

SEPTEMBER.

SONNET BY HENRY PRINCE.

Like a fair vision of a love long lost,
That fills the soul with joy e'en to remember.
So comes the gipsy, hazel-eyed September,
With gift of fruits for summer's pentecost.
How fair is she, enrobed in emerald glow!
For her wan nature, it's last effort makes;
To brightest light before its final throes,
'Tis all in vain; a yellow melancholy
Lays daily siege to all that lingers fair;
And hope seems but the shadow of despair,
So faint the last sweet blush on things laid lowly.
Then, where exhausted life and beauty lie,
This dear autumnal maid, in tears, lies down to die

THE
GOLD OF CHICKAREE.

BY

SUSAN and ANNA WARNER.

AUTHORS OF

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

CHAPTER XIX.

SCHOOLING.

All Hazel's news thus far had come from Dr. Maryland's house; brought by Primrose or sent in a note. There was not much to tell; at least not much that anybody wanted to tell. The sick-beds in the two cabins, the heavy atmosphere of disease, the terrible quarantine, the weary tension of day and night, the incessant strain on the physical and mental strength of the few nurses,—nobody wrote or spoke of these. The suspense, nobody spoke of that either. The weeks of October and November slowly ran out, and the days of December began to follow.

One mild, gentle winter morning, Dr. Maryland's little old gig mounted the hill to Chickaree.

Dr. Maryland had not been there, as it happened, for a long time; not since the event which had made such a change in all the circumstances of its mistress; nor in all that time had he seen Hazel. The place looked wintry enough to-day, with its bare trees, and here and there the remnant of a light snow that had fallen lately; but the dropped leaves were carried away, and the sweep showed fresh touches of the rake; everything was in perfect order. Dingee ushered the visitor into the great drawing-room, to warm himself by a corresponding fire; and there in a minute Hazel joined him, looking grave and flushed. The doctor had not sat down; he turned to face her as she came in.

"Well, my dear!" said he cheerily. "How do you do?"

"Very well, sir, thank you."

"You are alone? Mr. Falkirk is away, I understand; just gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Gone to a sick sister in England, and left you alone."

"Yes sir. It is nothing very new for me to be alone," said Hazel.

"But for you to be so much alone? Well, I suppose he thought there would soon be somebody to take care of you. We have the good news now that those poor people seem to be all getting well. Arthur reports that there are no new cases. I am most thankful!"

Hazel answered with merely a gesture of assent. She had no words to say what she could say.

"I suppose Dane would be soon out of quarantine now.—But he is not quite well himself, Arthur tells me; knocked up by watching and incessant exertions, I suppose."

For a minute Hazel held her breath—growing so white that even the old doctor must see it. Then she turned away in a gentle, noiseless way and leaned her head down upon the back of her chair. She must have support somewhere.

"It is nothing but a low feverish affection," Dr. Maryland hastened to say. "May be tedious, perhaps, for a while, but shows no dangerous symptoms at present. We must not anticipate evil, my dear."

Hazel did answer that; but presently she sat up again and asked one or two quiet questions as to time and place.

"He is at Gilda's, my dear; they took him up there, being the nearest place. Mrs. Boerssen is a good nurse, and devoted to him; and so is Arthur. He will not want anything. Hazel, my child, can you cast your cares off on the one arm strong to help?"

She started up and went to the fire, picking up brands and pushing the red coals right and left, until the wood burst out into brilliant flame. And all the time she was saying to herself, "He will not leave me,—he does not want me." But she came back to her place again without a word. Dr. Maryland looked on, pitying, feeling for her, and yet oddly without anything to say. He had lived so long and seen so much of life and had got so far above its changes; more, he had lived so much in his study and felt life so little except in contemplation, and with so small an admixture of practical experience of human nature, that he looked at the young thing before him and was conscious of his unreadiness, and in some sort of his unfitness, to minister to her.

"Are you lonely, my dear? Would you like to have Primrose come and keep you company?"

"Oh no!" said Hazel hastily. Then she began again, and tried to catch up her eager words and soften off their corners; speaking with a wistful affectionate tone that was half pleading, half deprecating. "I mean—I do not want anybody with me, sir. I am out a great deal—and sometimes very busy at home. And—some other time, maybe, Primrose will come."

Dr. Maryland considered her with a recognizing smile on his lips, and a very tender look in his thoughtful eyes.

"I understand," he said. "There is room in the house for only one presence just now.—Are you going to be a true helpmeet to Dane, Hazel, in all his work?"

"I do not know, sir,"—Hazel always classed such questions, coming to a preoccupied mind, under the general head of 'pins and needles,' and never by any chance gave them much of an answer.

"He will want a helpmeet. A wife can hinder her husband, or help him, very materially. Dane has taken a great deal on his shoulders. He thinks you will be a help to him; 'the best possible,' he told me one day, when I ventured to ask him."

The words shook her so, coming close as they did upon the news of his illness, upon thoughts of his danger, that for a minute Hazel moved like one bodily pain; and more than one minute went by, before she answered, low and huskily,—*"He knew I would try."*

"My dear, there is only one way," the old doctor said very tenderly. "Dane has set out to follow his Master. If you would help him you must follow with him."

Hazel glanced up at the kind face from under her eyelashes. Could she dare open her heart to him? No,—young as she was, her life experience had cut deeper channels than Dr. Maryland's own; he could not follow her; it was no use; she must bear the trials and work out her problems alone.

"I know, sir," she said gently. But she said no more. And perhaps Dr. Maryland had an intuitive sense that the right words could not be spoken just then, and that the wrong ones would be worse than an impertinence. For he only looked gravely at the young creature, and added no more either of counsel or comfort at that time. He did not stay long, nor talk much while he staid, of anything; but he was thoughtfully observant of Hazel. He gave her a parting shot on taking leave.

"Good-bye, my dear," he said with a kind and shrewd smile. "I hope Dane will not let you have your own way too much for your good;—but I am afraid of it."

The girl's eyes flashed up at him then, as if she thought there was *rather* less danger of that than of any other one thing in the world. Then she ran down the steps after her old friend, and gave little finishing touches to his comfort in the shape of a foot-muff and an extra lap-robe, and held his hand for a minute in both hers,—all with very few words and yet saying a great deal. And when Dr. Maryland reached home, he found that a basket of game had in some surreptitious manner got into his gig.

"Small danger of that!" Hazel thought, going back to his remark, as she went back into the house. But it was not such a question that brought the little hands in so weary fashion over her face. She stood very still for a minute, and then went swiftly upstairs to finish the work which Dr. Maryland had interrupted. That could not wait; and Hazel was learning, slowly, that the indulgence of one's own sorrow *can*. So the work was well done; only with two or three sighs breathed over it, which gave kind Mrs. Bywank a headache for the rest of the day. But then Hazel hastily swallowed a cup of the chicken broth and went off to her room. It had come now, without if or perhaps, and she could only sit down and face it. The one person in all the world to whom she belonged,—the only one that belonged to her!—

For a while, in the bitterness of the knowledge that he was sick, Hazel seemed to herself half benumbed; and sat stupidly dwelling on that one fact, feeling it, and yet less with a sense of pain than of an intolerable burden. A weight that made her stir and move sometimes, as if she could get away from it so. It was no use to tell her not to anticipate; to say he was not much sick; that was thin ice, which would not bear. And now on a sudden Hazel found herself confronted with a new enemy, and was deep in the fight. What then? Only her own will in a new shape.

She had come out so gently and sweetly, so clearly too, from the mouths of restless perplexity and questioning; she had agreed, she had decided, that her will should be the Lord's will. Now came a sudden sharp test. She had chosen heaven, with earth yet in her hand,—now if earth were taken away! And what if to do the Lord's will should be all that was left her, to fill her life? Did her consent, did her acceptance, reach so far?

And—Oh how hard that was!—to study the question, she must throw full upon it the light (or the darkness) of things that might be. Things that she would not have let any one say to her, knife-edged possibilities came and went and came again, till Hazel stopped her ears and buried her face in the cushions and did everything in the world to shut them out. What use? She *had* to consider them. Was she willing now that the Lord should do what he pleased with *him*?—She could not word it any other way. And the fight was long; and time and again pain came in such measure that she could

attend only to that. And so the day went by with occasional interruptions, and then the unbroken night.

She could submit,—she must submit: could she accept? Nothing was anything without that. And she was getting almost too worn out to know whether she could or not. So she would sit, with her face buried in her hands, putting those fearful questions to herself, and with answering shivers running over her from head to foot. Then would come interval of restless pacing the floor, thinking all sorts of things; chiefly, that the very minute it was light she would set off for Morton Hollow. What would that serve? what could she do if she were there? But one Hand could meddle with these things, and work its will. And for a while a bitter sense of the Lord's absolute power seemed to lie on her head and heart till she felt crushed. She could not walk any longer, she could not debate questions; she could only lay her head against the arm of the chair, and sit still, bearing that dull pain, and starting at the sharp twinges that now and then shot through it.

There came to her at last, as she sat there, suddenly, the old words. Words read to her so long ago, and learned so lately. They had reached her need then, and there she had in a sort left them, bound up with that. But once more now they came, so new, so glorious, all filled with light.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us!"—The key to life work, but no less to life endurance. And the key turned softly, and the bolts flew back, and Wych Hazel covered her face saying eagerly, "Yes, yes!"

But then, even with the saying, she broke quite down, and a stormy flood of tears swept over her, and left her at last asleep.

There was no getting back when the day dawned. But Hazel soon found that this question was not to be ended once for all like the other. It came up anew with each new morning, and must be so met, and answered: in full view of what unknown possibilities the day might bring or the night have brought, the assenting "yes" must be spoken. The struggle was long, sometimes, and sometimes it was late before she left her room; but those who saw her face of victory when she came would remember it always.

Still, the days were long. And hearts are weak; and Hazel grew exceedingly weary. Chafing most of all against the barriers that kept her from Morton Hollow. At first, when Dr. Maryland left her that night she thought she should go with the sunrise next day. Then she recollected herself.

"I said I would follow his bidding if I *could*," she remembered,—*"and I can wait one day."*

And so she *could* wait two, and so she waited on. One day she *must* go; the next, she would write and ask permission. "But he never asked me to write!"—she thought suddenly, covering her face in shame. "What would he think of me?" But oh, why had he given such orders?

It was the old story,—she was supposed to have no discretion.

"I dare say he thought I should rush over if I had a fingerache!" she said with some natural indignation. Was she then really so little to be trusted? Wych Hazel sat down to study the matter, and as usual, before the exercise had gone on long, she began to foot up hard things against herself. How she had talked to him that night!—what things she had told him! Then afterwards what other things she had proposed to do,—propositions that were stamped at once with the seal of impropriety. Hazel pressed her hands to her cheeks, trying to call off those painful flushes. Well—he should see now!—She could wait, if he could. Which praiseworthy climax was reached—like the top of Mount Washington—in a shower of rain. But the whole effect of these musings was to make her shrink within herself, and take up again all the old shyness which had been yielding, little by little, before the daily intercourse of the month past. Prim found her very stately over reports, after this; and even good Dr. Maryland would often fare no better, and betake himself home in an extremely puzzled state of mind. That the girl was half breaking her heart over the twofold state of things, nobody would have guessed. Unless, possibly, Mrs. Bywank.

Meantime, the purchase of the Hollow property from Gov. Powder had been completed; and the fine fall weather tempting people to stay and come, and the region being thus full of guests, Chickaree had been regularly besieged during most of these two months. And almost at the time the sickness broke out in the Hollow, Mr. Falkirk had been summoned to England, where his only remaining sister was living, with the news that she was very ill. Mr. Falkirk had nevertheless stood to his post, until the fever had gone in the Hollow and he saw that Rollo would soon be able to resume his place. And then he had gone, much to Wych Hazel's disgust. "It seems," she said, "that I can never want anybody—even my own guardians,—so much as somebody else!"

CHAPTER XX.

ABOUT CHRISTMAS.

The days lingered along, but no worse news came. Rollo was slowly regaining his usual condition. Still December was half gone before with all his good will he could undertake the drive from the Hollow to Chickaree.

Late one afternoon Dr. Arthur set him down at the old house door. A cool winter breeze was fitfully rustling the dry leaves and giving a monitory brush past the house now and then; whispering that Christmas was near and snow coming. Staying for no look at the sunlight in the tree-tops, Rollo marched in and went straight to the red room. He stood suddenly still on opening the door. No one was there, not even the presence of a fire, but chair and foot-cushion stood as they had been left two months before; the ashes had not been removed and the flowers in the vase had faded and dropped with no renewal. Rollo next went down the hall to Mrs. Bywank's quarters. Here a side door stood open, and Mrs. Bywank herself stood on the steps shading her eyes and gazing down the road.

"What are you looking for, Mrs. Bywank?" said a cheery voice behind her.

"Mr. Rollo!" cried the old housekeeper turning with a delighted face. "I am glad to see you again sir, surely! And well-nigh yourself again! I was just looking for Miss Wych—it is time she was home."

"Where is she?"

"Off and away," said Mrs. Bywank, with the smile of one who knows more than his questioner. "She's a busy little mortal, these days."

"What does she find to be so busy about?"

"I should like to tell you the whole story, sir,—if we had time," said Mrs. Bywank with a glance down the road. "She'll never tell—and I think you ought to know. Step this way Mr. Rollo, and you can see just as well and be more comfortable."

Mrs. Bywank led the way to a little corner room were fire and easy chairs and a large window commanding the approach.

"I suppose you'd like to hear, sir," she said as she replenished the fire, "how the world has gone on down this way for nearly two months back?"

"Very much,"—Dane said gravely, with however a restless look out of the window.

"Well sir, about the first days I cannot say much. I hardly saw Miss Wych at all. She used to dress up and come down and meet Mr. Falkirk, and then she'd go back to her room, and there she staid. Only she'd given me orders about the articles for the Hollow."

So one morning, just as the beef and things were brought into my kitchen, and one of the maids had gone down for a kettle, in walked Miss Wych. "Bye," says she, "I am going to make everything myself in future."—"But my dear!" said I, "you don't know how."

"I am going to learn," says she.

"Well," said I, "you can look on and learn."

"I will do it then and learn," says she—and she marched right up to me and untied my big apron and put it on herself; for I don't believe then she had an apron belonging to her."

Without ceasing to keep watch of the window, Dane's eyes gave token of hearing and heeding, growing large and soft, with a flash coming across them now and then.

"It's a nice business to hinder Miss Wych when she has a mind," Mrs. Bywank went on; "but I couldn't see her tiring herself over the fire—so I said, 'But my dear, think of your hands! No gloves!'"

"What about my hands?" says she.

"Cooking is bad for them Miss Wych," says I.

"Is it?" said she. "Well, they've had their share of being ornamental. What is the first thing to do, Bye?"

"So I felt desperate,—and said I, 'My dear when Mr. Rollo comes back he will not like to find your hands any different from what they are now.—She turned round upon me so,' said Mrs. Bywank laughing a little, 'that I didn't know what she would say to me for my impertinence. However, she only gave me one great look out of her eyes,—and then stood looking at her hands, and then she ran off,—and was gone a good little while. And I felt so bad I couldn't set to work nor anything, till at last I knew it must be done, and I told the girl to set the kettle on. And just then back she came, looking—Well, you'll know some day, sir, how Miss Wych *can* look," said Mrs. Bywank with dim eyes. "However, the gloves were on; and she just took hold, steady and quiet as an old hand, and never opened her lips but to ask a question. Of course I sat by and directed, and kept a girl there to lift and run; but from that day Miss Wych made every single thing that went to the Hollow—or to you, sir—with her own little fingers. So that kept her fast all the mornings."

Dane's eyes did not leave the window. His lips took a firmer compression.

"Then in the afternoons she just shut herself up again,—and I knew that would not do, and I begged her to go out. So she said at last that she could not go and come without such a train—and it did seem as if people were bewitched, sure enough," said Mrs. Bywank. "I think there never *was* such a run on the house. What with you sick and Mr. Falkirk somehow not taking much notice—You know he's gone, sir?"

"Yes."

"Miss Wych took it rather to heart," said Mrs. Bywank. "She couldn't why he went. But I asked her then why she didn't ride in the woods where nobody'd meet her.—'If there was anything to do there!' she said. 'But nobody lives in my woods.'—'Ask Reo,' says I. 'He goes everywhere.'"