

THE GRASSHOPPER.

Grasshopper, grasshopper, dressed all in green,
And scarlet, and copper, and ultramarine.
You're the gayest grasshopper that ever I've seen,
Where are you going to? Where have you been?

Did the hot sun from a dew-drop create you?
Is there a brilliant being to mate you?
Is nature pledged with her last soul to fête you?
Does all the joy in the world await you?

O king of creation! Small bridegroom of June!
O white spark thrown off from the white heat of noon!
Musician who findest the whole world in tune!
Dry drinker, good fellow, pray grant me a boon.

Tell me, if I in the fields were to live, now,
To leap over leaves and among lilies to dive, now,
To revel, and take some gay girl to wife, now,
And give up all thought how to study and strive now,

But lie on the grass, on the brink of the river,
Singing—would such a fine life last forever?
Would summer ne'er go? Would I ne'er have to shiver
In winter's cold blasts for my lack of endeavour?

What? You say that the summer is not yet a-gone—
That you do not feel winter's breath yet a-blowing—
That roses can only be sipped while they're growing—
That in harvest, 'tis better be reaping than sowing.

ACROSS THE GULF.

"He does not know his own mind half a minute," thought Jane, amused. She brought both the tea and water, laughing at him, making playful, girlish jokes about his whims which would have shocked Miss Lowry.

Mr. Imlay did not know his own mind on that day, or on Monday or Tuesday. On Wednesday he was to go home. One hour he felt himself possessed by a demon, an honest, fierce creature who must have Jane, who could not live without Jane; the next, he was the calm and critical William Imlay, making contemptuous pictures of himself bringing home this bride. She would be expected to take the leading part in the religious and literary societies and the aesthetic teas of Third Church society, —Jane, who had but one shabby merino gown, who adored chronos, who asked the other day if the Europeans were generally pagans. He was a fool, —a mad fool. And yet—yet—

Finally, he determined to do nothing until he had consulted his mother. She was wise; she always looked after his best interests. He would lay the whole matter before her.

When he was ready to start on Wednesday morning, he found, to his surprise, the whole household prepared to take the train with him.

"Mr. Sperry and I have business in Philadelphia," explained Mrs. Finn, "and Janey joins Kneedles there."

For an hour and a half longer, therefore, he would have her in sight. He felt an absurd boyish rapture of which he was ashamed. She was with her father in the front of the car; the old man was unusually kind and protecting in his manner to her, and she seemed tired and depressed. Mr. Imlay sat watching her. What rare distinction was in her face and figure! The Third Church had never seen anything like that. If he should bring her among them, it would be like setting up the Venus of Milo beside fashion-plates!

When the train stopped at Philadelphia he hobbled up to her. She looked up. "Is it really time to say 'Good-by'?" she said, her chin quivering a little. Jane was an affectionate creature, and very few people had been kind to her. The quiver of the chin meant just so much,—nothing more. But it touched Mr. Imlay to the quick.

"No. I am not going on to Baltimore to-night. I will stay here, with you," he said, speaking thick and fast. As he handed her from the car his fingers were icy cold.

Jane watched him, wondering, as he sat opposite to her in the carriage, stiff and silent, a pillar of propriety in his high hat and upright collar, beside Mr. Sperry, fat, joking, and, as usual, many-hued as to clothes. Yet, there was a new meaning in the quick furtive glances of the younger man which made her breath come quicker with a pleased terror. It was not altogether an attraction of the blood which held Mr. Imlay there bound to this woman. There was a certain force and directness in her character and life which was totally new to him. He knew nothing of the world outside of books and the calm society of wealthy people whose manners and religion alike were pliable, inoffensive, and elegant. There were plenty of gentle, prettily dressed girls in his church, singing hymns sweetly, working beautiful Bible mottoes. But this shabby teacher, tottering through her youth with this selfish old man and boy on her back, —the sight stirred him like high distant music.

The carriage stopped at the door of a boarding-house on a side street. A lean, pimply man, smelling strongly of brandy, was standing smoking on the steps. He hurried out, tapped Janey familiarly on the back as she alighted, and went with her into the house.

"Business!" said Mr. Sperry. "That's Kneedles. He's sharp on the trigger, I tell you!"

"But that is not a gentleman!" said the clergyman, his pale face flushed. "He is not a fit person to have control of a school for young ladies. Miss Shannon must sever her connection with him at once. I insist—"

"Don't insist on anything just now," said Sperry with a worried look. "Come in; come in. She'll be out presently."

Mr. Imlay waited in the hall until Jane came out of the parlour. Mr. Kneedles preceded her. He stared at the clergyman's white neck-cloth, nodded to Sperry, and turned to the door.

"You'll come down at once!" he said authoritatively to Jane.

"Oh, immediately!" She was excited and pleased. Her eyes sparkled; that peculiar fine smile was on her lips which had become so dear to William Imlay.

As she went out on the steps he followed her; "I will go with you. I have something to say to you."

"As you please." But she hardly noticed him as she tripped lightly on, looking as if she could scarcely keep from singing or laughing. The slanting evening light struck through the quiet street. He observed with keen pleasure that the passers-by invariably glanced a second time at the radiant face under the picturesque wide hat. Was not this delicate rare creature his own?

"Mr. Kneedles is going to double my salary!" she broke out at last. "I shall have more work; but that's nothing. Twenty dollars a week. And we stay here all winter! There are schools that I can afford to send Bob to now, where he will be with gentlemen's sons. And there are lots of dear little houses for thirty dollars a month,—bath-room, gas, marble facings,—simply perfect! I always wanted to keep house. I'm a first-rate cook, Mr. Imlay. Gracious! It's too good to be true!" She swung her umbrella and laughed out loud from sheer gladness. Mr. Imlay shuddered. But no matter! These trifling *gaucheries* would soon be cured.

They were passing an open square filled with aisles of leafless trees. The snow lay deep and untrodden beneath. On the other side of the pavement was a high brick wall covered with flaming placards. It was a quiet place; he would speak to her here: "You speak as if this man Kneedles were to control your future. I think that I— Come away! Why do you look at those things?" he cried, interrupting himself; for she had stopped in front of a great poster and was examining it with beaming eyes. It represented a frowzy female of gigantic proportions, with a liberal display of neck and arms, being dragged by the hair to a precipice by a stalwart villain. Below, enormous red letters notified the public that this was Miss Violet Dupont in her great *role* of the Rose of the Prairie.

"You should not look at those vile things," he repeated gently, laying his hand on her arm.

She drew back so that his hand dropped. "Vile!" she said in a low tone. "Vile!" She grew excessively pale as she stood looking at him steadily. "You do not understand, Mr. Imlay. I am Violet Dupont."

He did not understand even now, nor until she had gone on speaking for some time. He was always uneasy of apprehension. He stared alternately at her and at the placard.

"Mr. Sperry said not to tell you that we were actors; you had prejudices. But—'role'—I did not think anybody—" She put the back of her shut hand up to her mouth with a choking sound, turned, and walked quickly away.

Mr. Imlay followed at a distance for several squares; then he came up to her side. What-ever battle was raging within him, the almost unconscious habit of stiff politeness was still dominant. "I am sorry if I appeared rude," he said. "That picture is really gross, vulgar; and you—you seemed the purest thing on God's earth to me. I cannot associate you with it." His eyes, as he spoke, were fixed on her with the same vacant, amazed survey as when she had first dealt the blow.

"You may associate me with it, then," said Jane tartly; "I am Violet Dupont. I suppose that picture isn't very pretty,—I don't think, myself, it's a flattering likeness of me,—but it's worth a good deal to me in my business. I never had my name on the posters before, and I did not expect to have my picture billed for years to come." And the soft lovely eyes glanced at it with triumph.

For there it was facing them again. On every blank wall, in the windows of the barber-shops and beer-saloons, Violet Dupont, with her bare neck and brawny arms, stared out at him. He turned to the woman whom half an hour ago he had meant to make his wife. There could be no doubt of it: there was an appalling likeness to her in it, and she was delighted with that horrible notoriety. Yet how pure she looked! He stopped, shuddering. She passed on, and he almost ran to overtake her.

As for Jane, she neither saw him lag behind nor run after her. She had forgotten that he was there. Twenty dollars and her picture billed! If this sort of thing went on, Bob could go to college. And Mr. Sperry had wanted to put him to a trade! There was a sweet little house with lace curtains at the windows; something like that, now, could be managed; and a new suit for her father. Her own street-dress was terribly shabby. She anxiously eyed the gown of every pretty girl who passed her. There was not one of them whose heart was filled with more innocent desires than was poor Jane's; but how was Mr. Imlay to know that? The vulgar publicity which would have been loathsome to him, undeniably thrilled her with triumph. She stopped at the back entrance to the theatre.

"Is this the place?"

"Oh, Mr. Imlay! I thought you had gone. Yes, this is the place. I am to be a super to-night, but I rehearse for the *rose* to-morrow," laughing to herself at the alarm and horror in his face. "You won't come in! No. I know: you have prejudices. Good-by, then. I shall see you at dinner."

Prejudices? As she passed down the dark little alley-way a gulf opened between them impassable as death. Yet he would drag her back

over it. This good pure girl tottering on the edge of hell,—should he not put out his hand to save her?

The terrible emergency almost forced William Imlay to know his own mind. He wandered about the streets until nightfall. Once a brother minister met him, and overwhelmed him with congratulations on his escape in the train: "En route to Baltimore, eh? No, no; come and take tea with us, and spend the night. It is our lecture-evening; perhaps you will make a few remarks to my people!"

"I have business," pleaded the wretched man. "There are friends whom I must see."

If Dr. McLeod knew that his friends were strolling players, and his business to marry one of them!

The good doctor went home to his wife greatly troubled. "I met Brother Imlay just now," he said, "and he is completely shattered by that accident. I don't like his looks at all; his mind seems unhinged. I wish I had made him come home with me."

"I wish you had; we have a very nice tea. It would kill Mary Imlay if anything should happen to that boy," said his wife.

About ten o'clock Mr. Sperry ran against the clergyman behind the scenes of the theatre: "How! What! Mr. Imlay! How did you come here?" he exclaimed, shocked at his wild, haggard face. "Come into this room," for the young people were staring and laughing at the clerical neck-tie, which he had taken no pains to hide.

"No. I will stay here. I must see Jane. I must make her give up this life."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Sperry soothingly. "But if you would talk to her to-morrow—"

Mr. Imlay shook his head obstinately. "McLeod," he muttered, "wanted me to preach to-night. But my work is here. He that saves a soul alive—"

"Very well. Janey will be off presently." Mr. Sperry was hurried, and proceeded to make up his face at a glass, by means of cork and burnt umber and a gray wig. It was an anxious, not unskillful bit of work.

Mr. Imlay, left to himself, was startled by the fact that this was all work that was going on about him. A theatre, he had supposed, was a brilliant, bewildering fairy-land, the haunt of wild dissipation: players were lost souls who spent their time in idle jollity and open sin. There was no enchantment and no vice which it would have surprised him to see behind that fatal curtain. What he did see was a dusty floor and the plank backs of trees an inch thick, dirty canvas castles and stormy seas, a table set with tin goblets and a dish of cotton ice-cream. Where was the enchantment, the wicked sirens, the deluded lovers, that everybody knows reveal behind the scenes? Half a dozen workmen with their sleeves rolled up pushed the heavy board screens about; in an inner room some men and women, mostly middle-aged, were ranged on wicker settees, many of them with paper books in their hands, which they studied assiduously until they were called. They seldom spoke to each other, and looked worn and fagged. The players who ran off the stage with a laugh or song seated themselves instantly, dull and silent. Mr. Imlay's mind may have been unhinged, but he had sense enough to see that this was not hellish sport from which he had come to take Jane, but work,—hard, steady drudgery. The fun, the gaiety, belonged to the audience; behind the curtain there were few jokes or laughs. The only idle person was Jane's blind father, who sat dozing in the corner.

"He always brings Janey and takes her away," explained Mr. Sperry. "I bet you that fellow Kneedles will make her work now for her twenty dollars! She has three super's parts to-night,—nothing to say, but changes her dress ten times. Worst of it, she goes right out of a heavy costume,—fur cloak and wraps over her head,—wet with perspiration, into a ball-dress, bare neck and arms. You've no idea of the draughts on that stage. I shiver even in my cloth clothes. Here she is."

How superbly beautiful she was! But nobody but himself seemed to think of her beauty.

Mrs. Finn, in trailing cotton-velvet robes and gilt crown, hurried after her: "Put this shawl round you. You are shivering, and your head is like fire.—This must be stopped, George Sperry, at once," she continued angrily. "If you don't speak to Kneedles, I will, though I break my engagement by it. It is sheer murder for a girl with delicate lungs."

Jane, who was coughing violently, checked herself with a laugh. "Nonsense, Emily! Never was better in my life! I can't expect to be paid twenty dollars for doing nothing. The truth is," she added vehemently, "I never can play a speaking part; that's the truth, and you know it. All that I can earn must be by posing. Don't speak to Kneedles. Don't take our bread and butter away."

Mr. Imlay stepped forward. But the life seemed to be suddenly sapped out of his arguments. He had meant to snatch this soul from the edge of hell. But was she on the edge of hell? "I came," he said formally enough, "to persuade you to leave this mode of life. It does not seem to me—"

"I understand all that," said Jane impatiently, standing very erect. "You have your prejudices against our profession, Mr. Imlay, but it is my trade. It is all I can do. I have myself and—others to support. I cannot teach, nor write, nor paint. What other work is there that would bring me in twenty dollars a week?"

Was it really a trade, a more question of work and wages?

"The temptation—" he faltered. "I don't think," said Mrs. Finn sharply, "that Janey is exposed to more temptation here than if she were a shop-girl obliged to dress decently and feed herself on three dollars a week. There, George, curtain's up."

A shrill boy's voice squeaked out something at the door, and in a moment the room was empty. Only Jane was left. She looked at Mr. Imlay, hesitated, and then went directly up to him and laid her hand on his arm. There was little intellect in her dark eyes, but there was an almost motherly affectionateness, a common-sense which seemed to the irresolute man before her, strangely durable and strong. "You are very kind to me," she said. "But you had better go away now. Clergymen don't come here. Don't worry about me. It's hard work, but the pay is good. It's the right thing—" she stopped, then repeated with emphasis,—"it's the right thing for me to stay with Kneedles."

She urged him gently toward the door. He had not asked her to be his wife,—she did not know that he loved her: "One moment, Jane!" stopping on the threshold.

"No. They are calling me. Good-by." She smiled and kissed her hand. He fancied that the tears stood in her eyes. "It is the right thing for me to do to stay just here." Then the door closed on her, and he found his way out into the dark street.

A year later the Rev. William Imlay one day passed with his wife the theatre in Baltimore.

"Miss Gertrude Swan in her original *role* of the Rose of the Prairies. Kneedles's Great Combination!" he read. "I wonder where." He stopped abruptly. Young Mrs. Imlay turned, smiling, but when she looked at him she stopped abruptly. She had fine tact, and seldom asked questions.

A moment later they met, coming out of the theatre, a stout man and a pretty little woman in a Gainsborough hat. Mr. Imlay stopped and held out both hands. (He was a firmer, more decided, stronger man now in every way than when they had known him.) "Clara, here are some old friends of mine," he said.—"Mrs. Finn, my wife.—Mrs. Imlay, Mr. Sperry."

There was a good deal of hand-shaking and curious glances on both sides. The handsome bride was very courteous and affable, though her nerves were greatly shaken. Actors' William's friends! Could she touch pitch and not be defiled? Though, indeed, these poor players really seemed to talk and look quite like other human beings.

Just before they separated, her husband said, "Mr. Kneedles, I see, has another *role*—"

"You did not hear about Janey?" said Mr. Sperry with a sudden sobering of his pompous manner. "No!—Tell him, Emily."

Mrs. Finn did not speak. There was an awkward silence.

"No, I did not hear," said Mr. Imlay loudly. Something in his tone made his wife look at him. She put her hand quickly on his arm, but he did not see or feel her.

"Janey is gone," said Mrs. Finn briefly.

"Yes," said Sperry. "It was that internal Kneedles. He saw the child was ambitious to earn twenty dollars a week for her father and Bob, and piled on the work. She took cold the night you left. Me and Emily warned her, but she wouldn't give up. Lung-trouble. It only lasted a week. It was pitiful to hear her worry about those two,—Bob's schooling and the old man's overcoat,—everything. But the profession took it up; raised enough to get the old man in an asylum and to send Bob to college. Emily, here, has taken him home with her boys. So the poor child died content. Yes, sir," said Sperry, after he had looked around and waited for somebody to speak, lifting his hat with a little dramatic flourish. "Yes, sir. Poor Janey has saluted the world!"

"Come, George!" said Mrs. Finn abruptly. "We have a train to make. You forget."

Mr. Sperry was very hearty in his adieu, shook hands twice with the bride (to whom Mrs. Finn only bowed with great stateliness), and drew Mr. Imlay aside to say, "I'm sorry I told you about poor Janey. I'd no idea it would knock you up so. But it's all right with her now."

"Yes," said Mr. Imlay, with deliberation. "It is all right with her now."

His wife did not speak to him until they had walked a long time through the quiet streets. Then she said gently, "That was a sad story. Very sad."

He made no answer.

"But what," she persisted, "can we do in such a case? There is such a wide gulf between us and them."

"Is there?" said Mr. Imlay, looking at her vacantly.

She thought he had not understood her, and said nothing more.

REBECCA HARDING DAVIS.

A YOUNG mother, in despair of ever teaching her idle little girl, aged four, her letters, and thinking that perhaps the child knew more than she would admit, said, "Now Katie, I won't try to teach you to-day; you shall be mother, and teach me my letters."—"May I really and truly be mother?" said Katie.—"Yes, my darling."—"Let's begin, then," was the response. "You have been a very good child to-day, and you may have a whole holiday." And Katie shut up the book and ran off laughing.