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Vol. XV. WOLFVILLE, KING'S CO., N. S., FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1895. No. 12.

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POETRY.

Our Thankful Hearts.

Not for Thy lavish providence alone—
Not for the fullness of Thy bounty's store—
Not for the tenfold yield of harvests, sown
In hope, O Lord! we thank Thee, o'er and o'er
Not for the cattle on a thousand hills;
Nor valleys, purple with the vine's increase;
Not for the Nation's measureless wealth, that fills
The land with prosperous peace!
We thank Thee for the ever widening scope—
The ever nobler use of hands and brain,
In newer paths, that, mounting ever, ope
On mightier fields, beyond this crowded plane!
We thank Thee for the grand discoveries
That grasp the elements, and curb or loose
The awful forces of the clouds and seas,
And mould them to our use!
We thank Thee for the sweet and boundless meed
Of swift, electric human sympathy,
That leaps responsive to a brother's need
In the wild onsets of calamity!
Father, we give Thee thanks that year by year
The quickened heart of our humanity,
Drawn by Thy law of Love, beats ever near
One brotherhood in Thee.

SELECT STORY.

Wolfe the Ranger.

CHAPTER I.

The light from a fire of huge logs which burned in the rude fireplace, big enough for the roasting of an ox, fell upon the face and form of a young girl.

She stood with her hands loosely clasped, and her eyes fixed dreamily and sadly on the flames and glowing embers, as if lost in thought, but every now and again she raised her head and seemed to listen.

Outside was the stillness of an Australian night, in which no sound is heard but the bleating of the sheep and the hoarse, rasping cry of the wild dog. Not a breath seemed stirring, not a leaf rustled: nature slept.

Inside, from the next room, separated from the one in which she stood by a wall of rough planking, came sounds both strange and mysterious. At times they resembled the whir of a wheel, at others the hissing and simmering of some hot liquid. A faint odor of chemicals oozed through the chinks of the partition, and at intervals a voice, feeble and crooning, joined with the noise of the wheel and the hissing of the liquid.

The girl glanced towards the partition now and again, and sighed.

An air of mystery seemed to prevade this rough log cabin in the Australian wilds, and the mystery was certainly not lessened by the fact that the young girl was extremely beautiful, and had the appearance of being a lady by birth and training.

She was of medium height, but exquisitely proportioned, her slim yet fully developed figure as graceful as a fawn's. But for the reflection of the roaring, dancing fire, her face would have been pale, and even in the ruddy glow it had the appearance of rose-tinted alabaster. Her eyes were blue—of that intense and darkening blue which one sees oftenest in the Irish type of beauty, and—Irish this, too—her hair was of a soft and raven black, which, in conjunction with the violet hue of her eyes and her exquisite complexion, presented a form of loveliness which no man with a heart in his bosom could look on without a thrill of admiration.

She was dressed in the plainest manner; yet, though her dress was of a dark and simple material suitable for the bush, she wore it with that unconscious air of ease and grace which one may remark in any lady of fashion gliding through a London ballroom.

Over the fire hung, suspended by a hook, a kettle of water, and presently she took a teapot from the hearth and made some tea.

Then she went to the rough door of the adjoining room, and, knocking gently, said:—

"Father, father!"

She had to call three or four times before the answer came, and then the feeble voice replied with irritable impatience:—

"Well, well?"

"Will you not come out and have some tea, father?" she asked, and her voice, low yet distinct, sounded as strange a contrast to the rough cries of the wild dogs, heard faintly from the outside, as was her appearance to the rude hut, for it was the voice of a young and refined English lady. "Come out and leave your work for a little while—only a little while!"

"No, no; I cannot—I cannot!" he returned. "Every moment is of importance. To-night I am near—I know it—very near the great end. Do not wait for me. I am not thirsty nor hungry."

The girl sighed, and went back to the fire, and a moment afterwards the old man's voice spoke again:

"Has Fenton come back, Constance?"

"No, father," she replied, and as she spoke her brows contracted, as if the name or the question were unwelcome.

"So long, so long!" he muttered, impatiently.

Then the silence, broken by the sound of the wheel and the hiss of the boiling liquid, fell again upon the hut, and the girl stood and gazed at the fire.

At last she poured out a cup of tea, and knocked at the door of the inner room.

It was opened, and an old man stood before her, peering as if roused from some absorbing task, and holding the door in his hand as if impatient to close it again.

"You!" he muttered, not unkindly, but disappointedly. "I thought it was Fenton. What is it?"

"I have brought you some tea. You must take it and rest, father, if only for a little while."

"Well, well," he muttered. "Bring it in."

She entered and looked round for some object upon which to place the cup. The room was somewhat larger than the other, but presented an appearance strange beyond adequate description. At one end was a small furnace, such as is used by analytical chemists; upon the small fire was a crucible, from which rose a film of rainbow-colored vapor. Retorts, test glasses and spirit thermometers littered all the space around it. Near by stood the kind of lathe used by the cutters of precious stones, and on the floor a heap of the stone called jasper.

A small "chunk" of this lay upon the bed of the lathe, and as the light from a flickering lamp, suspended from the wooden ceiling, fell upon the lump, little jets of ruby and emerald-like fire flashed and sparkled from it.

At the other end of the room was a stout wooden partition, which served to screen the girl's sleeping apartment.

The old man, in appearance, seemed as out of place in this rough hut, in its wild Australian scenery, as the girl. Bent and white with age, clad in a garment that was half cloth, half fur, he yet had the unmistakable look of a gentleman, and there was something in his clearly cut face and long, thin hands which indicated the doctor and the man of science.

The girl went to the lathe and put out her hand to move the lump of jasper to make room for the cup, but the old man stopped her.

"No, no, don't touch, don't move anything, child! Give me the cup."

He took it and drank the tea as if he were performing a tiresome duty. "There—there. Take care you do not disturb anything. One mistake, one blunder to-night, and the fruit of months is thrown away and lost."

As he spoke he went back to the crucible, and bent over it, as forgetful and oblivious of her presence as if she had not existed.

She stood looking at him for a moment or two with sadly pitiful gaze, then stole up to him and put her arm around his neck.

"Ah, father, give it up!" she murmured gently and lovingly. "For my sake, dear, give it up and rest. Let it all go, and let us leave this dreadful place."

He straightened himself, and, turning his head, looked at her with the feverish, too brilliant eyes of the enthusiast whose life has become absorbed by an idea.

"Constance, are you mad?" he said, waving his hand, as if to silence her and put her disturbing presence from him. "You don't know what you ask! Give it up! And to-night, of all nights! Now, of all times, when I am on the eve, on the moment of success! What, after all these weary months, to throw away the grand result, just as it comes within my reach! No; for your sake, I persevere. Yes, for your sake! Do you think that it is for myself I am working? No, it is for you, for you! Constance, my child——"

He broke off, some subtle change in the vapor rising from the crucible catching his eye, and waved her away.

"Leave me alone," he muttered, watching the flame eagerly. "Don't disturb me to-night, Constance. Ah, if Fenton were only back! Send him to me the moment he comes. Do you hear—the moment!"

Constance turned reluctantly, and went back to the adjoining room, and with a weary sigh sunk down upon the sheepskin rug, and relapsed into her old gazing at the fire.

Presently her quick ears caught the sound of footsteps outside the hut. She rose and listened intently, then went to the door, unlocked, unbarred and opened it. The footsteps came nearer, and a young man reached the door.

"Miss Grahame," he said, in a tone of expostulation. "It is not safe; you could not be sure it was I."

"I know your step, Mr Fenton," she said, coldly.

He passed in and locked and barred the door, and she went and stood by the fire.

"If you knew how anxious I am on your account, whenever I leave you!" he said, as if apologizing for his former tone. "I am afraid I have been a long time away, but I met with some difficulty. There was some news at Dan's station, and in the excitement I could not for some time get him to give me the said."

As he spoke he took off his heavy fur cloak, and kneeling down held his hands to the fire.

He was a man of about thirty-five. He, too, looked of a different and higher class from that to which the usual squatter belongs, and his thin, flexible hands, as well as his sharply cut face, denoted the gentleman.

It was almost a handsome face, but there was something wrong about the lips, and an expression in the grey eyes which, if not exactly furtive, did not certainly err on the side of frankness. Looking at him as he knelt in the firelight, a student of human nature would have said that Rawson Fenton was a man who would never be without an object in life, and who would attain that object by fair means if he could; if not, by any other that presented itself.

There was calculation in the cold grey eye, caution in the thin, straight lips, and a certain amount of daring in the line of the low, thoughtful brow.

"My father is very anxious to see you," said Constance Grahame after a moment or two.

He looked up at her with a kind of watchful and covert eagerness in his eyes, and nodded.

"Yes, I will go directly," he responded, but he still knelt and held his hand to the blaze. "He is still at work, still hopeful?" he asked in a low voice, as if he did not wish the old man in the next room to hear him.

"Yes," replied the girl, with cold sadness. "He thinks that to-night——" She stopped, and Rawson Fenton shrugged his shoulders, not so much contemptuously as with resigned pity.

"That is always the way," he said, glancing up at her quickly, and then returning his gaze to the fire. "It is always the way with your enthusiast of any kind—always on the brink of success. It is a great pity," and he sighed and waited as if for encouragement from her to proceed. But she made no response, and he went on, after a moment's keen calculation:—

"It is a pity, a thousand pities, that he was ever led on to this wild-goose chase."

"Was he led on?" said Constance, coldly, and with a glance at the face beneath her.

The faintest color rose to his cheek for a moment, but he replied with instant and seeming frankness:—

"You mean that I led him on, do you not, Constance—Miss Grahame?" he corrected himself, as he felt rather than saw the contraction of her brows which the use of her Christian name had provoked. "You do me an injustice, and I think if you consider the facts that you will admit you do. What are the facts?"

"My father is waiting for you," said Constance, in the same repelling tone.

"One moment, give me a moment," he returned, pleadingly. "What are the facts? Six months ago I found your father at the farm at Walla-Walla. He had come out from England, like many another disappointed professional man, to make a fortune in the world. What folly it is! Why, when one thinks of it, the men who are to the manner born, the men of the soil, here too often fail! What chance is there for an Englishman who knows nothing of the work, and has neither youth nor strength on his side? Miss Grahame, you will admit that your father was drifting to ruin on the sheep ranch?"

Constance leaned her head upon her arm and sighed.

"I happened to come, a chance wayfarer, an Englishman like himself—yes, and poorer than himself—and because I was an Englishman and destitute he took me in. Do you think I am not grateful, that I shall ever forget it? No! Not while I have a drop of blood left to shed for him, an ounce of strength left to work for him."

It was a noble sentiment, and really very nicely delivered, but somehow it did not produce the effect he had expected and hoped. Constance Grahame's cold and reserved expression did not soften in the slightest.

Rawson Fenton paused for a moment, then went on in a low voice and slowly, as if he were anxious to impress every word on his motionless hearer.

"In an unwary moment, little dreaming of the effect my words would have upon him, I told your father of the story I had heard of the finding of precious stones in this district. I had, as you know, been here myself, and had proved the truth of the rumor by finding several pieces of rock of jasper containing opals. When your father heard my account of this place, and saw the specimens, he jumped to the conclusion that I had discovered a new El Dorado. It was not my fault. I did not lead him astray. I pointed out to him that though it was easy enough to find the gems it was so difficult to extract them, separate them from the jasper in which they were embedded, that the cost of doing so would probably far exceed the value of the gems. All I could say was of no use. He resolved to sell the farm and buy the piece of land. Have I not spoken the truth? You can not say I led him."

Constance moved slightly, but did not speak.

"Be just, Miss Grahame," he pleaded, looking up at her watchfully. "I did everything I could to dissuade your father from leaving the farm and speculating in this—well, yes, I called it a mad scheme, and I call it so still."

He paused and sighed.

"If any means could be found of extracting the gems from the jasper without crushing them, why then—— But no one will ever succeed in finding such means. There is only one way of doing it. You smash your lump of rock, and in smashing it as likely as not destroy your opals. Would to heaven we had never come here! This place spells 'ruin.'"

Constance moved from the fire.

"Will you go in to my father now?" she said.

"One moment more," he replied, with a certain restrained earnestness and excitement which displayed themselves in the restless movement of his eyes and the quiver of his hands. "I told you that I heard news up at Daniel's station."

"Yes," she said, with profound indifference.

"An escort is coming to take his money to Melbourne. It will reach here and leave here to-night. Daniel is anxious to avail himself of this escort, as bushrangers have been seen prowling about the neighborhood, and he thinks it unsafe to keep his money at the farm any longer. One or two stations to the west of his have already been attacked. Don't be alarmed," he added, quickly.

"I am not alarmed," said Constance, quietly. "I have lived so long in the midst of danger that I have ceased to fear it."

"I know how brave you are," he murmured, with fervent admiration. "But we—you and I—have another to think of. Doctor Grahame, your father, and it is for his sake that I make my proposal."

"What proposal?" she asked, turning her head and looking at him with cold indifference.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

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And are you glad to see me, my little man? asked the bishop of Bobby.
Yes, sir, replied Bobby.
And why are you glad to see me?
Because it's only when you come that we have anything for dinner worth eating.

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Well, replied her impecunious lover, if I have any preference, it is for payday.

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