

No! Bill Ackers had been a lonely, almost pathetic figure 'midst the many parting scenes. True, many a friendly hand had been stretched his way, but none the less, the little Cockney had gone overseas with an utter disregard for his life. Strangely enough, however, on the battlefield he seemed to bear a charmed existence, seeing year after year of service on the firing line.

But towards the close of the bloody period Bill was severely wounded; and the final result found him on this bright spring morning trying out his new artificial limb.

And then as the mist passed from before his eyes the little veteran became aware of a pressure on his arm, and then the flashing vision into the past vanished, leaving, however, a certain warm glow of feeling.

The girl was speaking softly, and as he met her gaze his own expression softened, for he saw a look in her big dark eyes which set his pulses throbbing with anticipation of—he knew not what—but it caused his whole being to suddenly take on a new aspect of life!

Ah, these April days—the days of hope—the days when, to the "lover true," all seems fair—

Then he sensed her words:

"Yus Bill"—she was saying—"yus! it's me, orl right, 'ole sport! 'ow are yer? Oh, Bill Bill! it's sure some sight ter see yer agen!"

At this juncture the girl furtively dabbed the back of her hand to her eyes; and when she again spoke there was an added note of seriousness in her voice:

"I've been a' looking fer yer, Bill!" she avowed, adding, one uve the blokes at 'ome said as 'ow yer 'ad come ter these parts—and thet's why I am 'ere!"

"But Lize—"

Ignoring his interruption, however, she went on, her tone becoming louder as she warmed to her subject. Passers-by were eyeing the curious couple with considerable interest, and then some more—

"Yer see Bill, all the folks is dead and gone—and I—I—but I see Bill, poor ole dear, that yer went ter fight—I fou't as 'ow yer would go, Bill—" a tone of pride creeping into her voice.

Again he tried to voice the question which was trembling on his lips, and yet again she took no notice, but continued as though eager to be done with her story:

"Yer know, Bill, arter yer 'ad gone an' left me—in course I hexpected as 'ow yer would come back—cos I was on'y a 'kiddin' yer, ole dear—but no! ter Canada yer 'ad ter skip—"

"An I fou't as 'ow I might as well be dead wivout yer Bill—and then the bloomin' ole K'iser got on the loose—an' well, Bill, as yer jolly well know, 'ell was loose—I did my bit for the ole flag—elped wash up dishes in a kenteen—but yer got badly 'urt I sees—pore ole bloke."

And then, regardless of all else save the fact that she was facing Bill Ackers she suddenly flung her arms around the man, and for a moment there was a tense silence—even the passers-by appeared to have summed up the situation; for, with a bare exception or so, they almost reverently passed on, with perchance a glance of contempt at the irreverent ones who, having failed to grasp the full significance, were lingering, coarse jests on their lips.

The veteran now gently released himself from Lize's embrace, and then he breathlessly exclaimed:

"But wot abart the 'Fish and Chips' bloke, Lize?"

"Aw, garn, Bill!" she affirmed. "I was only a kiddin' of yer then, ter see 'ow much yer loved me—I never fou't as 'ow yer'd sink I meant it, Bill!"

"Wot d' yer mean, Lize?"

"Aw, Bill!" she commenced, and then a flush suffused her thin, pale cheeks, whilst her dark eyes flashed a love message to the man.

"Yer see, Bill," continuing in a voice that was scarcely above a whisper, "there never was a 'Fish an' Chips' bloke—yer the 'On'y Bloke' fer me!"

Shortly afterwards this typical coster couple—thus strangely united—might

have been seen walking slowly along Portage Avenue, arm in arm. Presently they stopped, and after a hesitating pause, suddenly disappeared through the doorway of a jewelry store.

THE WAYFARERS

I'd rather walk with you, dear,
Life's dusty, rude highway,
Than ride in state, while lackeys wait
My bidding, day by day.

All grandly some go riding by
In lofty, high disdain
Of common ways, and common days
And common gaze of men—
Their way may lead through forest,
By ferny pool and shade,
Where singing tree-tops quiver

In many a gladsome glade,
The vagrant woodland breezes
May stir each waving plume,
Each golden shaft of sunlight
Glance bright on beauty's bloom,
And gleaming jewel's daggered ray
May shame the light of summer's day.

But, oh, were you not there, dear,
For me no sun would shine,
But winter's gloom and icy breath
Would chill this heart of mine.

For us the wayside blossom,
The swaying wayside grass,
The winding roadway's curving rim,
The fleecy clouds that pass,
The fresh, sweet breath of morning,
The world new-bathed in light,
The thousand charms that beckon
To soothe our sense and sight,
The noonday's drowsy shining,

The sunset's golden gleam,
The twilight's hazy radiance,
The moon's pale, silver beam,
And weary Nature lulled to rest
On Night's great, tender, slumbrous
breast.

So bravely fare we forth, dear,
Nor envy wealth afar,
If shining still, o'er sunset hill
Love's radiant guiding star!

—Elizabeth Robson.

THE POET'S VISION

Teacher (to class).—"In this stanza what is meant by the line, 'The shades of night were falling fast'?"
Clever Scholar.—"The people were pulling down the blinds."



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