

LOST HOURS.

I ween the vigil that I keep
Is a sad and solemn thing,
Where the chill November breezes sweep,
And the ferns lie withering.
For I pass the years in long review,
The years I have trifled past,
The years when life was bright and new;
Ah, what have they brought at last?
And I cry, as I look at my drooping flowers,
My baffled hopes, and my falling powers,
"Oh, my lost, lost hours!"

What a harvest might have been garner'd in,
When the golden grain was wasted!
What a nectar of life it was mine to win,
When the draught was barely tasted!
What happy memories might have shone,
Had folly never stain'd them!
What noble heights to rest upon,
If a steadier foot had gain'd them!
And I cry, as I sit 'mid my faded flowers,
"Rashness and weakness have fatal dowers,
Oh, my lost, lost hours!"

Too late for battle, too late for fame,
Comes the vision of better life;
With eyes that are smarting with tears of
shame,
I gaze at the world's hot strife.
The patient love cannot pardon now,
Or the proud believing cheer;
Where the white cross gleams and the violets
grow
Lie the loved that made life so dear.
Kind Nature renews her perish'd flowers,
But death knows nothing of sun or showers.
"Oh, my lost, lost hours!"

SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER.

BY M. YOUNG.

CHAPTER I.

Downton has been in the possession of our family since the reign of Elizabeth. From generation to generation Downton has descended in an unbroken line from father to son, unencumbered by debt or mortgage. True that we have of late years been obliged to practise a somewhat strict economy, and curtail all unnecessary expenses. My grandfather gave up the mastership of the hounds some time before his death, and my father sold our town house soon after his marriage. My mother was well born, and very pretty, but penniless, as my grandmother had been before her. The Brandons were noted for marrying beauties. Whatever else they could make up their minds to sell, they would not sell themselves.

"Walter will have to relieve the family fortunes and marry an heiress," my father used to say when I was yet quite a child.

"All right, father," I would reply carelessly, "and mind you find one with a precious lot of money, and then I can keep a pack of hounds!"—my *summum bonum* of human felicity.

Out of a family of seven children my parents only reared two—my sister Constance and myself. Constance was my senior by seven years. She married a wealthy Scotch laird when I was only twelve—his name was Macintosh, of Beghie—and then went away to live in Sutherlandshire. I always spent my summer holidays at Beghie; and as the Macintoshes generally spent Christmas with us, I saw on the whole as much of Conny as schoolboy brothers usually see of their sisters.

When I was nineteen I left Eton, and went to a private tutor's in the Isle of Wight for two years. Mr. Garnham only took two pupils. My fellow-student was the son of a very rich brewer who had recently been made a baronet—Sir John Thornton.

During the first year of my sojourn at Mr. Garnham's, Thornton and I were inseparable. But when I had been about a year at Mr. Garnham's an event occurred which I will not say estranged us, but certainly tended to make us less dependent upon each other for companionship than we had hitherto been: I fell in love. But I must reserve the interesting details for another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

My lady-love was the *protégée* and adopted child of an old French dressmaker residing in the Isle. Cherie Dupont's birth and parentage were involved in doubt and obscurity. She had been deposited at Mme. Dupont's door one Christmas Eve, some sixteen years before I first made their acquaintance. The worthy old woman was fully persuaded that Cherie would turn out some day to be "a lady of consequence;" she used often to talk to me about that Christmas Eve: "I heard a ring at the door, Monsieur Brandon, just as I begin to make my Cress-mass poudin; my landlady had just gone out—nobody at home but myself. I open the door—I see no one there—but on the doorstep a large corbeille, open at the top. I bring it into my little salon, and I find inside the loveliest of babes—my peerless Cherie. She was dressed, monsieur, in a superbe petite robe, trimmed with lace—real Valenciennes—deep as that," and she held up her forefinger, "and wrapped round in a magnifique châle de Cachemire; and to this châle was pinned an envelope containing a fifty-pound note and a slip of paper with these

words: 'Take care of Cherie, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee.' So Cherie's parents, Monsieur Brandon, are not only great, but good people." I had my doubts on this point, but of course I kept them to myself. "And has no one ever come again, Madame?" I asked.

She shook her head. "No," and for eighteen months I heard nothing more from Cherie's parents. By that time I had left London, and had come to live here, but I had given my new address to the old landlady.

"One day she sent me a letter—from Cherie's papa, I suppose—thanking me for all my bonté to his bébé, and begging that the chère enfant might be well educated—a request that Monsieur can see has been carefully attended to." I assented heartily to this remark.

"I send her to a day-school, monsieur, as soon as she could speak. I taught her the French myself, and she speaks it as well as the English; and she plays the piano, and sings like an angel. Often I do not receive a son for her for months—years même together; mais qu'est-ce que ça fait? She is like my own proper child to me now, and is she not beautiful too, monsieur?" and poor old Madame Dupont would gaze at Cherie with the tears of rapture in her light gray eyes.

I must have been very much in love to spend, as I did, hour after hour of fine, warm spring days, shut up in Madame Dupont's stuffy little parlor, listening to her rhapsodies over her adored Cherie, who certainly was very lovely—divinely tall, and most divinely fair.

"I don't see, my dear fellow where it is to end," he said one day. "You can't marry that old froggy's niece" (I had told him Cherie was Madame Dupont's niece. I had just sufficient discretion to keep her early history a secret from Edgar).

"And why can't I marry her, pray—eventually? Of course, I know we shall have to wait" (at twenty, one thinks that a mere trifle).

"Ah, but the whole thing is so absurd, Walter. What would your governors say to it—your governor who is so tremendously proud and stiff-necked, always talking about 'new people?' He'd think old Mother Dupont a rum lot for a new person, I should say."

"You mistake my father's character altogether, Thornton," I replied loftily. "He hates pretension, and assumption, and vulgarity of any kind; he can't stand would-be great people; but he admires beauty and respects worth, wherever he meets it: and Cherie's face and manners would adorn any station; besides, my position is good enough for me to marry whom I please. A man raises his wife to his rank."

CHAPTER III.

"Came at last the bitter ending," Cherie and I had to part. The time had arrived for me to go to Oxford. We bade each other farewell with many a sigh and many a tear, and endless assurances of unaltered love and devotion.

I went home for a month before going to the university, and received no end of lectures during that time from the governor upon the duties of my position. I also discovered, to my horror, that my parents were laying a matrimonial trap for my unwary footsteps—they intended me to marry the daughter of the wealthy Dean of F—; she was only fourteen at that time, so a marriage with her was a distant evil—but the very thought of that girl was a nightmare to me. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, wondering why I felt so restless and oppressed, and suddenly I would recollect—Eliza May. By the way, I never remember seeing a plainer young lady than the aforesaid Miss May. But it would have been all the same to me had she been Venus herself; the tallman on my heart mocked all female wiles.

I must pass briefly over the first two years I spent at Oxford—two very happy years. If I achieved no brilliant victories, I, at all events, acquitted myself creditably.

A few weeks before I was to leave Oxford for good, I received a letter from my father that filled me with apprehension. Rumors had reached his ears that I had "a flirtation with some girl of low birth and connections." He begged me to write at once and deny the report, as he feared that if it reached Dr. May's ears it might cause him to look unfavorably upon me as a son-in-law.

I answered my father's letter immediately. I denied positively having any flirtation, but informed him at the same time that it was a matter of perfect indifference to me what Dr. May thought of my conduct, as I had no intention of becoming his son-in-law.

My father was furious of course. He came up to Oxford and told me I must marry Eliza May—that it had been a settled thing between her father and himself for years—that if I refused to comply with his wish, I should never receive another shilling from him as long as he lived.

I could not renounce Cherie—better forfeit my birthright than my love. However, I promised my father I would not marry without his consent; at the same time I told him that nothing should induce me to marry a girl I did not love.

We parted in anger, and the doors of Downton were closed against me from thenceforth. I passed my next vacation at Beghie, and to Conny I confided the tale of my love for Cherie. She held out no hope of my father ever consenting to my marrying Cherie. And indeed, when I thought it over calmly and dispassionately, it did seem highly improbable

that my father, with his old-fashioned Tory notions and class prejudices, should ever welcome a rameless girl, the adopted child of an old dressmaker, as a daughter-in-law.

"Perhaps, though, she will turn out to be a great lady after all," Conny would sometimes say hopefully—"very likely the daughter of a royal duke or a foreign prince."

But I was not so sanguine. After leaving Beghie, I went down to the Isle of Wight to pay Cherie a visit. I told her exactly what had taken place between my father and myself. She was only grieved, poor child, and wanted to release me from my engagement; but I would not hear of such a thing, and made her swear never to give me up under any mistaken idea that it would be for my good."

I had now to look out for some employment to enable me to live, as my father had stopped my allowance. Fortunately I very soon fell on my feet.

As I was strolling down Piccadilly one afternoon, I met an old schoolfellow—Miles Stratton—the son of the editor of a well-known illustrated periodical. Thinking he might be able to help me, I told Miles exactly how I was situated, and he promised to interest his father on my behalf. (I ought to have mentioned before that my only talent was for drawing; I sketched well from nature, but I chiefly excelled in figure drawing and caricaturing.) Well—to make a long story short—through Miles Stratton's exertions, I was soon enabled to eke out a livelihood by my pen; but it was a hard life, and, but for Cherie, I should very soon have thrown it up in disgust, and returned home like the Prodigal Son, to accept my father's blessing and—Miss May.

But for my promise to my father never to marry without his consent, I should have made Cherie my wife at once, and we would have faced the world together, strong in our mutual love and confidence. Madame Dupont was growing old, and I anticipated with dread the time when Cherie would be left alone in the world, and often debated whether, under those circumstances, I should not be justified in breaking my promise to my father if he refused to absolve me from it.

I wrote every week to my darling, and once a month I used to run down to the Isle of Wight, from Saturday to Monday, to pay her and Madame Dupont a visit.

CHAPTER IV.

Two years passed away, and my father had not yet relented, which I attributed mainly to the fact of Miss May being still Miss May. He never wrote to me. My mother did occasionally—under the rose—and Conny and I corresponded regularly.

Madame Dupont was now very infirm, and Cherie had the entire superintendence of the business, which thrived admirably under her direction. From time to time madam continued to receive anonymous gifts of money for Cherie's benefit, but she had never obtained any clue to the sender. It was certainly very mysterious, and, little as I really cared, I could not help feeling curious about Cherie's parentage.

One day I was going down from London to Southampton, en route for Cowes. From Waterloo Station to Farnboro, I had a smoking-carriage to myself, but at Farnboro a very heavy swell got in—a regular plunger. In my character of caricaturist this fellow's appearance interested me; he was quite a subject for Punch, and I at once set him down in my own mind as a major of dragoons. He was in deep mourning—such ostentatious mourning! His crape band was almost as high as the hat itself; his studs and solitaires were of jet, surmounted with a monogram in pearls and diamonds, and his greatcoat was of the blackest, curliest Astrakan fur. Such a heavy moustache he had—twisted round and round like those hirsute adornments that ladies call *acrocroche-cœur*. Everything about the man bespoke wealth—from his hat to his boots. I could not help smiling as I recalled the antipathy my father had to this style of person. He seemed a good sort of fellow, too, when he spoke—rather aw-aw and swaggering, but very good-natured withal.

He appeared particularly interested to hear that I was going over to Cowes. So was he. I did not ask him if he belonged to the R. Y. S. Castle. I felt certain he did not. I would have offered anybody ten to one that I named my new friend's club. "The Rag" was stamped on every inch of him.

Presently the conversation turned upon monograms.

"I am—aw—rather heavy on monograms," he drawled out. "Ennis and Grayle designed this one—aw—for me," and he handed me his cigar-case, on which his monogram was raised in gold letters—A. W. H.

I offered to design one for him, at which he appeared highly delighted.

"Really I am awfully obliged. I want a new one for my writing paper. One—aw—can't exactly have five boys playing at football on—aw—deep black-edged paper—can one?"

I agreed with him that it was inappropriate, and took out my note-book to make a rough sketch of the projected monogram, when . . .

When I came to myself I was lying amidst the ruins and *débris* of the train—stiff, bruised, and terribly shaken, but, fortunately, with no bones broken. A collision had taken place; we had run into a goods train. Luckily the accident had taken place near one of the stations—a small one, where few trains stopped, but there were houses near at hand, to which they were carrying away the poor sufferers on litters and

hurdles. My first thought was for my travelling companion. He was lying close to me—senseless. I assisted in carrying him to a neighboring farm-house: or rather I accompanied his carriers, for it was as much as I could do to drag myself along. Then I despatched a telegram to Cherie—who, I knew, would be expecting me—to inform her that an accident had occurred, that I was unhurt, and would write further particulars by post.

After that I returned to the bedside of my military friend, whom I found restored to consciousness, but terribly put out at not being able to proceed on his journey. This the surgeon informed me was simply out of the question; for Colonel Heavystone had not only broken his collar-bone, but was severely bruised, and very feverish, and would probably be obliged to keep his bed for a fortnight.

My new friend seemed much pleased at hearing me announce to the surgeon my intention of sitting up with him. He was on his way—so he informed me—to Cowes, en route for Ventnor (I started when he said this) on urgent private affairs, and therefore had not brought his "man" with him.

I inquired if he would like me to write to his servant.

"No—aw—he is such a confounded ass—my man. I'm—aw—in fact, going to get rid of him. Tell the sawbones to telegraph to London for a professional nurse, if he thinks it necessary. They are the best people when one's ill. Never mind what it costs."

I began to smell a rat. My friend the plunger was evidently out on a prank, and did not wish his belongings to know where he was. As I was not obliged to return to town until Tuesday, I offered to remain and nurse him.

"Thanks, but that's awfully good of you," said he, "but such a doosid bore for you—aw. No, I don't like to—"

But it ended in my offer being accepted, and I was installed as head nurse. I knew pretty well what to do, having nursed a friend at Oxford the year before who had met with a similar accident.

The collar-bone was set at once, and all that was needed now was perfect rest and quiet. The surgeon looked in again before night, and assured me the invalid was going on satisfactorily, and then prescribed for me. I was fearfully bruised, but I did not care about that, as neither of my hands was injured, and I could write and draw as well as ever. The next day was Sunday. The weather was lovely, making my invalid regret more than ever the accident that had placed him *hors de combat*, I tried to console him by telling him how well the doctor thought he was getting on, and that he would be all right soon.

"And then I shall have to go back to town," he groaned. "Confounded bore! another month perhaps before I can get down there."

Not knowing the circumstances of the case, of course I could offer no opinion.

Presently he asked me if I would write a letter if he dictated it.

"Certainly," I replied.

"Well, now, this is what you're—aw—to write: 'Dear Lina, I say, mind you don't put where you're writing from—do you see—aw?'"

"I hear. 'Dear Lina, Now what next?'"

"I'm detained here—aw—on—aw—important business."

"No, 'Don't'—underline 'Don't,' please—'Don't go out in the brougham with Dianaw or Euphemia. Take either your aunt or Miss Spinks' (they're both so precious ugly)."

"Am I to write that?"

"No, no. Well, now, that's all, I think. Your affectionate father, A. W. H.' Now put it in an envelope, Brand" (I always called myself Brand, now) "and address it to Miss Heavystone, 799 Portland place, London. Lina, you know, is my daughter—and a very pretty one, too—and one has to look after her, you see. She is fifteen now. Her poor mother—aw—could do nothing with her. She is dead now—ah!" and I fancied the sigh that followed this piece of intelligence was one of relief.

"Have you a daughter of fifteen?" I could not help exclaiming in astonishment.

"Rather—aw! How awfully astonished you look! Why, how old do you take me for?"

"Two-and-thirty."

"Forty—very nearly."

I was surprised; he was certainly the youngest looking man for his years I ever beheld. Life had evidently gone very smoothly with this wealthy plunger. No mental wear and tear, no strong emotions, no undue preponderance of mind over matter to wear him out. He looked younger at forty than many a man who has to live by his wits looks at twenty.

"Ah, well!" thought I, "better to wear out than to rust out. Better anything than to be indebted for wealth and luxury to a wife one could not love."

CHAPTER V.

On the Tuesday I returned to town—to my work. I could not afford to be absent any longer; but I promised Colonel Heavystone to run down again to him on Thursday or Friday. A sudden intimacy had sprung up between this heavy swell and myself. I had become quite fond of him. He was so good-natured and easy-going, and very amusing, without the slightest intention of being so.

I was soon in possession of his whole family history. His father had made a large fortune in trade, and had brought up his son with one object in life—to marry a girl with a handsome name. And that his son had accomplished. He had married Lady Caroline O'Shea, the