

THE UNKNOWN.

He stood, the centre of a motley throng
Of voyagers, new-landed on the shore;
The dark-skinned children of a softer clime,
Where bounding pulses, and hot, jealous blood,
Bespeak the ardor of a glowing sun.
Stern, low-browed men were there, of sullen mien;
Their kerchiefed wives, some hushing wailing babes;
And beldames, who had trod the bridge of life
Near to the confines of its furthest span;
While all of life remaining in the frame
Of worn-out womanhood, forsook the cheek,
The shrunken lip, the withered palated arm,
And gathering all its concentrated force,
Seemed shining forth, from out the beady eyes.
And maids were there whose rich blood mantled 'neath
The softer outlines of a youthful cheek;
Whose eyes looked childish with their wond'ring gaze;
Whose skin outvied the velvet of the peach;
Who seemed as though their young feet, trembling,
Paused.

Upon the threshold of this newer life,
Yet poverty, and want's malignant power,
Had lent precocious cunning of their own
To their young minds, and so well versed, they stood,
In many arts, and wiles, which passing years,
And close experience, often fail to give.
And he, the boy I saw, was standing with
This mingled crowd, was with them, I repeat,
Yet surely not of them—a barrier wide,
And permanent, at least, it seemed to me,
Divided him from coarser clay apart.
I stood, and gazed entranced, for ne'er before,
I saw in some vision of the fancy bred,
Had I beheld such form, such face, such soul,
Which last revealed its presence by the glow
It lent the depths of those resplendent eyes,
And thus proclaimed its proud nobility.
So move I fancied in my willing mind,
For surely Nature, when with gracious hand,
In generous mood she formed this perfect son,
Perfect in outer attributes of grace,
Had never sent him forth without a mind,
And soul, with all this worth commensurate.
As well some marvel of skilled workmanship,
Some casket richly fraught with precious ore,
A cunning artificer's toil for years,
Be made the keeper of a worthless toy;
The shrine of some dull tarnished lump of brass,
Instead of costly, pure and flashing gems
Reposing on a fitting bed of gold.

But this fair boy, how came he 'mid that throng
Of peasants, from that far Italian shore?
Or, as indeed my fertile fancy prompts,
Does he in worldly rank, as in all else
That meets the eye, transcend his present mates;
Does some fair, high-born mother, wildly weep
In hopeless anguish for her stolen child?
Such things have been, for vengeance hath its claims,
And eager votaries in that southern clime;
And is this exiled boy to expiate
Mid strife, and pover y, a parent's crime?
Or do they think to reap a harvest full,
And golden, on the profit of his charms?
And is their only object one of gain?
It may be so indeed, for of a truth,
An object dear enough, 'twould seem to be,
By gazing in their wild and hungry eyes.
But after all, such reasoning may prove false.
He is, perhaps, some simple peasant lad,
And of a kith and kin with many here,
Although by nature fitted for their king.

The while I studied thus, the boy looked up
And met my questioning gaze; upon his brow
No conscious flush appeared, for innocence
Her pale, pure banner, o'er that brow unfurled,
That like to fair, white marble, polished stone;
Nor came the hot blood leaping to that cheek
That boasted but the ruddy glow of health,
And deeper tinged, just where the southern sun
Had left the seal of an abiding kiss.
Like that which tints the petals of the rose,
Or revels on the downy peaches cheek,
Or lends its glory to the purple grape.
His eye met mine, a mournful, questioning look,
Or did I dream? he seemed to throw on me
A melting, tender, and self-pitying look,
As though he guessed my interest in his fate,
And vainly craved compassion for his woe;
'Twas such a look the Peri might have cast
Upon the angel, who, with lingering hand
Against her closed the gates of Paradise.
But then, perchance, I yet was self-deceived.
It might have been an old, and worn deceit,
Some trick, oft practiced thus for sake of gain.
Oh! stranger youth, I may not know thy name,
Thy rank, thy past career, or future fate,
Enough, that thou hast charmed a friendly eye,
Enough, that thou hast filled a thoughtful mind.
Fair child of Nature! take a last adieu,
As slowly melting from my puzzled sight,
Amid thy crowd of fellow voyagers,
Thou passest on thy new and toilsome road.
As like a dream, he chained my spirit first,
So, dreamlike, doth his presence fade away.

MARY J. WELLS.

THE GOLD OF CHICKAREE.

SUSAN and ANNA WARNER.

AUTHORS OF

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

CHAPTER XXX.—(Continued.)

"Well, why do you then?" said Wych Hazel.

"I!—I don't. I think it's no use. People see through pretences. I only pretend enough just to keep up appearances. Didn't I always tell you exactly what I thought? I don't tell everybody."

"Do you suppose I believe that you came here for the express purpose of being snowed up,—outside of theatres and Germans, and other necessities of life?"

"That is just what I want," said Josephine. "I wish it would snow—five feet deep. I would like nothing better than to be snowed up. I would like to be desiccated—like a man I was reading of yesterday; he's in a French novel. Do you know, he was desiccated; he was a convict, you see, and the men of science could try their experiments upon him; and they desiccated him and laid him by; and he was forgotten, and years passed, and everything changed in the world, and his children grew up, and his friends died—if he had any friends; and people forgot what this preparation was; and

hey cut off a bit of his ear to try under the microscope whether it was an animal's skin or what it was. And afterwards the skin was put in water and he came to life again—that was all he wanted, you know, like a rose of Jericho. I wish I could be desiccated and kept awhile, till everybody was dead that I know, and then come to life again."

"What would be the pleasure of that?" said Hazel, watching her.

"I should never see Charteris any more. I suppose I shock you—but what's the use of pretending? He's away in Albany now; and as soon as he went, I ran. You see, it isn't at all a bad sort of a place here. Little rooms, to be sure, but there's nobody in them but me; and Rhodes is a capital cook, and she pets me, and I like to be petted. And I have my own way here, and down in Fortieth street I can't. With all the world outside the house, and a husband inside, there is no place to breathe. I enjoy it here ever so much, and I don't want to go back, ever! Don't you want to run away, too, by this time?"

"Then it is a real scheme, deep-laid and serious," said Wych Hazel. "Not the whim Mr. Nightingale calls it?"

"Mr. Nightingale!" said Josephine, her face changing and darkening. "What does he say of me? Has he spoken to you about me? He doesn't know anything."

"About anything.—No. And never by any chance speaks the truth about the few things he does know. He said that Mr. Charteris had gone to Albany, and that Mrs. Charteris had the pretty whim to follow him. 'Touching,' I think he called it." The disdain in the girl's voice was incomparable.

"That will do," said Josephine. "It's nobody's business whether I am in Albany or not. Never mind him; talk to me. Why haven't I seen you anywhere all winter? Does Dane Rollo want you to stay at home, now he is married! like Charteris?"

"I am married too," said Wych Hazel with a flash of her one self. "So take care what you say about him. Josephine, did you tell that man you were going to Albany?"

"Nonsense!" said Josephine laughing. "I believe you are afraid to answer. I know you used to like to have your own way. Did I tell Stuart? No. What should I tell him for? I didn't tell him I was going to Albany, because I wasn't. I was coming here; and that wasn't telling a fib about. I came here to do what I like; and I just do it from morning to night. I suppose you are learning to do what you don't like. How does it feel?"

"I did not believe one word he said, all the time!" said Hazel, coolly ignoring the insinuations. "Why should Stuart Nightingale invent falsehoods to cover the movements of Josephine Charteris?"

"Just as well as for anything else," said Josephine laughing. "I'm much obliged to him for the attention, I'm sure. But you don't answer, Hazel. I want to know how you and Dane get on together, after all your fine theories? Dane Rollo was as lordly a man as ever I saw, with all his easy ways; and you were never one to give up your liberty. I suppose you won't confess. Now I am more honest."

Wych Hazel answered with a laugh,—fresh and glad some and sweet,—more convincing than a hundred words. But she was grave again instantly. She left her chair and bringing a cushion to Josephine's feet sat down there, leaned her arms on her friend's lap and looked straight up into her face.

"Josephine," she said, "I am very, very much troubled about you."

Josephine did not answer this. She looked at Hazel, and then her look wandered to something else; undeclarative, withdrawn into herself.

"Josephine, you cannot have what does not belong to you, any more in men than in money. And if you try to give away what belongs to somebody else, nobody but a wretch will take it."

"You are not going to give me a moral lecture, because I came to Mrs. Rhodes on a spree?" said Josephine, with a superficial kind of little laugh. "Isn't my time my own while Mr. Charteris is away?"

"No, it is not. Not to spend in a way that wrongs him. And you are not your own, wherever he is."

"You think I am a man's property just because I am married to him! I don't. I think the man and the woman are equal, and both of them are free. It is only among the savages that women are slaves."

Hazel let that pass. Keeping her folded hands on Josephine's lap, she looked down, thinking.

"What sort of a life have you led with Mr. Charteris so far?" she said, not raising her eyes.

"Can you picture it for me?"

"Picture it!"—Josephine put up her lip, and then she laughed with seeming amusement. "Did you ever see two chickens pulling at the two ends of a worm? That's about it. John pulled one way, and I pulled the other. Pleasant picture, isn't it? But that sort of thing can't last forever."

"No," said Wych Hazel looking suddenly up,—but this does. A life ignored by all respectable people; a name spurned with the foot and scorned on the tongue. A dark spot, which only forgetfulness can hide,—and which nobody ever forgets! That other sort of thing does end, Josephine, with death, or with patient endeavour; but this thing, never!"

"You talk,"—said Josephine pouting. Then

she suddenly broke out, with her eyes full upon Hazel's face. "Don't you think, if you had never been happy in your life, you would like to try just for a little how it feels?"

"Yes," said Wych Hazel, "but you are going to try misery;—and not for a little."

"I am not trying misery here," said the girl with a shrug of her shoulders. "I tell you, it's jolly. How did you know where to find me?"

"There is a fair view, quite often, from the place where one step towards it plunges you down thousands of feet. When you are left alone in Lisbon—and dare not come home to America—then you will learn what misery is."

Josephine started a little, and for once her colour stirred. Words did not come readily. When they came, they were a somewhat haughty enquiry what Hazel meant?"

"Just what I say," Hazel answered quietly.

"Did you come here to say it?"

"Yes."

"That's Annabella. Well,—I don't care. You know about it. You know I can't live with Charteris."

"Josephine, you must."

"I cannot. You can't tell how it is. He don't care for me, and I don't like him; and I don't think, for my part, it is religious for people to live together that don't like each other."

"This is a tragedy, not a farce," Hazel said, knitting her brows. "Leave fashions of speech on one side. John Charteris, with all his faults, would never grow tired of you, Josephine—if you give him half a chance to help it; but Stuart Nightingale will."

"I am jolly tired of him," cried Josephine with a burst. "Charteris and I can't live happy together. I know better. And it will be worse now he has lost his money. I would rather die, Hazel. And I tell you, he is tired of me—and I should think he would. If you knew the life I've led him, you would think so too. You needn't talk to me. I would rather die right off, than go on living with him; and it would kill me anyhow, and I'm not going to die that way."

"There is honour in dying at one's post," said Wych Hazel thoughtfully,—"even if it came to that. But to sail away on a pleasure trip, with all one's dearest friends praying that the ship may go down in mid-sea!"

Josephine sat still, looking with cold impassiveness into the fire; then she remarked in the same way,

"My dearest friends don't do much praying. I guess they won't drown me."

"You may kill them," said Hazel. "Imagine people watching Annabella and saying 'Poor thing!'—What has become of the other sister?" "O you mustn't ask about her. You know"—and then heads will draw together. And your mother will see the shrugs and catch the hints."

"What makes you care?" said Josephine, without moving a muscle. "I believe you must have liked him a little yourself."

"I liked him such a very little," said Wych Hazel, "that a year ago I cut his heart into bits. He has patched them together again,—but the stitches shew."

"Stuart was poor," said Josephine. "I knew it all the time."

Wych Hazel's brows drew together, but the words got no further notice.

"Josephine, you married for diamonds. I will give you diamonds every week for a year, if you will go back to your place and stay there."

"I don't care for diamonds," said Josephine very coldly.

"What do you care for?"—the grave eyes looked up eagerly.

"Not much," said Josephine drearily, and the words were inexpressibly sad from such young lips. "But I am not going to live in that prison in Fortieth street, and with that jailer Charteris any more!"

"Josephine, you could change all that. There is no prison—and no jailer—for any woman of whom it is true: 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.'"

"It wouldn't be safe for Charteris to trust me," said Josephine, with a hard, metallic laugh. "I never was to be trusted. I know what you have come for, Hazel, and I know who has brought you; it's Annabella; but it's no use. You may give up the job. I know all you want to say, and I'm not going to have you say it; and you have said it, besides. Look here. A marriage isn't a real marriage when people don't care for each other. Do you think a woman is bound by a few words said over her by a man in a black silk gown? by an incantation, like the savages? It would make me downright wicked to go on living with John Charteris; you ought to want to save me from that. I am always a great deal better—more religious—when I am happy, than when I am miserable. It always rouses up all there is bad in me, to try to make me do something I don't want to do. I can't imagine how you get along with Dane Rollo; but that is your affair; this is mine. Where is Annabella?"

Before Hazel could stop her, she had flown across the hall to the room on the other side, whence she fetched back her sister. The conversation was not renewed. In ignorance of what fruit the interview might have borne, or what its results might be, Annabella dared not touch the matter; and Josephine gave her no chance. She kept up a rattling fire of nonsense, until the two ladies were forced to leave her.

The day was darkening fast now towards the early evening. Fine snow was falling thick, and the wind came in gusts. There was no time to be lost in getting home. Yet Annabella

paused at the very coach door and looked at Hazel. "Have you done anything?" she asked anxiously.

At the instant a gentleman ran against them with an umbrella, and lifting the same suddenly to make his excuses, a very familiar figure was revealed to them. Stuart Nightingale himself. A flash of disagreeable expression crossed his face for that one second of surprise, then he had regained his usual manner.

"Quel plaisir!" he cried, bowing low. "Two such ladies, in the snow, here! at Fort Washington! The charms of the surprise are manifold. What has procured it? mercy, or vanity? One or the other it must be. A sick friend?—or a French mantua-maker? But you are never going to drive back to New York in this awful storm?"

Annabella drew herself up and made no answer. Wych Hazel looked at the snow.

"Good evening," she said. "The storm is not much."

They were to have more of it, however, than she had bargained for. Stuart's remonstrance were not listened to; the ladies entered their carriage and drove off. But their driver, who was not Mrs. Powder's servant, had improved his leisure time during their stay in the house by making visits to a neighbouring drinking saloon; and now, confused by the mingled effects of wind and brandy, took the road north instead of south from the village. To spare her sister, and indeed herself, Annabella had taken a hackney coach, and this was what came of it. The ladies were thinking of something else and did not see what their charioteer was doing. Annabella broke at last a silence which had prevailed for some time.

"What did she say?"

"Said she didn't care."

"She would not listen to you!"

"Not this time."

"Then there is no chance," cried Annabella in despair. "They will make all their arrangements now. Stuart is going to sail the week after next, I know."

"I wish I could get speech of him!" said Wych Hazel, knitting her brows in the darkness.

This too was to fall to her lot in an unexpected manner and measure. It might have been three-quarters of an hour, or more, from the time of their meeting that gentleman in front of Mrs. Rhodes's cottage, when Stuart happened to be in the street again and crossing the main road at the corner where the carriage had turned the wrong way. The storm had now grown to be furious; wind and snow driving so across the street that to hold his umbrella was no longer possible. As with difficulty he closed it, a carriage stopped immediately before him, the door opened, and two ladies sprang out into storm. He had nearly run against them, before he saw that they were the same ladies. And they saw him.

"O Mr. Nightingale!" cried the foremost, forgetting everything in her distress,— "do help us. We've got a drunken coachman."

"Miss Powder!—But how are you here yet?"

"O he took us ever so far on the way to Albany before we found it out. He's quite stupid. What shall we do?"

A few steps in the snow, taken with extreme difficulty, brought them to the shelter of a village hotel. Here the matter was debated. Stuart advised their spending the night quietly where they were. But Annabella would not listen to this. "Her mother," "her mother"—she urged; "her mother would be frightened to death." Write, Stuart suggested. Miss Powder did not believe any messenger would go. Stuart offered to be the messenger himself. Annabella refused, obstinately. I think she did not put enough faith in him even for that. She would have a carriage and proceed on her journey forthwith. Annabella shewed herself determined, and Hazel did not oppose her decisions, nor have much to say in the matter generally.

So a carriage was got ready; it was necessary to offer a huge fee to tempt any man out that night, but however that was arranged; and in half an hour the ladies were able to set forth again on their interrupted journey. But one circumstance neither of them had counted upon. Mr. Nightingale, after putting them into the carriage and giving directions to the driver, coolly stepped in himself and took the opposite seat.

"Mr. Nightingale?" said Miss Powder—"you are not going?"

"Certainly I am. You two ladies cannot be allowed to take such a journey alone. I should expect Gov. Powder never to speak to me again, and coffee and pistols with Rollo would be too good for me. To say nothing of the punishment of my own conscience."

The drive from that point was extremely silent, and never to be forgotten by at least two of the party. The violence of the storm was quite enough to justify the third in intruding himself upon their company, though I am afraid nobody thanked him for it. Wind and snow and darkness made any progress difficult, and any but very slow progress out of the question. The horses crept along the road, which they were not unfrequently left to find by themselves; the snow whirled and beat now against one window and now upon the other with a fury and a rush which were somewhat appalling. Still the horses struggled on, though all the light there was abroad came from the glimmer of the snow itself, unless when a gleam shot out into the night from the window of some home. They did keep on their way, but it was