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## THE SCHOOLMATES.

BY MRS. N. T. MUNROE.

SCHOOLMATES! Ah, it is a magic word, and brings countless thoughts to my mind, both painful and pleasing. It carries me back to the days of my childhood, and I am again in the home of my parents, or in my childish haunts, where I have played through long summer afternoons, till the sun has sunk behind the western hills, and then sought my home, worn out with the very excess of enjoyment.

They rise up before me, the playmates of my childhood, the companions of my school-days. I see them, with their laughing eyes, clustering hair, and glowing cheeks; I hear, again, the shout of glee, and the wild, ringing laugh of merriment and joy; I almost think to feel again the pressure of the rosy lip of childhood and of innocence.

But no, this is passed, and I but dream. Years have since gone by, and while care has overshadowed the many, changes have come upon all!

They have gone forth into the world, with their various minds, and its intercourse has had a different effect upon each. Some have met with coldness and neglect; the warm, gushing feelings have been driven back upon the young heart, the sunny brow has been shaded by the world's indifference and scorn, the very soul has grown callous, as it were, the affections have been checked, have changed from what they were in childhood, and the glad, joyous being is now restrained in every warm impulse of the heart, and like many of the world, is too much governed by fear of that world's opinion.

Some have gone far from the scenes of their childhood, are out on the deep, mid sea, or in a far land, where the suns have darkened their fair brows; their hearts, too, have been changed somewhat by different scenes and circumstances, and I know not that my eye would recognize them, should they stand before me now! Some are in the western world, the world of the emigrant, the land of enterprise, to which the sons of New England direct their steps. And some, ay, some are in another, a better, and a brighter land! They have gone in the spring-time of life, ere sorrow or care had come, gone ere they knew the coldness of the world, its trials and its many changes. Yes, they have gone! the playmates of my childhood! the sod is green above their resting places; in the church-yard their bodies sleep in quiet, but their souls are with God!

But my pen lingers too long around these memories. I would tell thee, gentle reader, a simple tale; and turn not thou coldly away, but deal gently with the writer, remembering that to her it may not be all fiction.

Ella Stanley and Edith Morris were playmates in childhood, and being nearly of the same age, were ever together. Ella, the eldest, was not handsome. Even a child, none called her really beautiful, her complexion was dark, and her features, though regular, had nothing about them either striking or elegant. Yet, though she had not beauty, there was something in her countenance that attracted your attention, something which would cause you to look twice at Ella Stanley, even though you met her by the side of Edith Morris.

Ella knew that her friend was handsome, nor was she ignorant of her own deficiency in personal charms; but this never excited any envy or uneasiness in her mind, although she sometimes wished that she was as fair as her little playmate. But these were transitory thoughts, and the young friends seemed more unworldly than perhaps any one else, of the difference in their appearance.

I may not linger over the days of their childhood, it is not of these I would speak. But years passed on, and Ella and Edith arrived at that season of life which is generally deemed the happiest and brightest; when all the hopes and aspirations of the heart are highest, when life and health are in the veins, and every pulse beats high with anticipations of future joy and happiness. And how did this season find the two friends? Ella was now tall in person, and her soft, hazel eyes were full of the eloquent language of a pure and noble mind. It was for intellect alone that she would be noticed in the crowd, and that she would be dangerous as beauty. Though she is often still very young, her heart had already tasted its first draught of fame, and was sighing ardently for more. She had won praise from the lips of those who could discern and appreciate talent; praise, too, which was well deserved. Yet was her a dangerous station for one so young, and with all a woman's gentleness of heart, and all a woman's affections, just springing up, like a young fresh fountain to the sunbeams; for the breath of praise might mar that heart, and smother those affections, as it had, full often, the heart and affections of many a woman before her.

Edith Morris had also grown up, and the beauty given in her childhood had ripened and matured, with years. Nor was she deficient in intellect; but her heart was a mind which we may often find in woman, satisfied with her present station, and sighing for none higher; and this is well. Edith would be looked

at and admired for her transcendent beauty, and loved for her gentleness of heart, while Ella would be praised and caressed for her superior talents, though perhaps very few would pause to consider whether she had the feelings and affections of a woman, and so her richest gifts might lie all hidden and noticed, or be trampled on and forgotten by the many. Which, then, was the most dangerous gift, beauty or genius?

It is a scene of quietude and pleasure. Youthful forms are fitting in the mazy dance, while music and singing, and the gay laugh and joyous tone, blend harmoniously together on the still air of evening. The beautiful and the gifted, the manly and the aspiring are in that circle thus gathered together in the mansion of Mr. Seward. Among these are our friends, Ella and Edith. Many forms are standing around the two, for, as usual, they are together, and the soft, hazel eye of the one is often turned to meet the merry glance of the other.

Ella, as usual, attracts attention by her known powers of mind, and by her sparkling wit in conversation; and there are those around her who are ever ready with the honeyed words of praise. But there is one, always at her side, seldom speaking when others are by, yet whose dark eyes dwell fondly on her youthful face, as she stands there surrounded; so fondly that even a stranger could read the feelings which have prompted the earnest gaze.

It would perhaps have been difficult for Raimond to have told why he loved Ella; but he did love her, fondly and devoutly; more than even she herself dreamed. It was the love of a noble, manly heart, which looked alone to the happiness of the adored object, and to secure which, it could give up its own dearest wishes. Others praised and flattered, while he was silent. Not that he was unconscious of her great power of mind, but it was not for these he loved her; it was for her woman's heart and feelings. And well might she prize that love, for it was what she seldom might hope to win, and it was what her heart might pine for, in after days, when trouble and sorrow should come, and the voice of the world had ceased to please.

Ella had never told Raimond that his affection was returned, but as she stood there in that brilliant circle you would have seen her eye turn away, as if seeking for some other object, and when her gaze met his, you would have noted the glow of pleasure on her cheek, and the sparkle in her tell-tale eye. She had never promised to be his,—nay, she never asked for his heart; but that evening, as she walked with her through the brilliantly lighted rooms, and out beneath the clear sky,—as she stood beside him with her hand resting lightly on his arm, and when he took that hand within his own and pressed it fondly to his heart,—she forgot that she thought but of the one beside her; and he, too, forgot that she was another than the adored one, whose image was so treasured in his heart of hearts. But yet, when they parted that night, there was no engagement between them; no promise had passed their lips, no word had been spoken to bind them to each other. Yet did Raimond Seward look forward to the time when he could call Ella Stanley his wife as confidently and fondly, as if her lips had breathed the welcome Yes!

It was an afternoon in summer, and Ella Stanley was alone in her chamber. A letter lay open before her, and her hand was resting thoughtfully on her hand; a smile had passed over her features, when she first perused the letter, but as she sat there, and the thoughts came thronging fast over her mind, the expression of her countenance grew sad, and the tears dropped one by one upon the paper. Again she turned and perused the letter, and again she sat for a while abstracted. It was indeed one which might have puzzled an older head than hers. It was from one famed for his talents, and very flattering, the world would have pronounced it, could it have perused those lines; for the gifted writer had therein made an offer of heart and hand to Ella Stanley. No wonder that the young girl was excited. An offer of marriage from the gifted Horace Wilbur! There were visions of greatness passing before the tearful eyes of Ella, as she sat there alone,—thoughts of what she might one day become in the world's eye, as the wife of one so talented.

But why stood the tears in her eyes as she gazed upon the paper? Mingling with the visions of greatness and fame, that rose before her mind's eye, was the form of Raimond Seward. His mild glance seemed to meet her's with something like sad approach. And yet why should it? No tie bound her to him and though she knew within her heart, that Raimond looked upon her as though she might one day be his, yet why should he? It would surely be foolish and unmanly to refuse this offer, upon such a plea as this. And yet what should she do? If she should accept the offer made in the letter, she could no longer be to Raimond as she had been; and she determined to show him the letter, for their intimacy would warrant her in so doing, were it even on the score of friendship, and to ask his

advice as a brother, in the course she should pursue. Evening came and Raimond was at her side: He had read the flattering letter which had been sent to her, and in spite of himself, his lip quivered and a tear stood in his eye, as he took her hand within his own.

His voice trembled as he spoke. 'I would not, Ella,' he said, 'I would not have my wishes direct you in the course you are now to take. Consult your own feelings, let your own heart dictate to you. You cannot have been unmindful of the deep affection I have for you; your image, ever since first became acquainted with you, has been present in my mind. In my sleeping or waking hours, you have ever been the one who was to share my future joy or sorrow. There are others more talented and richer, others who would woo with smoother words and a more flattering tongue, but Ella, there is not, there cannot be one who would love you better. It is true, Horace Wilbur is talented, his pursuits and his mind are perhaps more in accordance with your own, and it may be, it may be, that he will make your path pleasanter than I could do. And if your heart tells you that he will, if you think you will be happier and more blessed in a union with him,—I would not even plead my own happiness nor ask you to be mine, nor would I ask for your love, much as I desire it. I could not bear to think that it was for me, you had rejected aught which you thought would secure your happiness. I will not ask you now which you choose, but I will give you time for longer reflection. Let not ambition influence you too much. And Ella, should your heart ever long for affection, for kindness, and sympathy, and find it not where it should look, remember then, the one who offered you his, and would have cherished you, as fondly, and devotedly, as the mother cherishes her first-born.'

He paused. He would have said more, for his heart was full, very full of sad, painful thoughts; but much as he loved the being by his side he would not press his affection for her now. He feared, ay he had sometimes thought, that Ella Stanley, with all her rich powers of intellect, was not for him; he had often questioned whether, indeed, he was the one calculated to make her happy, although he loved her, with a deep and overpowering affection, which told him that he might never love another! And now as he sat by her side, this thought came into his mind, and he forebore to say more, but was determined, though his heart seemed bursting with unuttered love, to leave her to her own free choice.

And how did she decide? Let not my readers think that she decided too hastily; nor condemn her too soon. Others have erred, where she has erred, and many more, we fear, will do the same. Ella was not very ambitious, not more so than any woman in her situation would have been. She reasoned as many a man, and still do reason. Horace Wilbur's pursuits were intellectual, and so were her's,—and he had talents, and was desirous of cultivating them; so had she; he stood before the world as a writer, above whom few could dare to aspire; and she, too, was known to fame, and many praised her. And then came thoughts to her mind of how pleasant it would be to have one who could sympathize with her in every romantic and fanciful feeling, which is thought to wander through the brain of the poet, and of the intellectually gifted.

Moreover Horace Wilbur was young and his countenance one which well suited a genius. It would have required a harder heart than Ella's to have resisted all these attractions, and he was soon her acknowledged suitor. The manly, dignified virtues of Raimond Seward, seemed to have sunk before his successful rival. Not that he was inferior in aught that could please the eye of woman. He loved all that was beautiful in nature.—His heart was full of unwritten poetry, and deep and glowing thoughts; and his soul was warm with pure and generous feeling, towards all that lived and breathed upon earth. You would have loved him for his heart and soul; but you would not have dreamed that so much of deep, glorious thought was lurking in his mind never yet exposed to the eye of an applauding world. And was it not the purer and richer from its being kept all hidden and treasured up there in its own bright home?

Had Ella Stanley been his, all these deep thoughts would have gushed forth, and been lavished with his most ardent affection on her. Looking not and seeking not for aught of praise from the world, all the treasures of his heart would have thus been poured out upon one object, and he would have been her all that her mind in its most romantic dreams could have desired.

Poor Ella, she was not aware how strong a hold he had upon her affections, until her word was pledged to another, and even the wedding day was fixed!

But slowly came the conviction that Horace with all his talents was not to her like Raimond. She had been so used to his kind attentions, to his gentle smile and tone, that they had become to her a part of her existence, and she knew not until she began to miss them, how much they had been the source

of her happiness, nor how deeply they had wound around her heart. But it was then too late; her heart was pledged to another, and the word was soon to be spoken that was to make her his for life!

It came, the day that was to unite Horace Wilbur to Ella Stanley. It was a beautiful evening, and bright as the sky above, seemed the path which lay before them. Many were there to witness the ceremony, and Ella stood by the side of him so soon to be her husband, with a deep flush upon her cheek—but it was the flush of excited feeling, and not of heart-felt joy. And Horace Wilbur's tall, graceful form, and intellectual countenance, looked well in that brilliant light, and as he gazed upon the being by his side, a thrill of pride passed through his heart, as he thought how she would add a new glory to his name.

But let us not forget the beautiful bridesmaid, our Ella's most intimate friend, Edith Morris. A wreath of pure white roses was twisted amid her raven hair, and very beautiful did she seem to all, but more especially to young Albert Seward, who expected so soon to call her his wife.

It passed away, the bridal eve, and as the gay tone and heartfelt wishes of friends fell upon the bridal couple very dignified and stately did Mrs. Wilbur appear,—fit wife for him who was about to take her from her childhood's home, to be the light of his own dwelling.

It passed away, the world was spoken, and Ella Stanley,—what was she now to him who sat alone in his chamber, through that bridal eve, with a pale brow and almost bursting heart? What was she now to him? *The wife of another!* He might not hope now ever to call her his, he must pass on through life alone, for never, never might his heart give to find another whom it could love as it had loved Ella Stanley,—and so had his visions faded, and his hopes been crushed! But think not that he gave himself up to melancholy and grief, till his noble form wasted away and sunk into an untimely grave.—It was not so. Time passed, and though many wondered that Raimond Seward never married,—for he had all things requisite to support a wife and thought it strange that he should prefer a life of single blessedness,—yet so it was, and every one knew why. Few knew how the deep love which had once gushed forth for one, had been driven back upon his own heart. None but Edith, now his brother's happy wife, and she whom he had once loved so well. He would sometimes, though seldom, speak of her to Edith, who was to him like a sweet sister.

He rarely met Mrs. Wilbur, and nothing more than the common civilities of society, had passed between them since her marriage. So time went on for a few years. Albert Seward and Edith were best and happy in their affection. Horace Wilbur grew more proud of his wife, for as he had expected, she had added new glory to his name and had realized all his ideas of a talented woman.—She was, moreover, a most exemplary wife, ever ready to do his slightest bidding, and toiling and studying on through long hours, till her brain and heart were wearied, if he but required it. And did he love her? Did he love the one whose fame almost eclipsed his own? Aye, yes, he loved her but there was much of selfish pride mingled with that love, and we should tremble for that affection, should her heart weary of her task, and her health and spirits sink beneath the burden imposed upon her to gratify his wishes.

It is not like the love she had once cast away from her, it was not like the affection for which she sometimes pined in lonely hours.—For she had lonely hours,—her husband was ever very busy with his books and studies, and could spare little time for relaxation, or for those numerous pleasures, or rather duties of life which are so necessary to our happiness.

This application soon wore upon a frame naturally delicate; the cheek of the student grew pale, and a cough seemed hurrying him fast to the grave. It was in vain that Ella warned him of his danger, it was in vain that she besought him not to apply himself so closely to study; her warnings met with little attention, and he would often answer her with the petulance so natural to the sick. She forgave him for this unkindness, though it cost her many a bitter sigh to see him thus slowly wasting away, while all her kind attentions seemed to be utterly neglected.

She was sitting one afternoon by his side, as he lay reclining on a sofa. A flush deep and red, was on his usually pale countenance, and he felt feverish and hot. She bathed his brow with the kindest care, and adjusted the pillows beneath his head, that he might, as he requested, look out at the window. She asked if she should read to him; but he replied that she need not, he felt nervous and irritable, and as he turned his head, an expression of pain passed over his features.

'Do you not feel easy in your position? Are not the pillows placed as you wish?'

'Raise me a little higher, for I can hardly breathe.'

She did as requested, and when she had finished, he looked up with a faint smile into her face, and thanked her for her care. Ella

was affected; this was much for him to say, yet a kind word and look were all she required for her attention. She took his hand within her own, and a tear dropped from her eye and fell upon his forehead. He looked into her face, 'Ella,' he said, 'you weep because I am dying. Do you think the world will mourn when I am gone?—and yet, I have laboured for it alone. I have toiled and worn out my health, and wasted away to this; only for its praise and its fame; yet after all, it will not weep for me, nor mourn for me so much as you, whom, if I have not really neglected, I have not treated with all the affection, which I ought, and which you have deserved.'

Ella spoke not but her tears came faster and faster. 'As I lay awake last night,' he continued, 'and was thinking of the past, I saw some things very plainly, which I would that I had seen as plainly before. Alas! the world came in between and prevented, but now, as that recedes, I see how deeply I have misunderstood both your character and my own. You have ever been kind and affectionate; neither have I been harsh, but yet, Ella, there was something wanting; the deep trust and confidence which should ever exist between a man and his wife, the feeling that they are dearer to each other than all the world beside—and that, should all the world forsake, still they would be happy within themselves. I see it all plainly now,—too plainly, would to God I had seen it thus before! Your woman's heart has longed for something more than I have ever bestowed; but it not Ella? Nay, weep not thus; raise me a little, and let me gaze upon your face once more, and bless you for all your kind care and attention.'

She raised him, but he was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and for some time was unable to speak. When he did, it was in a low, faint tone. 'Ella stood over him, spoke encouragingly, and hoped he would be better. But no, it was not that to be. Ere that afternoon's sun had sunk behind the western hill, the spirit of the gifted Horace Wilbur had sought his God; and Ella sat weeping over his corpse, a lone, sad widow.'

Three years had passed since she had been wedded to Horace Wilbur. Three years—ah! how? Had she been happy? Alas! it was a sad question.

Perhaps she might have been, had her heart never known another and a different love; perhaps she might have been, had she possessed less of feminine tenderness, mingled with her great powers of mind. But there were quick, gushing feelings within her breast; and because her heart found not the ardent sympathy it desired, it pined and sickened of the world, and sadness settled upon it like an incubus. To such a one, O what were fame, or applause, or the silent admiration of the whole world? But those three years had her heart gone by, and many a lesson had her heart learned within that time—lessons of stern experience, which, though ever dearly bought, have a value within themselves that endures unto the end.

Two years more passed away in widowhood, and the heart of Ella Wilbur was refined and purified by affliction; and she looked to a higher source, even to the Throne of Grace, for happiness and consolation.

The joys of Edith's home, which had now become her own, lent a feeling of quietness and repose to her mind, while the merry prattle of innocence amused and lightened her spirit; and perhaps she wrought more enduring good there, in that quiet circle, than she had ever done before, at any period of her life.

She was sitting one quiet summer afternoon with Edith. A little one, with sunny eye and curling hair, and who bore the name of Ella, had just fallen asleep in her mother's arms.—That mother was as beautiful as ever; yes, a prurer and a holier beauty was now upon the fair white brow, and a sweeter expression shone in the eyes, and played around the mouth.

Edith rose and carried the child to the cradle. 'Come Ella, we leave the children to the care of Sarah, while we walk in the garden; for I really wish to see how the roses and peonies are getting along; and perhaps we may meet Albert, as it is nearly time for him to return.'

Mrs. Wilbur arose to comply with the request, and the two separated forth together. They walked for a while in silence, Edith was the first to speak. 'Albert has received a letter from his brother, which tells him that he may be expected home every day.' A slight colour rose to the cheek of Mrs. Wilbur, but she answered not. Edith turned to her flowers, and the two friends were soon deeply engaged in discussing their various beauties. The bright sunny days of their childhood seemed to have returned, as they wandered along side by side, even as when they had been little children together.—While they were thus engaged, Albert was unobtrusively approaching them, accompanied by a stranger. Edith first perceived, and went on eagerly to meet them; but Mrs. Wilbur stood still and waited their approach. She greeted the stranger with apparent calmness, although that stranger was Raimond Seward. And he, too, held out his hand as if kindly and as kindly as ever. It was long since they had met, for he had been abroad for the last two years; and

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