

UNWIDOWED.

They ask me, Shall I love again?
Alas, they little know my heart!
For twenty graves would yawn in vain
That woman from my life to part.

They see her now no more, I know;
But still with me she smiles and talks;
And where the flowers she cherished blew,
Beside me still at eve she walks.

I loved her once, and won her love
(Green days, and yet in memory green);
And now she is my wife above—
Above, and here, by men unseen.

My wife—although the form I loved
In death's gray mist is coldly furled;
My wife—however far removed,
The sweetest woman in the world.

What, then, is left with me to give,
Since I am here, and here alone?
Dear wife, around me love and live,
My angel, and not less my own!

Thou know'st that tale we read of yore—
The bond that on his master's grave
Pitched camp till death; and thou much more
Wilt camp around my mortal dove.

Yet am I selfish! Are there joys
Thou must forego to wait with me,
And only hear the golden noise
Far off, and only far off see?

O, I were jealous of sweet heaven,
Did I not know how, from thy youth,
The only joys were those whose heaven
Is love and sacrifice and truth.

So, from the free life above
My dungeon, kiss me through the bars;
Thou art my bride, thou art my love,
This side or that side of the stars!

WALKER ROBINSON.

OUR DERBY SWEEPSTAKES.

"Bob!" I shouted.
No answer.
"Bob!"
A rapid crescendo of snores ending in a prolonged gasp.
"Wake up, Bob!"
"What the deuce is the row?" said a very sleepy voice.
"It's near breakfast-time," I explained.
"Bother breakfast-time!" said the rebellious spirit in the bed.
"And here's a letter, Bob," said I.
"Why on earth couldn't you say so at once? Come on with it," on which cordial invitation I marched into my brother's room, and perched myself upon the side of his bed.
"Here you are," said I: "Indian stamp—Brindisi postmark. Who is it from?"
"Mind your own business, Stumpy," said my brother, as he pushed back his curly tangled locks, and, after rubbing his eyes, proceeded to break the seal. Now if there is one appellation for which above all others I have a profound contempt, it is this one of "Stumpy." Some miserable nurse, impressed by the relative proportions of my round grave face and little mottled legs, had dubbed me with the odious nickname in the days of my childhood. I am not really a bit more stumpy than any other girl of seventeen. On the present occasion I rose in all the dignity of wrath, and was about to dump my brother on the head with the pillow by way of remonstrance, when a look of interest in his face stopped me.
"Who do you think is coming, Nelly?" he said. "An old friend of yours."
"What! from India? Not Jack Hawthorne?"
"Even so," said Bob. "Jack is coming back and going to stay with us. He says he will be here almost as soon as his letter. Now don't dance about like that. You'll knock down the guns, or do some damage. Keep quiet like a good girl, and sit down here again." Bob spoke with all the weight of the two-and-twenty summers which had passed over his towsey head, so I calmed down and settled into my former position.
"Won't it be jolly?" I cried. "But, Bob, the last time he was here he was a boy, and now he is a man. He won't be the same Jack at all."
"Well, for that matter," said Bob, "you were only a girl then—a nasty little girl with ringlets, while now—"
"What now?"
Bob seemed actually on the eve of paying me a compliment.
"Well, you haven't got the ringlets, and you are ever so much bigger, you see, and nastier." Brothers are a blessing for one thing. There is no possibility of any young lady getting unreasonably conceited if she be endowed with them.
I think they were all glad at breakfast-time to hear of Jack Hawthorne's promised advent. By "all" I mean my mother, Elsie and Bob. Our cousin Solomon Barker looked anything but overjoyed when I made the announcement in breathless triumph. I never thought of it before, but perhaps the young man is getting fond of Elsie, and is afraid of a rival; otherwise I don't see why such a simple thing should have caused him to push away his egg, and declare that he had done famously, in an aggressive manner which at once threw doubt upon his proposition. Grace Maberley, Elsie's friend, seemed quietly contented, as is her wont.
As for me, I was in a riotous state of delight. Jack and I had been children together. He was like an elder brother to me until he became a

cadet and left us. How often Bob and he had climbed old Brown's apple-tree, while I stood beneath and collected the spoil in my little white pinafore! There was hardly a scrape or adventure which I could remember in which Jack did not figure as a prominent character. But he was "Lieutenant" Hawthorne now, had been through the Afghan War, and was, as Bob said, "quite the warrior." What ever would he look like? Somehow the "warrior" had conjured up an idea of Jack in full armour with plumes on his head, thirsting for blood, and hewing at somebody with an enormous sword. After doing that sort of thing I was afraid he would never descend to romps and charades and the other stock amusements of Hatherley House.

Cousin Sol was certainly out of spirits during the next few days. He could be hardly persuaded to make a fourth at lawn-tennis, but showed an extraordinary love of solitude and strong tobacco. We used to come across him in the most unexpected places, in the shrubbery and down by the river, on which occasions, if there was any possibility of avoiding us, he would gaze rigidly into the distance, and utterly ignore feminine shouts and the waving of parasols. It was certainly very rude of him. I got hold of him one evening before dinner, and drawing myself up to my full height of five feet four and a half inches, I proceeded to give him a piece of my mind, a process which Bob characterizes as the height of charity, since it consists in my giving away what I am most in need of myself.

Cousin Sol was lounging in a rocking-chair with the *Times* before him, gazing moodily over the top of it into the fire. I ranged up alongside and poured in my broadside.

"We seem to have given you some offence, Mr. Barker," I remarked, with lofty courtesy. "What do you mean, Nell?" asked my cousin, looking up at me in surprise. He had a very curious way of looking at me, had cousin Sol.

"You appear to have dropped our acquaintance," I remarked; and then suddenly descending from my heroics, "You are stupid, Sol! What's been the matter with you?"
"Nothing, Nell. At least, nothing of any consequence. You know my medical examination is in two months, and I am reading for it."

"O," said I, in a bristle of indignation, "if that's it, there's no more to be said. Of course if you prefer bones to your female relations, it's all right. There are young men who would rather make themselves agreeable than mope in corners and learn how to prod people with knives." With which epitome of the noble science of surgery I proceeded to straighten some refractory antimacassars with unnecessary violence.

I could see Sol looking with an amused smile at the angry little blue-eyed figure in front of him. "Don't blow me up, Nell," he said; "I have been plucked once, you know. Besides," looking grave, "you'll have amusement enough when this—what is his name?—Lieutenant Hawthorne comes."

"Jack won't go and associate with mummies and skeletons, at any rate," I remarked.

"Do you always call him Jack?" asked the student.

"Of course I do. John sounds so stiff."

"O, it does, does it?" said my companion doubtfully.

I still had my theory about Elsie running in my head. I thought I might try and set the matter in a more cheerful light. Sol had got up, and was starting out of the open window. I went over to him and glanced up timidly into his usually good-humored face, which was now looking very dark and discontented. He was a shy man as a rule, but I thought that with a little leading he might be brought to confess.

"You're a jealous old thing," I remarked.

The young man colored and looked down at me.

"I know your secret," said I boldly.

"What secret?" said he, coloring even more.

"Never you mind. I know it. Let me tell you this," I added, getting bolder: "that Jack and Elsie never got on very well. There is far more chance of Jack's falling in love with me. We were always friends."

If I had stuck the knitting-needle which I held in my hand into cousin Sol he could not have given a greater jump. "Good heavens!" he said, and I could see his dark eyes staring at me through the twilight. "Do you really think that it is your sister that I care for?"

"Certainly," said I stoutly, with a feeling that I was nailing my colors to the mast.

Never did a single word produce such an effect. Cousin Sol wheeled round with a gasp of astonishment, and sprang right out of the window. He always had curious ways of expressing his feelings, but this one struck me as being so entirely original that I was utterly bereft of any idea save that of wonder. I stood staring out into the gathering darkness. Then there appeared looking in at me from the lawn a very much abashed and still rather astonished face. "It's you I care for, Nell," said the face, and at once vanished, while I heard the noise of somebody running at the top of his speed down the avenue. He certainly was a most extraordinary young man.

Things went on very much the same at Hatherley House in spite of cousin Sol's characteristic declaration of affection. He never sounded me as to my sentiments in regard to him, nor did he allude to the matter for several

days. He evidently thought that he had done all that was needed in such cases. He used to discompose me dreadfully at times, however, by coming and planting himself opposite me, and staring at me with a stony rigidity which was absolutely appalling.

"Don't do that, Sol," I said to him one day; "you give me the creeps all over."

"Why do I give you the creeps, Nelly?" said he. "Don't you like me?"

"O yes, I like you well enough," said I. "I like Lord Nelson, for that matter; but I shouldn't like his monument to come and stare at me by the hour. It makes me feel quite all-overish."

"What on earth put Lord Nelson into your head?" said my cousin.

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Do you like me the same way you like Lord Nelson, Nell?"

"Yes," I said, "only more." With a small ray of encouragement poor Sol had to be contented, as Elsie and Miss Maberley came rustling into the room and put an end to our *little*.

I certainly did like my cousin. I knew what a simple true nature lay beneath his quiet exterior. The idea of having Sol Barker for a lover, however—Sol, whose very nature was synonymous with bashfulness—was too incredible. Why couldn't he fall in love with Grace or with Elsie? They might have known what to do with him; they were older than I, and could encourage him, or snub him, as they thought best. Gracie, however, was carrying on a mild flirtation with my brother Bob, and Elsie seemed utterly unconscious of the whole matter. I have one characteristic recollection of my cousin which I cannot help introducing here, though it has nothing to do with the thread of the narrative. It was on the occasion of my first visit to Hatherley House. The wife of the Rector called one day, and the responsibility of entertaining her rested with Sol and myself. We got on very well at first. Sol was unusually lively and talkative. Unfortunately a hospitable impulse came upon him; and in spite of many warning nods and winks, he asked the visitor if he might offer her a glass of wine. Now, as ill-luck would have it, our supply had just been finished, and though we had written to London, a fresh consignment had not yet arrived. I listened breathlessly for the answer, trusting she would refuse; but to my horror she accepted with alacrity. "Never mind ringing, Nell," said Sol, "I'll act as butler;" and with a confident smile he marched into the little cupboard in which the decanters were usually kept. It was not until he was well in that he suddenly recollected having heard us mention in the morning that there was none in the house. His mental anguish was so great that he spent the remainder of Mrs. Salter's visit in the cupboard, utterly refusing to come out until after her departure. Had there been any possibility of the wine-press having another egress, or leading anywhere, matters would not have been so bad; but I knew that old Mrs. Salter was as well up in the geography of the house as I was myself. She stayed for three-quarters of an hour waiting for Sol's reappearance, and then went away in high dudgeon. "My dear," she said, recounting the incident to her husband, and breaking into semi-scriptural language in the violence of her indignation, "the cupboard seemed to open and swallow him!"

"Jack is coming down by the two o'clock train," said Bob one morning, coming in to breakfast with a telegram in his hand.

I could see Sol looking at me reproachfully; but that did not prevent me from showing my delight at the intelligence.

"We'll have awful fun when he comes," said Bob. "We'll drag the fish-pond, and have no end of a lark. Won't it be jolly, Sol?"

Sol's opinion of its jollity was evidently too great to be expressed in words; for he gave an inarticulate grunt for an answer.

I had a long cogitation on the subject of Jack in the garden that morning. After all, I was becoming a big girl, as Bob had forcibly reminded me. I must be circumspect in my conduct now. A real live man had actually looked upon me with the eyes of love. It was all very well when I was a child to have Jack following me about and kissing me; but I must keep him at a distance now. I remembered how he presented me with a dead fish once which he had taken out of the Hatherley Brook, and how I treasured it up among my precious possessions, until an insidious odor in the house had caused the mother to send an abusive letter to Mr. Burton, who had pronounced her drainage to be all that could be desired. I must learn to be formal and distant. I pictured our meeting to myself, and went through a rehearsal of it. The holly-bush represented Jack, and I approached it solemnly, made it a stately curtsy, and held out my hand, "So glad to see you, Lieutenant Hawthorne!" Elsie came out while I was doing it, but made no remark. I heard her ask Sol at luncheon, however, whether idiocy generally ran in families, or was simply confined to individuals; at which poor Sol blushed furiously, and became utterly incoherent in his attempts at an explanation.

Our farmyard opens upon the avenue about half-way between Hatherley House and the lodge. Sol and I and Mr. Nicholas Cronin, the son of a neighbouring squire, went down there after lunch. This imposing demonstration was for the purpose of quelling a mutiny which had broken out in the henhouse. The earliest tidings of the rising had been conveyed to the House by young Bayliss, son and heir of the

henkeeper, and my presence had been urgently requested. Let me remark in parenthesis that fowls were my special department in domestic economy, and that no step was ever taken in their management without my advice and assistance. Old Bayliss hobbled out upon our arrival, and informed us of the full extent of the disturbance. It seems that the crested hen and the Bantam cock had developed such length of wing that they were enabled to fly over the park; and that the example of these ringleaders had been so contagious, that even such steady old matrons as the bandy-legged Cochins, had developed roving propensities, and pushed their way into forbidden ground. A council of war was held in the yard, and it was unanimously decided that the wings of the recalcitrants must be clipped.

What a scamper we had! By "we" I mean Mr. Cronin and myself; while cousin Sol hovered about in the background with the scissors, and cheered us on. The two culprits clearly knew that they were wanted; for they rushed under the hayricks and over the coops, until there seemed to be at least half a dozen crested hens and Bantam cocks dodging about in the yard. The other hens were mildly interested in the proceedings, and contented themselves with an occasional derisive cluck, with the exception of the favorite wife of the Bantam, who abused us roundly from the top of the coop. The ducks were the most aggravating portion of the community; for though they had nothing to do with the original disturbance, they took a warm interest in the fugitives, waddling behind them as fast as their little yellow legs would carry them, and getting in the way of the pursuers.

"We have it!" I gasped, as the crested hen was driven into a corner. "Catch it, Mr. Cronin! O, you've missed it! you've missed it! Get out of the way, Sol. O dear, it's coming to me!"

"Well done, Miss Montague!" cried Mr. Cronin, as I seized the wretched fowl by the leg as it fluttered past me, and proceeded to tuck it under my arm to prevent any possibility of escape. "Let me carry it for you."

"No, no; I want you to catch the cock. There it goes! There—behind the hayrick. You go to one side, and I'll go to the other."

"It's going through the gate!" shouted Sol.

"Shoo!" cried I. "Shoo! O, it's gone!" and we both made a dart into the park in pursuit, tore round the corner into the avenue, and there I found myself face to face with a sun-burned young man in a tweed suit, who was lounging along in the direction of the House.

There was no mistaking those laughing gray eyes, though I think if I had never looked at him some instinct would have told me that it was Jack. How could I be dignified with the crested hen tucked under my arm? I tried to pull myself up; but the miserable bird seemed to think that it had found a protector at last, for it began to cluck with redoubled vehemence. I had to give it up in despair, and burst into a laugh, while Jack did the same.

"How are you, Nell?" he said, holding out his hand; and then in an astonished voice, "Why, you're not a bit the same as when I saw you last!"

"Well, I hadn't a hen under my arm then," said I.

"Who would have thought that little Nell would have developed into a woman?" said Jack, still lost in amazement.

"You didn't expect me to develop into a man, did you?" said I in high indignation; and then, suddenly dropping all reserve, "We're awfully glad you've come, Jack. Never mind going up to the House. Come and help us to catch that Bantam cock."

"Right you are," said Jack in his old cheery way, still keeping his eyes firmly fixed upon my countenance. "Come on!" and away the three of us scampered across the park, with poor Sol aiding and abetting with the scissors and the prisoner in the rear. Jack was a very crumpled-looking visitor by the time he paid his respects to the mother that afternoon, and my dreams of dignity and reserve were scattered to the winds.

We had quite a party at Hatherley House that May. There were Bob, and Sol, and Jack Hawthorne, and Mr. Nicholas Cronin; then there were Miss Maberley, and Elsie, and mother, and myself. On an emergency we could always muster half a dozen visitors from the houses round, so as to have an audience when charades or private theatricals were attempted. Mr. Cronin, an easy-going athletic young Oxford man, proved to be a great acquisition, having wonderful powers of organization and execution. Jack was not nearly as lively as he used to be, in fact we unanimously accused him of being in love; at which he looked as silly as young men usually do on such occasions, but did not attempt to deny the soft impeachment.

"What shall we do to-day?" said Bob one morning. "Can anybody make a suggestion?"

"Drag the pond," said Mr. Cronin.

"Haven't men enough," said Bob; "anything else?"

"We must get up a sweepstakes for the Derby," remarked Jack.

"O, there's plenty of time for that. It isn't run till the week after next. Anything else?"

"Lawn-tennis," said Sol dubiously.

"Bother lawn-tennis!"

"You might make a picnic at Hatherley Abbey," said I.

"Capital!" cried Mr. Cronin. "The very thing. What do you think, Bob?"

"First class," said my brother, grasping eagerly at the idea. "Picnics are very dear to those who are in the first stage of the tender passion."