

COQUETTE.

My sweet, 'tis neat, but indiscreet,
That you so use those eyes of thine;
You make me vexed; I'm sore perplexed
To know, indeed, if you'll be mine;
Your fickle ways I can't define.

I'm most enraged; tho' we're engaged,
Now, you love me, then, love me not,
And well I may fret all the day,
For little can I tell my lot;
Perchance 'twill be that I'm forgot.

Ne'er did I yet see gay coquette
As cruel as you—you ne'er relent;
But do beware, my sweet, take care—
Forgive me all this sad lament—
Perhaps ere long you will repent.

Ah! now you smile, and all the while
Your eyes are telling of your heart;
Now, I can see you play on me
With all the graces art,
Which of your nature forms a part.

Montreal.

G. T. B.

THE
GOLD OF CHICKAREE.

BY

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"WIDE, WIDE WORLD," and "DOLLARS AND CENTS," "WYCH HAZEL," etc.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE.

"Papa," said Primrose, very thoughtfully, "do you think Hazel will marry Duke?"

Dr. Maryland and his daughter were driving homeward after some business which had taken them to the village.

"She will if she knows what is good for her," the doctor answered decidedly.

"But she has been away from Chickaree now nearly a year."

"I don't know what her guardian is thinking of," Dr. Maryland said, somewhat discontentedly.

"Duke is her guardian," remarked Primrose.

"You land a fish sometimes best with a long line, my dear."

"People say she has been very gay at Newport."

"I am sorry to hear it."

"Do you think, papa, she would ever settle down and be quiet and give all such gaiety up?"

"The answer to that lies in what I do not know, my dear."

"Papa," Primrose went on, after the pause of a minute, "don't you think the will was rather hard upon Hazel?"

"No," said the doctor, decidedly. "What can a girl want more?"

"But if she does not like Duke?"

"She is not obliged to marry him."

"But she can't marry anybody else, papa, without losing all her fortune, that is—"

"Till she is twenty-five, my dear; only till she is twenty-five. She is not obliged to wait any longer than that, and no woman need be married before she is twenty-five."

Primrose laughed a little privately at the statement which she did not combat. She was thinking that Duke did not look at all depressed, and querying whether it was because he did not care. The old buggy stopped before the door of the long, low stone house, and the conversation went no farther.

Meanwhile, far away in the city, the young lady in question had discovered what nobody knew, and at last had unveiled her own secret. Not doubting, as she had glanced at it before, but beyond question, as an accepted fact. She hid it well from other people; she was at no pains to hide it from herself. Pains would have been of no use. If, in the somewhat secluded quiet of the first part of the winter, she had contrived a little to confuse things, it was no longer possible the moment she was out in the world again. Well she knew that she would rather live over three minutes in the red room when she had unconsciously pleased Mr. Rollo's taste, than to dance the gayest dance with such men as Stuart Nightingale, or do miles of promenading with the peers of Mr. May. For to Wych Hazel, to care for anybody so, was to care not two straws for anybody else. The existence, almost, of other men sank out of sight. She heard their compliments, she laughed at their talk, but through it all neither eye nor ear would have missed the faintest token of Mr. Rollo's presence; and since he was not there, she amused herself with mental comparisons not very flattering to the people at hand. She could not escape their admiration, but it was rather a bore. She *care* to have them stand round her, and join her in the street, and ask her to drive! She *enjoy* their devotion! "In idea," she belonged to somebody else, some time ago; now, the idea was her own; and she cared no more for the rest of the world than if they had been so many lay figures. It was not too easy, sometimes, to hide this; not easy always to look long enough at the hearts laid at her feet, to give them the sympathetic courtesy which was their due. She never had tried her hand at flirting; but it was left for this season to stamp Miss Kennedy as "the most unapproachable woman in town." Which, however, unfortunately, made her more popular than ever. She was so lovely in her shy reserve; the hard-won favours were so delightful; the smiles so witching when

they came; and nobody ever suspected that what she did with all her triumphs was to mentally bestow them on somebody else. They belonged to him, now, not to her, and for her had no other value.

It was a very timid consciousness of all this that Hazel allowed herself, even yet. Thoughts were scolded out of sight and shut up and hushed; but none the less they had their way; and the sudden coming of forbidden thoughts, and the half oblivion of things at hand, made the prettiest work that could be in face and manner. A sweeter shyness than that of the girl who had nothing to hide watched all doors that led to her secret; a tamer reserve than mere timidity kept back what belonged to one man alone. A certain womanly veil over the girlish face but made the beautiful life changes more beautiful still. If anything, she looked younger than she had done the year before.

All this being true, why then did Miss Kennedy throw herself into the whirl of society, and carry her elder guardian about with her from place to place, till they had nearly made the round of all the gay scenes of winter and summer? Very simply and plainly, she said to herself, because there was nothing else to do. Of course she could not settle down permanently away from home; and as to going back to Chickaree—to rides, and walks, and talks—with September hurrying on as if everybody was in a hurry to have it—that was out of the question. The very idea took her breath away. Till September Mr. Rollo had pledged himself to be quiet; longer it could not be expected of him. No, she must keep her distance, and keep moving; and if she had to meet her fate, meet it at least on a sudden. She could not sit still and think about it. If she could have persuaded Mr. Falkirk, Hazel would have gone straight to Europe, and stayed there till—she did not know when. She had an overpowering dread of going home, and seeing Mr. Rollo, and having herself and her secret brought out into the open day. So she rushed about from one gay place to another, and hid herself in the biggest crowds she could find; and all the while went to his "penury readings" (in imagination), and counted the days that were yet left before the end of September. But the tension began to tell upon her, and her face took a delicate look that Mr. Falkirk did not like to see, in spite of the ready colour that flickered there in such fitful fashion. And then, Dr. Arthur Maryland, watching her one night at the Ocean House, with his critical eyes, gave his opinion, unasked. All that appeared was purely professional.

"She would be better at home, Mr. Falkirk, with different surroundings, and more quiet. Just now she is attempting too much. But do not tell her I say so."

The advice chimed in well with Mr. Falkirk's own private notions and opinions. It pleased him not to have his ward so given up to society, so engrossed with other people, as for months he had been obliged to see her. Mr. Falkirk had a vague sense of danger, comparable to the supposed feelings of a good mother when which has followed her brood of ducklings to the edge of the water. For Mr. Falkirk's attendance seemed to himself not much more valuable or efficient to guard from evil than the said mother-hen's clucking round the pond. True, he stood by, and saw that Wych Hazel was there; he went and came with her; but the waves of the social entertainment floated her hither and thither, and he could scarce follow at a distance, much less navigate for her. What she was doing, or saying, or engaging to do, was quite beyond his ken or his management. Besides, Mr. Falkirk thought it ill that the beautiful home at Chickaree should be unoccupied; and ill that Wych Hazel's tastes and habits should be permanently diverted from home joys and domestic avocations. He was very much in the dark about Rollo; but, knowing nothing about the secret compact for the year, and seeing that Rollo did not of late seek his ward's society, and that Wych Hazel shunned to come near his neighbourhood, and affected any other place rather, he half comforted himself with the thought that as yet his little charge was his only, and her sweet trust and affection unshared by anybody who had a greater claim.

So Mr. Falkirk issued his decree, and made his arrangements; that is, he told Wych Hazel he thought she ought to go to Chickaree for the rest of the season; and, seeing that she must, Wych Hazel agreed.

It came to be now the end of August. And all through the season, Rollo had kept at his work or his play in the Hollow, and he had not sought out Wych Hazel in her various abiding places. Perhaps he was too busy; perhaps he was constantly expecting that her wanderings would cease, and she would return to her own home. Perhaps he guessed partly at the reason for her keeping at a distance, and would not hurry her by any premature importunity. And, perhaps—for some men are so—he was willing that she should run to the end of her line, see all that she cared to see, and find, if she could find, anything that she liked better than him. It might have been patiently or impatiently; but Rollo waited, and did not recall—did not go after her. And now she was coming home.

It was September and one week of it gone. Rollo had ridden over to Dr. Maryland's to dinner, and the little party were just sitting down to the table, when Dr. Arthur arrived. He had been, we know, at Newport, on business of his own, where Wych Hazel and Mr. Falkirk were, and was just returned after an absence of some weeks. He was a lion, of course, as any one is in a country home who has ventured out into

the great sea of the world and come home again; and his sisters could hardly serve him fast enough, or listen eagerly enough to his talk at the dinner-table. Though Prim cared most for the sound of his voice, and Mrs. Coles for what it had to tell.

"And you saw Miss Kennedy, Arthur, did you?" this latter lady asked, with a view to getting intelligence through various channels at once, keeping her ears for him and her eyes for Rollo.

"I saw Miss Kennedy."

"How was she looking, Arthur?" said Prim.

"Not very well, I thought. That is, well according to you ladies, but not according to us doctors."

"Not well?" echoed Prim in dismay; while Rollo said nothing and did not even look.

"Rather delicate it seemed to me," said Dr. Arthur. "But she is coming to-morrow, Prim, so you can judge for yourself."

"Is she as much admired as ever?" quoth Mrs. Coles, eyeing Rollo hard by stealth and not making much of him.

"More. And deserves it."

"How does she deserve more?" said Rollo.

"I am not good at descriptions," Dr. Arthur answered, somewhat briefly.

"I suppose she takes all she gets?" said Prudentia.

"Difficult to do anything else with it."

"Who is her special admirer now, or the most remarkable? for she reckons them by scores."

"All seemed to be special. One or two young Englishmen made themselves pretty prominent."

"That Sir Henry something—was he one of them? Is he there?"

"Crofton? Yes, he was there."

"What do people say, Arthur? Who of them is going to have her?"

"People say everything. And know nothing."

"That's true—sometimes. But whom does she dance with oftenest? Did you notice?"

"I saw her dance but once, and so could not notice," said Dr. Arthur.

"Well, what was that? and whom with? If you saw her dance only once, that might tell something."

"No, it might not; for I never went into the ball-room. This once that I spoke of was at a private party, and the dancing was on the lawn. Crofton was her partner then."

"Crofton was her partner? Sir Henry Crofton. Waiting with her? Then he'll be the man, you see if he won't. Was he waiting with her?"

"Nonsense, Prudentia!" said her sister. "He won't be the one; and it proves nothing if she was waiting with him. Why shouldn't she wait with him, as well as with anybody else?"

"You'll see," said Prudentia. "Answer my question, Arthur. Was it a waltz?"

"A waltz they call it," said Dr. Arthur, with considerable disgust. "I should choose a longer name, and call it an abomination."

"I don't believe Arthur is a good witness, Prim," said Rollo. "His testimony gets confused. Does he ever go walking in his sleep in these days—nights, I mean?"

"I was awake then," said Dr. Arthur. "And why you women don't put that thing down!"

"Arthur!" said Prim, half laughing but half fearful too, "it's rather hard on the people who don't go, to tell them they ought to put a stop to it; and the people who do go, some of them, do it very innocently."

"Yes!" said Dr. Arthur, "and any man who takes such a young, pure face into that whirling-gig ought to be shot!"

"I daresay she'll marry Sir Henry Crofton," said Mrs. Coles.

But Rollo did not seem terrified, and did not seem to pay much attention to the whole thing, she thought. He was rather silent the rest of the dinner; but so he had been the former part of it, ever since Dr. Arthur had come home to talk. To Prudentia he never said more words than were civilly necessary. As soon as dinner was over, he mounted and rode away.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT COMES OF ON THE.

Wych Hazel had not wanted to come home. But neither did she at all wish to arouse Mr. Falkirk's suspicions by a too strenuous resistance; and besides, when he really made up his mind to a thing, she had to yield; so, with much secret trepidation, and a particularly wayward outside development, she made the journey; and late the next night after Dr. Arthur's revelations, laid her head on the pillows in her own room at Chickaree, with a strange little feeling of gladness, that half began to take the trepidation in hand. Well—it was not the end of September yet; she would have a little breathing space. And then—Wych Hazel dropped asleep.

Things "happen," as we say, strangely sometimes. Threads which should lie smooth and straight alongside of each other and make no confusion, get all snarled, and twisted, and thrown crosswise of each other by just a little breeze of influence, or some slight impulse on one side. And so it fell next day.

Mrs. Powder, who had also been at Newport, and left it three days before Wych Hazel, had engaged her and Mr. Falkirk to lunch for this very day, the next after their arrival. That was one thread, not necessarily touching, one would say, the grand event of the day, which

was Rollo's coming and visit at Chickaree. For that visit was to have been made right early in the morning, and Collingwood was ordered, and even mounted, when there, came a message from the mills. Some complication or accident of business made the master's presence necessary. Rollo went to the Hollow, and stayed there till he had but just time left to get to Chickaree before luncheon. This thread was twisted.

The carriage at the door. Rollo threw himself off his horse and went in. He was too late. Just within the door he met the little lady he came to see, standing in her pretty draperies of mantle and veil, ready for her drive; and Mr. Falkirk was behind her.

"O Mr. Rollo!" she said (fortified with this last fact) "you have come for lunch!"

"Have I?" said he, as he took her hand in the old-fashioned way. "I see I shall not get it."

"Will getting it to-morrow help you to dispense with it to-day? We are engaged at Mrs. Powder's. You see I must go."

"I see you must go. I have been delayed."

Mr. Falkirk, according to his own accustomed tactics, passed out upon the veranda after giving his own greeting, leaving the others alone. Rollo had come in with a face flushed with pleasure and riding; now a certain shade fell upon it; his brow grew grave, as if with sudden thought.

"I will not detain you," he said, after, seeing that Mr. Falkirk was at a safe distance; "only let me ask one question. Arthur Maryland says he saw you waltzing with that English Crofton. I know it is not true; but tell me, say that I may contradict him. He was mistaken?"

"Dr. Arthur! was he there?" voice and face too shewed a sudden check.

"But he did not see that?" said Rollo, with eyes which seemed as if they would deny the fact by sheer force of will.

Her eyes had no more than glanced at him hitherto, shyly withholding themselves. But now they looked full into his face, using the old, wistful, girlish right of search; watching him as keenly as sometimes he watched her. She answered gravely:

"How could Dr. Arthur be mistaken in what he says he saw?"

"Is it true?" came with an astonished, very glance of the gray eyes. She drew herself up a little, stepping back.

"It is true—since he says so—that he saw me among the rest."

It is not often that we see a man lose colour from intense feeling. Wych Hazel's eyes were now. Rollo stood still before her, for a space of time that neither could measure, growing very pale, while at the same time the lines on his lip and brow gradually took a firmer and firmer set. Motionless as an iron statue, and assuming more and more the fixedness of one, he stood, while minute after minute slipped by. To Wych Hazel the time probably seemed measureless and endless; while to Rollo, in the struggle and tumultuous whirl of feeling, it was only a single sharp point of existence. He stood with his eyes cast down; and without raising them, without uttering another syllable, for which I suppose he had not self-control, at last he bowed gravely and low, and turned away. In another minute, the bay horse and his rider went past the door and were gone.

On her part, Wych Hazel had stood waiting, expecting him to speak, scanning his face with eager scrutiny. Then, with a grave shadow of disappointment upon her own, looked down again, nervously herself for the words of anger which must follow such a look. But when he turned, she raised her head quickly and looked after him, following with her eyes as long as eyes could follow, listening as long as ears could hear—then drew her veil over her face and went down and entered the carriage. Answering, somehow, Mr. Falkirk's words; and, somehow, taking her part in Mrs. Powder's festivities.

Of the interminable length of those bridges from life-point to life-point, over which we must sometimes pass at a foot-pace! Is anything more intolerable than the monotonous tramp, tramp, of the meaningless steps? Is anything more sickening than the easy sway of the bridge, which seems to make the whole world rest, while in truth it is only ourselves? If Wych Hazel had been asked afterwards who was at Mrs. Powder's, and what was said, and when she came home, she could not have told a word. She came with a scarlet spot on either cheek, burning brighter and brighter. They were very beautiful, people said.

But to-morrow he would come, when his anger was cooled down. What if he did? Her pain this time had had used a trident. He had doubted her. Then he *could* doubt her! Then, he never could trust. And what was anything after that? Not her discretion merely, as before; not her obedience; but her word! Well, he would come, and she would tell him—that would be one little shred of comfort, at least. But he had looked at her so? and then—he had turned his eyes away. And no matter what she told him, or what he might believe then, that look had gone down to the depths of her heart. He had doubted her!

Well, the night wore away, somehow, between bitter waking pain and snatches of exhausted sleep; and then the morning—as mornings sometimes will—seemed to speak comfort. He would come, and she would tell him.

But he did not come. And one day followed another, and still there came not even a message; and Wych Hazel waited. No one guessed how little she ate in those days, no one guessed how little she slept; the one thing she knew of