

The "Holly and Ivy" Girl.

"Come buy my nice fresh Ivy, and my Holly... I have the finest branches that ever yet were seen."

"Ah, won't you take my Ivy?—the loveliest ever seen! Ah! won't you have my Holly boughs?—all you who love the Green! Do—take a little bunch of each, and on my knees I'll pray That God may bless your Christmas and be with you New Year's Day."

"Twas thus a dying maiden sang, while the cold hail rattled down, And fierce winds whistled mournfully o'er Dublin's dreary town; One elf hand clutched her Ivy sprigs and Holly boughs so fair, With the other she brushed the hall drops from her hair."

"I dreamed of wanderings in the woods among the Holly Green; I dreamed of my own native cot and porch with Ivy screen; I dreamed of lights forever dimmed—of hopes that can't return—And dropped my Christmas fires that never more can burn."

"On New Year's Day I said my prayers above a new made grave, Dug recently in sacred soil, by Lily's mourning wave; The minister maid from earth to Heaven has wings, and happy way, And now enjoys with sister saint an endless New Year's day."

"It's all humbug!" "What is all humbug?" "To talk about being resigned to one's lot in life. I am not resigned. I hate being poor, and I hate—oh, I do hate wearing that shabby old thing!"

"Horrid old thing," said George, coming to a standstill in front of it, and giving it a contemptuous twist, "I do hate you!" "Oh, George!" "Yes, I; and you need not sit perched up on the bed, Esther, saying, 'Oh, George!' in such a horrified tone. I do hate it, and it is horrid and poverty stricken. Just think of going to a party in it! I would rather by half go in sack-cloth and ashes."

"How lovely you would look in a sack-cloth garment with a rope round your waist!" said Esther dryly, from her perch on the bed. George gave an unmerciful pull at the curly brown hair. "I wish you would be sensible, Esther—you see so dreadfully literal. At any rate, if I might dress like a Sister of Charity, it would be a merit to look shabby and woe-begone."

"Sisters of Charity don't look woe-begone. At St. Mary's I'm one that is quite merry and not at all miserable. But you would look a fright in a great black bonnet."

cate creamy complexion, with no spot of color save in the rich scarlet lips—all framed in the wonderful masses of bright nut-brown hair. George gazed at herself intently for a minute or two, and then smiled through her teeth. It was very pleasant to know she was so fair that even the space dress could not quite hide her beauty.

"There, George, you need not be so disconsolate," said Esther, seeing the tears had nearly vanished. "When you have finished admiring yourself, I will do your hair for you."

George resigned the brush, and her sister, taking the wavy, curly masses, brushed and twisted them deftly into a loose coronet all round the graceful little head. Then George donned the despised black dress—somehow it looked well on the rounded little figure—fastened the ruffles on, just permitting a glimpse of fair white throat, encircled by the prized string of pearls, to be seen, and stood forth at last a very dainty lady indeed.

"If it had only been white muslin!" sighed she, giving one more look in the glass, and feeling considerably comforted by her appearance therein. "Perhaps I may not have to sit at a corner all the night, Esther," said she hopefully. "I am sure not—that was only my nonsense. Here are your gloves and handkerchiefs. Be quick! I heard papa go down five minutes since."

Mrs. Ball's was the great house of the neighborhood. On this evening, the large parlours, with their handsome massive furniture and rich sober colouring, were filled with almost a crowd of people, for her evening parties were a popular institution. When Mr. Casterton and George entered the room, she came forward with a cordial greeting, and, after introducing George to the one or two strangers present, consigned her to the care of her daughter Lillie, who, to George's relief, was almost plainly attired as herself.

Still feeling very conscious of her alpaca dress, George shyly buried herself in a portfolio of Italian photographs on a stand near her. Presently she heard her name softly repeated behind her, and, glancing up, recognized Captain Day, one of the strangers who had been presented to her, Mrs. Ball's regular guest.

"May I get you some coffee?" asked he, smiling down at her. "Yes, please," said George, diffidently, her mind instantly reverting to what he must think of her shabby dress. He made a sign to a servant, who came up with a tray. Helping George to her coffee, he took another cup himself, and then, drawing a chair beside her, began to talk in a light, careless manner that speedily set her at her ease. Even the troublesome dress was at length forgotten, and George bore her fair share in the laughing, half-serious conversation that ensued.

After a while he drew the stand of photographs forward, and turned them over for her to look at, telling her about Italy, in a soft low voice that seemed meant for her alone. He was tall, handsome man, rather fair, with bright blue eyes, and a moustache and whiskers that seemed to require an immense amount of attention to keep them in order. He possessed in perfection the art of being all things to all women. His looks, graceful air of deference and intense devotion, his low, caressing voice, were irresistibly flattering. His words were simple enough, neither very wise nor very witty; but they might have been very pearls and diamonds of wisdom from the veneration with which George listened to him. He stayed by her side for a long time, turning over and discussing folios and albums. At length Mrs. Ball captured them for a round game of cards, much to Captain Day's disgust. However, he managed to obtain George for a partner, took her to her counters, and contrived to throw an immense amount of earnestness into the simplest questions. He conducted her into supper, and took care to have a snug corner for themselves; and then he bestowed on her all those polite and delicate attentions which are the right of some favoured mortals, but which were something very new and very charming to his unsophisticated companion.

George was completely fascinated. She was very young, very simple, very romantic, beautiful, impulsive, frank as a child, with all sorts of wonderful ideas floating about in her graceful little head; and Captain Arthur Day was the handsomest man she had ever seen, and one of the most consummate flirts in existence. Had George's eyes and ears not been so entirely engaged, she might have discovered that her partner at least looked covered that the trust and confidence of a father's guides love.

When the time came they parted with one long, mute caress and George, her lips trembled, her sweet eyes full of tears, turned quickly homeward. The next morning a bouquet of exquisite flowers was left at the parsonage for Miss Casterton—roses of all kinds, from the richest damask to the delicate-scented Provence. As George stood at the window, she turned to her brother and said, emphatically and suddenly— "You have no right, Arthur, to pay such devoted attention to any lady, much less Miss Casterton."

of a sweet little thing being sacrificed for my amusement! It is too absurd." "I have seen too many of your flirtations not to know the signs of a new one. I know what your hour or two of amusement means, and I say you have no right to raise hopes and wishes you have not the slightest intention of fulfilling."

"Looks like a case of righteous indignation," said the Captain coolly, smoothing his moustache. "Thanks; your lecture might be more effectual were you an interested party."

"I don't understand you," said Mr. Day, haughtily. "Who is it talks about 'volumes in locks,' or some such sentimental nonsense? I have never seen you bestow two glances on any young lady before; but to-night you have honoured us both with your most distinguished regards. If Miss George Casterton is wise, she will turn the cold shoulder on my irresistible self. You are a much more eligible party than your scapegrace brother."

Mr. Day turned his eyes contemptuously on his brother. "Your remarks are most uncalculated," said he. "However, I don't care to discuss the matter further. Nothing that I can urge is likely to stay your hand."

"Not with the prospect of a rival in the field, and such a rival." "Of course not," said Esther dryly; then, after a short silence—"George, do you remember that party just two years ago and how you cried over the alpaca dress? You would be able to appear got up regardless of expense, now."

"Not quite," returned George, smiling; "we are always so poor, and the money is so wanted for things it is hard to be without, that I don't think I should be any more gorgeously arrayed than I was then."

She sighed a little, for the troubles of poverty came home very keenly to her, and she knew, though Esther did not, that half at least of her poor little earnings went into the family exchequer. She would have cared nothing for all the little trials and stings of her daily life had she had nothing else to bear; but for eighteen months she had never seen nor heard a word of Captain Day, and the blank silence was a cruel hardship. The constant, weary uncertainty had brought an anxious look on to the fair young face as one waiting and watching continually; and the lovely eyes looked sadder, sadder, and more wistful than ever.

Presently Esther put down her paper and satured to the window, gazing disconsolately out at the fog and rain. "Oh, dear, dear, George, there he is again, coming in at the gate!" exclaimed she abruptly in a few minutes. "Who?" asked George absently, her thoughts far away, her fingers busy with the complicated shades of a scrap of faded moss.

"Who? As if you didn't know!" retorted Esther incredulously. "Mr. Francis Day makes it sufficiently clear who it is that he comes to see in this house!" "Oh, dear, dear, George, there he is again, coming in at the gate!" exclaimed she abruptly in a few minutes.

"Who?" asked George absently, her thoughts far away, her fingers busy with the complicated shades of a scrap of faded moss.

the parsonage. Esther Casterton sat on the hearthrug in front of it, reading the newspaper; George was at the table painting. A sort of frame stood before her, on which were arranged a wild tangle of the small tree ivy, sprays of plants tinged red by the frost, and a few scraps of moss. She was copying them with rare delicacy and skill.

"I wish I had a few blackberries," said she presently. "We can't find any this morning," returned Esther, looking up from her paper. "It is too late for them; can't you manage without them?"

"Yes, I think I can," said George; giving a few bright touches to the leaves. "How much do you think the man will give you for that picture, George?" "I don't know—five pounds, I hope."

"It's not half enough—why it is exquisitely done! I know Mr. Day would get you twice as much, if you would let him. Why don't you accept his offer, and allow him to dispose of your paintings for you?"

"I like to manage my own affairs, dear," laughed George. "Besides, it was he who introduced me to this man. He took a deal of trouble at first; and of course, I cannot trouble him always with my concerns."

"Of course not," said Esther dryly; then, after a short silence—"George, do you remember that party just two years ago and how you cried over the alpaca dress? You would be able to appear got up regardless of expense, now."

"Not quite," returned George, smiling; "we are always so poor, and the money is so wanted for things it is hard to be without, that I don't think I should be any more gorgeously arrayed than I was then."

She sighed a little, for the troubles of poverty came home very keenly to her, and she knew, though Esther did not, that half at least of her poor little earnings went into the family exchequer. She would have cared nothing for all the little trials and stings of her daily life had she had nothing else to bear; but for eighteen months she had never seen nor heard a word of Captain Day, and the blank silence was a cruel hardship. The constant, weary uncertainty had brought an anxious look on to the fair young face as one waiting and watching continually; and the lovely eyes looked sadder, sadder, and more wistful than ever.

Presently Esther put down her paper and satured to the window, gazing disconsolately out at the fog and rain. "Oh, dear, dear, George, there he is again, coming in at the gate!" exclaimed she abruptly in a few minutes.

"Who?" asked George absently, her thoughts far away, her fingers busy with the complicated shades of a scrap of faded moss.

"I know," interrupted George steadily. "Who was it?" "It was Emilie Forest," answered he reluctantly. "I don't know anything of it till she is seeking for some shadow of excuse for her lover's faithless."

"She is a great heiress—her fortune is immense. They were married almost the day before. I will never forgive him," said Mr. Day vehemently, "never! George, don't look like that," for the fire flashed up, showing the poor miserable face, with the blank bewildered eyes. He came and knelt in front of her only stone for it! My poor little one, if I could only have saved you from this!"

She gave a long shivering sigh, and laid her head back wearily upon the cushion of her chair, as if tired. "Thank you—you are very kind," said she dreamily. He looked at her anxiously. "I would give my life to make atonement—to make you happy. George, will you marry me?"

"No—oh, no," she replied, shaking her head. "Why not?" "I cannot. Don't ask me."

"George, since the first night I saw you I have loved you, or even now, to atone for this great wrong, I would not have asked you to be my wife. Can it be?" said he, anxiously watching the sweet fair face with the beautiful miserable eyes.

She made no reply, but lay back in her chair and gazed into the fire, seeing, as in a dream, the desolate dim years stretching before her. Slowly her thoughts returned to the friend at her side, tried, trusted, and true, and she saw herself, sheltered, loved, and honoured, safe in his steady devotion from sorrow and trouble, shielded from every rude blast, stretching before her. Slowly her thoughts returned to the friend at her side, tried, trusted, and true, and she saw herself, sheltered, loved, and honoured, safe in his steady devotion from sorrow and trouble, shielded from every rude blast, stretching before her.

"I did not ask anything," was the quiet response. "I only want the right to take care of you."

"She lay back again in her chair, gazing dreamily before her with pathetic, sad weariness. "Whatever happens, remember I am always your friend," said he gently, rising at once; "and, if you decide in my favour, it will be the one thing to crown my life and make it full and perfect." Then he left her.

The long brick front of an old-fashioned country house lay glowing in the sunshine of a summer day. The smooth lawn, dotted with spots of mixed scarlet, yellow, purple, and crimson, stretched away far and wide from the long French windows opening on to it. A damask rose tree was trained all over the wall and round those windows to a considerable height. A tall ladder, in a very shabby position, leaned against the wall. Perched half way up, clinging desperately to it with both hands, and looking very frightened, was George. Her light muslin dress was twisted and fastened firmly round both herself and the ladder, and several long festoons of flowers and frills hung over the sprays of the rose-tree, evidently torn away from the skirt in violent efforts to get free. She seemed in a deplorable condition of fright and helplessness on her precarious perch. Presently a step sounded on the gravel walk beneath.

"Esther, do come here!" cried George, not daring to turn her head for fear of losing her balance. "My dress is quite fast to those nails. I have been here for nearly half an hour. When I stooped to unfasten it the ladder shook so that I nearly fell off. I am so frightened!"

"It is for you to decide, little wife. But for your wish I should never willingly have spoken to him again; and he shall not come here unless you like."

George rested her head with quiet content on her husband's shoulder, and looked up at him with shy, trustful eyes. "Why should they not come, Frank?" said she, simply. "I will give them a welcome."

Mr. Day took the fair pure face in his two hands, bent down and kissed the sweet red lips, and then, drawing her close again, said laughingly— "Do you know, sweet wife, I was grievously disappointed in your coming! My lady-love has never even yet told me if she loves me."

"Perhaps she doesn't," returned George saucily. "Let me go, Frank—I hear Esther opening the window."

"Answer them"—keeping her firmly imprisoned. "Do you?" "Do you love me?" "Please let me go, Frank—she is coming, really!" And George made a desperate effort to escape from his encircling arms.

"Tell me, then, my sweet wife!—in an almighty anxious tone. She ceased her efforts to escape, raised her eyes, deep and dark with emotion, and, clasping his hand in hers, said, gravely and steadily— "I love you, Frank, with a love compared to which all other love seems poor and mean. I love you so much that I know that till now I did not know what love meant. My husband, I love you as that nothing but death can part us."

THE METHODIST CONFERENCE. New York Freeman's Journal. The Methodist Conference closed its deliberations in Baltimore on December 17th. A pastoral address was issued by the committee of Methodist Bishops, addressed to the various branches of Methodism under their charge. The pastoral emphasized the doctrinal points of Methodism called "doctrines of experience." The document will be of much interest to those Protestants who have not outgrown what Wordsworth calls "a creed un-learned." The most interesting part of the address is the explicit declaration of the Methodists to save their children by the same means which the Catholic Church long ago adopted—Christian education, and which some Methodists, among many others, characterized as "un-American."

That Methodism has ceased to rely on Sunday schools is plain from certain sentences in the pastoral: "The address urges the maintenance of family religion. The holiest sanctuary on earth is the Christian home. Neither church nor Sunday schools can do the work of the home, or become an adequate substitute for the influence of piety in the household. See to it that the children be all taught of the Lord. With sound instruction let the hand of restraint be employed, yet with such firmness and gentleness as to win and help the children, as well as to hold them in subjection to authority."

Methodism cannot be held together as a body by preaching or by social intercourse. There their church fails. The Sunday schools—and Methodist Sunday schools are powerless against "doctrines" public schools. What, then? the family! But, with Methodists, marriage is not a sacrament and what is to prevent the family from falling apart?

A NEGLECTED PRECEPT. Do our younger Catholic generation contribute as generously to the calls of the Church as do the older? There is scarcely any difference of opinion in the conclusion that they do not. They fail to respond as liberally upon the occasion of collections. They do not think of making sacrifices. The young women are not of the same spirit as were the working girls who so willingly gave of their earnings for the support of the Church in the new country, to which they came as emigrants. One of the most beautiful and earnest—whole-souled, trusting and earnest—that obtained among the "poor Irish and Germans," whose contributions have, within fifty years, made the Catholic Church rich in great churches throughout a great continent. This is to be regretted. Primarily, not for the Church's sake, but for the sake of the younger generation itself. We will believe that generosity is rewarded among men. Niggardiness and penny are pleasing neither to God nor man. But liberality and charity seem to have the element of temporal luck upon their side. What is given is not misused. God increases the store of him who takes pity upon the poor. Temporal prosperity follows the generous giver to the needs of the Church. Upon the thrift of him who fails to do his share in supporting the Church, there can be no blessing. He does not make a proper use of his prosperity and instead of becoming a source of happiness it becomes a burden of anxiety and, in some cases, a positive misfortune. One of the precepts of the Church enjoins Christians to contribute to the support of their pastors. This precept is left to the interpretation of every individual, so far as the amount is concerned. He is to give according to his means. His own conscience will incline him to judiciously in this respect, and if he makes a conscientious obligation out of the matter he will not be wanting in the discharge of his whole duty. That so many of our young Catholic men and women fail to look upon the subject in the light of a conscientious requirement is, perhaps, the chief reason for their slight showing in church collections. Otherwise we might expect them to set apart at the beginning of each year a certain portion of their earnings, an amount that they themselves should consider fair—for the Church and for the support of their pastors. The purpose might be formed to contribute from this amount cheerfully and without solicitation, at whatever times the call should be made upon them. A cultivation of this sense of obligation is the truest basis for all appeals from pastors of the church for revenues. It is better than the more worthy than motives of pride or emulation.—Catholic Citizen.