

(For the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.)

LONELY.

A hush on the lofty mountains,
A hush in the lowly vales,
And night from the lanes of the forest
Her funeral shadow trails.
I wander afar on the headland
To the foot of the tamarac tree,
And I muse forsaken and lonely,
Ah! lonely as lonely can be.

I bend my ear and I listen
To the voices of loved ones at home
Will come through the silence and whisper
A solace to me in the gloom.
Alas! I hear naught in the stillness,
Save the moan of the desolate sea,
And my heart it is aching and lonely,
Oh! lonely as lonely can be.

I look above in the heavens
To the star by her lot apart,
Which often in hours of sadness
Illumined and gladdened my heart;
But to night a cloud has come o'er it,
And hidden its lustre from me,
Ah! to night I am mournful and lonely,
Oh! lonely as lonely can be.

A sigh o'er the days of my childhood,
A tear for the beautiful past,
No trust in the hopes of the future,
No hopes of a joy that will last!
I live encircled by phantoms
And cling to a love that must flee—
I never was so sad and so lonely,
Oh! lonely as lonely can be.

Poor wail! what need of repining!—
Said a voice from the caverns below—
If the hearts thou hast loved are too narrow
To embrace thee now in thy woe,
Look up to Him whose affection
Is broad and immense as the sea,
And thy soul, so despondent and lonely,
Shall be happy as happy can be.

JOHN LESTERANCE.

ROBINETTE.

"Bournemouth is not a bad place to spend three months, after all, especially when one has a scheme to develop which requires careful management," murmured Hector Campbell, as he strolled through Hinton Wood one fine September morning.

The speaker's tall, upright figure showed him to be a man in the prime of life; but his most intimate friends could not even have surmised what had in a few days changed the light-hearted young officer into a grave, careworn man. Some great sorrow or trial had sprinkled his hair with gray, and stamped deep lines of care on his countenance.

About eight years before he had disappeared from London in the height of the season, nobody knew whether; and at the end of three weeks he returned only to make arrangements for the sale of his commission, and to announce his immediate departure for Bombay, where he had purchased a partnership in a well-known mercantile firm. This sudden decision created some surprise in the circle of which he was a popular member; but he was soon forgotten, or spoken of only as "that unaccountable fellow Campbell."

"I wonder where," he began, thinking aloud, but suddenly stopped on hearing a sweet bird-like voice singing—

"Oh, my love she's like a red, red rose!"

On looking round he perceived a small maiden, apparently about eight years old, seated on the ground, half hidden by the tall fern-leaves, busily occupied with a large family of dolls in various stages of dilapidation. An expression of surprise, not unmixed with pain, flashed across Campbell's face; but he said nothing until the child, having finished her song, commenced a French lullaby.

"What is your name, little one, and who taught you to sing?" asked Campbell.

"My name is Robinette, and the *bon Dieu* and the birds taught me to sing," was the ready reply as the child looked up with a quaint little jerk of her head and a sparkle in her bright black eyes, which fully accounted for her name.

"Have you no other name?" continued Campbell.

"Oh, yes! My grand company name is Gwendoline Holt; but I don't like it, and nobody ever calls me by it. If you are tired, you may sit down on my table, but you must nurse Euphrosyne and Melpomene, my twins," said Robinette, with an air of patronage.

Campbell took the dolls, which were wrecks of former grandeur, and seated himself on the stump of a tree.

"My twins were once very pretty," continued Robinette, gravely, "when the Owl brought them from London two years ago; but the sun and the sea, and our dog Brick, have injured them so that they have only two legs and a half and three arms between them. Still I love them much better than this child in my lap, who is so vain because she came from the bazaar only last week."

"May I inquire who the Owl is?" asked Campbell, who was highly amused with his original little acquaintance.

"Oh, he is my very biggest playfellow—nearly as big as you—and he paints such lovely pictures, to buy bread-and-cheese with, he says; and he wears eye-glasses, and likes to go out by the sea at night; so I called him the Owl. Every year he comes to stay at granny's house for a month—and we have such fun; and when I am a woman he says I shall be his servant and clean grates. But granny says that cannot be; for I am a lady, and must learn to be clever, because my grand stranger-papa will come and fetch me away some day."

"And which would you rather do—clean grates, or go and live with your grand stranger-papa?" inquired Campbell.

"Clean grates for Owl, of course!" was the prompt reply. "I love him dearly; but my stranger-papa, I don't care for one bit, cos he never comes to see—so he can't love me. But I must run home now, for it is twelve o'clock, and Madame la Marquise will be ready to give me my music lesson," said Robinette.

"And how do you know it is twelve o'clock?" asked Campbell.

"The sun tells me," replied Robinette. "Tenez—you see he is passing through the top-most branch of that fir-tree; every day he moves a little farther off, but I know where he'll be at twelve o'clock, for Madame la Marquise teaches me lots about the sun and moon and stars." As she carefully packed her family into a perambulator, she added, "Good-bye, monsieur. I wish you would come and stay at granny's house—it is so comfortable, and I rather like you. We live at the Heron's Nest—through the avenue *la-bas*."

"Well, perhaps I may come, little," said Campbell, as he kissed the rosy, upturned face. "Adieu—au revoir!" sang Robinette, as she opened a little wicket-gate and ran down a shrubbery.

The same afternoon Hector Campbell presented himself at the Heron's Nest, where his arrival was expected by Mrs. Lynn, the worthy mistress of the establishment. Arrangements were soon made by which he became master for three months of as pretty a suite of apartments as the most fastidious lover of comfort combined with elegance could desire.

"Your little granddaughter told me I should be very comfortable here," remarked Campbell.

"Well, sir, you must know Robinette is not my grandchild," said Mrs. Lynn. "There's quite a romantic story about her, which perhaps some day you would like to hear; but, after all, it may be the very old story of villainy on one side and betrayal on the other—yet I can't help feeling there's good at the root of my romance."

"I should like to hear it now, if you can spare the time to relate it," said Campbell.

"Well, sir, there's not much to tell—it's just this," responded Mrs. Lynn. "Nine years ago came next May-day, a very respectable party arrived here by the bus, quite natural-like, carrying a sweet little mite a few weeks old, and took two rooms for a month. There was nothing particular in her ways, until one morning she said—

"Mrs. Lynn, will you take charge of this infant, and bring it up, asking no questions? You will be allowed a hundred a year until she is grown up and claimed by her father. Understand, she must have the education of a lady. Take these papers to your lawyer, or anybody whom you can trust, and you will find that the money is safe."

"Give me the child," said I, "and never mind the lawyer; I don't hold with such people. If the money's safe, well and good; and, if the precious darling's own flesh and blood means to forsake her, I have enough to keep us both, and the wee birdie shall never want."

"So it was settled, and the woman—she couldn't have been his mother from the way she kissed the baby—went away, and I've never set eyes on her since. The name written on the baby's clothes was Gwendoline Holt; and the party which left her told me that she had been christened and vaccinated. The marks of one were plain; the other—well, I should have liked a certificate, but, as my birdie doesn't seem likely to die, it isn't of much consequence. Well, sir, I am an ignorant woman as far as book-learning goes, but I've taught her to say her prayers and tell the truth, and looked after her health—she can swim like a fish—and put by fifty pounds a year for her marriage portion. A French lady who lodges with me all the year round and goes to see her friends in Paris only at Christmas is very fond of our Robinette, and teaches her French and to play the piano; and a young lady comes every other morning to look after her English; and in due time she will learn to ride and paint and do everything that a young lady of fashion should. If her unnatural father ever turns up, he will surely worship her."

"Your Robinette seems very accomplished for so young a child; but you must not overwork her," observed Campbell.

"No fear of that, sir. She's as flighty and lovable as the bird she was named after by a young gentleman who comes to me every summer; he's a painter—a poor business, I should think, to judge by the holes in his socks and his buttonless shirts."

This conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Robinette, who came waltzing across the lawn and passed in through the window.

"I've learnt a new step, granny, and shall teach you and Madame and Brick to waltz!" she exclaimed; and then, seeing Campbell, she made a polite curtsy, and added, "So you've come, monsieur; then you must be taught to waltz."

Very soon Hector Campbell and Robinette became firm friends, and when, at the end of three months, his leave of absence was up, and he began to make preparations for his return to India, the child wept bitterly.

"Ten years is such a great long time; and perhaps my stranger-papa will take me away. Oh, I know how I shall hate him!"

"No, darling, you must promise to love him very much," pleaded Campbell.

"Never, never!" exclaimed Robinette, passionately. "I love you, oh, so much. But all the little girls at the dancing-class have good, kind papas, and I have only a cruel one who never comes to see me."

"Don't cry, birdie. When I come back I will try to bring your papa with me; at any rate I promise to stay here in England for ever," said Campbell, as he hugged the child close to his side.

"Ten years!" murmured Robinette as she held up her hands with the fingers spread out. "I shall paint ten big figures, and put them in a box, and every year, on the first of December, I shall burn one, and, if you don't come home before the last is destroyed, you will have told a story."

Campbell smiled at this quaint notion, but promised gravely to keep his word or forfeit Robinette's love and faith for ever.

Mrs. Lynn and Robinette accompanied Campbell to Southampton to see him off, and when at parting the weeping child clung convulsively to him he gently unclasped her arms from his neck, and said—

"If I promise you on my honour to come back before number ten is burned, will you believe me, my birdie?"

"Yes, Rajah!"—this was the play-name chosen for him by Robinette—"but you need not hunt for my papa, as we shall be much happier without him."

"A letter from your old friend the Owl! He has returned from foreign parts and is coming down here. Only fancy, after being away five years!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, as she rushed into the room appropriated to Robinette, who was now grown into a young lady of seventeen, although but little changed, for there were the same roguish sparkle in her eyes and the same quaint little jerk of the head which had gained her the name she still bore.

Robinette stopped in the midst of her song, and looked grave, as she said—

"I am almost sorry to hear it, for he will be so changed and clever that I shall never dare to call him Owl again."

"So much the better, child," responded Mrs. Lynn, "for you are too old to play with a young man of twenty-eight."

"But I shall sing with him, and make him read Italian with me, and never show him my miserable sketches, and—" began Robinette, but was interrupted by Mrs. Lynn.

"I must run away to get my room ready, for he will be here to-night," said the bustling old dame, and left the room.

When she found herself alone Robinette turned towards a looking glass, contemplated herself for some minutes, and then broke into a solitary cry.

"Robinette, you are very little changed since he painted yonder portrait of a chubby little girl of ten years. You have the same round face and dreadfully healthy cheeks—the same ugly dimples and curly hair which no amount of coaxing will turn into a smooth chignon. What a rustic I shall seem to him after all the classical beauties he has seen in Rome! I wonder how he looks with a moustache and beard! So saying, she opened a photographic album and looked at the portrait of a very fair young man with a delicate complexion and faultless features.

"Ah, Monsieur Ellis, it strikes me very forcibly that your beard will be red and you very combed. Shall we ever be the same merry companions of bygone days? Alas, no! For prudent old granny tells me I must behave like a proper young lady, and never kiss your dear handsome face again."

"Not till the next time!" said a voice behind her; and Robinette felt a strong arm round her waist and a soft golden moustache touching her lips.

She extricated herself from the unexpected embrace, and, with an attempt at dignity, said—

"You are very impertinent, Mr. Ellis, and seem to forget that I am no longer a child to be played with."

Graham Ellis threw himself into a chair and burst out laughing.

"Only fancy our chubby little Robinette calling herself a woman! Why, you are as much like your roundabout feathered namesake as when we last parted!" said he.

The blood rushed angrily into Robinette's face as she exclaimed, passionately—

"And you have grown into a rough, rude, disagreeable, handsome man! I cannot help being short and round and ugly! It is not my fault that I am like a horrid little robin instead of a grand Roman model!" Here Robinette, having exhausted her stock of adjectives and breath, covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

Graham instantly became serious, and endeavored to remove her hands as he said, soothingly—

"My poor little birdie, I did not mean to wound you. Not all the beauties of Rome combined could ever make me forget my own original little redbreast. I have been looking forward all these five long years to the time when you would clean my grates and tidy up my studio."

At this climax Robinette uncovered her face and began to laugh; so peace was soon restored.

Great was Mrs. Lynn's dismay, on entering the room a short time after the reconciliation, to find Graham and Robinette seated side by side on the couch, entering upon the first chapter of a love-history.

"Dear me, what a man you've grown, to be sure—lost your complexion, and grown a beard!" exclaimed the old lady. "But now, young gentleman, once for all, you must no longer treat Miss Holt like a child. No more scouring the grates and chimneys, scrambling over the cliffs, and things of that sort! You may walk to-

gether on the pier or to church. I'm responsible to her unknown papa that she shall be a lady-like young woman—not a romping hoyden—when he comes to claim her which it strikes me will be very soon."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Graham. "Now listen to me, granny. Robinette and I have agreed to be on the same brotherly and sisterly terms as we were in bygone times; and so pray do not put any nonsensical ideas into her head. I have brought her some pretty Italian songs, and intend teaching her to sing them with proper feeling, so as to charm her lost parent when he makes his appearance."

"I don't hold with foreign songs, and can't understand them, but Madame la Marquise can; and if you are determined to teach Robinette such nonsense, why Madame shall, what she calls, 'assist at' the lessons."

From that moment Mrs. Lynn's troubles began. The poor old lady was always on the watch, aided by Madame la Marquise de St. Foix, a wiry little Frenchwoman, who trotted about after Robinette with a vigilance which did not in the least disturb the young girl, although Graham often chafed beneath it.

The summer and autumn sped rapidly by, and love was sown, sprung up, and blossomed in Robinette's heart before she was aware of its existence. One day, however, her eyes were opened, and she discovered that Graham was dearer to her than a brother. It was a glorious sunshiny day towards the end of September. Graham and Robinette had obtained permission to spend several hours at the Glen, where the former was painting a large picture; and the latter worked severely at stumps of trees, and studies in perspective, by the express command of her severe instructor, who had ruthlessly condemned all her previous out-door sketching, and put her back to what he called the alphabet of art. Of course Madame la Marquise went with the young people, but she had the satisfactory habit of dropping asleep at the end of a long walk and peacefully snoring for hours together.

As she was leaving home Robinette met the postman, who gave her an Indian letter; she put it into her pocket unopened, and observed—

"I will read it when we arrive at the Glen." Time was when Indian letters were received with delight; now the sight of one filled her with a dread of the news it would bring. Robinette could not enjoy her walk over the cliffs and chimes, which were then in their full autumnal glory of purple heath and golden gorse; the remembrance of the letter in her pocket subdued her gaiety.

Graham had hired a room at a cottage close to the Glen, where he kept his picture and easel. When, after a light luncheon, he had arranged his work, he lighted a cigar and said—

"Sing me a song, birdie; I shall allow myself half an hour's repose."

Madame la Marquise was soon asleep, and Robinette began to sing, but there was a tremor in her voice which attracted Graham's attention.

"What is the matter, dearest?" he asked.

"That letter in my pocket—I so dread to open it," she said.

"Courage, mon enfant; no man on earth shall divide us, for if a stern parent should make his appearance and forbid the banise, we will be off to New Zealand and live in the bush."

So saying, he took the letter, opened it, and handed it back to Robinette, who read aloud—

"The time is fast approaching when the last figure must be burned; and I am ready to keep my promise. On the 1st of December I shall be with you, accompanied by your father, who is longing to embrace his child and spend the remainder of his life with her."

"But what of this Graham Ellis? Your letters are full of his praises. Beware of creating a hero from some ne'er-do-well artist-sea!"

Here Robinette paused, in evident confusion. Graham took the letter from her and finished the sentence—"some ne'er-do-well artist-sea, who is probably looking out for your fortune."

"Complimentary!" observed he, with a careless laugh. "We must convince this cautious personage that Graham Ellis is neither seedy nor scampish. Robinette, do you love me sufficiently to stand firmly by me?"

"Yes, dearest, for ever!" was the whispered reply; and then followed a little love-scene just under the nose of Madame la Marquise, who still slumbered serenely.

A week before the dreaded first of December, Graham Ellis, at the urgent request of Robinette, started off to London, "for," said she, "I shall be able to coax the Rajah into taking our part if papa should prove stern, whilst you would most likely go off in a rage and quarrel with them both."

"How cold it is to-night, granny!" said Robinette with a shiver, as she sat down on the rug before the fire, which was lighting up every corner of the pretty boudoir, and displaying to great advantage Graham's picture of "The Glen," which had just come home from being framed previous to exhibition in the North.

"You are nervous, my birdie, and so am I—for it strikes me we have neither of us behaved quite right to your father. I ought to have known better than to let that lad come hanging about you with his handsome face and winning ways, and you should have turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to his charms," sighed Mrs. Lynn. "And when we know that the ship is close at hand which contains our judges, we tremble like two guilty women as we are."