

UNDER THE LILACS.

Under the lilacs where my dead
Repose within the grassy mound.
I saw her walk with lingering tread.
Her brown eyes drooping to the ground:
Her slender shadow as she went
Waved by me through the palisade.
A silent invitation sent
To meet her 'neath the lilac's shade.

Under the lilacs sweetly rest
The dearest of a much loved race,
But none more dear than she who pressed
Her light foot in that holy place:
I almost feared to open the gate,
And break in on her silent prayer,
For a living angel she seemed to wait
On the dead angels slumbering there.

Ah, power of love! She felt me nigh,
She heard my footsteps on the sand.
A soft light trembled in her eye,
And she held out her rosy hand:
Under the lilacs! There we met
The first time in our rounds of love.
The providential moment set
The union of our souls to prove.

I know not why, but the time and place
Intensified my hopes of bliss,
All shame, all tremor fled apace,
Our hearts were melted in a kiss;
Mine was no mood for idle talk,
My silence pleaded best for me.
We stood quite still on the gravelled walk,
Distracted in love's dear mystery.

I gazed profoundly in her eyes,
The while her color went and came.
I saw her bosom fall and rise,
I felt my temples throb with flame:
Under the lilacs! In that hour
My life hung on one single word,
She spoke that word of glorious power—
My being's deepest founts were stirred.

"O love!" in passionate tones I said,
"We must adore the ways of heaven."
And, kneeling on the grass, we prayed
Wrapt in the violet light of even;
The lilacs shivered and rained down
Their purple blossoms on us there;
O love! it was thy bridal crown,
God's answer to our wedding prayer.

JOHN LESPERANCE.

THE
GOLD OF CHICKAREE.BY
SUSAN and ANNA WARNER.AUTHORS OF
"WIDE, WIDE WORLD," and "DOLLARS AND
CENTS," "WYCH HAZEL," etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

DR. ARTHUR'S NEWS.

"Those people," she began again hurriedly, bringing herself back to business and a business tone, "will want a great deal. And there is not much in the Hollow, nor on the hill. If you will let me, I can have supplies sent from here every day. Mrs. Bywank will know what. And my messenger need not go near that part of the Hollow; the things can be left at any point you say." She looked up eagerly—then down again; not much fonder than he was of asking what she could not have.

"Do that, by all means," was the answer. "Your supplies may be left at the mill where I read."

The shadow on her face deepened.

"Will you write?"

"No." His face began to take on something of the yearning look of the Huguenot in the picture.

"How then shall I hear?"

"I have been thinking about that. I do not know; unless Arthur can carry reports now and then to Dr. Maryland, and Prim or her father bring them to you."

"He may come straight here at once," said Hazel. "I talk out of a window as well as anybody else. And if anybody ventures to come here to comfort me, I shall—"

"What?" said Rollo smiling.

"Send me no reports that way. I could not bear it. And Dr. Arthur will stay in the Hollow while you stay."

There was a moment's gesture that reminded him of the despairing way in which she had flung herself down in the chair, that long ago night at Green Bush.

"Dr. Arthur will go and come as a physician should, according to the demand for him. What will you do, my little Wych?"

"I do not know. Only one thing."

"What is that one thing?"

Again Hazel was silent, struggling with herself, controlling her lips to speak.

"Just one thing"—the words came passionately now. "If you are sick, I shall come. And it is no use to lay commands on me, because I should break them all in one minute. I know I should. Promises or commands or anything else."

He paused slightly before he spoke.

"Do you know, Mrs. Bywank once said in my hearing that you were the loveliest little thing that ever lived. I knew she was right. I have been waiting for this minute. It makes me a rich man. But you will not come to the Hollow, Hazel, even though I were ill. You must love me enough to mind my wishes. It is hard, I know. It is the very last and uttermost proof of love."

Hazel was bending down, busy detaching something from her chatelaine. The fingers were quick and hurried, but the words came slow.

"Hush," she said. "You must not say

that. You are confusing things. And your rights do not cover all the ground. There is a corner, some, in mine. Now"—she raised her head, drawing a long breath,—how fast the gathering tide of anxiety and sorrow came rolling in!—"See here. I know you have nothing so womanish as a vinaigrette about you,—but womanish things are useful just now and then. Will you fasten this to your watch chain—to please me?"—The eyes were wistful in their beseeching. She was so uncertain of having anything granted to-night!

He met them with a grave, searching attention, and released her from the arms which had till then enfolded her, gravely fastened the vinaigrette as she wished. He turned slightly then and rested his elbow on the mantelpiece, looking down into the fire which his care had caused to leap into brilliant life. As motionless on her part Hazel stood, with fingers interlaced and still. But her eyes were on the floor. Presently Rollo roused himself, and stretching out his hand took Wych Hazel's and drew her nearer to him.

"I cannot go and leave this question undecided," he said; "and I must go soon. How shall it be settled, Wych?"

Some things are hard to talk of, which yet are in the thoughts; and contingencies take life and reality by being put in words. The shadow on the girl's face grew deep as she answered,—yet the answer was quiet.

"You know, reverse the case, you would not be bound by any words of mine. You know—that you are what I have in the world. And I know, that if—if—" there was a moment's pause,—"that if it came to that, I should go. I could not be bound."

The gravity of his face as he listened to her, you could hardly call it a shadow, changed and flickered with a quivering smile; and the eyes flashed and then darkened again. The end was, he drew Wych Hazel into his arms, clasping her very tight.

"I know—I know," he said, kissing her face with passionate touches which had all the sorrow of the time, as well as all the joy, in them. "I know. All the same, I will not have you there, Hazel, if I am ill. I should settle the matter very quickly with anybody else; but you disarm me. I cannot stir a step without hurting you. What shall I say to you?" he went on, holding her fast, and stroking the hair back from her forehead with the gentlest possible touch. "It has come sooner than I expected, this sort of trial, which generally comes, I suppose, whenever two lives that have been separate join together to become one. There will be differences of judgment, or of feeling; and what is to happen then? And what am I to fall back upon, when love and authority have both proved insufficient? For I have authority as your guardian. I shall have to ask now for your promise; the promise that you never break. For I will be secure on this head, before I leave the house, Hazel."

"People should have reasons for exerting their authority."

"Of that," said Dane with the same gentleness, but very steadily, "he who exerts it must be the judge himself."

"Yes," said Hazel, the impetuous element asserting itself once more, "but there is no use in beginning as you cannot go on. Do you mean that always—I mean in future—if anything were the matter with you, the first thing would be to send me out of the house?"

"I hope not," said Dane smiling. "In my understanding of it, husband and wife belong to one another, and are inseparable. There are conceivable circumstances in which I might do it."

A slight lift of the eyebrows dealt for a moment with this opinion and let it drop. Into those imaginary regions Hazel did not see fit to go. Nor into any others then. The flush of excitement died away, and the weary look settled down upon brow and lips. She said no more.

Rollo watched her a little while, then stooped and kissed her.

"I must go. Give me your promise, Hazel, that you will not come near the Hollow without my leave."

She answered with a certain subdued tone that matched the face.

"I have no intention of coming. Your command is enough. If I can keep it, I will. No amount of promises could make my words any stronger." But she looked up again, one of her swift eager looks, which again fell in silent gravity. There was scarcely another word said; except one.

"Look away from second causes, Hazel."

Linking her fingers round his hand, so she went with him silently through the hall and down the steps; and stood there until he rode away into the darkness and the light of his work, and she came back into the light and the darkness of her own home.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALONE IN THE FIGHT.

Nature, with all her many faces, her thousand voices, has seldom a look or a tone to help our sorrow. Her joy is too endless in its upspringing, her tears are too fresh and sweet; even the calm steadiness of her quiet is to bewildered thoughts like the unflickering coast light, against which the wild birds of the ocean dash themselves, blinded, in the storm. Wych Hazel stood still at the foot of the steps, until not even imagination could hear so much as an echo of the rapid trot which she was not to hear

again for so long a time. The sweet October night, its winds asleep, its insects silenced with a slight frost, its stars wheeling their brilliant courses without a cloud, all smote her like a pain. Then some faint stir of air brought, distantly and sweet, the scent of the woods where they had been chestnutting that very day. With a half cry the girl turned and fled up the steps, locking the door behind her; remembering then keenly what else she was shutting out. She went back to the red room, and stood there—she and the spirit of desolation. There was no tea tray, happily, with its cheerful reminders; but there was the corner of the mantelpiece, and the spot on the rug, and the fire—now slowly wearing down to embers, and the embers to ashes. There was her foot cushion—and the crimson bergère. But she could not touch anything,—could not take up the tongs which he had set down, even to put the fire in safe order for the night; some one else must do that. Slowly she went round the room, with a glance at everything; passed on to the door and stood looking back; then shut it and went slowly up the stairs. Midway she sat down and leaned her head against the banisters. Sat there she knew not how long, until she heard Mrs. Bywank's step going the rounds below; then rose and went on again. But as Wych Hazel's little foot passed slowly up stair to stair, one thing in her mind came out in clear black and white, of one thing she was sure: she must lay hold of those immutable things after which she had striven before. Mere hoping would not do, she must make sure. In the happiness of the last weeks, she had said, like David in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved,"—where was it all now? Above all other thoughts, even to-night, this came: she could not live so. Tossed by one storm upon a reef here, and by the next one carried out to sea. Something to hold her, something that she could hold,—that she must have.

Intensely bitter thoughts flocked in along with this. The hand she had clasped so lately, and the way it had clasped her; a longing that would hardly be gain-said for the touch of it again. Was she forgetting that? was she trying to loosen that bond? She paused, leaning back against the wall, holding her hands tight. But even with the answer the other cry came up: the world was all reeling under her feet,—she must have something that would stand. For the time everything else gave way. It was true, this trouble might pass,—then others would come; others from which even Dane could not shield her. Already, twice in her little life, twice in three months, had such a crisis come. Mrs. Bywank got no sight of her that night; only gentle answers to enquiries through the closed door; and Hazel lighted her study lamp, and opening her Bible at the ninety-first psalm, and setting it up before her in the great easy chair, knelt down before it and laid her head down too. No need to go over the printed words,—there was not one of them she did not know. But was there anything there to help? She went then over to herself, verse by verse, and verse after verse was not for her. It was Dane who had taken that stand, who was leading that life; these promises were all to him. No arrow of darkness was his fear,—she knew that well: no pestilence walking at his side could alarm him. But as she went on, half triumphantly at first, with the detail of his faith and his security, the vision of his danger came too; and a long restless fit of pain ended all study for that time. Ended itself at last in sleep,—and the dreams of what was about him, and thoughts of what he was about, gave no token of their presence but a sob or a sigh, until the few remaining hours of the night swept by, and the morning broke.

As I said somewhere else, the new day is often good for uncertainties. The foolish fears, the needless alarms, the whole buzzing troop of fidgets that come out in the darkness, go back to their swamps and hiding places when the day has fairly come. They cannot make head against the wholesome freshness of the morning wind. Then painted hopes and lace-winged fancies flit out to take their place: things certainly are better, or they will be better, or they never have been bad.

But certainties are another matter. The new burials, laid down in sleep, but now to be taken up, and adjusted, and borne on through all the ins and outs of the coming day. Morning does nothing for them, but fasten them on securely, with a heavy hand.

Wych Hazel roused herself up as the day came on, and looked things in the face so long, that her own face got little attention. However, Phoebe—and the force of habit—sent her down in the usual daintiness, at the usual time, to receive Mr. Falkirk, who after all did not come. But Dinee was on hand, and so Hazel made believe over her breakfast, quite successfully, and carried on her mental fight of questions the while with no success at all. So on through the day, until dinner time brought Mr. Falkirk; so on, with a semi-consciousness, through all the evening's talk; and when at length Wych Hazel went to her room again, it was with all the trouble of last night, and a day's worry additional. She knew what she wanted,—she did not seem to know how to get it. Those shining words lay up so high, above her reach: a mountain head lifting itself out of the fogs of the valley wherein she dwelt. As for the first verse of her psalm, it might as well have been a description of Gabriel, for any use to her,—so she thought, shrinking back from the words. Then for the second verse,—yes, there was a human weakness there—or had been. Some

time a refuge had been needed; but so long ago, that the years of calm security had wiped out even the thought of defencelessness. That was like Dane: she did not believe it ever occurred to him that he wanted anything, or could. What was he doing now to-night, in the darkness?—Hazel rose and went to the window. What work it must be, going round among the shadows of the Hollow, without a moon!—but then he would be in the houses,—darker still! She knew; she had sat there through one evening.—She stood still at the window, going over half mechanically to herself the next verses. "Surely,"—yes, it was all 'surely,' for him! was there nothing for her? She was not in all the psalm, Hazel thought. Unless—yes, that might fit well enough: she might stand for "the wicked" in the eighth verse. For studying the shining words that went before, there had come to her a feeling of soil, a sense of degradation, all new, and utterly painful.

"No use to consider that now," she said, knotting her hands together as she went back to her seat. "I want help. And if I begin to think how much I want it, I shall lose my wits."—Was there nothing for her?

Again the promises ran on as before, with new images, fresh wording. There were angels enough keeping watch over Morton Hollow to-night!—was there no spare one to come to Chickaree?—Hazel put her head down and sobbed like a child in her loneliness and desolation.

Next day she tried another plan, and began at the end of her psalm, passing over the promise of long life as not just now of much interest. And honour,—she did not want that: nor deliverance, where no evil was at hand. But this!—

"I will be with him!"

"I will answer him!"

Was it for her?—To whom *was* it said?

"He shall call upon me,"—ah, that she had done a great many times!—this was not the whole description. Who was it then who should be heard?—She ran back over the words rapidly, fastening then upon these few:

"Because he hath set his love upon me!"—and Hazel knew she had set her love upon some one else.

It was very bitter; the struggle was sharp and long; and duty and possibility, and wrong and right, fought each other and fired upon their own men.

She could not take back her love: that was impossible. She might die, but *that* she could not do. And now with a certain gleam of comfort, Hazel remembered that Dane had not withdrawn his. How had he managed then? After all, it did not touch the question much,—he was a man, dependent on no one; she was a girl with nothing in the world but him. Yet she wanted more. A strength above his, a love even more sure: "the things which cannot be shaken."

So, slowly, she went back over the verses, laying hold still of but that one thing in her way:

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him."

Yes, it must be meant for her. And Hazel tried to shut her eyes to the character that went with the promise. People like *that*, she argued, would need nothing,—it *must* be for her. But oh she had called so very often!—Far back in the psalm, that is, close at the beginning, another word flamed up before her in a sudden illumination: a word she had read and reread, but now it stopped her short. Another three words, that is:

"I will say."

—Something that seemed to head the long list of blessings, something for her. But it was something for her to do. What, then?

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."

"I will say."—But close upon that followed "Surely."

Could she say it? Was she ready for that absolute choice? The words came to her as she had heard Dr. Maryland read them:

"You do now declare and avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your God; and Jesus Christ to be your Saviour; and the Holy Spirit to be your sanctifier."

"You do solemnly give yourself away, in a covenant never to be revoked, to be his willing servant forever."

She had noticed the words so often, half putting them to herself in imagination, that now they came back to her with clear distinctness. *This* was what the psalm meant; nothing less. "A willing servant?" Could she promise it? she, who hated control and loved so dearly her own pleasure? But it all came to that:

"I will say of the Lord, He is my God."

Back and forth, back and forth, went thoughts and will and purpose; sometimes almost persuaded, sometimes all up in arms. Something gentler than need was lacking, something stronger than fear must work. Slowly and sadly she turned over the leaves, far on and on, to the other marked point; seeing them then, those common words of print that she had read so often, seeing them then in letters of flashing light.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."—2 Cor. 5. 14, 15.

Hazel laid her face down upon the open page, and said from her heart,

"I will."