

SING UNTO ME.

BY THOMAS CLAUDE DEAN.

I've heard the dove bewail its weight of care,
Hid in the twilight grey;
I've heard the lark sing in the startled air,
Just at the break of day;
I've heard the brooklets sing their serenades,
Mourning and brokenly;
But oh! the memory of this music fades
When thou dost sing to me.

Then sing again to me thy breadth of song,
Which makes my soul rejoice,
As soft the sweet, rich notes flow swift along
From thy low, thrilling voice,
Hush me to rest beneath thy magic spell
Of matchless melody,
While in the vale of song in bliss I dwell,
Oh, sing again to me.

Awake my soul from dreams of dark despair,
Which long have round me clung,
Unloose the bonds which bind me to Old Care
With thy vibrating tongue,
Far in the sunny lands of love, oh, let
My spirit wander free,
And all life's bitter trials I will forget
If thou wilt sing to me.

L'Original.

D.

MARRIED BY ACCIDENT.

Dick Osborne was not exactly fortunate in his university career, which is a euphemism for saying that it was everything the reverse. He spent all his money, he wasted all his time, he was reprimanded, he was rusticated, he was plucked. It became an open question in the mind of Richard whether he should enlist in the army or drive a hansom. Fortunately a third course was indicated to him by a friend—he might turn private tutor. I once heard of a man who was on the verge of bankruptcy, but was saved from it by the following ingenious plan: He advertised for pupils at three hundred a year, and got a dozen of them. People thought that if such a price was asked something good must surely be imparted. The advertisement, which a friend of Dick's had brought to him, stated that a private tutor was wanted to prepare a young gentleman for matriculation and the previous examination at an English university. Now it was quite true that Dick Osborne had been ploughed for Greats, but then nobody could deny that he had passed prosperously through Smalls. The fact that he had been ploughed for Greats was not one which he was bound to obtrude upon public attention. The decision of the matter virtually rested with the young gentleman himself, who, being greatly pleased with some traits in Dick's character which had not been equally pleasing to Dick's academic superiors, insisted on having Mr. Osborne, and nobody else, for his private tutor. It was true that Dick knew next to nothing, but, as his pupil knew absolutely nothing, the mental superiority ultimately rested with Dick.

The tutor and pupil went down to Wingfield Hall. The odd thing was that Wingfield Hall did not belong to the pupil, but to his sister. The brother had a hall of his own with ever so much shooting, but being a minor it was let off to some Leeds manufacturer. The father had married a lady with a large landed estate, which was settled on the younger children of the marriage. There was only one child, a girl, who became an heiress, as her mother had been an heiress before her. It was of course only very gradually that the exact bearings of things became known to young Osborne. I must also do him the justice to say that when the fact became known to Mr. Osborne, instead of stimulating any tendency in the direction of heiress-hunting, it had a directly contrary effect. Dick rightly considered that grapes of this kind hung a good deal beyond his reach, and that it would be better for him to limit himself to the legitimate enjoyments of his surroundings; for his lines had certainly fallen to him in pleasant places. His pupil was a very backward delicate lad; and as he had the faculty of forgetting everything as fast as he learned it, no early date could be assigned to the termination of Mr. Osborne's services. He had already continued at Wingfield Hall for a twelvemonth when certain circumstances arose which I am about to relate. The real mistress of the Hall was hardly its nominal mistress; for an active aunt bore sway, and had done so for years. Lucy Harlowe was a quiet, imaginative, retiring, simple-hearted girl, who, wrapped up in her own quiet ways and accustomed to leave everything to her energetic and self-asserting aunt, against whose yoke, however, she occasionally felt inclined to rebel, hardly asserted or even realized her true position. A gentleman is almost a necessity in a household, and, beyond his tutorial duties, Mr. Osborne made himself useful in a variety of ways which were sources of interest and occupation to himself. He looked after the horses, he kept the gardener and coachman in order, he had a keen eye for plantations and preserves, and in company with his pupil he did a good deal of fishing and shooting. Indeed these were very properly regarded as essential points in young Harlowe's education, as peculiarly adapted to fit him for that future destiny in life which he was intended to adorn. So Dick was quiet, harmless, and happy as a general rule, though a little weak-brained, as might be conjectured from his history, and with a whole store of susceptibilities and sensitiveness. His natural tendency would have been to flirt with Lucy Harlowe, whom he really liked very much; but he had spent his little all, and looked with dismay on any chance that

would drive him from his warm corner into the cold of the outer world. In the shooting season various gentlemen came to join in the Wingfield shootings; for the aunt rightly considered that the society of country gentlemen was a proper thing for her nephew, and would probably provide a befitting husband for her niece. The aunt, with all her imperiousness, was an honest woman, and wished to do her duty according to her lights. The gentlemen came, two gentlemen especially, Squire Dorrington and Major Fitzpatrick, who liked the shooting, the lunch in the preserves, the late dinner. They were rather puzzled and jealous about Dick Osborne's position in the household. He was only the tutor; but then all in the neighbourhood had discovered that he was something more besides. The gentlemen found out that Osborne was a simple-hearted fellow, and had resolved to "draw" him for their own behoof and satisfaction.

They were two very artful men, the Major and the Squire. They sat in the smoking-room, going in respectively for sherry-and-seltzer and for brandy-and-soda. The pupil, not over-strong, had been ordered to bed by the aunt hours before.

They were both of them clever gentlemanly fellows in their way. Dick could not help feeling a kind of awe of them. They were handsome, he was not; clever, he was not; dressed in the very best style, he was not; thoroughly men of the world, he was not; plenty of money in their pockets, which was certainly not the case with him. They made him partake of the brandy-and-soda, they made him partake of the sherry-and-seltzer. Dick became slightly excited. His imagination took a broader range.

"You're very much in clover here, Mr. Richard Osborne," said the Major.

"It does very well for a stop-gap," answered Mr. Richard. "I must do something till I can take my degree and get called to the bar."

This was Osborne's professed object in life, but he was himself giving up belief in it.

"You're a clever dog," said the Major.

"And he's a deep dog, too," said the Squire.

"What a capital plan for a fellow to get shut up with Lucy Harlowe, to pretend to be a tutor to her brother! Why that gives you an opportunity of seeing her every day of your life! What wouldn't some of us give to have a chance like that?"

Dick was astonished to hear such deep designs imputed to him. He felt that it was something like profanation, however, that such a conversation should go on in the sanctuary of that home. He admired her like the Victoria Regia in the conservatory pond, or the vesper star at an immeasurable distance beyond sea and air.

He hastened to assure his new friends of the perfect rectitude and straightforwardness of his views and intentions.

"But it would be very nice if you could come in and hang up your hat in the hall as the master of everything—the house and the grounds and the young lady."

In this remark the metropolitan Major was only reproducing his own state of mind. He was tired of those small rooms in Jermyn-street, though backed up with a couple of clubs. It would be very sweet to have a *pièce à terre* in the country, especially if it took the shape of a real hall with a rent-roll of three good farms to back it.

The Squire had his estate, but only a squire can understand the loveliness of annexing the next estate and enclosing them both in a ring-fence. The joy of annexing the young woman would be nothing in comparison.

"Have you ever tried it on with her?" said the Major. "Ah, Mr. Dick, Mr. Dick Osborne, you are a deep fellow! You university men are the fellows to get on with the ladies. You beat us Rag-and-Famish fellows hollow."

Dick blushed a radiant blush. The character of a deep dog was one by no means to be despised.

"Well, I say just what I think," said the Squire. "She's a very nice young woman, and any fellow might do worse than be tied up to her, especially when Wingfield Hall is to be part of the bargain."

Dick thought she certainly was a nice young woman, one of the nicest ladies whom he had ever met in his career. To give him his due, he really thought more of the young lady than he did of the old hall.

A notion was put into Dick's honest head which had never deliberately found place there before. He thought it would be very nice to fall in love with Lucy Harlowe. That might be agreed on all hands. Great swells as might be the Squire and the Major, they could not make a better match. His cheek tingled at the thought of such a match. But however easy it might be to fall in love with Lucy, the difficulty remained of making Lucy fall in love with him.

"The fact of it is," said the designing Major, who liked nothing better than to befool a fellow and play a practical joke, a taste derived from early army days,—"the fact of it is that the girl's half spoony on you already. Don't you think so, Dorrington?" he asked his neighbour.

Dorrington caught the cue at once.

"Think it!" he exclaimed; "why, to any fellow who knows a bit of life, the thing is as plain as a pikestaff. I have seen something of that sort of thing in my life, and nobody could mistake it."

Now both the Squire and the Major had some touch of selfishness at the bottom of this chaff.

When a man in his own centre of the universe (and this is so with most of us), it is impossible that the case should be otherwise. The Major had seriously determined that he would have a "go in" for the heiress. But he had the wit to keep his own counsel from both the other men. The idea began to loom before his eyes that he would get Dick Osborne to propose, if he could. That Dick could possibly be accepted did not enter his mind for a moment. He made no doubt that Dick would be turned out of the house at once. Serve him right for his impudence. That Dick might be utterly ruined formed no part of his calculations. The Major knew that there was danger in proximity, and he thought he would remove the young gentleman, of whose presence he greatly disapproved.

Mr. Dorrington had also his ideas. He had truly interpreted the Major's wink, and thought he saw his way into a practical joke. When the young lady had thrown off a rubbishy proposal, she would better be able to appreciate a proposal of the right sort.

In poetry and fiction we have memorable instances of tutors marrying heiresses. This is the case in Currier Bell's *Shirley*. This is the case in Mrs. Browning's *Lady Geraldine*. I do not know if honest Richard Osborne was acquainted with these precedents. They might have given him a gleam of encouragement. But I suppose these things happen much more frequently in fable than in reality. Dick might have been ready enough to propose if he had the least tangible basis to go upon.

"The fact of the matter is, Mr. Osborne," said the Major, "you're afraid."

Now Dick Osborne belonged to just that bulldog order of Englishmen to whom the words "You're afraid," especially when coming from a military man, who is supposed to be afraid of nothing, are simply maddening.

"You can't deny that you're fond of the young woman," said the Squire judiciously, lighting up his cigar.

Dick hardly knew his own mind; but he did not venture to deny the soft impeachment.

"Then why don't you tell her so, like a man? I am afraid the Major's about right when he says you're afraid."

"I shouldn't mind making her an offer if I had made up my mind to do it," said Dick.

"Lay you a pony you don't do anything of the sort, and that's twenty-five skiv'."

"Done with you," said Dick.

I am afraid there was a mixture of motives; bravado, a false shame of not shrinking from a money-bet, and perhaps some allowance of soda-and-brandy, might be among the elements of this sudden determination.

Accordingly Dick sat down to concoct his letter. His friends would have given him every assistance, but on this occasion he decided to trust entirely to his own swimming, and not to any cork or bladders that might be devised for him. Thus he wrote:

"Dear Miss Harlowe, or rather dearest Miss Harlowe, if you will allow me to say so.—Although I am only a poor man, and your brother's tutor, I am a human being, and cannot help falling in love with you. My family is as old a family as any, and at school and college I was thought as good a fellow as any other fellow. I think I could make you happy. I would strive very hard to do so. So will you marry me."

"RICHARD OSBORNE."

Dick thought this way of finishing was a great literary master stroke. He was very shy of showing the letter to the men, but they insisted that on the terms of the bet they had a clear right to see that a direct intelligible offer was really made. So Osborne showed them the last line, which was of course sufficient for all practical purposes.

"That's all straight," said one man.

"That's the direct tip," said the other.

The next question that arose was, how was the letter to be delivered? and how was it to be clearly ascertained that it had been delivered? But just at this moment there was a light step by the door, which being a little ajar disclosed the lithe figure of Florence, the handsome lady's maid.

"O Florence, you're wanted here. There's something for you to do," said the Major. "Mr. Osborne will tell you what it is."

Florence came demurely into the room, not unwilling to obtain some little portion of admiration from the three gentlemen. Such is the nature of Florence.

"It is only something that I have to give to Miss Harlowe. Please let her have it."

"Take care to put it on her dressing-table, that she may find it when she goes to bed," said the Major.

Florence stretched out her hand for letter, or parcel, or anything else that the article might be; but Richard Osborne felt wonderfully reluctant to give it up. He felt like a man who was about to clear a chasm or leap from the rock into the sea.

"Out with it, old man," said the Major.

"The longer you look at it, the less you'll like it," said the other.

A neglected poet of the last century has spoken of a hero

"Who, without *buts* or *ifs*,
Jump'd into the sea from off the cliffs."

But Dick was not that hero. The whole enormity of that proceeding came vividly before his mind. He had far better lose those twenty-five sovereigns. Yes, he could touch his quarter's stipend, and it would be that exactly. What, then, about the outlying ties? For I need hard-

ly say that Dick was just the sort of good fellow who lives in a chronic state of outlying ties. With the receipt of the quarter's stipend he would bid farewell to any further quarterly stipends, at least from this source. Above all, what would be Miss Harlowe's feelings if she ever learned that she had thus been made the subject of a bet of this sort?

He had handed forth the fatal letter in an irresolute way. The Major had quickly caught it from the grasp and handed it over to the waiting-maid.

"Here, Florence: look sharp and take it up stairs, and lay it on the dressing-table."

Florence saw there was some fun going. She gave a laugh of glee, and bounded up-stairs. Richard rose from his seat and bounded after her. Then the Squire caught hold of his coat-tail. The coat-tail might probably have given way, but the Major laid firm grasp upon his arm. In the mean time Florence entered her mistress's room, and, just showing herself on the top of the staircase, disappeared in the *penetrations* of the mansion.

"Poor Richard"—for he might well appropriate to himself the title of that historical personage—felt positively sick and ill. He was not sorry when the Major and the Squire, with all sorts of grins and grimaces, took their leave for the night.

Poor Dick could hardly rest. He took a turn in the grounds, threading the shrubbery and pacing the lawn. He watched the light in her room; he watched her figure moving before the blind. At last the light was extinguished and he went indoors. He went indoors, but not to sleep; he tossed about restlessly. He really thought that he had done for himself. He must bid adieu to the very comfortable quarters where he was so pleasantly ensconced from the cares of life. But I must do Dick the justice of saying that this was not the primary consideration. Dick had worked himself into a sort of fever. He was seriously in love, or thought he was seriously in love. For the first and last time in his life he began to compose some poetry. It is a curious psychological fact that the love-fever quickens the mind, and makes dull people quite intellectual for the time-being. There is a constant repetition of the fable of Cymon and Iphigenia. Cymon wrote in that thorough state of despair which is so congenial for the production of poetry:

The meanest hind that ploughs the lea
Is thought to crown'd in dreams of bliss;
But love's bright gaze is not for me,
And not for me affection's kiss.

Enough that I alone should sigh
And muse o'er pleasures banish'd past
And watch with an unequal eye
Till the grey sky is flush'd at last.

These are some of the very egotistical lines. They are not so very bad, I am inclined to maintain; but then Dick threw into this one supreme effort all the poetry of a life-time.

The two gentlemen had bed-rooms that night at the Hall. All assembled at a late breakfast next morning, and one or two slightly rumpled glances were interchanged between the Major and the Squire. Lucy Harlowe retained, however, her usual quiet impassive attitude, except that perhaps her dark eyelashes shaded her cheek a little more demurely that morning. The visitors, after their breakfast, smoked their cigars, and dabbled about the kennels, and then rode off in different directions. Richard Osborne kept himself extremely quiet that day, and applied himself to his pupil with great assiduity. The thought occurred to him, should he write a note and recall that former one, and beg pardon, and ask that the whole matter of his unfortunate mistake should be buried in oblivion? But somehow Dick resolved that this should not be the case. He had crossed the Rubicon, he had burned his boats, he had dared the giddy leap, he had trusted his last coin to the throw of the dice, he had done whatever is most desperate in the annals of desperation. He would wait quietly. It was not often that he was left alone with the young lady, for that chaperoning aunt was vigilant enough. But the chance would come, and indeed, at any moment, Florence, the waiting-maid, might bring him a note in answer to his own.

He did not have long to wait. The chance soon came. The aunt was not coming down to dinner. She was rather fatigued with entertaining visitors, and had slightly over-eaten herself with very high game. So Dick found himself alone in the drawing-room, in the mixed lights of twilight and firelight. Soon enters Lucy, who goes straight up to him and lays her hand on his, and looks earnestly at him, and says:

"Richard!—Mr. Osborne—did you really mean that letter?"

The moment of moments was come! Richard Osborne threw to the winds any thought of backing out of the transaction.

"I do, indeed, Lucy; I cannot help myself. I love you with all my heart."

"O Richard," said the girl, "you are so kind and good and clever. It is very silly of me, but I could not help thinking a good deal of you for a long time."

It is unnecessary to carry on the conversation beyond this point. Things were manifestly tending in one direction. The aunt did not quite like it, but Miss Harlowe was her own mistress; and the aunt thought it judicious to give way. When the engagement was made public, the Major sent his cheque for twenty-five pounds to Dick Osborne, and it came in handy.

"How on earth did such a girl as Lucy Har-