

Beside the Brook.

Softening breezes rich with dreaming Gently o'er my spirit stealing— Lulling murmurs, hazy languor, Floating on the evening air.

Roaring, dancing, laughing, gleaming, Leaps the brook with music teaming, Dashing up in mimic anger, Throws its white foam high in air.

And the sunset rays are glinting All the valley with rose tinting— All the trees like crimson banners, Quiver o'er the fragrant air.

Rich with mellow radiance beaming, All the sunset sky is gleaming; Drenching, in a misty splendor, Distant hilltops fresh and fair.

Softly o'er my senses stealing Comes a peaceful drifting, dreaming, Till I even cease to wonder At this beauty, rich and rare.

And I drink, while deeply thirsting, All this sunset beauty bursting, Drink it in a balm of heaven, Drink and deaden pain and care.

From God's fingers drop the gleamings, Silver splendors, golden beamings; He, in all that's bright and glorious, Shows his presence everywhere.

Praise Him in the rosetate dawning: In the twilight silver falling, In the sombre hour of midnight; Lift to Him a heart of prayer.

Love Him when the sunset fading, Glimpses the land in deepest shading, Love Him for the joy he gave you When the day was fresh and fair.

SELECT STORY.

Bought With a Price.

[CONTINUED.]

Chapter IX.

ESTELLE'S TRIUMPHS.

ESTELLE was charmed with the "colat" that attended her bridal tour.

Many times she told herself that the price was worth the purchase.

Her husband, she found, did not prove the annoyance she feared.

He was by no means "exigent" of her attention to him.

In public he appeared gratified at the notice they received.

In Paris, Estelle's marvellous beauty caused quite a "furore."

She was feted and flattered till she could hardly bear the thought of tearing herself away from those charming Parisians.

This was all very well at first—just as it should be, the squire thought; but he became weary of it, when he saw that Estelle still absorbed all the notice.

Surely these foreign idiots could not know he was a man of millions.

Estelle was only worthy of notice, as being his possession.

But the Parisians still ignored him; though he tried to impress them with his greatness, with all the energy he could throw into his broken French.

It was no use—they still treated him as the accidental appendage of "la belle Estelle."

In Florence and Rome, matters were still the same—Estelle attracted general notice.

Painters raved about her; and she was beset with prayers for her portrait to be painted.

Sculptors, too, were eager for the honour of immortalizing her beauty.

It was here, for the first time, that the squire showed the clover foot.

Estelle's pulls upon his purse had neither been few nor moderate.

She was willing to demand her price for which she was bought.

But her husband had made no demur.

She was his wife, and, therefore, the splendour of her surroundings must be consistent with this fact.

Now, however, when Estelle appeared to be recklessly spending large sums on objects which the squire considered of no value, he made resistance.

Estelle only scoffed at his ignorance of works of art, and still continued her profuse expenditure.

Her husband commanded her to desist; and tauntingly told her, that it was his money with which she was so free—that she added nothing to the store.

A fierce quarrel was the result; and to prove his power over her, the Squire desired their return to England.

Once more on English ground, the Squire felt his old pompous self again!

Here, Estelle would take her proper position—the millionnaire's wife!

The Squire had taken care to let their return to Ashton be known.

He hoped—what really took place—that their arrival would be attended with some display.

In one thing, this ill-sorted couple perfectly agreed—they were both eager for themselves to be the centre of notice.

Both, then, were gratified at their reception at Ashton.

To them, the ringing of the village bells and the shouts of the villagers were music dear to their ears.

Estelle forgot for a time the vile behaviour of her husband.

She took care to enjoy her triumphs here to the utmost.

Their return home was inaugurated by the promised ball, given in honor of the bridesmaids.

To this Lilly was obliged to be present, but she determined that here she would make a stand.

In no other way would she recognize the barter that Estelle had made.

For the first time, Estelle's suit of rooms were seen by the admiring guests.

These were gorgeously furnished, with white and gold.

The hangings were of pale blue satin—costly Indian cabinets, filled with rare treasures, stood in various angles of the rooms.

There were, also, statuettes, vases, besides objects of "vertu," rare and costly.

The pictures on the walls were of fabulous value.

Estelle once more was satisfied with her price.

The ball was a perfect success.

Estelle had spared no pains or money to dazzle her former acquaintances, and to impress their minds with the fact that she was the proud mistress of this unlimited wealth.

Is she happy, I wonder? thought Lilly, does she never regret the sacrifice she has made for this wealth?

Lilly could not answer these questions.

She saw Estelle moving among her guests looking exquisitely lovely, and, to all appearance, happy.

The Squire was as loud and self-asserting as ever, and to Lilly he seemed to have become more vulgar.

The gaities still went on at the Manor House.

Estelle inaugurated her reign as leader in Ashton by a perfect whirl of festivities.

The weather, fortunately, was delightful, so garden "fetes" became the order of the day.

For the time being, the gardens of the Manor House were changed into a paradise of novelty and wonder, where the guests wandered, believing themselves in fairyland.

There were rock-work grottoes, temples of rare workmanship, graceful pagodas scattered in various parts of the ground; but upon the lake was what attracted the chief attention.

This was a gondola, luxuriously cushioned, and its awning of white silk emblazoned with gold.

The rowers were in true gondolier costume, being, in fact, copied from a dress worn by the servants of an old Venetian nobleman.

They wore silken jackets, in whose tissue was interwoven flowers of the gayest colours, a falling colour of scarlet, and bright velvet caps.

As many a fair maiden took her place in the gondola, she tried to imagine herself in Venice; and as few of them had ever seen it, the imagination could take a wide range, and so the pleasure was enhanced.

Lilly and Estelle seldom met; when they did, there was a restraint upon them which both felt irksome.

Estelle never mentioned Neville's name, nor did Lilly, though he was in the thoughts of both.

Estelle professed to be annoyed that Lilly refused her invitations, though secretly she was not sorry to be free from Lilly's surveillance.

She ever dreaded Lilly discovering the skeleton of her married life.

Her other guests were not likely to penetrate below the surface, and there all was fair to the eye.

Short as had been her married experience of her husband, Estelle had been made to feel that he was a man of vicious habits—crafty, and malicious.

How she hated him she alone knew.

Her gollen fetters were oftentimes not easy to bear.

There was no love between this pair to make their life one of celestial harmony.

There was no sweet sympathy between them.

When discord arose, there was no love to bridge the chasm.

And there was discord very frequent, but of this the world knew nothing.

To them the wedded pair appeared perfectly harmonious.

The Squire's ambitions were soaring far above the present.

He was not content to be the great man of a rural place like Ashton.

He was about to try his wings in a far wider sphere.

He would become known in the metropolis. In the world of fashion his gold should carve him a way.

Estelle had boasted of her intimacy with people high in power in the political world; she should, therefore, bring this intimacy to bear upon his fortunes.

He, too, would become known to them, and in time take his place in their ranks. He would enter parliament, and ere long become something great.

He was only waiting his opportunity.

It had not been without a motive that he had "feted" and indulged in lavish hospitality in Ashton.

Estelle made no demur to these wild aspirations on the part of her husband, because they led to his doing what she most ardently longed for—a town house!

How Estelle panted to once more blaze forth on London society as "la belle" Estelle!

She longed to renew the triumphs of that brief season during her father's lifetime.

With how much more splendour could she not now enter upon that whirl of fashion!

She knew, too, that her beauty was even greater than when she had before been the London belle.

Besides, her health would be a great aid to her.

Yes, though her sun had set on her former glory, she would again shine forth with greater radiance than ever.

The town house, therefore, was taken, and furnished in the costly manner befitting the millionaire's wealth.

Estelle found no difficulty in renewing acquaintance with her former friends.

Her house became the fashion, and her invitations were matters of great moment to the London world!

Estelle was again the belle of society. "Dejeuners," botanical "fetes," at homes, dancing parties, or pleasures of some kind filled up every hour of the day.

Estelle was the fashion!

Men raved about her beauty wherever she went.

Whether it was in the Row, or the drive, she was surrounded by her admirers.

Her box at the opera was also the centre of attraction!

Her jewels and her beauty surpassed in splendour that of anyone else.

Estelle was intoxicated with delight. She had not sold herself for nothing.

The skeleton of her marriage was kept close hidden.

She saw little of her husband, and cared not how he passed his hours. So long as he kept apart from her, and left her free to enjoy his wealth, she was satisfied.

She tried to forget that she was fettered to this man, and this was not difficult, since her acquaintances appeared quite to ignore him.

Estelle never found herself lacking an escort.

There were many ever eager for the office.

It was considered "the thing" to be in attendance on "la belle."

It was pronounced by all to have seen a most brilliant season, and, throughout, Estelle had been the reigning beauty!

Had she not reason then, to be satisfied with the price for which she was bought?

But had Estelle no moments of regret for the past?

She tried hard to banish all such moments.

But even in the giddy whirl of pleasure into which she rushed with delight sometimes Neville's name reached her, and sent a pang of regret through her heart.

The lion-hunters among her set often spoke of him, and tried hard to secure his presence at their reunions.

From them Estelle heard that Neville was making rapid strides in his profession.

It was predicted that the wool sack itself was destined for him!

Then it was Estelle would feel a tightening at her heart.

If she had only waited

Then Neville was no longer a poor, briefless barrister.

Even now he was sought after, and could take a higher place in society than ever she could hope to reach.

If she had only been his wife, how different would have been her lot!

But Estelle dared not give way to such thoughts—there was madness in them.

She drowned them in the giddy vortex of pleasure as speedily as possible.

At first her pulse would beat rapidly as she entered a house to which she knew he had been invited, but she learned to know there was no chance of their meeting.

Neville never accepted invitations.

Was she glad or sorry?

She hardly knew.

Chapter X.

LILLY BECOMES A BELLE.

THE Manor House was still tenantless though the London season was over.

This was a keen disappointment to many a fair maiden in Ashton, who had been looking forward to a renewal of those delightful balls and parties which had been given by the squire and his bride.

When it became known that the squire and his mistress were not to return and fill their house with guests, as the Ashtonians expected them to do, gossip was immediately rife about them.

But when it became known that the squire had gone to Caden, whilst Estelle remained in England, tongues were loosened with a vengeance.

Some even went so far as to say the couple had separated by mutual agreement; in fact there was no end to the surmises on foot.

Estelle would only have been too glad to fill her luxurious mansion with her London friends had such a thing been practicable.

It had been for this very purpose she had taken so much delight in its arrangements.

To dazzle the Ashtonian world had been but a secondary matter with her.

Her aim had been to excite the wonder and envy of her old acquaintances—the London world.

But this she could not well do and her husband absent.

So she decided to accept a long-standing invitation from an old acquaintance, Mrs. Aechibald Leighton was delighted to receive Estelle.

True, she had formerly been jealous of her, but that was when Estelle had threatened to be her rival—during her first season as the reigning belle.

Now, things were different.

The somewhat recalcitrant lover had been secured during the eclipse of the too seductive London belle, and Mrs. Archibald Leighton could again afford to acknowledge her dear Estelle as her friend.

Then, too, she would be a charming addition to a country house gathering.

If Estelle were of the number, no fear of her guests—the gentleman portion, at any rate—being weary of their quarters.

Estelle was hardly dissatisfied that her husband had chosen to take himself to Baden, instead of entertaining her friends.

Though twelve months had hardly elapsed from her marriage, Estelle knew what it was to suffer personal violence from her husband.

Her maid could have told of strange and mysterious discolorations on that fair, sicken skin of hers.

Estelle had always a plausible reason to give for their being there, but her maid was not deceived.

Did Estelle shield her husband from love to him?

Ah, no! but she dreaded to acknowledge, even to herself, the bitter mistake she had made.

She had been "Bought at a Price"—this man's gold, and that she would still exact.

His brutal treatment of her should not make her relax her hold on that.

So she hid her skeleton from human eye.

But had there been no changes in Ashton.

Yes great ones as regards the vicarage.

The good old vicar was dead, and the vicarage had new inmates.

The news had reached Estelle in the zenith of her triumph, and a passing pang smote her as she knew she had lost one who loved her.

What, then, had become of Lilly?

Neville had come to the vicarage directly the sad tidings had reached him.

His father had passed so peacefully from this world, that no one knew the exact moment of his death.

Margery had found him in his study, leaning back in his easy chair, as if he had fallen asleep, but it was the sleep of death.

His worldly affairs, which were few, were found in perfect order.

It had been no secret to the good vicar that death was likely to overtake him at any hour.

His medical adviser had told him, at his own request, of the presence of heart disease.

Lilly had been left as a sacred trust to Neville, who, immediately after the funeral, removed her and their faithful Margery to London, or rather, to one of its suburbs.

So it came about that Neville, after all took that villa of which he had spoken to Estelle; but Lilly, and not her cousin, became its proud mistress.

Neville had no intention that his pretty sister should remain unseen by the world.

Neville always thought her name—Lilly—peculiarly suited to her style of beauty; her charm lay in the intense purity and simplicity of her nature. She was like—

The bloom of opening flowers; unsullied beauty, softness, and sweetest innocence she wears, and looks like nature in the woe's first spring.

For Lilly's sake, then, he was glad to have secured an entree into society.

Lilly, little used to society, was at first shy and reserved before strangers, though there was always a quiet self-possession about her, which prevented her manner from appearing "gauche," or unformed.

But this strangeness soon wore off, and Lilly was soon able to make conversation with a graceful ease, that added no little to her other fascinations.

There was one family to whom Neville introduced Lilly, whose friendship was very dear to her. These were the Hamiltons, the mother and three sisters of Lawrence, Neville's first client.

Lawrence had found England insupportable after the prominent and painful position in which he had been placed regarding his uncle's murder. People had prepared to lionize him after his narrow escape from the ignominious death, but this Lawrence shrank from with dismay. Neville who was now looked upon as the friend of the family, was consulted by Mrs. Hamilton as to what had best be done. She saw that Lawrence, if left to himself, would in his over sensitiveness, shun society, and become morbid over his recent misfortune.

This she was especially anxious to avoid; not only for his own sake, but for that of his sisters.

She was sure, she told Neville, that Lawrence would more readily overcome this morbid feeling, if he kept a steadfast face to what would be said of him—the reality would be much less to endure than the presentations of it.

Neville entirely agreed in this view of the case—in truth, he mostly did in Mrs. Hamilton's opinions—but Lawrence was not so easily brought round.

At length a compromise was effected—Lawrence, whose health had suffered greatly from his imprisonment, was to have twelve months' travel, and then return to take up his duties as the owner of Worthing Priory.

In the meantime, Mrs. Hamilton and her daughters were to take up their abode there; and everything was left to the supervision of Neville.

It was during this absence of Lawrence, that Lilly made her acquaintance with the family.

Mrs. Hamilton took Lilly to her heart at once.

It was well for Lilly that, on this, her first entrance into society, she should have the guardianship of one so wise and good as Mrs. Hamilton.

Edith Hamilton, the eldest daughter, was a year older than Lilly.

The two girls were soon bosom friends.

It was not long before Lilly had matured a plan for marrying Neville to Edith.

If only this could be, she told herself, she should be perfectly content.

If only she was sure her brother had forgotten Estelle's treachery.

But Lilly had no means of judging if the most important members to the contract had any idea of such an alliance.

Neville was a son to Mrs. Hamilton; and her daughters treated him as a very wise and dear brother.

The Priory was mostly Lilly's home. Her brother was often absent—and he knew that his sister could not have a wiser guardian than Mrs. Hamilton.

The family at the Priory was very popular.

Their acquaintances ranked among the first and most exclusive of the country people.

The Hamiltons belonged to a good old family, and though poor until Lawrence's accession to his uncle's fortune, had always moved in a good set.

It was just the position that Neville would have chosen for his sister.

Lilly was no mean acquisition to the Priory party.

She was pronounced charmingly fascinating and lovely.

Edith too, was very lovely, and the two girls stared between them the honour of being the belles of Worthing.

Several offers, already, had been made for Lilly's hand, but the young girl felt that her time was not yet come, no one had as yet touched her heart.

She had her dreams of her future lover, as most girls have; but no one had as yet appeared who came up to her ideal.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE BEST way to do good to ourselves is to do it to others; the right way to scatter is to gather.

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