

CASTLE AND COTTAGE.

I
 THERE stands a castle by the sea,
 With an ancient keep and turrets three,
 And in it dwells a lady rare,
 Rich and lovely, with golden hair,
 By the wild waves plashing wearily.

II.
 In it dwells a baron bold,
 Gallant and young, with store of gold,
 Store of all that man can crave,
 To cheer his pathway to the grave,
 By the wild waves plashing wearily

III.
 The lady bright is kind and good,
 The paragon of womanhood;
 And her wedded lord is leal and sure,
 Beloved alike of rich and poor,
 By the wild waves plashing wearily

IV.
 There dwells a fisher on the strand,
 In a little cot with a rood of land,
 With his bonnie wife, and girls and boys,
 That climb to his knee with a picaunt noise,
 By the wild waves plashing cheerily.

V.
 And the lady of the castle sighs
 When she meets the fisher's gladdening eyes,
 And wishes that Heaven to bless her life
 Had made her mother as well as wife,
 By the wild waves plashing cheerily.

VI.
 The lord of the castle riding homo
 O'er the hard sea sand where the breakers foam,
 Oft sees the fisher, his labour done,
 Sit with his wife in the glint o' the sun,
 By the wild waves plashing cheerily.

VII.
 Sit with his wife, and his boys and girls,
 Dandling the youngest with golden curls,
 And turns his envious eyes aside,
 And well-nigh weeps for all his pride,
 By the wild waves plashing wearily.

VIII.
 "I'd give," quoth he, "my rank and state,
 My wealth that poor men call so great,
 Could I but have that fisherman's joys,
 His happy home and his girls and boys,
 By the wild waves plashing cheerily."

TWELVE MONTHS OF MY LIFE.

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IN TWELVE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

It is needless to set down here how often at this time Mrs. Hatteraick came to see me, how many cream cheeses and sweet shortbreads, how many baskets of strawberries of their own picking, and nice new books just fresh from London, were carried triumphantly into my room by the good Samaritans, Polly and Nell. And invariably with these other gifts came the bouquet, of which Polly was not unreasonably proud as the handiwork of Uncle Mark. "He matched the colors himself," this little woman would cry, "and you should have seen him going picking and snipping around the greenhouses, gardener John following him with tears in his eyes." These flowers used to oppress me in my small room sometimes. They were richer and of stronger perfume than any about the Mill-house. Often during these visits of Mrs. Hatteraick's, when Sylvia had carried off the children, and the old lady and I sat alone, she talked to me sweetly and wistfully about her tall soldier son, of his goodness and bravery, and her desire to see him married to some one who could appreciate him and be worthy of him, some one he and she could love. When should I be able to go back to Eldergowan? was her constant cry.

And as often as she talked to me in this manner, just so often had I right impulses to open my heart to her, and tell her all about Luke. But physical weakness and suffering had made me a coward, and I still kept putting off the evil day. Each visit was too short and precious to be darkened by the cloud which I felt must come between me and that gentle face whenever my

story should be told. I cheated myself with fair promises and the finest reasoning in the world. I said that by-and-by, when I was stronger, and less foolishly nervous and lackadaisical than I found myself now, I should be able, in the telling my news, to speak up with a better dignity, and guard the honour of my father, my future husband, and myself. I felt that I could never confess to Mark's mother that I did not like Luke Elphinstone, and, as I was determined to hold up my head and walk with pride in the way I had to go, I had better have no slipping and hesitating, no gonding commiseration and counsels. Advice could not avail me, and sympathy could only sting.

One golden afternoon, I sat alone in my own room at the open window. The grass, the trees, the river, and sky, all were golden. The very rolling monotony of the distant dashing wheels was molten gold poured out in sound upon the air. Idleness and sunshine are sore irritants to a troubled heart. Many disturbing questions had been teasing me all morning with oft-silenced "whys" and "wherefores." The birds and the flowers had been giving me bad advice, and my solitude obliged me to listen to them.

Elspie came hobbling in with her knitting, and sat down beside me in her privileged way, "speering" at my face, though I kept it turned from her till the sun had dried it. But Elspie's eyes, with the help of a pair of huge wry spectacles, were as keen as any I have met with.

"It's sair to see you sittin' greetin' her: for lonesomeness," said Elspie, "when there's ane o' yer ain years i' the house might bide wi' you for company."

"You are very cross, Elspie," I said. "I thought you had given up your ill-will to Miss Ashenhurst. Do you think I would sit in-doors on such a day as this if I could help it? And it is new to her, you know. You never were in London, Elspie, and how should you understand why she loves to be so much in the open air here?"

"She's no' i' the open air the noo," said Elspie, grimly. "She's doon there," pointing with her thumb towards the drawing-room below. "I saw her yonder awhile ago, walkin' about the floor, and singin' and talkin' to hersel', just daft-like. She's no' sae found o' the open air unless when she's ane to walk wi' her."

I smiled at Elspie as she tugged her needles.

"I don't think she'll find any one to walk with her here," said I, "except it be the dogs or the crows."

"Oh ay! that indeed!" said Elspie. "Wait till the sun's a bit low, an' she's off to meet Luke, wi' her hat on her arms sae simple, an' her bare locks shining like a wisp o' goud. You might mind yer auld nursery window, Mattie, an' how far a body might see roun' the orchard out o' its we crooked panes. Gin ye were sittin' there instad o' here the length o' the simmer's day, ye might see mair than the river runnin'."

"What might I see, Elspie?" I asked, knowing that I must speak and humour her.

"Mair than I'd like to tell ye, lass," said Elspie, peering at me from under her shaggy grey brows, "only I'll say ane word to ye that's worth a score. Get you smooth-faced bizzie oot the Mill-house the soonest day ye can, gin ye think o' Maister Elphinstone for yer husband."

"Elspie!" I said, sharply, "I never knew before that you were a cruel and unjust woman. I know you have always had a strange dislike to my friend, whom every one else loves, but you ought not to let it carry you too far. If Mr. Luke and Miss Ashenhurst are better friends than they used to be, I am very glad of it, and no more need be said on the subject. Why, you silly old thing," I added, "if you only knew how far you are astray with your ridiculous notions!" And I smiled as I thought of the doctor's blushes.

"Eh lass!" said Elspie, leaning her chin upon her skinny hand, and looking at me mournfully, "yer ower young to deal wi' a wicked world,

an' yer ower prood an' simple to look after yer ain right. Gin ye were freean' coaxin' wi' yer lover yersel', ye might snap yer fingers at a' the saft-faced strangers on airth, but ye will not even crook yer finger to bring him to yer side. I tell ye, bairn, that a man likes a bonny woman that'll laugh in his eyes, an' blush when he comes by, better than a bonnier woman that's could an' sad. An' I tell ye mair, that gin ye do not stir yersel' it's Sylvia an' o' Mattie that'll sit at Luke Elphinstone's fireside. Wae's me! I did not yer mither pass me a waft i' the gloom'ing' last night. An' I spoke to her oot lood on the lobby as she went flittin' by. 'Gaug hame, maistress,' I said, 'an' tak yer sleep. Elspie'll speak to the bairnie afore anither day.'"

At this point Sylvia came singing up the stairs, and Elspie hobbled abruptly from my room. The young woman and the old woman exchanged glances of distrust upon the threshold. Sylvia looked saucily after her enemy, and, turning to me, asked me guily what Gooly Crosspatch had been saying to make me look so glum. I told her we had been speaking of my mother. Sylvia sat down beside me and talked sweetly and kindly, as she knew how to talk. I half closed my eyes and ears, and tried to look at her apart from her fascinations, but it was like swimming against a current, and the tide of her good humour bore me with it. It seemed to strike her that I was sad, and she excited herself to amuse me, which proved to me that her neglect at other times could be owing to no deliberate unkindness. But she soon wearied of her task and left me, and the old state of things went on.

I began to ruminate seriously upon Elspie's suggestions. I had felt so certain that Sylvia was encouraging the doctor, that I had never thought of the possibility of her preferring Luke. How should I, since she and Luke had been almost at enmity when I saw them last together? But they had been much thrown upon each other's society since then, and must have at least become good friends, unless Elspie could be supposed to have gone mad. Reflection made me uneasy for Sylvia, and I resolved that, at all events, she should no longer be kept in ignorance of the engagement between me and Luke Elphinstone.

"My dear," said Miss Pollard, bursting in on me one morning, all rosy and breathless, "I wanted so much to come and see you, so I made a little jelly for an excuse. I got up at four this morning, partly to make it, and partly because I could not sleep. If Miss Ashenhurst is not about, I should like a little private conversation."

I assured her that we should not be disturbed.

"Should Miss Ashenhurst come in," she said, "promise me you will immediately change the conversation. Miss Ashenhurst makes me feel as if I were sitting on pins, or had my gown hooked on crooked, or my shoes on the wrong feet, or something else very uncomfortable the matter with me. If she happens to call at my house when Dr. Strong is paying me a visit, as he often does, on the subject of broth and petticoats, she gives way to such extraordinary merriment that I quite blush, my dear, besides being uneasy lest it should end in hysterics."

I promised that if Sylvia happened to come in, I should immediately begin to talk about canaries. When Miss Pollard said, "I quite blush, my dear," it was literally true, for her cheeks had turned as red as a rose. She put off her bonnet with trembling hands, and the lappets of her little cap stirred with great agitation. She had on her best black silk gown, so I knew that a matter of importance was to be discussed.

"It is about Dr. Strong, my dear," she said, speaking with a quaint mixture of elation and distress in her manner, and adding, with a slight incoherency, "though ostensibly it was only about broth and petticoats."

In a moment I guessed what was coming, and in the shock of amazement I felt through my mind for my familiar idea of Dr. Strong as a lover of Sylvia's. But all ideas were in confusion, and I could only listen.