

CANADA.

Fair Canada! dear Canada!
The country of the free!
Not any kingdom on the earth
Would we exchange for thee.

Thy lordly woods, like giants old,
Thy rivers wide and free,
Flowing through country unsurpassed
Down to the boundless sea.

Thy lakes, upon whose bosom fair
Once toyed the bark canoe,
Now bear a navy of their own
Upon the waters blue.

Thy prairies broad, whose wondrous space
Might kingdoms well contain!
Extend a welcome to thy sons,
Who would a fortune gain!

Who can tell all the countless wealth
Reserved for honest toil?
We'll trust in thee, and take thy gifts,
Richer than conqueror's spoil!

In summer-tide, not Italy
Can boast of skies more blue,
O'erarching fields of golden corn,
And flowers of every hue!

At harvest, in the teeming fields,
Is heard the reapers' lay;
In winter, with the dance and song,
The time is whiled away.

And glances soft, from gentle eyes,
Go through the heart in thrills,
As guided by the "steerer" bold,
We fly down frozen hills.

Then let our song be evermore
Turned to the sweetest strain,
And evermore be "Canada"
Heard in our proud refrain.

May love of thee, and loyalty,
In union close be seen;
God bless our noble Canada!
God save our gracious Queen!

E. L. M.

Montreal, 1878.

SIDNEY DANE.

Time—5 o'clock on a sultry September afternoon; the air is close and oppressive, the sky covered with clouds that threaten storm. Scene—the pleasant shady flower-scented drawing-room of a pretty old-fashioned house in a suburban road just outside the town of Leamington.

The room has two occupants, one of whom—the middle-aged lady, presiding at a dainty little "6 o'clock tea" table—is the present writer, Miss Catherine Dane. The tall, dark-eyed girl in white, who stands at the open lawn window, is my niece Sidney, the motherless child of my brother Colonel Dane, now in India, but shortly expected home on sick leave.

"Don't you want any tea, Sidney?" Sidney is in a brown study, and I have to ask the question twice before she comes to the surface with a start.

"Tea? oh, is it ready?" she answered absently, and moving from the window, subsides into a chair near the table. "I was looking for the postman. He is late this afternoon."

"Do you expect a letter from India by the mail that is just in?"

"Yes; I daresay papa will write."

"We shall have him with us before Christmas I suppose?"

"I suppose so," she assented.

Her tone was certainly not one of joyful anticipation, and the words were followed by a suppressed sigh. It pained but did not surprise me to hear it, for I had discovered long ago that Sidney dreaded her father's return, though for what reason I could not even conjecture. The girl was almost as much a stranger to me now as she had been six months before, when first I received her beneath my roof. My brother had written to me requesting me to take charge of her till he returned to England, as her health required immediate change of climate. I readily consented, but soon found it was no light responsibility I had accepted; I had neither power nor influence over the haughty headstrong girl, who knew no law but her own will, who accepted homage as a right, and repelled sympathy as an impertinence. In spite of her faults, however, I had learned to love my niece, and her waywardness and caprice only served to add compassion to my affection; for some instinct told me that they were but the outward signs of a deeper ill, a heart oppressed by some hidden trouble, and a nature at war with itself.

What could the trouble be? Anxiously I asked myself the question as, after that sigh, I watched her clouded face. But the beautiful face kept the secret and told me nothing.

A sound of carriage wheels approaching swiftly along the road caused Sidney to desist from her idle occupation of breaking a biscuit into fragments, and look towards the window. The next moment there swept into sight a pony carriage and pair containing three ladies, two young, and one (who was driving) very youthfully dressed—a gentleman, a handsome soldierly-looking man of 30, with bold, dark eyes, and a sweeping, tawny moustache. The ladies, catching sight of Sidney, kissed their hands to her effusively, and the gentleman raised his hat, as the carriage dashed by and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"Were those the Lightwoods?" I inquired, as she turned from the window, her cheeks flushed, her eyes unusually bright.

"Yes, they have been to the flower-show. Mrs. Lightwood has a rival exhibition in her bonnet. Did you notice it?"

"Her brother, Captain Forrester, is staying with them I see."

Sidney only nodded in reply as she handed me her cup to be replenished.

"How long are they likely to remain at Leamington?" I asked.

"I don't know I'm sure. Mrs. Lightwood took a house for three months, I believe; they have been here more than two already."

"Did you know them very intimately in India?"

"Well, yes, I used to visit them very often when they were living at Madras. The widow, Mrs. Lightwood, has always professed a great affection for me, though I fancy she— But that reminds me, Aunt Catherine," she broke off, leaving the sentence unfinished, "they are going to have a little dance to-night, and they have invited me."

"Again!" I exclaimed. "Do you know that you have been there no fewer than six times during the last fortnight?"

"What an accurate reckoning you have kept!" she returned laughingly. "Well, to-night will be the seventh time, for I am going—with your permission of course."

The last clause was so evidently pro forma that it would have been almost more gracious to have omitted it altogether.

"I wish Mrs. Lightwood would not keep up her 'little dances' to such a late, or rather early hour," I replied; "and I am sure Sidney, that so much waltzing is not good for you, with your weak heart."

"Particularly when my partner is Captain Forrester," she added, looking at me with a half smile. "You had better be candid, Aunt Catherine; you know it is not the dance, but the partner you object to."

"I object to both; the partner chiefly, perhaps."

"I wonder why?" drawled Sidney, lazily examining her fan.

I was provoked into answering plainly:

"Because he is a bold, unprincipled, dangerous man. That is why, Sidney."

Tea finished, and she seemed about to make an angry answer; but thinking better of it, answered coldly, after a pause; "I daresay he is very much like other men; neither better nor worse."

"I should be very sorry to think my circle of acquaintance included many men of his stamp," I observed.

"Oh! I am sure it does not," she returned, with a little laugh; "you may be quite easy on that score, Aunt Catherine."

"And I should be still more sorry," I went on, ignoring her remark, "if I thought he could ever be more to you than a mere acquaintance. Heaven help you, Sidney, if you bestowed your heart on such a man!"

She shut her fan, and looked up with a sudden change of expression.

"Bestow my heart!" she echoed in a tone half angry, half scornful. "You talk as if hearts were 'bestowed' like prizes, as a reward for merit; as if love were a thing to be given or withheld, subject to the approval of parents or guardians. It does not occur to you that a woman's heart may be won in spite of her? that she may love against her will, against her judgment, against her duty?"

She stopped abruptly, and the colour rushed over her face.

"What rubbish we are talking!" she concluded with a shrug, as she rose and returned to her old post at the window. A few minutes afterward the front gate closed behind the postman, who advanced up the winding drive toward the house. Somewhat to my surprise—for she had her full share of the Anglo-Indian laziness—Sidney gave herself the trouble to go and meet him, took a letter from his hand, and returned slowly across the lawn, a tall, elegant figure, in trailing summer draperies, with a yellow rose in her dark hair.

"A letter for you, Aunt Cathie," she said, "with the Southampton post-mark. It—why—good heavens!"

The words died on her lips; she stood looking blankly at the letter in her hand.

"What is it?" I asked. "What is the matter?"

"It is papa's handwriting!" she answered, in a whisper of amazement.

"And the Southampton post-mark," I exclaimed, and hastily tore it open—Sidney looking over my shoulder as I read.

RADLEY'S HOTEL,
SOUTHAMPTON, September 6.

MY DEAR CATHERINE,—You will see from the heading of this, that I am already in England. I landed from the *Chester* last night, and I should have been with you to-day (Tuesday) but my old wound in the shoulder has broken out afresh, and will keep me prisoner here, the doctor says, for the next forty-eight hours at least, if not for several days. I have just learned that the Lightwoods are living in Leamington, and that Mrs. L.'s brother, that scamp, Fred Forrester, is with them. Sidney has never mentioned their names in her letters to me; but I have no doubt that in spite of my express prohibition, she has renewed the acquaintance which was broken off before she left India. I have now a stronger reason to object to the intimacy; and I trust to you, Catherine, to see that she does not set foot in their house, or hold any sort of communication with them, till I come. I reserve explanations until I see you. In the meantime, believe me,

Your affectionate brother,

FRANCIS DANE.

I folded the letter in silence, and looked at Sidney, who stood motionless, gazing straight before her.

"So for the last three months you have been deceiving both your father and me?" I said in a tone I had never used to her before. "You have concealed from him that these people were here, and from me that he had forbidden the acquaintance. I am disappointed in you, Sidney."

"Most people are when they know me well," she replied, with a faltering attempt to laugh; and leaning her elbow on the chimney-piece she let her forehead fall on her hand. Her back was toward me, but I could see her face in the glass, and there was a look of anxious trouble upon it that smote me with sudden pity.

"My child," I said, impulsively, putting my arm round her waist, "why will you not confide in me? You have some secret trouble; let me share it; you would surely find it a relief. Will you not trust me, Sidney?"

She glanced into my face, then looked down. Her lips trembled.

"I do trust you, Aunt Catherine," she answered, after a pause. "But—but I cannot tell you; it is impossible; you would not understand."

Before I could speak she disengaged herself from my arm, and continued in her usual tone: "I suppose I may write a note of excuse to Mrs. Lightwood? That does not come under the head of forbidden communication?"

"If you will allow me to read it before it goes."

"Oh, certainly." She seated herself at her desk, and took up the pen, but instead of beginning to write, she sat for full five minutes with her chin propped on her upturned palm, looking out before her with a face of intent and anxious thought.

"It is getting late, my dear," I reminded her at length; "you had better write at once. She started and pushed back her hair.

"Yes, I will do it at once," she said, and dipping the pen in the ink, hastily wrote a few lines, which she handed to me for inspection. I glanced over them and saw that she excused herself on the plea of a headache.

"Have you an envelope?" she asked, as I gave her back the note, "I can't find one." I left the room to fetch back my letter-case, which was in the dining-room. When I returned Sidney said hurriedly: "Oh, I am sorry to have troubled you, Aunt Catherine; I found one after all. There is the note," and she handed it to me sealed and addressed.

"For once the stereotyped excuse is not a fib, for my head does really ache distractingly," she added, passing her hands over her forehead. "I think there is thunder in the air. I will go and lie down for a time; I shall not care for my dinner, so please don't let me be disturbed. If I am better toward 7 o'clock I shall go and spend an hour at the 'Cottage.'"

"The Cottage," which was the residence of my cousin, Lady Hillyard, was the next house to mine, and the two gardens communicated by means of a door in an ivy-covered wall.

"Do so, my dear. Lady Hillyard is always glad to see you," I answered.

She paused a moment at the door, turning the knob in her hand; then coming suddenly back to my side she put her hands on my shoulders and looked into my face with an unwonted softness in her handsome dark eyes.

"Dearest, kindest, best of aunts, forgive your graceless niece," she said, with a tremulous smile; "forgive me, not only for deceiving you, but for caprice and ingratitude. Tell me that you love me a little in spite of it."

"My poor child, can you doubt it?" I exclaimed, much touched, stroking the braids of her glossy dark hair.

She lifted her face and kissed me once—twice, and I felt a tear on my cheek; the next moment she was gone, and I was left to my own meditations.

That they were not altogether pleasant ones may be imagined. The more I reflected on what had passed, and the oftener I read my brother's letter, the more anxious I grew.

He could have but one reason for objecting to her intercourse with the Lightwoods, and when I remembered that she had been in constant communication with them for the past three months, with almost daily opportunities of meeting "that scamp, Fred Forrester," I felt anything but comfortable.

I longed for my brother's arrival, and yet half dreaded it; fearing some outbreak of his fiery temper.

It was not wonderful that I had but little appetite for dinner that day.

My solitary meal was soon over, and I returned to the drawing-room and tried to occupy myself as usual, but found that I was too restless to settle anything.

The heat, instead of diminishing, seemed to increase as the evening advanced. There was a curious hush and stillness, like the stillness of dread, in the sultry air, broken only by the distant muttering of thunder, and the frightened twitter of a bird, hiding beneath the leaves from the coming storm.

Night "came down with a rush" (as in the tropics) an hour before its time, at 7 o'clock it was dark; so dark that, looking out through the open window as I sat alone in the drawing-room, I could not even trace the outline of the shrubby trees; all was a vague black void.

"Do, for goodness' sake, ma'am, shut the window," cried the old servant, Carter, when she came in with a cup of coffee; "the storm'll

be upon us in another minute, and it'll be no mistaken, it'll be the worst we've had this many a year."

The words were hardly out of her mouth, when the utter darkness was suddenly rent by an awful, blinding flash of lightning, which literally seemed to set the sky on fire, and, barely a moment after, the thunder crashed close above the roof, so close that I voluntarily crouched and put my hands to my head.

Carter screamed and clung to me. "Lor'a mercy! it's like the day o' judgment!" she panted.

"Shut all doors and windows," I said hastily. "I will go up stairs to Miss Dane."

"Better leave Miss Sidney to herself, ma'am, if you'll excuse me," Carter replied in her blunt way. "I went upstairs a minute ago to see if she was frightened, and would like me to sit with her, and she answered very short that she had seen much worse storms than this would be, and didn't want my company."

"Was she lying down?"

"I don't know, ma'am; spoke to her through the door."

The storm proved indeed the worst we had known for years. The sky was lit up almost incessantly by the red glare of the lightning, though none of the succeeding flashes were so awfully vivid as the first; the thunder pealed as if heaven's artillery had opened fire on the earth, and the rain came down like a cataract "sheer, and strong and loud." In little more than half an hour, it had spent its force. The thunder died away in the distance, and the rain abated. I threw the window open again, and admitted a stream of cool, delicious air; then, turning up the lamp, which I had lowered during the storm, I took up my work, and sat down on the sofa.

I had set the door open, so that I could see across the hall, half way up the stairs, and I kept glancing up from my work in the expectation of seeing Sidney descend, for it was now nearly 8 o'clock.

Within and without, the house was profoundly still, and the measured "tick-tack" of the old-fashioned clock on the stairs sounded unnaturally loud in the silence.

I felt lonely and unaccountably depressed, and began to wish impatiently that Sidney would come down and keep me company.

"It is too late now for her to go to Lady Hillyard's," I reflected, as the clock struck 8.

Even as the thought crossed my mind, looking toward the stairs, I saw her descending. She had changed her dress for a darker one, and wore a long black cashmere mantle, the hood of which was drawn over her head. Her face, in its dark frame, looked startlingly white.

She came noiselessly down stairs and across the hall; opposite the drawing-room door she paused and looked in at me, but did not speak.

"Surely you are not going to the Cottage to-night, Sidney?" I exclaimed. She made no reply, but passed out of sight.

Something in her looks and manner made me uneasy. Suddenly a thought struck me that caused me to start to my feet. "Suppose she was not going to Lady Hillyard's after all? Suppose—" I stayed for no more suppositions, but threw down my work and followed her. She had already quitted the house, leaving the front door partly open.

Going out into the verandah, I saw her walking rapidly down the side-path toward the door in the garden-wall. I called to her, but she kept on without heeding me. However, I felt reassured now that I knew she was really gone to the Cottage, and only wondered anxiously whether she had been so imprudent as to rush out of doors in her thin house shoes.

The rain had now entirely ceased, and the night was as calm as if no storm had ever troubled it, though the heavy rain-clouds had not yet dispersed, and the moon was climbing her way wearily through their dark masses. The breeze blew fresh and cool, bringing with it the rich moist scent of damp earth and grass. It was all so pleasant that I was tempted to linger a little out of doors. I threw a shawl over my head, and began to pace up and down the verandah.

About half an hour passed thus, and I was just about to turn indoors when I heard wheels approaching along the road. They stopped at my gate, and presently a hired fly appeared in the drive and drew up at the door; a tall figure, muffled in travelling wraps, alighted, and the next moment I was in my brother's arms, pouring out ejaculations of surprise and broken words of welcome. After a hasty embrace he released me, paid and dismissed the cabman, then followed me into the drawing-room.

"Where is Sidney?" was his first question, as he glanced round the room.

"She is spending the evening with Lady Hillyard; we did not expect you till to-morrow, we will send and fetch her."

"Wait a moment," he interposed, laying his hand on mine as I was about to ring the bell. "I want to have a little talk with you first. Sit down, Catherine."

He tossed his wraps on to the sofa and sank into a chair, running his fingers through his hair. "Handsome Dane," as he had been called, was handsome still, I thought, as I looked at him; but his face was worn and pale, and there was a look of haggard anxiety in his dark eyes.

"Francis, why did you come to-night? you were not fit to travel!" I said, involuntarily. He gave a short sigh.

"That is true enough, but I was in such a fever of anxiety that I could not wait until to-