

Family Circle.

The Old Mill-Wheel.

BY H. S. KELLER.

How we used to sit and watch it—
But you don't remember dear,
For, alack! we were but youngsters
In that old delightful year.

How the spray it turned to silver
In the early morning light,
And each paddle was a diadem
With jewels sparkling bright.

How the willows bended lowly
To the bank on either hand,
As we sat there wrapt in glory
Of the light of fairy-land:

Fairy-land because the elfin
Sprites we conjured in surprise,
Child-like, from the realms of fancy
Lighted up our paradise.

Do you recollect the sunset
And the glory of the west,
When the day-time turned to twilight
And the old wheel went to rest?

Do you recollect the swallows
Skimming homeward to their eaves?
Do you ever hear the whirr-poor-will
Whose lone note ever grieves?

Do you see the dusty miller
As he closes up the door?
Do you ever see the light that comes
From out the days of yore?

Ah, you were a happy maiden
In the days of long ago—
And your babies and my babies
They are glad to have it so.

A MISSING HUSBAND.

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She hadn't the slightest intention of writing to Miss Elmore, or of leaving her address for her. That would have put the young lady on her guard, and have spoiled the little plot which Rose was carefully thinking out for her rival's discomfiture. As it was, she was afraid that the agent merely telling the actress that a lady had been asking for her might arouse her suspicions. She didn't think they would remember her name at the office. She had not written it down or left a card. Even if they did, the girl might not think it of any serious import. It was quite likely that she did not know what Wilson's real name was or that he had a wife in London. He had probably told her that he did not want his friends to recognize him for some family reason, and that had caused the girl's agitation after the visit of Tom Yarrowborough, as described by the landlady.

Looking on the brass plate outside the agent's door, Rose saw that the business hours were from 11 to 4, except on Saturdays, when they were 11 to 2. She calculated that the agent would write to Miss Elmore that afternoon, and make an appointment for the next day or the day after. On one of these two days, between the hours of 11 and 4, Miss Elmore would enter that office and leave again and return to the place where she was living. She might come alone, she might come with "Mr. Wilson."

Under any circumstances Rose would be there. The street was a wide and busy one. She would easily be able to keep the agent's front door in observation without being noticed herself. With her veil down and her parasol up "Mr. Wilson" could hardly recognize her, and Miss Elmore didn't know her.

The only difficulty was about following her, but it would be time enough to get over that when the time came. The girl was probably hard up and wouldn't take a hansom, she would either walk or go by bus, and in either case Rose could be her travelling companion without exciting suspicion.

If Jack came the case would be different. She should go up straight to him, confront him, and ask for the pleasure of a few moments conversation with him. All that evening and far into the night Rose thought over the scene that she might have to take part in on the morrow. She rehearsed it to herself and spoke her speeches aloud as she lay tossing from side to side, waiting for the dawn. She was too feverish and excited to sleep. She was not going to be violent, or make a scene. She had a few words of withering sarcasm ready for Miss Elmore, who would probably stare to see a strange lady accost Mr. Wilson rather unceremoniously and insist upon a private interview, but with Jack she was going to be calm, cold, and dignified. But she was going to let him understand that he would have to answer for his wicked, heartless conduct, and that Nemesis had overtaken him at last.

And, crushing her repentant husband with words of dignified scorn, Rose fell asleep at last, and woke so late that by the time she had had her breakfast and reached the side street off the Strand in which the agent's office was situated, it was on the stroke of eleven.

As she got out of the bus she noticed a gentleman who got down from outside the same conveyance look at her rather curiously, and she wondered

where she had seen him before. She thought it must be some one she had been introduced to, and so she bowed slightly, but the gentlemen took no notice of her salutation but looked deliberately the other way.

Rose knew then that she must have made a mistake, and she colored slightly at the idea of having bowed to a strange man who had stared at her. This little circumstance set her thinking of the man as she walked up the street, and she gave quite a little start when a quarter of an hour later, as she was loitering near the office, she saw this same man come along on the opposite side and enter a public house.

She watched for him to come out, but he didn't do so, and so she decided he must be the landlord, and then she fixed her attention on the agent's doorway, and forgot all about the stranger to whom she had bowed in mistake.

For two hours Rose watched the agency without any result. Plenty of ladies and gentlemen went up and came down the big stone staircase—actors and actresses most of them, she could tell by their style—but nobody in the slightest way resembling the photograph of Miss Elmore, and certainly no one in the slightest degree like Jack Smedley.

Once she had a false alarm. A lady and gentleman came along from the top of the street; the man was just Jack's height and build, but when he came nearer she saw that he was a man with grey hair, and Jack's was as black as night. He was an actor, she thought, because of his shaven face, but when they got to the agent's door he left the lady, who went in alone, while he went over the road to the public house.

He was in there about a quarter of an hour, and when he came out Rose thought he looked at her rather hard. But she was a pretty little woman still, and had a slim, graceful figure, and when ladies with slim, graceful figures go about closely veiled, there is nothing in gentlemen looking at them, as though they would like to see what sort of a face that tantalizing veil is hiding.

It must have been nearly two o'clock, and Rose was thinking that she should have to find out some place where she could sit down, for she was getting terribly tired, when a tall, thin girl, plainly, almost shabbily dressed, came up the street, looking up at the numbers as she walked along.

This action it was which first attracted Rose's attention, and then in a moment, instinctively, and before she was near enough for Rose to recognize her features, the deserted wife knew that she and her rival were about to meet.

It was Miss Elmore. There was no doubt of that. Rose soon forgot her caution in her excitement, and stood still and let the girl pass her so closely that their dresses touched. Miss Elmore evidently suspected nothing. She said "beg your pardon" as she accidentally touched Rose, but only gave her a passing glance.

The hot blood rushed to Mrs. Smedley's face, and a hard, cruel look came into her eyes. It was fortunate that her veil was down, and that it was thick. Otherwise she would undoubtedly have attracted attention.

The face of her rival was a beautiful one—so beautiful it made Rose hate her all the more. But it was very pale, and there was a melancholy look in the large lustrous eyes which told even Rose, blinded as she was with jealousy and passion, that her rival had suffered, and was suffering still, mentally as well as physically.

The pale face, the sorrowful eyes, the shabby dress, the thin frame, all told a tale to one who can read a life story in the crowded street.

Such a one would have looked after the tall beautiful girl and have said, "That girl is ill and unhappy." Rose only thought of her as the woman who had usurped her place by her husband's side, and had been his companion in the misfortunes she had not been allowed to share. She was glad in her heart of hearts that her rival looked ill, more glad than she looked unhappy. She never stopped to ask herself whether this girl might not be in utter ignorance of the true story of Mr. Wilson's "life," utterly innocent of the knowledge that she was injuring anyone but herself.

Rose watched her enter the doorway and go up the stone steps that led to the agent's office. Then she went a little way down the street and stood just where a building, jutting out, hid her from the sight of anyone coming out of the house which she was watching. She kept her eyes fixed upon the doorway so eagerly, so steadfastly that the strain made her eyelids ache. She was terrified lest she should not detect Miss Elmore the first moment she emerged, and so let her mix with the crowd and get away ere she had time to follow her.

Her attention was so fixed on this one particular point that she did not notice the gentleman to whom she had bowed in the morning come quietly to the public-house door, look up and down the street, catch sight of her, and then go in again quickly.

The time passed slowly as Rose stood and watched. When a quarter of an hour had passed it seemed to her that Miss Elmore had been with the agent an hour. She had never taken her eyes from the doorway, and yet she found herself fearing that the girl might have come out into the street again and got herself up into a fever of suspense a lady emerged from the doorway and walked rapidly away in the direction of the Strand.

It was Miss Elmore. An instant afterwards another lady, the lady who had parted with the gray-haired man at the door, came out too. Rose darted forward almost with a run, but in the excitement got to lose sight of Miss Elmore now, but quickly checking herself she crossed the road and walked rapidly till she was on a level with the girl, and then she was dividing them.

Miss Elmore turned down into the Strand, and walked along until she came to Southampton street, then she crossed the road and made for Waterloo Bridge.

Rose followed, this time keeping on the same side of the road, but a little way behind. It was not an hour when the Bridge was crowded and it was quite easy to keep anyone in view.

"The girl is either going to walk home or to take the train at Waterloo," thought Rose, "whichever it is I have her safe now. I shall find out where she is lodging, and there I believe I shall find my husband."

Suddenly a shriek rang out just behind Rose. Everybody instantly turned to see what was the matter, Rose among them. A little boy had run across the road and fallen just as an omnibus was coming rapidly on to him. It was a woman who had seen the occurrence who uttered the cry. The driver pulled up and the boy was saved. Then everybody went on their way again.

But in the second that Rose turned her head she had seen something that astonished her. Close behind her was the woman who had come out of the agent's immediately after Miss Elmore. And on the opposite side of the road was the gentleman she had bowed to in mistake and who had gone into the public house opposite the agent's office.

Swift as lightning a suspicion of truth flashed across Mrs. Smedley's brain.

She was being followed herself. She and Miss Elmore too.

The woman was following Miss Elmore, the man was following her. He had evidently followed her from her house that morning, taken the same bus as herself, and watched her while she watched the agent's office.

She saw it in a moment, and she knew by a flash of inspiration what it meant.

Some one else beside herself had a suspicion that Jack Smedley had returned to London. And they had been watching her, his wife, believing that she would know of it, and communicate with him.

The part of his story which she had for the time forgotten came back to her at once. She was trying to find him to reproach him for his offences against her. But these people were trying to find him to make him answer for his offences against the law.

The warrant which had been issued for John Smedley's arrest was still in force. She and the girl were being followed by police agents, and together, John Smedley's wife and his mistress were guiding them to their prey.

Instantly Rose felt a revulsion of feeling. All the while in her rose up against the idea of seeing the man she had once loved stand in the felon's dock.

She would have punished him herself, but she would protect him from others.

In a moment she had made up her mind what to do. Quickening her pace she caught up to Miss Elmore.

As she came level with her, without looking at her she said in an undertone, "Don't look at me. You are being followed."

The girl gave a little start and turned her head toward the person who had addressed her.

"Hush!" whispered Rose; "take no notice of me. But don't go home; I tell you, you are followed."

Rose could see that Miss Elmore's face was now more deadly pale than ever and her lips trembled.

"What shall I do?" she said.

"Anything, but don't go home."

At that moment an omnibus passed them. The conductor held up his hand. "Room for two inside, ladies," he shouted.

"Yes. Get in," said Rose.

Miss Elmore, trembling and almost speechless with agitation, obeyed. She was too bewildered to think for herself.

Rose followed her. The conductor slammed the door.

The two women passed to two corner seats at the top of the omnibus. As it drove off, Rose leaned forward and looked out of the window. The man and woman were getting into a hansom cab together. They intended to follow the omnibus.

Rose leaned across and whispered to Miss Elmore, "When the bus stops at Waterloo Station," she said, "get out. I shall do the same. Have you any money?"

The girl blushed. "I have a shilling," she said.

Rose took out her purse and put some silver into the girl's hand. "As soon as you get out take a hansom and tell the man to drive you to No. 4, Guildford street, Bloomsbury. That is where I live. I shall be there as soon as you are. Then I will tell you more."

It had occurred to Rose that the best place for her to explain the situation to Miss Elmore would be her own house. There they could stay as long as they liked, and concert some plan by which the detectives, who were evidently following them, might be put off the scent.

Miss Elmore didn't venture to ask for any explanation there. She knew that there was danger to some one whose name had not been mentioned by either of them. She knew that she was being followed by those who meant her harm if they could find him. This lady evidently knew it too, but how she knew it and what interest the matter was to her, the poor girl was too agitated to even try and think out.

The bus stopped at Waterloo Station, and nearly all the passengers alighted, Rose and Miss Elmore among them.

"Remember," said Rose, before they left the omnibus, and she repeated the address. "You will come?"

"Yes."

A minute afterwards Miss Elmore had hailed a hansom and given the man his directions. As the cab drove off Rose saw a hansom which had pulled up a little way off, turn round and follow it.