

For the Favorite,
MY LOVE.

BY G. D.

My love is like the red, red rose
That breathes the sweet perfume,
It charms alike my thoughts and dreams,
And I its charms consume.

My love is no expensive wife,
Tho' very dear is she,
Two cents a day upon my life
Is all she costeth me.

Of bonnets, paniers, bustles, lace
She never feels the need;
No flowers at her command I place
Save only one poor weed.

And yet not 'e'en the fairest girl
Can with my love compare,
Although she boasts no glossy curl,
Not 'e'en one scrap of hair.

Three daily, after every meal,
I press her to my lips,
And then as sweet a kiss I steal
As bee from lily sips.

May I all other loves from
My remembrance wipe,
Whilst loving one poor bit of clay,
My beautiful, my pipe.

MONTREAL, 1873.

LESTELLE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSK AND SHAMROCK," ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

EN ROUTE FOR LONDON.

Wyett civilly delayed his departure till the fresh search Mrs. Price set on foot had come to an end, with no better results than the former one. Not a creature had seen Essie since the children were sent off to school some hours previously; but no comment had been made on her absence, as her capricious mistress, who had been too busy to notice it, was apt to resent anything that betokened a kindly interest in the girl.

At last, Wyett, remarking that he had already lost one train, and ran a risk of being too late for another, bade his troubled hostess adieu, and joined the miller, who had been waiting away the interval with sundry glasses of ale and whiffs of tobacco.

When he had taken his seat in the miller's cart, he stopped down to drop some halfpence into Mrs. Price's apron.

"These are for the children to buy sweeties with. You'll send me a line about those papers when you've found the girl, won't you?"

"Do ye think I ever will find her, Mr. Wyett?" asked the woman, with white lips and chattering teeth. She had been disturbed by a bad dream on the previous night, and was credulous enough to connect it with Essie's disappearance.

Wyett laughed. "Oh! she's only hiding to frighten you."

Mrs. Price clenched her hands. "If I thought that, I'd cut her into mince-meat!"

The touch of the miller's whip sent the horse off at a trot before she had finished her vindictive speech; but Wyett, with a mocking smile, kissed the tips of his fingers to her as he was borne away.

"Farewell, most amiable of women," he muttered. "If Essie has a spark of common sense in that little head of hers, she will consider any fate preferable to dwelling beneath your roof!"

As he had predicted, he did not reach the railway station until the train had puffed away. There was not another due for two hours, but he heard this with smug acquiescence.

"What can't be cured must be endured. Take care of my trunk, porter, and I'll walk on to the next station. The stroll will stretch my legs, and be pleasanter than waiting on a draughty platform."

The civil miller offered to drive him a mile on his way, but the proposal was gaily rejected.

"You stout countrymen always think that we poor Londoners are frightened of an hour's walking; but I'm going to show you the contrary, and so good-bye, and thank ye!"

With his travelling bag in one hand, and neat little umbrella in the other, Wyett strode away, stopping at the top of the first bit of rising ground to turn and cast his eyes wistfully around, and wave a farewell to the miller, who was jogging homeward over the moor. Then our pedestrian began to descend the hill, and approach a large plantation of larch trees, which skirted the by-road he was traversing.

And now—a most unusual thing for Wyett to do—he commenced whistling shrilly one of Darcy Lesmere's favorite airs. After a while, he paused, and looked curiously about him. The trees grew so closely together as to throw a dark shadow over the secluded spot, and he did not perceive at first that a crowning figure had risen at his approach from its concealment amongst the ferns that grew luxuriantly beside a little pond. But when the lost Essie stopped into the open, and came slowly towards him, his face assumed an air of profound satisfaction.

"So you did not forget any of my instructions? That's well. I have more hopes of you than

before." And, opening his bag, he drew from it a waterproof wrapper, and small black hat, and tossed them towards her.

"Put these on, child. Quick! we have no time to lose. Put this veil down over your face, and hide it as much as you can. That will do. You look somewhat more like a decent traveling companion than you did before. Fling your old shawl into the pond; it will set some one searching for you in the mud at the bottom!"

When these directions had been obeyed, he resumed his journey, signing to the girl to follow, and she did so unhesitatingly, as if he had already acquired an influence over her which rendered her passive in his hands. Yet, as he walked on, with Essie half running to keep pace with him, she stole several wistful glances at his impassive face; and when he turned sharply round, and detected this, she blurted out the question, "Are you my father?"

Wyett stared at her, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Certainly not. What put such a queer idea into your head? I am happy to say that I am not your father."

"Where is he, then? You know him, don't you?"

"How should I?" he queried, in return. "I dare say he is dead; but why do you ask?"

Essie was silent awhile, though her face was working strangely, and her eyes moist with tears. Coming suddenly to a full stop, she abruptly demanded, "Then where are we going? What makes you take me away?"

Wyett walked on for a few steps without replying; but finding that she did not accompany him, he had to come back to her.

"Why detain me now with idle questions?" he cried impatiently. "I thought I made you fully understand yesterday that my plans for your benefit have nothing to do with your parents. You have a voice which, if properly cultivated, will make your fortune. I shall have you decently educated, and taught singing by a good master. In return for this, I shall expect you not only to repay me the sums I shall expend on you, but also a third of all the moneys you take when you appear in public."

Essie mused. "That means that you'll teach me to sing everything, and I'm to pay you out of my earnings?"

Wyett smiled.

"I don't think I promised you quite such a comprehensive education. But no matter, we understand each other now, so please walk a little faster. The sooner we are out of this neighborhood the less risk there will be of some one recognizing you, and setting Mrs. Price on your track."

The girl cast a frightened look behind her.

"I'll never go back!" she gasped. "I'll be killed first!"

"Imprisoned you might be, if she found you," said Wyett, coolly; "for she accuses you of going to one of her cupboards, and robbing her!"

Essie's face flamed with passion.

"It's a false! I'm no thief! The case is mine; it was my mother's, and she meant me to have it. I heard Uncle Price say so often and often before I died! I won't be called a thief! And in her excitement she stamped her foot, and looked defiantly to Wyett, whom her impetuosity amused.

"Silly child, I'm not accusing you. If you are certain the case is your own, you are justified in taking possession of it. Then you did take it? I thought as much. What have you done with it? Have you got it about you?"

Essie clutched the bosom of her print frock, and nodded assent.

Wyett's eyes glistened. "Humph! You ought to take great care of such a relic. You had better let me have it, and keep it under lock and key till you have some place of security to bestow it in."

Essie glanced at him from under her eyelids, but did not speak. Long ill-usage had made her mistrustful, and though so ignorant, she was quick-witted enough to see that Wyett was cunningly eager to get possession of the case.

With a look of frown, he repeated his suggestion. "It will be safer with me, I tell you. Give it to me."

But, retreating from his outstretched hand, she doggedly answered, "I want to keep it myself."

"Let me look at it," he cried impatiently.

But even this she refused to do.

"Tain't nothing to see,"—an answer so provoking, that he muttered an oath under his breath at her obstinacy. But, too polite to let her perceive his annoyance, he cleared his brow, and carelessly said, "Just as you please, little one. Only remember, if you lose your treasure, you will have yourself to blame for it."

From this moment, the conversation languished. Essie mutely obeyed her conductor, who, amongst other precautions, travelled to town in a separate carriage, never appearing to have any connection with the quiet little girl, whose dark eyes watched for, and promptly obeyed, his signals. Arrived in London, he took her to a respectable coffee-house, where he invoked the landlady's good offices for his little niece from the country, taking care, however, that the woman should have no opportunity for questioning her, on Essie's evident fatigue furnished a good excuse for sending her to bed.

In the first hour after the tired and confused girl had been left to herself, she stood at the window, peering beneath the blind at the busy street below. She had eagerly consented when Wyett proposed bringing her to London, but

now the roar of the great city startled her, and everything was so new and perplexing, that she was half-inclined to wish herself back at Mrs. Price's. More hopes, more wild schemes, were floating in Essie's untutored mind than her new guardian dreamed of; though every attempt to put them into shape was crushed by her sorrowful sense of her ignorance. This had never been felt till she came in contact with Lord Glenaughton's children, and saw Lady Ida's contemptuous looks rest upon her, and heard Darcy Lesmere and Wyett command her one great gift—her clear, melodious voice. What Wyett would do with her, and how long it would take to make her as clever as the beautiful Lady Ida, were the questions which filled her thoughts when she laid her head on the pillow, and dropped asleep.

But her slumbers, despite her fatigue, were brief and light. A vague fear that her unfeeling relative had contrived to become cognizant of her whereabouts, and would, at some unexpected moment, pounce upon her, haunted her dreams, as well as her waking moments. At last she awoke, impressed with a fancy that some one had touched her, and that it must be Mrs. Price, whose harsh voice she lay tremblingly expecting to hear.

There was a light in the room, though she had extinguished her own; and the measured breathing of some person was audible for a moment or two, before she ventured to unclose her eyes.

It was Wyett, who was standing by the table, carefully examining something. Essie slipped her hand beneath her pillow, where, for greater safety, she had placed the card-case. It was gone; and growing more and more afraid of the unscrupulous man who had possessed himself of it, she lay watching him from beneath her long eye-lashes.

She saw him smooth out and read the faded letters the case contained; shake his head, and mutter his vexation at the unsatisfactory nature of their contents; and then carefully examine the case again and again.

It was a clumsy, old-fashioned thing, very different to the elegant receptacles in modern use. Wyett turned it over and over, till his slender fingers came upon a secret slide, the existence of which neither Mrs. Price nor Essie had suspected. Drawing it open too hastily, the contents fell to the floor, and candle in hand, he stooped to reclaim them. One small, thin slip of paper lay at his feet; this was all. He did not know, till long after, that another and rather larger piece had fluttered under an old chest of drawers close by; only Essie, watching him unobtrusively, knew that he had not recovered all he had dropped.

But Wyett had found enough in that one thin slip of paper to bring an exulting look to his crafty face. Carefully securing it in his own pocket-book, he restored the faded letters to the case; and came, with noiseless step, towards the bed. Essie, overwhelmed with dread of what he would say or do if he discovered that she was awake, lay perfectly still, scarcely venturing to breathe, till he had slid the case under her pillow; and quitted the room, leaving her once more in darkness.

It was a long time before she could overcome her fears that he would return; but at last, with a desperate effort, she sprang up, groped her way to the spot where the paper lay, and grasping it with both hands, stole back to bed.

She could not examine it until the morning, and then it was only to look at the characters upon it hopelessly, and sob through her tears. "Ah, if I could but read!—if I could but read!"

CHAPTER V.

WELCOME HOME.

When Darcy Lesmere came of age, the Earl, his uncle, resigned his ambassadorship. His lady had grown very weary of Spain, and was eager to return to her own country, and enjoy the pleasure of preparing her beautiful daughter for an entrée into society, and witnessing her triumphs. Nor was Ida free from ambitious dreams of successes to be achieved and conquests to be made, though she would protest tearfully against Darcy's predictions that, in the whirl of dissipation, he should be forgotten. A boy and girl attachment had sprung up between the cousins. Ida was lovely enough to make Darcy's infatuation pardonable; and a certain respect for his father's love of right caused the willful girl to wear her gentlest aspect in his presence. A dream of making her his own while she was still little more than a child, and moulding her into a woman as good as she was beautiful, sent Darcy to his uncle to entreat permission to woo her. But the Earl shook his head.

"I don't know any one on whom I would sooner bestow I than on you, my dear boy, but it must be when you are both of you older and wiser. Ask me this question three years hence, and you shall have my cordial assent to your union."

Darcy reddened.

"You think, then, that I do not know my own mind—that I shall change?"

"I think that marriages are hastily concluded often result in the misery of both parties," the Earl replied. "I have seen an instance of this in my own family. But, without implying any doubt of your constancy, I feel that it would be unjust to Ida, if, at the early age of sixteen, I permitted her to affiancé herself to any one. Better that you should wait for your bride, Darcy, than that either of you should reproach me hereafter."

Darcy adjusted his cravat, and was just in what

the Earl said, and he was not so madly in love as to be very much troubled at the prospect of a long probation.

"If this is your decision, sir, I think that, instead of returning to England with you, I shall join some friends, who are proposing a tour to Russia. We may go farther, and penetrate into Tartary or Persia, if we fraternise as well as I fancy we shall."

"An excellent idea! I should like Percy to accompany you, but his mother would object to such a lengthened separation from her boy. And how long do you propose to be away?"

This was a question Darcy could not answer. His friends had attached themselves to an experienced servant, who was to be the guide and director of the travelers; and if the Earl refused him the hand of Ida for three years, he felt that he would rather spend the greater part of the interval in active pursuits, than fritter his days away in London, or settle down on his estate, alone.

It was, therefore, without fixing my time for their reunion, or even hinting at the wishes he connected with it, that Darcy Lesmere bade his beautiful cousin adieu. He was too honorable to breathe a word that would militate against his uncle's arrangements; and it was in a quiet, cousinly fashion that he kissed the tear-stained cheek of Ida, as they shook hands and parted.

The three years had nearly expired, when Darcy came back to England. He had left his native country a boy; he returned to it a thoughtful, intelligent man, whose prejudices had been softened, and mind expanded, by constant association with men of ability and intellect. As he drove towards Portland Square, in which Lord Glenaughton's town house was situated, he was amused to see how few changes had taken place during his absence. The same names were over the shops; he could almost have said the same faces met his gaze in the throngs that were passing and repassing; and, at Glenaughton House, the identical myrtles stood on the balconies, through which Ida used saucily to smile a good-morrow. Would she be as little altered as the rest?

The Earl was in his library, alone, when Darcy was ushered in. His lordship's hair had grown grayer, his form was losing its erect bearing, and the lines of care were deepening around his handsome mouth; but his greeting was cheerful, as well as cordial, and, in a few minutes, the uncle and nephew were chatting together as freely as of old.

"And so you come to us from the Himalayas! From the mountains of Asia to the West End of the metropolis, the height of the season!" the Earl observed, with a smile. "From the sublime to the ridiculous, truly! You will find London society very tame after tiger-hunting and crag-climbing!"

"Not if the faces of old friends wear a welcome for me," Darcy replied. "My aunt and Ida—are they here and well?"

"Ida is quite well. I have kept your secret, so you can meet her without a pang of uneasiness, even if you have outgrown your boyish fancy. She is very gay and very much admired."

Darcy made no direct answer to this, contenting himself with repeating his inquiry for Lady Glenaughton.

"She has gone to Richmond for a few days, taking Ida with her," his lordship replied, with a faint sigh. "Her health has been impaired of late by much anxiety."

Darcy was surprised to hear this, for her ladyship was one of those quietly selfish people who do not make the distresses of others their own. On whose account, then, had she experienced mental uneasiness?

The Earl soon solved the difficulty. "You do not ask after Brancoligh, so I suppose that you have heard—"

Here he paused, and finding that he remained silent, Mr. Lesmere replied that he had heard of cousin Percy from the Nevilles, who were staying at Folkestone when he passed through. "They tell me that he is one of the handsomest young fellows about town. Where is he?"

"I cannot tell you," the Earl answered, gloomily. "We seldom see him now. He has taken chambers in the Alley; his conduct of late has caused us the greatest uneasiness. His mother's tears and my remonstrances annoyed him, and so he avoids us."

"I suppose I can guess what is amiss," said Darcy, cheerfully. "Percy has been extravagant, as I daresay will be who belong to crack regiments and are full of fun and spirit. You must pardon a few follies, sir, in consideration of his warm heart, and really great affection for you."

The Earl was a reserved man, and it chafed his pride to permit any one to perceive how deeply his estrangement from his only son was troubling him. But Darcy Lesmere was one of the few men in whom he intuitively confided, and his uncle had hidden his anxieties in his own bosom till they grew intolerable.

"If you know all!" he sighed, still wrestling with his pride, and his yearning to find comfort in revealing the worst.

Darcy looked at him inquiringly. "I know that Percy is thoughtless and wild," he said; "but at the same time so full of generous impulses, so quickly subdued if convinced that he had given pain to any one, that I cannot believe him capable of any great errors."

"You describe him correctly," the Earl answered. "He is impetuous and well-meaning, generous and credulous. It is these very qualities that are entangling him in such a web of