) The third -- (a pause, takes up violets and smells them) Until the world ceases to exist - men will not understand that it is not what a man has to give, but what he is, that counts with a woman.

(Knock at door)

Amelia: Come in!

(Enter maid with card on tray, hands it to Amelia who takes card and reads) "Frederick Lane, U. S. A."

Maid: The gentleman says are you ready to go to Miss Sophie's -- and Mr. Thayer left word he would stop for you at nine. (Amelia stands up and takes white rose; begins to pin it on dress, - hesitates and takes up red rose; stands a minute, considering the two.)

Amelia: Tell Mr. Lane I will be down in a minute. (Clock strikes nine - Amelia stands apparently counting the strokes) No, tell him I am not ready. (Throws white rose down. Maid goes toward the door.) Wait a moment, Anna, tell Mr. Thayer when he comes -- (pulls red rose to pieces) Tell Mr. Thayer I have a headache and will not go to-night. One minute (taking up white rose) tell Mr. Lane -- Tell Mr. Lane -- not to wait (throwing white rose on the floor -- taking up violets and rising, goes to writing table.) I have a letter to write.

(Maid retires) (Sits down at table and kisses violets; taking up pen, begins to write.)

Curtain.