

**Our Little Rosebud.**

Ah, wife, as we watch the unfolding  
So tenderly day by day,  
Of our little rosebud, what a golden  
Glory streams down on our way;  
As a tear from the eye of Heaven,  
As a gift from the lap of May,  
To sweeten our lives was given  
This blossom, that winter's day.

Oh, God! in thy love defend her,  
Oh, lift her up out of the night;  
Dear Christ, in thy bounty send her  
A ray from thy crown of light!  
May the flush of her outward beauty  
Be pale to the light within,  
And the Angles of Love and Duty  
Stand guard at the gates of sin.

Ah, wife! how we faint and tremble  
As we gaze on our flower of flowers,  
For a tear that we cannot dissemble  
Will rise in these hearts of ours;  
And a word that we may not mutter,  
That dies on our quickening breath,  
The eye with a flash will utter,  
And that terrible word is Death.

We have trimmed up the lamp of our  
being  
With the tears of our love, sweet wife,  
And bright as an eye all seeing,  
It circles her little life;  
It streams like the floods of morning,  
When the gates of night are hurled  
Backward, our lives adorning,  
With the hues of another world.

Oh! love it can make us waver,  
And love it can make us strong,  
So fearful we ask the favor,  
And fearful we sing our song;  
God keep thee, thou prettiest blossom  
That ever made joy of grief,  
And the dew of grace fall on thy bosom,  
And nurture thee leaf by leaf.

**SELECT STORY.**

**Bought With a Price.**

[CONTINUED.]

**Chapter V.**

ESTELLE IS SATISFIED WITH ASHTON.

Estelle was always impatient when Lilly spoke of her engagement to Neville; but of late she seemed to dislike it more than ever. So, to Lilly's dismay, she turned quite angrily to her, crying—

Lilly, how many more times shall I beg you to keep to yourself the secret of my engagement to Neville? You make me quite weary of the subject. Neville is in no position as yet to marry, and perhaps never will be, so I do not choose that it should be talked of.

Margery was well pleased that her darling should enjoy herself, and was delighted when the two girls were invited to take part in all the festivities that took place on the squire's residence, at the Manor House.

The vicar was almost the only one who appeared not to have lost head on account of this man's wealth.

He was too buried in his dearly loved books to know much of the outer world.

Lilly was dazzled by so much gaiety, and Estelle pronounced Ashton tolerable enough for existence.

Estelle hardly gave the good people of Ashton their due.

The one who appeared—that the squire would make choice of one of their daughters to share his wealth.

Now, as no one in Ashton could compete with the vicar's niece—the wonder is, that they risked so much in allowing her to compete with them.

Then, too, must be taken into consideration the fact, that Estelle had formerly been scornful of their notice.

Yet this did not deter them from, at all times, inviting these two motherless girls to their picnics, water parties, archery meetings, and croquet parties.

If the Ashtonians had been dull, they were not ill-natured.

They even did not repent of their hospitality, when they saw their own daughters excited very little attention from the millionaire, and that Estelle was always marked out for his particular attention.

Yet, without this, the squire yet remained popular in Ashton.

He soon began to respond to the welcome which had been awarded him.

His French chief astonished the simple-minded Ashtonians by the banquets which they were required to partake of at the Manor House.

A good English cook had always been enough for their wants—they had never even heard of the choice dishes which were now set before them.

In truth the squire's object seemed to be ever to show his simple-minded neighbors the power he wielded with his gold.

Lilly declared to Estelle that she never went to one of the squire's costly entertainments, without an idea that she was being choked with gold.

I think his entertainments are perfect. His fortune must be most princely. Did you notice the plate we dined off yesterday?

I know. I heard him boasting of the fabulous sums he had given for it. I thought it heavy and ungraceful, as though he had been afraid he would not

have enough of the precious metal to show for his wealth. I declare I quite relish one of Margery's cutlets after a surfeit of the squire's dainties.

On the contrary, I despise them all the more, and should not be sorry to exchange the squire's chef for your old Margery, whose cooking is worthy of herself, both equally detestable.

Come, Estelle, you must not speak so of our faithful old servant. Papa would be very vexed if he heard you. She does very well for our modest culinary performance, though I am well aware she could not perform the prodigies of the Manor House chef. But I know what ails you, my dear, you have been restless and unhappy ever since Neville left.

I am beginning to quite dislike your meeting the squire. He insists on paying you attentions, which I am sure are odious to you for you never seem yourself after we have left him. I wonder what Nevilles would say could he see that purse-proud, vulgar piece of pomposity bending over you and asking your opinion on everything in his house. I have a great mind to give him a hint that he is poaching on forbidden ground. You, of course, do not like to tell him you are engaged.

Lilly, if you dare ever to tell him such nonsense, I will at once break my engagement with Neville. Remember, in that case, you will have done the mischief. I begin to think that you have been placed as a spy upon my actions.

Lilly had never seen Estelle in such a passion. She began to think that she must have done something very wrong for her cousin to accuse her of being a spy.

Estelle, she cried, do forgive me. I did not mean to annoy you. I am sure you know more of these things than I do. I dare say I thought more of those attentions of the squire's than you do. I was only afraid that he may hope to make you his wife; he seems to think his gold can purchase anything—that it is

The picklock

That never fails!

He would hardly, though have the presumption to offer "ma belle" though Ashton has made so much of him.

Now, you are reasonable, my dear Lilly, and need never give yourself any more trouble regarding the poor squire's wasting his affections upon an unobtainable object. If he has set his hopes on me, which I by no means admit, you need not fear that his heart has been very deeply touched. I very much doubt whether that is not so thickly coated with his gold, that it would be impossible to touch it.

I am glad you think that, Estelle. I was afraid you had been rather seized with this gold fever that has bewitched all Ashton. I declare I am quite tired of hearing this millionaire's wealth talked about. Wherever you go, the subject is—the squire's fortune. It is gold, gold, and nothing else, since he has been here. The people are becoming quite mercenary, I am afraid.

Well, suppose we say nothing more about it Lilly, since you are so weary of the subject. And there is no occasion for you to mention the matter to Neville when you write. Ashton will have returned to its normal stupidity before he returns to it, so it would only distract his thoughts just now.

How thoughtful, you are darling, where Neville is concerned! Now I should never have thought of that. He is not much interested in anything I write to him, I fancy, except when you are the topic. I certainly will not trouble him with an account of all Ashton's madness about a pompous, vulgar millionaire.

So Neville was kept in ignorance, through Estelle's art and his sister's innocence of treachery, of the changes that were taking place in Ashton, and he little knew that much was in progress which would be the cause of great wretchedness to him and to others.

**Chapter VI.**

THE SQUIRE MAKES HIS CHOICE.

Had Estelle been perfectly sincere in assuring Lilly that she despised the millionaire? By no means. She worshipped his gold far more than all Ashton put together. She was more clever than they, and knew many a stratagem for securing his notice, wholly unknown to them.

But Estelle found that there was not much need for effort on her part. The millionaire had at once decided that she would make a magnificent mistress for his mansion.

He looked out for his future wife much in the same manner as he would have chosen his costly furniture, all must be for show, to prove that he was a man worth his millions. Therefore Lilly was entirely overlooked by him, her "petite" beauty was not to his taste.

Estelle's beauty, on the contrary, was grand and dazzling—not to be overlooked. She would be one to attract attention everywhere. People would be eager to ask who she was, and then it would be whispered that she was the wife of the great millionaire! The man

worth millions of money! Therefore it was that he had decided from the first that Estelle should be his choice.

He was shrewd enough to know that it was his gold which was his attraction, and not himself, so this was kept ever before her sight. No wonder Lilly had complained of feeling as if this same gold choked her. The conversation of their host was ever on this one subject.

He saw the adulation he received in consequence of his wealth, and it was but fair that he should conclude that no topic could be more agreeable. He knew it was sovereign money which was to procure him a wife of the class he desired; also that it must stand him in the place of pedigree, and draw around him friends and acquaintances.

Who can blame him, then, if he took care to keep flaunting before the eyes of his guests the one fact, which hid all blemishes?

What mattered it that he was coarse and vulgar?—was he not covered well by a cloth of gold?

Had he not toiled hard for this same gold?—only to prove that it was all-powerful?

Would these neighbors of his, in Ashton, have been so eager for his acquaintance, had it not been known that he was a millionaire?

Had they troubled to inquire if he possessed a long ancestry?

No! his gold had at once bought him admittance to their ranks—none had troubled to think of the man himself.

Then, too, this man had need to keep his wits about him, in his former battle with life.

He had learnt to judge men, well, and to calculate how to turn their foibles to the best account.

It had been thus that he had managed to amass his enormous wealth.

No generous friend or wealthy ancestor had helped him.

He had fought and struggled hard, taking advantage of the necessities of others to gain the desire of his soul—wealth!

The battle had been long and severe—it had left scars upon him, and wasted his manhood; but now the victory was gained and he was reaping the advantage of it.

He had never been rash in business matters; so, in the same manner, did he bring to bear upon the choice of a wife the same cool, calculating system—the advantages for and against her purchase.

He said to himself,—

This girl is dazzlingly beautiful; but she is also poor and ambitious.

She would fetch a high price and knows her value, but she is disadvantageously situated. No chance of her securing a prize, based as she is, in a country of dearth.

She pants to emerge from her present life, and would willingly sell herself for gold! Well, have I not the gold wherewith to buy her? She is to be bought for a price, and I am willing to become the purchaser.

And Estelle?

She knew well the squire meant to propose to her; also, that when the time came, she should accept him. She despised the man. No one saw clearer than she did the innate low-breeding and vulgarity of him. She thought, too, that he could be merciless and cruel—a man in whose power it was not well to be. She saw, also that they were as far asunder as the Poles in all ideas and habits of life. Yet none of this deterred her. He had the gold—the price for which she was to be bought!

The man was too vulgar and uneducated for her to flatter herself that he would rise beyond the fact that he was a millionaire, but this also mattered not so long as she possessed his gold. He would be a drawback, since she must accept him with it; but already Estelle had mapped out her future life, and with it her husband would have as little to do as she could possibly avoid.

But did Estelle never think of Neville?

Yes, often. But it was only to rail at Fortune, who had ordered matters so contrary. Why had not her handsome, clever cousin the wealth, in place of this pompous, low-bred man? In that case how blessed would be her lot! It was hard on her that she should be obliged to give up Neville for this man, but what was she to do? Give up this millionaire's gold? Ah, no! that would be madness!

So between the two chief actors, the impending barter had fully decided upon.

It was to be beauty in exchange for gold!

Neither gave the other credit for any other sentiments.

That love should enter into their compact was never calculated upon.

Estelle's visions consisted in the display which she would make with her wealth—the grand people who should visit her at the Manor House, and the means she would take to dazzle the worthy Ashtonians, also the costliness of her town house, and the splendour of her entertainments.

She would yet again be "la belle."

London society should again acknowledge her sway.

Those thoughts were found more effectually to banish all ideas of that foolish love passage with Neville, than any others, so Estelle encouraged them.

There was to be a picnic—the last of the season, given by the squire.

It was to be on even a larger scale of magnificence than any previously given by him.

It was to be at some distance from Ashton, and the squire's carriages and horses were to be at the service of those not provided with their own.

All the families for many miles round Ashton had been invited, and it was known it was to be a picnic of the most recherche description.

Estelle, I wish you would give up going to this picnic to-day.

Lilly, you must be crazy. Do you know what you are asking?

But surely, Estelle, it cannot be a great act of self-denial. Do you think this millionaire would care whether you are there or not? We shall only be two the less for him to display his wealth before. But let alone my dislike to this purse-proud, man, I have a presentiment of some evil happening. I know you think me foolish, Estelle, but pray do not go.

Estelle almost wavered. Now it had come to the point, should she carry out this barter? She knew well the crisis impending—that day would decide her fate.

Should she listen to Lilly's warning? But then rose before her this man's wealth, and she resolved to possess it.

Estelle was a good horsewoman, and passionately fond of riding, and Lilly naturally supposed her cousin meant to form one of the group of equestrians, when she refused to drive with her and their good-natured chaperone on all occasions—the widow of a naval officer living in Ashton.

What then was her amazement to find that Estelle had already promised to share with the squire his mail-phaeton.

You see my dear, said Mrs. Fraser, by whom Lilly was already seated in her carriage, the squire makes no secret of his choice. I expect we shall find the matter is quite settled before we reach our point of rendezvous. The squire looks as if he meant business, and I rather fancy your cousin will not prove obdurate.

Dear Mrs. Fraser, you are quite deceived. If you knew all, you would see how impossible it is such a thing could happen. Estelle will never accept the squire. I could tell you something—but here Lilly suddenly paused.

Well, my dear?

I forgot, Dear Mrs. Fraser. It is a secret. But please do not think that Estelle will ever marry that purse-proud man. She is far too noble to sell herself for gold.

My little friend is completely blind to her cousin's character, thought worthy Mrs. Fraser. Why, everyone in Ashton knows the girl has meant to marry him from his first coming amongst us. But I will not be the one to open these dear innocent's eyes.

So Mrs. Fraser said no more, and Lilly felt sure that she would soon be able to prove to her how right she had been. She wished, however, that Estelle would not permit so much notice from that horrid millionaire.

The squire and his companion were two of the last to arrive at the scene of the picnic. They had not hurried on the road, it was evident.

What was it made Lilly's heart sink within her as she caught sight of her cousin? Was it that Estelle looked unusually pale, or because of the triumphant tone of the squire's voice? What meant also the meaning looks of the squire's guest?

That picnic was a source of wretchedness to Lilly, though all others pronounced it a success.

As usual there was everywhere in the arrangements the presence of this man's wealth. He had spared no cost in providing for their entertainment, but Lilly loathed the display. She wished to be near her cousin, but Estelle evidently avoided her.

Then, too, she had to bear the congratulations of her friends; who appeared to have no doubts that the squire had made his choice and been accepted.

How Lilly longed to make it known that Estelle was her brother's affianced wife; but yet she would not break her promise.

She shunned her old friends, and only longed for that wretched day to be ended.

She would make Estelle give her back her promise.

These gossiping women must be silenced.

Not even did she doubt Estelle.

The guests, however, were decidedly of one opinion—the squire had made his proposal, and had been accepted.

There was no mistaking that air of proprietorship about him.

The only matter of debate was—how soon the marriage would take place.

Lilly's face tinged with shame and annoyance, as she heard one remark,—

That no doubt the girl's friends would lose no time in securing such a chance. It was not often a penniless girl met with an offer so good as this one.

Or it was,

Depend upon it, she meant for the first time to secure him. I have seen all the time how she has laid herself out to attract him. I cannot say that I should care for a daughter of mine to have acted so. It is evident that is selling herself for gold. No one can suspect she loves the man!

I will tell Estelle, decided Lilly. No one will be more annoyed than she, and will no longer wish to keep her engagement to Neville a secret. My beautiful Estelle, indeed the squire's choice! How deceived these good people are!

**Chapter VII.**

WEDDING CHIMES.

Nonsense Lilly, I am tired to death. What can you have to say to me tonight?

But, Estelle, it is so important. People have been saying—

A great deal they know nothing about, I dare say, my dear Lilly; pray do not wish to keep me up, relating all the old women's gossip of Ashton? Good night. I am too tired to say another word.

So Lilly was defeated in having her talk with her cousin that night, but of course Estelle was tired. Who was not after one of the squire's monster entertainments? The next day would be quite soon enough to warn Estelle of the erroneous impression abroad. Lilly found, too, she was very tired, and very soon was fast asleep.

Estelle, is that you? Is anything the matter?

Estelle's answer was to throw herself by Lilly's side and weep passionately.

Lilly was thoroughly alarmed. She had woken to find her cousin standing beside her, and now what meant this violent weeping? What was it that had excited this passionate sorrow? Lilly's arms were round her, begging Estelle to allow her to comfort her. But all at once her thoughts flew to Neville. Estelle had heard some bad news of him! and she cried out in alarm,—

My darling! It is not about Neville? You have heard no ill tidings of him?

Lilly, don't do it. Do not speak of him, gasped Estelle, between her deep sobs; he will hate me and you too, Lilly. I am so wretched; I wish I was dead. Lilly, she said, striving to speak calmly you see in me a base, mercenary woman,—one who has bartered her soul for gold!

Estelle, you are ill. This day's excitement has been too much for you. I saw you were pale when you arrived at the ruins this morning.

Pale, was I? Rather ought I to have been radiant. Don't you know Lilly, that I had just promised to become the wife of that mighty millionaire who was beside me?

Estelle, you are not in earnest. You do not know what you are saying. Your hands are burning; you are feverish, and have allowed the remarks of some of those people to annoy you. Let me call Margery to do something for you.

Lilly, it is not fever; I am telling you the truth. See, I am calm enough now. You must write to Neville tell him to hate me, and be thankful that he has lost me. I should have made his life wretched, for I am not fit for a poor man's wife. Don't cry, girl, you little know what a vile wretch I am. Be thankful that your brother has escaped me.

Estelle here left the room and Lilly remained stricken with grief and shame.

Was this true or a frightful dream? There was no more sleep for Lilly that night: She remained tossing upon her bed, racked with troubled thoughts. How would her idolized brother bear this blow? Then, too, there was the thought of her own idol shattered to dust! Estelle could not be the premeditated unselfish being she had thought her.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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