

## Why They Twinkle.

When Eve had led her lord away,  
And Cain had killed his brother,  
The stars and flowers, the poets say,  
Agreed with one another.

To cheat the cunning tempter's art  
And teach the race its duty,  
By keeping on its wicked heart  
Their eyes of light and beauty.

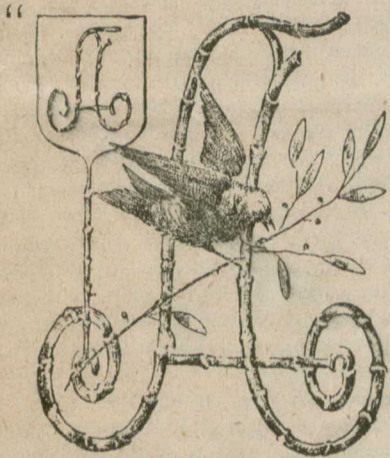
A million sleepless lids, they say,  
Will be at least a warning;  
And so the flowers would watch by day,  
The stars from eve to morning.

Alas! each hour of daylight tells  
A tale of shame so crushing  
That some turn white as sea-bleached shells  
And some are always blushing.

But when the patient stars look down  
On all their light discovers—  
The traitor's smile, the murderer's frown,  
The lips of lying lovers—

They try to shut their saddening eyes,  
And in the vain endeavor  
We see them twinkling in the skies,  
And so they wink forever.

## Eden Bower.



AND so they were married and lived happily ever after," as the story books say. They were married, certainly, but their "happy ever after" was exceedingly doubtful.

Over a year ago, when Madge Wilton and Dr. Robert Rogers became man and wife, every one said that they were just suited to each other. The gray-haired rector, who

had known them both from childhood, said that he had never joined in the holy bonds of matrimony a handsomer, happier, more promising young couple than they appeared to be.

Dr. Rogers had already established a lucrative practice in the little town to which he took his bride. And Madge's father had presented them with the loveliest little home imaginable, which was soon christened Eden Bower, because it was so pretty and picturesque, with its verandas and bow windows, and terraces and flowers, and vine-clad arbors, all so tastefully and beautifully arranged, and also because its inhabitants were so happy and fond of each other.

But what was the matter with the young wife to-day? Had the snake entered Eden again? Had that wily serpent which brought woe to our first mother, and doomed her descendants to toil and misery, been pouring its poisonous knowledge into her heart?

She was sitting on the veranda, with an open book lying idly on her lap, while the once happy, sparkling eyes looked sad and clouded. There was a sensitive look about the warm red mouth, as though the emotions were very near the surface, and might break forth at any moment.

She did not move as she heard a quick step on the walk, but the tell-tale color flushed the cheeks that were a little too pale a moment before.

"I came for my light suit," said her husband, as he mounted the steps. "It has grown insufferably warm."

"Can I assist you?" she asked, rising.

"No, no! Go on with your book," he answered carelessly, either not noticing or not heeding his wife's tone of excessive politeness.

She sank back in her chair as he entered the house, and sat mutely gazing at space till he emerged again.

"You need not wait tea for me, I may be called out late," he said, kissing his hand to her as he sprang into his buggy and drove away.

Madge rose from her chair and walked restlessly back and forth.

"What is the matter?" she murmured to herself. "Why is Robert so careless and indifferent to me of late? He could not be so changed if he did not think of some one else. I'd rather know the worst, and face it, than suffer day by day with vague suspicions."

She went into the little parlor, where he and she had spent so many happy hours together with their books and music.

"Romance and love are not all in novels; we are getting a fair share of it," he had said, drawing her toward him one day, when he had finished reading aloud a very affecting little story.

She thought of this now, and went to the piano and tried to play away her sad feelings. But she could not exorcise the evil spirit, and arose once more and wandered restlessly into their bedroom.

"How odd for Robert to be so careless!" she murmured, taking his coat from the bed where he had thrown it.

A note dropped from a pocket. She picked it up. It was not in an envelope, and the words "Doctor, come this afternoon," met her eye.

In her ordinary state of mind she would have replaced the note and thought no more about it; but the feminine hand writing, added to her own harassing doubts, made it impossible for her to resist reading its contents.

"DEAR DOCTOR,—Come this afternoon, Aunt is no better, and it is so lovely for a boat ride.

"UNA OWENS."

"Una Owens!" The name repeated itself over and over in her mind. "Una Owens—Una Owens," she murmured, crushing the note in her hand.

Oh, yes, she knew who she was; it was all explained now. She remembered seeing her driving out with old Mrs. Owens, a childless widow, a miserly old invalid, and the wealthiest patient her husband had.

"What a beautiful face!" she had involuntarily exclaimed to the doctor when she first saw her.

"I didn't think women ever admired each other," he had answered carelessly, and they were soon absorbed in another subject.

How well she remembered that face now, brief as was the glimpse she had had of it! So this was the woman who had taken her husband away from her!

"It cannot be!" she cried, her eyes wide and tearless, her face white and drawn with pain. "It cannot be—there is some mistake. I would sooner think myself mad than believe him false. Oh, no, no! I must be dreaming—mad—anything but that!"

She buried her face in her hands for several moments, but no sobs convulsed the slight, rounded figure.

"I'll go," she suddenly exclaimed. "I'll go to the river bank I'll see for myself—and then—God help me, the water will be so near!"

Dr. Rogers drove up to the old-fashioned, suburban residence of Mrs. Matilda Owens. A maid servant met him at the door, and without a word conducted him, who was such a frequent visitor, to her mistress' rooms.

"How are you feeling to-day?" he asked genially, addressing a hollow-eyed, cadaverous-faced old lady, who was reclining in an invalid's chair before a cheery south window.

"Well, doctor, it's them cramps again. It seems like nothing don't do me no good, and Una is so mean and careless. I'll cut her off with a shilling if she don't do better."

"Indeed! Has Miss Una deserted you?"

"Of course she has—said she had a headache, just to get off and read a book! I know her! Little she cares for my cramps, but much she cares for my dollars!"

"This will soon relieve you, I think. You need both internal and external treatment," the doctor said, making a sly grimace as he prescribed some powders and a box of ointment. "Pity we can't doctor the disposition as well as the body," he thought.

"You are wanted upstairs," said a servant, as the young physician quitted the room of his patient.

"Is some one ill?"

"Miss Una sent for you."

He followed her till she opened a door and then stepped back and let him enter alone.

The room was tastefully, but not luxuriously furnished. Reclining on a divan, with a rose-colored silk shawl half revealing, half concealing her white shoulders, which her low-cut dress left bare was a very beautiful woman. Her beauty did not consist so much in the regularity of her features, as in the life, color and tone of her whole countenance and person. Her hair was dark and glossy; her lips were full-curved and red; her eyes dark and bright as they looked out from long-lashed, drooping lids. One arm was thrown over her head, the half sleeve falling back and revealing its roundness. A slippered toe peeped from under the soft folds of her white dress.

Whether her pose was accidental or designed, she certainly presented a very beautiful and fascinating picture.

"Are you ill?" asked Dr. Rogers, seating himself on a chair near her.

"I have a dreadful headache."

"Let me count your pulse."

She extended a soft, warm arm.

"Now I don't want you to prescribe any nasty medicine. A boat ride will cure me, and I promised aunt to go out to the little island and get her those books, you know. You will go?" she said, turning her head so that her breath fanned his cheek, and her fascinating eyes looked into his own.

He hesitated; a shade of anxiety passed over his face. He had necessarily met this woman often while attending her aunt. He had many times lingered in the hall or yard to enjoy her society. He had grown to look for her when he came, and thought of her a great deal more than he should have done when he was away from her. She had cast a spell over him something like enchantment, and reason with himself as he might, he had been unable to dissolve it. But he had never yet compromised himself by word or look.

Twice he essayed to say no; twice his lips refused to form the syllable. She saw him waver.

"Just for an hour!" she pleaded.

"As you like," he said, the color coming back to his face, which was rather pale before.

A little later they had reached the old boat-house, and embarked in a shell of a boat, with an old, half-deaf boatman to help row.

The water was as smooth as glass. Una carried a pink-lined, lace-trimmed parasol that shed a rosy tint over her face.

It was a lovely day, and she was a lovely woman, and she sang lovely little songs of love. And the doctor thought of love, and I'm afraid he looked love in her eyes, but he said never a word. Not that the old boatman could hear him, but his lips refused to be disloyal to his wife. Let his eyes be as unprincipled as they might and tell their amorous tales, called forth by the voluptuous beauty of the woman and the fitness of the place and circumstances, his tongue was true. And so they floated on.

"You ask me why I love you  
I cannot, cannot tell;  
I, too, have often wondered  
Why I love you so well;

But, spite of all my efforts,  
I find no reason true,  
I only know I worship  
Whatever it is that's you."

The song rang out clear and sweet. Her voice was a pure soprano, well cultivated; so well cultivated that it suggested the professional singer.

The last tones of her voice had just died away.

"Squall coming on!" said the old boatman, the first words he had vouchsafed.

The doctor started as from a trance. A dark, low-lying cloud was approaching, and at that moment obscured the sun. The air was intensely still. He seized an oar and began pulling away for dear life. His wife—his wife! What if he should never see her again! The fear shot through his heart like an arrow.

He looked at the cowering woman before him, but her power to charm was gone; the spell was broken. The sudden danger made him himself again.

Oh, if he could undo this last hour! Why had he been so weak and foolish? Would Madge ever forgive him?

And where was Madge? She had snatched her hat and started for the village boat-house. She did not walk fast, but proceeded with a quietness and deliberation born of calm despair.

When she arrived at her destination she did not see the old keeper of the boat house. A half-grown, uncouth-looking youth was the only creature in sight.

"Who went in that?" she said, pointing to a boat that was slowly disappearing around a curve in the river.

"Dr. Rogers and a lady."

She said no more, but stood gazing at the boat as it disappeared from view. She remained there some time, still looking seaward. It seemed as if her whole life, especially the last year of it, came up before her like a picture. And what a pretty picture it was! How happy she had been! It seemed ages ago now, and she felt like some other person, some old, troubled woman looking back on the life of her happy youth. She remembered how young she really was, and thought with horror of the long life before her.

"I cannot bear it!" she muttered. "And the water is so near?"

She began to grow weak; her lips trembled. There was a little boat moored to the shore just beside her. She started toward it, reached the water's edge, and knew no more.

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The wind was blowing a gale; the rain fell in torrents. Three very wet and dismal-looking figures emerged from a boat that had just arrived half full of water.

"Come into the boat-house till I can get a conveyance to take you home," said Dr. Rogers to his dripping companion. "Hard is the way of the transgressor," he muttered to himself as he turned away.

Some one touched him on the shoulder.

"Want you right away. There's been an accident."

"Where is it?"

"This way; the next house. We're afraid the lady's drowned."

He followed without delay.

"How did it happen?" he inquired.

"She came down here just as your boat was going out of sight and asked me who was in it. I told her you and some lady, and then she stood and looked over the river a long time, and before I knew it she walked right off the bank."

A horrible fear seized him. He pushed past the youth, entered the house, and made his way to the patient's room he knew not how.

"Oh, God, have mercy!" he exclaimed, as he saw the white face of his wife.

A number of persons were in the room, and kind hands administered to her; but her face looked set and lifeless.

For a moment he felt paralyzed; all his professional coolness deserted him in the face of his own personal distress. At last, with an effort, he drew himself together and conquered his emotion sufficiently to begin the usual method of restoration.

They rolled her in blankets, and administered all the remedies known to the medical profession. Ever and anon the doctor called her name and groaned in agony of soul.

"Spare her—spare her! I know I am unworthy, but I will atone!" he kept muttering to himself.

At last Madge became conscious. She opened her eyes and gazed wonderingly around her.

"What is the matter?"

"You have been very ill, dear, that is all."

"And I had such a dreadful dream, too. I can't remember it all now," with a troubled look.

"There—don't think of it. You need rest; take this," he said giving her a sleeping draught.

She obeyed him like a docile child. All night long the repentant husband watched beside his wife and prayed and wrestled with remorse. As dawn approached he slept, his face against her pillow.

He was awakened by a soft hand laid across his brow. His wife was looking at him, perfectly conscious.

"My darling, what does all this mean?" she said.

"It means that God has spared you to me. It means that I have been tempted, and almost fallen, and if you had died the punishment would have been greater than I could bear. Can you forgive me, Madge?"

"Yes, freely, my husband!"

After that Miss Una Owens went back to the city and accepted an engagement at the theatre where she had formerly been employed.

She had left the stage a few months before to nurse her widowed aunt, from whom she hoped to inherit a fortune; but the life was so dull, and her aunt so quarrelsome after the doctor withdrew his attentions, that she gave it up in disgust, and sought more congenial employment.

And Eden Bower became Eden Bower once more, and the serpent never entered it again.