

[FOR THE CRITIC.]

SONNET.

TO NIGHT.

Hail! sable Queen, enrobed in sober grace,
 Like bat enshrouded in the twilight grey,
 Hovering about to seize whatever may
 A victim fall within his swift embrace.
 Weary and surfeit from the floral chere;
 Thy richest odors from the breath of day
 Effuse about my couch as down I lay
 My restless limbs and fever covered face;
 Bring some sweet melody from the convex skies,
 From regions unexplored, where holiness
 Illuminates the pure and saintly eyes—
 Some whisperings of peace and friendliness;
 And wrap me in thy folds as evening dies,
 That I may know thee in thy loveliness.

J. W. G.

[FOR THE CRITIC.]

"THE LASSIE I LOVE BEST."

(Concluded.)

"You do not speak, Joan," Marion said presently; "do you not think it will be a good thing?"

"I think," Jean said, speaking as steadily as she could, "that a thing is not good unless it is right, and I cannot think it was right of you to accept Will Grantly merely because he was 'so terribly in earnest.' Besides, she added, her voice trembling a little, "I do not think you realize the blessedness of being loved by such an one as he, or you would not have spoken as you did, of 'not doing so badly.'"

"What a strange little thing you are, Jean," Marion said, her fair face flushing, "but then you never did take things like anyone else."

This was all that passed between them on the subject, and a week later Marion and her aunt were gone.

Months passed, and all went on much as usual with the Middletons. Will Grantly continued coming as he had always done; but the old footing between himself and Jean could never be re-established. Sometimes she wished he would stay away, his coming made the task of forgetting so much harder; and then she shuddered as she thought of what it would be like if he did not come.

Spring came at last. She had met with many repulses, and had shed many tears, but firmly, though gently, she had held her ground; and now, the whole land acknowledged her sway.

It was one morning early in June that Helen received a letter, which she read with so grave a face, that Jean knew at once something unusual had occurred. The letter was from Marion, and in it she informed them that her engagement with Will Grantly was at an end. "I should never have consented to marry him," the letter said; "it was very weak and foolish of me to do so, merely because he wished it so much. I see my mistake now, and feel that it is better for us both that our engagement should end."

Undoubtedly, it was going to be better for Marion, at least from her standpoint; for, in a subsequent letter, she informed them that she had, with the full consent of her aunt, become engaged to a gentleman possessing many good qualities, and a large income.

How this announcement was received by Will, Jean never knew. A week passed before she saw him, and when he came, it was to say good bye. "Business was not very flourishing," he said, "and he meant to try his fortunes in a new field."

After Will Grantly had been absent for some months, he was surprised to find that the heart which he had believed broken past mending, was healing in a most unromantically rapid manner. When nothing but the scar remained, an uncontrollable longing to return home seized him. He was conscious that the memory of a certain pair of brown eyes had much to do with strengthening this longing, and concluded that it must have been Jean for whom he had always cared; but that his head had been turned for a season by the older sister's beauty. This was no doubt true, in a measure, still, it is probable that his head would have remained turned, had the older sister remained true.

The business he had undertaken was progressing favorably under his skillful management, and in a few years he would, in all probability, be a wealthy man. If Jean were to come and share that wealth, all well and good; if not, he felt that its acquisition was a matter of indifference to him.

Shortly after arriving at this state of feeling he one day received an unexpected visit from one of his old friends.

They had been talking together for some time, when the latter suddenly remarked:

"By the way, do you know that Tremaine is paying particular attention to that little Middleton girl?"

"Do you mean Jean?"

"Yes, the little dark one, you know."

Yes, Will knew.

"I don't know whether she regards him with favor or not; but for his sake I hope she does as the poor fellow is very far gone indeed."

Will did not echo this wish, and after his friend had left him he sat for a long time thinking of what he had heard. At first he could not take it in at all; it seemed so strange to think that perhaps she might be passing beyond his reach—the little friend—to whom he had been all in all in the old days.

Shortly after this, within a few weeks of the second Christmas since he had left home, he received a letter from his father, speaking of failing health and a wish to see his son.

This was a summons which Will felt he could not disregard.

He had not written of his intended return, and Jean knew nothing of his coming until he stood before her.

"Is it really you Will?" she said, just as she had done on that Christmas Eve two years before, when he had come in so unexpectedly.

He did not kiss her now as he had done then; for it was not a child's face into which he looked so earnestly, and besides he did not know but what that privilege now belonged to another.

She was alone when he came, for Marion had been married for some time and Helen was with her aunt.

Will was glad to find that his supposed rival was absent from home. He felt he would not have endured seeing "that fellow hanging round." Whether "that fellow" had hung round to any purpose or not he could not divine, but decided upon ending the uncertainty as soon as possible.

It was the evening before Christmas, and Mr. Middleton having some writing to do had gone to his study, so Jean sat alone by the parlor fire. She was neither reading nor working, but sat with folded hands thinking of many things. Presently she fell asleep, and upon awakening found that Will Grantly was standing beside her chair looking down at her with an expression which made her suddenly sit up very straight, while she said,—"I'm afraid, since I did not hear you come in, that I have been guilty of napping."

"I'm glad you are awake at last," he said, "I was beginning to think that you meant to entertain me by sleeping all the evening."

After this there was silence between them for some moments, when Will turned to her suddenly and asked:

"Do you know when Tremaine intends returning?"

Jean replied in the negative, coloring slightly as she did so.

"Will you forgive me," he continued, "when I ask if your unkindness had anything to do with his departure?"

"I think he had no choice about going, anyway," she answered, unconsciously committing herself.

"Thank you for the 'anyway,'" Will said.

After a few moments he turned to her again.

"Jean," he said, "where Tremaine has failed may I hope to succeed?"

Jean made no verbal answer, but,—

"She had no heart to say him na;
 At length she blushed a sweet consent
 And love was aye between them twa."

S. E. R. M.

[FOR THE CRITIC.]

HON. EDWARD BLAKE AND HON. J. S. D. THOMPSON.

Mr. Blake is undoubtedly one of the ablest lawyers in the Dominion. His ability, his high scholarship, and his eloquence, combine to render him one of the foremost public men of America. Yet, to judge from the epithets applied to him by some Conservative journals, we might suppose him one of the most feeble, most worthless, and most infamous of men, a supposition which would be very far indeed from the truth. Several of these party papers have, time and again, accused him of being entirely destitute of all commendable sentiments of patriotism, and of being irredeemably prone to disparage in every possible way the circumstances, advantages, and prospects of our common country. Whether or not, any, or all of them, believed this grave accusation, I have no means of knowing; but that Mr. Blake recently delivered before a select and distinguished audience, in the "Athens of Britain," an able and elegant speech—one of the most patriotic that ever fell from the lips of a Canadian—and that up to this time, it has not even been referred to by some so-called Liberal-Conservative organs, are facts which I do know, and which cannot be disputed.

Some journals seemingly believe that they are defending the N. P., when they call Mr. Blake the "leader of the Rebel party." This charge is based on what? On Mr. B.'s actions or expressed leanings? Not at all! It rests on the unwarranted supposition that he will make common cause with the whiners over the fate of the crank-rebel, Louis Riel! He never will.

I do not say that all belonging to the Liberal-Conservative party have been so maliciously unfair. Most of them, I believe, are too sensible to say or to believe such rubbish. I speak only of extreme partizans, of whom each party has too many.

With equal injustice has Mr. Thompson been dealt with by some of his political opponents. Before his entrance into public life, in 1877, although he was very well known, being *facile princeps* among the best lawyers of the Lower Provinces, nothing appeared in reference to him in the public prints but what reflected credit upon him as a professional man, and as a man of honor. When it became known that he had consented, after several pressing invitations, to take a place in the arena of politics, as a Liberal-Conservative, men of the opposite party—not, however, without some honorable exceptions—began to abuse him in a manner that would not be unworthy of the old fish-retailers of Billingsgate, and that provoked Antigonish County to elect him to the House of Assembly by a majority of 571. This unscrupulous and unmerited abuse continued until July, 1882, when the honorable gentleman was appointed to the Supreme Court Bench. Leading barristers in all parts of the Province expressed their cordial approbation of his appointment. Then, probably, thinking his return to political life a most unlikely contingency, and, therefore, having no further motive for continuing to do him injustice, some of his whilom bitterest opponents commended his elevation to the Bench, and lauded him to the skies as a gentleman of transcendent ability and unimpeachable character.