

POETRY.

APRIL AND MAY.

The days are growing longer,
The sun is growing stronger,
And summer with her beauty draws near;

The round brown buds are swelling,
The early robins telling
Morn and evening of their joy in roundelay;

The sun will flowers gay and fragrant,
Soon the butterflies be rustling,
Star the hills and valleys with their faces fair;

Soon the songbirds will be nesting,
Soon the butterflies be rustling,
And the world be full of song and beauty rare.

Where is the month so dear as May,
So sweet and fair as she,
So blithe and happy, mild and gay,

Not one in all the twelve I ween
Hath greater power than she;
To dull the blade of sorrow keen,
And fill the heart with glee.

Ay, May, rare, winsome, gentle May,
Sets all the world in tune;
More glad the brooklet's rippling lay,
More sweet the wind's low rane.

When her soft fingers touch the strings,
And sweeter far each song
Her every bonnie minstrel sings
Th' leafy bowers among.

SELECT STORY.

AN UNBROKEN PROMISE.

A CASTAWAY.

PART II.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BUSINESS OF THE BOARD.

"I think not," said the doctor placidly,
Or a lovely ear, which I noticed last night,
More lovely by far than the diamond which I had worn.

"Indeed," said Philip, "one of the company present; and who might that be?"
The doctor himself," said Delabole, "of course."

"Not I—not I, indeed," said Doctor Asprey.
"A man much younger, much handsomer, and more likely in every way to win favor in the eyes of a peerless lady—Mr. Gerald Harding."

"Ah, by the way," said Delabole, rising and drawing a heavy curtain across the door,
"let us hear all you know about that young gentleman."

"All I know is not very much," said Asprey.
"I first met him two years ago at the house of Mrs. Entwistle, an eccentric old woman, whom I was called in to attend for a spinal complaint under which she had long been suffering, and which so cripples her that she has lost all power of motion, and even in the house is wheeled about in a chair. I saw this young fellow in constant attendance upon the old lady, discussing her case with me, giving orders to the servants, etc., and I naturally imagined that he was Mrs. Entwistle's grandson. It was not until lately that I discovered that he is in no way related to her, and that before she had ever seen him, the old lady took a fancy to some pictures he had painted, and sent to London for sale; that when he called upon her she took a great affection to him, declaring that he resembled some dead member of her family, and he has remained with her ever since as her adopted son. He has been remarkably steady, I understand, and will reap the benefit of his prudence by inheriting all Mrs. Entwistle's money."

"Is that certain?" asked Delabole.
"Certain," said Doctor Asprey. "I had it from Platting, who is her attorney."

"And how long is Mrs. Entwistle likely to live?" asked Philip.
"Not more than two months," said the doctor, "but in all probability, nothing like so much; he has been on a thread; she may expire at any moment."

"Then the sooner we make young Harding's acquaintance, the better," said Delabole.
"Will you meet him at dinner at my house on—say Tuesday next," said the doctor, looking at his note-book; and you too, Vane?"

"Both of them said they should be delighted.
And so Madge Pierpont's husband, and the man who had loved her so dearly, were to be brought face to face!"

CHAPTER V.

"SCENE: A STREET IN LYONS."

SUCH of the good people of Springside as took an interest in the affairs of their neighbors (and they were by no means a small proportion of the population) were both astonished and disappointed at no match being made up between the Rev. Onesiphore Drage and the pretty widow, to whom the care of his child had been confided during his absence. The story of Mrs. Drage's last request, which was bruited about immediately after that good lady's death, had been received with a certain amount of discredit, and a large amount of scorn. Mr. Drage's temporary absence from Springside, and Mrs. Pickering's quasi-adoption of little Bertha, were regarded by the worthy townspeople as devised by the acuteness of the widow, who, bold as she might be, had not sufficient audacity to permit her courtship by the parson to be carried on "under the nose," as they expressed it, of those who had known his deceased wife. And when the news was spread that Mr. Drage was coming back, the usual amount of tea-table hospitality received a great impetus, and all the scandal-mongers of the place were expectant of their prey. The question whether Mrs. Pickering would remain at the rectory was for some time debated with the keenest anxiety, until at last it was proved, to the satisfaction of all parties, that, whether she stopped or whether she went, would be equally wrong. By stopping, she would outrage all laws of society, and it would be a question whether a statement of the facts ought not to be submitted to the bishop; by going she would act most artfully, and take the surest step to induce the rectory to invite her to come back as its head.

Even the fact that Mrs. Pickering immediately after the rectory's return, took up a new line of life, and entered upon her duties as housekeeper to Sir Geoffry Heriot, the new tenant of Wheatcroft, did not suffice to disabuse the Springsidians of their belief in her ultimate intentions about their rectory. Mrs. Pickering had found the parson more difficult to ensnare than she had at first believed, said the worthy townfolk to each other, and thought they were by no means aware of it, accredited her as a disciple of Mrs. Pechum's doctrine, "by keeping men off you keep them on." Over the evening muffins and tea cakes, were breathed rumors that the housekeeper had been

constituted herself a great favorite with her new master, whom she was reported to be "playing off" against her former employer. That there were reasons for these rumors was generally believed; even the most incredulous could not help admitting that, during the whole time he had held the parish, the rector's visits had never been so frequent as to Wheatcroft. So ran the gossip's talk, which, like nearly all gossip's talk, however exaggerated, had some truth in it.

After the first shock of her revelation to him that she was not a widow, but a woman who had been deserted by a husband yet alive, Mr. Drage had determined upon the line of conduct which he would follow for the future in regard to Mrs. Pickering, and had carried it out to the letter.

"There is an end, then," he said to her, after a few minutes had passed away, and the first shock of astonishment and grief had subsided, "there is an end, then, to my dreams of the last twelve months! It passes away as other dreams have passed before it; name, and fame, and—health; I have dreamed of it all, and found none! It is wisely ordained, doubtless," he continued, "but—it is a great blow. I had built on it; why, I know not, for, try my hardest, I could never find any expression in your letters which would lead me to believe you understood my feelings toward you; yet I had built on it, I can scarcely believe even now that the whole fabric lies shattered at a word. We shall be friends though, now?"

"Surely we shall still be friends!" she replied; "you cannot for an instant think that what you have said to me just now could cause any alteration in the regard which I have for you."

"No," he said, somewhat nervously, "I suppose not."

"Rather," she continued, "should you think what perfect trust I must have in you to confide in you to the extent of my life. There is no one else in the whole world who knows of my marriage; the fact has been concealed even from my sister; it is known but to me—and to him!"

There was a lengthened pause, during which, though Mr. Drage sat with his face shaded by his hand, it was evident to all present that the influence of deep emotion. When he looked up again there were traces of tears upon his cheeks, and his voice was unsteady as he said, "will you indeed make any difference in your decision upon Captain Cleothorpe's proposition?"

"No," she said, "it will not."

"And your decision is—?" he asked.

"To accept it without doubt," she replied. "Even had I a choice of the ways of life, I do not think I should hesitate in accepting what has been offered to me in such a kindly spirit, and which, quite peaceful and retired as it must be, will suit me so well. That illness from which I was rescued by your kindness, robbed me of a certain amount of youthful strength, and left me unfitted for any very active employment; besides, I have formed friendships here, which I should regret giving up, and I should scarcely have the heart to commence anew in a strange place."

"You are right," said the rector, still sitting with averted face. "I was selfish, indeed, to imagine for an instant that you could come to any other decision. And it would not much matter to me," he added, struggling with his breaking voice, "my stay must be so very short."

The peculiarity of his manner struck Madge instantly.

"What do you mean, Mr. Drage?" she asked, laying her hand lightly on his sleeve.

"Simply," he said, removing his hand from his face, in which burned the hectic flush, which always flattered there when under mental excitement, "I mean I could not trust myself to be near you, to be frequently brought within the charm of your presence, under the spell of your voice, without my mind being so very short."

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might feel that the house of an old retired Indian officer, no matter how old or how retired, might scarcely be a fit place for you. However, I shall take an early opportunity of bringing Mr. Drage and Sir Geoffry Heriot together, and I am sure they will get on remarkably well. What I want you to understand, and what I am sure you will feel as soon as you are here, was a few days at Wheatcroft, is that your position of housekeeper will be simply a nominal one. By this I mean to say that it must have some name, and as you cannot be called military secretary, or commissary-general, or aide-de-camp, one is obliged to fall back upon the ordinary British formula. If I had had my way, I would have had you called chief of the staff, and if the old General appreciated you as much as I expect you will find your position both a confidential and a pleasant one."

Captain Cleothorpe's predictions came true to the letter. When, a few days afterwards, Sir Geoffry arrived at Wheatcroft, and Mrs. Pickering was personally introduced to him, with admirable tact, by the Captain, she found in her new employer a man accustomed to command, so accustomed, indeed, as to be not unwilling to slip out of his buckram suit, and to have the burden of responsibility thrown upon other shoulders. Time had whitened Sir Geoffry's iron-grey hair, leaving it massed and curling as before, and blanching his small moustache, but the bronzed cheeks shone even more deeply red, in contrast with the white hair, and, under the bushy eyebrows, the glances of the dark eyes were prompt and expressive as ever.

Little time did it take Sir Geoffry to appreciate the character and qualities of the new addition to his domestic circle, and he had not long been conversing with her, when he was struck by the young and handsome woman of good education, refined and lady-like in her manner; such a woman, in fact, as he might have met with on the rare occasions when he accepted some of his brother officers' hospitality in India, but such a one as he had never before encountered in close or frequent contact with since his youthful days. Over the old man, strict disciplinarian, bitter, hardened cynic, and woman-hater as he was, Madge Pierpont exercised her accustomed influence, and his lineered and would act as a series of buffer between himself and his tradespeople. 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