

farm on the prairie was a family of five. The father, a fierce, passionate man, whose brutality to his children made them hate, while they feared him—the sister, the less said about her the better, at that time, she was simply, a shallow heartless flirt,—the boys, two, you know them, but the mother—the voice was soft now. “Little mother, the one light in a life of utter grey, drizzly darkness, my patient, loving little mother. But for her, I cannot tell what Art and I would have been.” Here a slight pause, and when he resumed, the voice was stern and hard. “She died, and we cut it all, Art and I. He went to school, while I did anything, shovelling snow, tending horses, finally getting a position as under clerk.”

But here the girl stopped him. “What is this to me?”

“Much, if you will see, if you but have patience.”

Again eye burned in eye, then Jennie sat down.

“By seizing a few moments at a time, I gained a moderate education there, and after some years, went into newspaper work. From then, through will and determination I rose more rapidly than most, but though fortune was the friend of my ambition, life was not much to me. Friends I made, staunch and true, but they were of my own sex, of the other I had none. I wanted none of those I saw. Once there was one, who seemed different, but she proved like the rest, ere I met her thrice.

“Then there was a visit to a chum, where at the same time was his sister’s friend. The week sped fast, too fast. Fair stately, true, she was all I wished, all I had longed for, all I loved. Hush, you must hear me through. We met, we parted, but I could not forget. Her image filled my brain, work could not hide it, the very tones of her voice rang in my ear. I heard of her too, Art never suspected he was being pumped. But that was not enough.” Then he paused. His voice had been earnest, convincing, now it became persuading, passionate, electric. His face grew white, set, as one with the world at stake on a single throw.

“At last, I could stand it no longer. Then I laid my plans. I knew your strong character, which unless taken by sudden onslaught, would yield only to a long and steady siege. The latter course was all but impossible for me, so—leave of absence was obtained. That item—yes I gave it. Everything is ready—license, ring, clergyman, even a substitute for your office work. All is waiting, my darling, for you to make it true.”

As the girl arose he moved closer.

“Oh, if you but knew how I have hungered for one glance, one touch, one word. Life was a small price to pay, Jennie, sweetheart. Have you no word for me, not one crumb for a starving man? Am I to go back to my lonely life, and spend an eternity in the memory of one happy week? Oh, you cannot be so cruel. Done wrong? Of course I did. But sweetheart, I loved you, I love you. Let that plead my cause, Jennie.” Seizing her hand, his burning eyes met hers—as though by mesmerism they held, then, slowly Jennie’s lids dropped. “My darling, my queen—I knew it. My brave girl, you do love me.”

Again he had won. Then as he drew her closer, I stole away.

It was quite a time before he came out, his face glowing with triumph. I went back. Jennie’s face was flushed, but his manner was composed, and she worked hastily as though to make up for lost time.

Inside the hour Jack Hill was back again. The boys assembled in the reporter’s room, and in the presence of us all, given away by the boss, took place the marriage ceremony.

Jack had been thoughtful. Luncheon was ready at the hotel, and inside of a few more hours, Mr. and Mrs. Jack

Hill were on the Imperial Limited, bound for Winnipeg.

A long time has passed since then, but until now, not one on all that staff, no one but myself ever dreamed that the wedding in the office that day was quite an impromptu affair.

To Thy Dear Memory, England.

Once again—the sweet old picture!
For awhile these tired eyes,
Turning from life’s toil and pain,
Shall grow calm and bright again;
E’en as they who in life’s even’ catch some glimpse of Paradise.

Year by year the work grinds onward,
From the dawn to twilight gloom,
Lo! there comes a sudden break—
English memories awake;
A forgotten dream of childhood floats across the dusky room.

Just a sunbeam on the paper!
Yet it sent my thoughts afar,
To the days that long have flown—
Sunny hours that I have known;
Where the heather and the moorland, and the smile of Nature are!

Oh, thou long loved Mother England,
I have tried to bear my part,
I have toiled with book and pen
Midst the busy mass of men—
For one moment, for one moment, take me back to thy great heart.

There first rose the star of morning!
There the dear hands long grown cold
Led me in the simple way,
Hold they now a deeper sway,
By their silence, still appealing, folded under English mould.

I have watched the sun come sweeping
Brightly o’er the mountain brow
I recall each look of old
With a yearning manifold;
O, thou little sea girt Island, would mine eyes could see thee now!

Knee deep stand the cows in clover,
Where the red thorns interlace;
Hark! I hear the rushes quiver,
Bending to the wind swept river
Gliding through the light and shadow round my earliest dwelling place.

Though I never more behold thee,
Ere life’s working day shall wane,
Yet could I forego thy charms,
Resting in thy mother’s arms,
Couldst thou hold me, couldst thou fold me, dust to English dust, again.

Fades once more the sweet old picture
With the parting golden gleam,
Four walls rise and close me in
Alien to their strife and din;
This the substance, that the shadow; this the waking, that the dream.

—LILIAN CAXTON.