

A RED, RED ROSE

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A Red, Red Rose by Katharine Tynan

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KATHARINE TYNAN

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BY

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CHAPTER I

THE EXILES

THE death of old Andrew Brent, of Brent, Massachusetts, had left his son and daughter, Tom and Amelia, without, so far as they knew, one of their blood in the world.

Their position would have seemed to most people an enviable one. Young, well-educated, and good-looking, with the great monster "Brent's" flinging out money for them even while they slept, they had the ball at their feet from a worldly point of view.

Yet behind Tom Brent's kindly, smiling face, his slow voice and lazy manner, there was still a quite fresh and smarting wound, although Andrew Brent had been in his grave six months and the grass was already velvety upon it. Presently the oblivion, like the grass, would cover the sore place in Tom Brent's heart, but as yet he did not forecast that time—would hardly have wished for it, indeed—although the dis-



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comfort of loss was always with him in his most distracted moments, waiting to manifest itself acutely when he should have time to attend to it.

At first sight one would have said that there must have been wide divergencies between father and son. Old Andrew had remained a mill-hand to the day of his death; while his son had had the best education America could produce and need not have been limited to America, if but he had wished it. That his choice had been Harvard instead of Eton and Oxford was a subject of frequent lamentations with his sister Amelia.

"My poor Tom," she would say, putting her white be-ringed fingers on his black coat sleeve, "my poor Tom, you were cheated out of Oxford."

"By my own will, Em," Tom would remind her cheerfully, as though the same thing had not been said scores of times before. "By my own will. You know the dear old man gave me my choice in the matter."

"And you chose Harvard — you dear, Quixotic boy."

"Since Oxford was half a world away, and he was an old man with a heart which might wear through its last shred at any moment."

"Never mind," Amelia would say complacently. "They couldn't have turned you out much better, really."

The brother and sister were entirely different in looks, as in most other ways. Amelia was very American, after her fashion, a brilliant bird of Paradise, the strangest product of the Brent nest, which ought to have produced chickens more homely. To be sure, she had other blood in her than the English operative's.

She dressed with the exquisite daintiness of the rich American, who has an instinct for dress only second to that of the Parisian woman. With a well-dressed Englishwoman you forget the dress, and think only of the goddess whom it so well becomes. In Amelia's case the dress was more insistent. You noticed the velvets and laces and furs and feathers in their detail, as you noticed, and were curious over, the exquisite baubles and trinkets with which she liked to adorn herself.

Amelia was small and pale, with a piquant chin and nose, hazel eyes, and a face that peaked itself at you out of furs or laces according to the time of year. Her face was smaller, more piquant by reason of the fell of dull yellow hair that surrounded it, which arranged itself prettily after the manner of a Florentine angel's waving locks.

It used to amuse Tom, who had a quiet, seldom-expressed sense of humour, to hear Amelia declare that the Brents were English, since she herself would never be taken for anything but an American.

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Tom, on the contrary, might pass any day for an Englishman. His accent was non-committal, and the most noticeable thing about it was that there was a hint in it of old Andrew's Northumbrian burr. It was characteristic of Tom that his speech, like everything else about him, should take its trend from the creature he had loved best on earth.

Somewhere at the back of Brent's, with its acres of mill-yards and great white buildings and towering chimneys, there was a little house which the present head of Brent's held in the most tender regard.

It was a small white cottage of two storeys, slated; such a cottage as may be found in thousands on the outskirts of any English town. It had an austere cleanliness of aspect, and though it had not been occupied except at rare intervals for many years, it and its contents were in as good order as though it were occupied every day. It had been the home of Andrew Brent's boyhood and manhood, and kept the sacredness to his heir, as it had to him, of the home where a good woman lights the hearth-fire, and keeps it tended whatever storms may blow outside.

Nearly sixty years ago, old Alexander Brent, the founder of Brent's, had built the cottage for his widowed sister-in-law and her boy, Andrew, who had come out to him from the North of England.