

NUPTURA.

Hush! let me hear of love no more
Till grief has had her rightful day;
Must I not count my treasure o'er
Before I give it all away!

Sweet home! from every field and tree
Breathes all my past of joys and tears;
The store of lifelong memory,
The voiceless love of twenty years.

My father's sigh, with smiles above,
The tear my mother lets not fall,
My brother's heart, so sore with love—
Can I alone then heal them all?

To love and heal, one little hour!
To loose and lift each clinging root;
To pour the scent of my last flower
On those who shall not see my fruit.

One little hour! my woman's eyes
With childhood's dying tears are dim
Love calls me: I shall soon arise,
And bid farewell, and follow him!

BENEATH THE WAVE.

A NOVEL

BY

MISS DORA RUSSELL,

Author of "Footprints in the Snow," "The Miner's Oath," "Annabel's Rival," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HILDA'S PUPILS.

The Squire's accident made some difference in the arrangements of the young ladies staying at the Hall. It had been originally fixed by Patty and Lu Featherstone that they were to return home the day after the wedding, but to leave poor Mr. Trevor alone when he was in such pain Lu said was impossible, and Patty made no objection to their remaining.

Hilda Marston also did not like to speak to Mr. Trevor about business when he was ill. She wrote, however, to her old friend the schoolmistress (at whose school she had been educated) and she sent her a kind letter in reply. She invited Hilda to come and stay with her for a little while, and said that she would endeavour to get her pupils for singing and music, but warned her that at first this would be very difficult, and that she must not, therefore, raise her expectations too high.

Still, this letter was very comforting, and enabled her to bear the brunt of her sister's displeasure when Hilda informed her that all her gloomy prognostications about Mr. Trevor had come true.

"I told you what would happen," wrote Marion Marston, "and," she added, "the next thing you hear will be that Mr. Trevor will be marrying someone else."

In this prophecy Hilda fully concurred with her sister. Lu Featherstone was not a girl who did things slyly. She openly devoted herself to Mr. Trevor and his sprained foot, and the probable consequence were, of course, patent to all. Nay, so natural is it to women to nurse and be kind to sick people, that Lu grew to like Mr. Trevor much better after his fall. She got more accustomed to him for one thing, for when a man is ill there are many little things he requires to be done for him which create intimacy, and Lu did everything she could for Mr. Trevor. Thus it surprised no one when they announced they were engaged. Patty Featherstone was delighted when this happened, and Lu was serious, but not unhappy. She had accepted Mr. Trevor for his position, but she meant to be a good wife to him, and was not marrying him by any means in the same spirit that Isabel had married Sir George Hamilton.

"If he is generous enough to give me money and a good home," she told her sister, "I mean in return to give him both duty and, I trust, affection. Not every man would marry a penniless girl like me."

As for jovial Antony Featherstone, he was overjoyed at his girl's good luck. Sometimes a dim vision had passed through his mind that the day might come when he would have to leave his daughters to the world's cold mercies, and an uncomfortable feeling for a moment or two had on their account disturbed his easy-going and not over-tender heart. But now it was all right. The "old boy," as he privately designated Mr. Trevor, would look after them both, and Antony need no more care for their future. So he made merry after his fashion on the occasion, and drank and boasted to his soul's content. Mr. Trevor wrote to him (a pompous letter we may be sure), and Antony answered it in his careless, sprawling handwriting. But he wrote very highly of his daughter, and told Mr. Trevor that he was a lucky fellow to have got such a prize. Indeed, to do Antony justice, he believed in his girls. They were good girls he often said, and in his way he was proud of them, though he would not have denied himself a single gratification for their sakes.

It was about a week after the Squire's accident, and Isabel's wedding day, when Lu Featherstone announced her engagement to her sister and Hilda Marston. Both the Featherstones liked Hilda Marston very much by this

time, and the Squire, in his gratification at being accepted by one handsome girl, had almost forgotten his mortification at being refused by another. Thus the party at Sanda Hall had got on very harmoniously together. But after the engagement was announced, Hilda felt that it was time for her to seek another interview with the Squire.

This was a much more agreeable one than the last. Mr. Trevor was dignified, but affable; and when Hilda told him about the correspondence which had passed between herself and her old schoolmistress, he signified his approval of the course that she had taken.

"And I may tell you, Miss Marston," he added, drawing out a cheque book, "that I have always intended presenting you with a year's salary when you quitted my establishment. I believe it was settled that you were to receive forty pounds a year as my daughter's companion? Allow me, therefore, to present you with a cheque for that amount." And Mr. Trevor handed a cheque, which he had just filled in, to Hilda.

"I thank you. I am very grateful," said Hilda.

Mr. Trevor waved his hand graciously. "You will find, Miss Marston," he said, "that though I admit no claims on my beneficence, that when I choose I can give with no niggard hand. But I will not allude further to my many charities. I act, as I may indeed conscientiously say, always up to the rules of life that I consider the duty of a gentleman in my position. Regarding your brother Edward," he continued, "I am willing to defray the expenses of his education until Christmas. After that, as I may have future claims on my purse which I cannot foresee, I must decline any longer to burden myself with his maintenance."

"I will take him to live with me," said Hilda. "Miss May, the lady I told you of, hopes to be able to get me some pupils, and I shall also have time to educate Edward myself."

"No doubt, abundant time," said the Squire. "And I should advise you not to over-educate him. I consider this is one of the mistakes of the present day. Formerly gentlemen and the sons of gentlemen only were highly-educated. Now young men without position or fortune are pushed forward, and this has caused, to my mind, a most dangerous class to arise."

"Yes," said Hilda, meekly, for she could not exactly follow the Squire's argument.

"As your brother's future position in life will probably be a clerk in an office," continued Mr. Trevor, "I should advise you, therefore, to teach him sound English, and if he has any idea of a mercantile career, French would be desirable. But all books of dangerous tendency, such as would induce to free thinking on any point, scrupulously keep out of his way. His sphere of life will necessarily be a narrow one, and his ideas, therefore, should be in accordance."

Hilda could scarcely forbear a smile at this. The narrow-minded Squire laying down the law, and thinking how clever he was, touched her sense of humour, and with an effort only could she preserve a proper humility of countenance.

"I—will try to remember," she said.

"Do so," replied the Squire, "and I assure you that you have my good wishes for your future welfare."

"And—I must offer you my congratulations," said Hilda.

"Thank you," said the Squire, graciously. "Yes, I have decided," he added, "now that my daughter has left me, to form a second marriage, and I think that I have been fortunate in my choice of the lady."

"Indeed you have," said Hilda, warmly, for she liked the Featherstones very much.

"Miss Lucinda Featherstone is attractive as a young lady," continued the Squire, "and I have no doubt she will be yet more attractive as a married one. If you will favour us with your address when you are settled in town, I shall desire cards to be forwarded to you on the occasion of my marriage."

Again Hilda said "thank you" for these gracious words, and then, after a few more speeches, her interview with the Squire was over. She left his presence with a lightened heart. Little Ned was to be taken care of until Christmas, and by that time Hilda hoped to be settled and at work, and at all events to have some sort of a home to receive him in. Mr. Trevor's gift, and the price Isabel had given her for her locket, made up a respectable sum, and altogether Hilda felt in better spirits than she had done since she had known that the Squire's patronage was to be withdrawn from herself and her family.

She left Sanda two days after this interview, and proceeded direct to town. Miss May (the lady at whose school she had formerly been) received her kindly, and it seemed somewhat like the old school days again when she found herself once more among a lot of girls. But when she had been with Miss May before, she had a father and a home, as most of these young girls had now, and the change sometimes made her very sad. The prospect, too, which lay before her was not a pleasant one, for Hilda shrank from going among strangers, and to solicit favours was not easy to one of her nature. But she had little Ned to think of, as well as herself, "the boy brother, whose fortunes she had so seriously injured," Marian Marston wrote to her, and Hilda felt that in some measure her sister's words were true. So she practised assiduously, and was pronounced competent to give both music and singing lessons by the

good-natured music master, who attended the school. Miss May promised to try to get her some pupils, but Hilda's hopes grew very low as day after day passed, and none could be heard of. She had received one or two kind letters during this time from the Featherstones, and one from Lady Hamilton. Isabel had forgotten something at Sanda that she wanted, and wrote to her late companion to forward it to her at Paris, never remembering that Hilda would in all probability have left Sanda by this time.

In this letter Isabel mentioned her father's approaching marriage. "I am utterly astonished at the news," she wrote, "but my future step-mother wishes me to be present at the marriage, and we shall therefore return to England early next month, when I believe the event is to take place."

But though she wrote thus discreetly, she had not spoken so when she had first received her father's letter announcing his engagement. With a contemptuous exclamation she had flung the letter on a table near which she was seated at breakfast, and Sir George, who was opposite to her, looked up in surprise from his newspaper as she did so.

"My dear Isabel, what is the matter?" he asked.

"He is a fool!" said Isabel, with curling lip. "His Lucinda indeed! Anyone's Lucinda who would be mad enough to marry into such a family as theirs."

"Of whom are you speaking?" said Sir George.

"Of my father," answered Isabel. "But you can read the letter. He has actually been infatuated enough to propose to Lu Featherstone!"

Sir George looked grave for a moment and then he said—

"Isabel, is that a proper way to speak of your father?"

Isabel shrugged her shoulders.

"My good creature," she said, "I did not come to Paris to go to school." And Sir George, as he heard her answer, looked for a moment in her face, and then rose from the table with a heavy sigh.

They had been married just about a fortnight at this time, and already Isabel had frequently given way to her temper and caprices. But he loved her still. The power of her beauty held him still. At times, too, she exerted herself to charm him, but she was very tired of it. She liked many things better than Sir George Hamilton. Admiration, the world's good gifts, "the pride of life." She had all these, and Sir George's generous, nay, lavish hand, grudged her nothing. She had only to express admiration for a thing, and if he could get it for her, it was hers. But still she did not love him. She was not even grateful to him, for she estimated herself so highly, that she thought nothing too good to be squandered at her feet.

And Sir George saw all this. Not, perhaps, that she did not love him, for the human heart is vain, and it is hard to believe that a violent affection meets with no return. But he saw that she was selfish, and wonderfully capricious. And yet he was ready to forgive her, to tell himself that she had been badly brought up, that she had been spoiled, that in time all her faults might pass away.

But he was not happy. He watched her eyes wander away from his to seek a look of admiration from some passing stranger. He listened to the words that fell from her lovely rosy lips, and heard no noble, nor even tender one. Isabel was charming and coquettish to him sometimes, but he felt that he could never lay his head on her shoulder, and tell her of his heart's weariness; tell her what he could have told her, if she had been a loving and faithful wife.

Isabel was exceedingly annoyed, as we have seen, at the news of her father's engagement. It would affect her socially, she thought. To be connected with a broken-down family like the Featherstones, must be a disadvantage to the new Lady Hamilton, who meant to hold her head so high.

But after her first anger was over, she felt that she could do nothing to prevent it, and that therefore it would be well to be on civil terms at all events with her father's young wife. But it was a bitter pill. Reckless Antony Featherstone rose before her mind's eye, familiar and encroaching. Then there was Patty—Patty, who would expect to be chaperoned, and who was too honest and free-spoken to be converted into a useful or convenient friend. Altogether, Isabel disliked the match, but she wrote a fairly kind letter to her father when she did write, and sent a message to "his Lucinda," the satire of which term she could not resist pointing out to Sir George.

"Let us hope they may be happy, Bella," answered Sir George smiling, when she showed him her letter, and he stooped down and kissed her fair cheek as he spoke.

"Let us pray so," said Isabel, scoffingly, "for there is no reasonable hope."

These words, as so many of her words did, jarred on Sir George's ears. But he did not say this. He stood looking at her, wondering if she ever would be gentle and womanly, as his mother had been; as he most ardently longed that she might be.

"She is marrying him presently," continued Isabel, still speaking of her father's distasteful engagement, "to save herself from being a governess or something of that sort, for, of course, when Mr. Featherstone dies, if they are still unmarried, they will be left paupers in the world. Certainly one can scarcely wonder at it, for do you know I had a letter from Hilda Marston to-

day, and she is absolutely going to become a teacher of music!"

"Indeed! Where is she now?" asked Sir George.

"At some school at Brixton, I think her address is. 'Oh! I dare say she will do very well,'" added Isabel, "for she was always an industrious, patient kind of person. As for me, I would kill a child, I think, rather than teach one a note."

"Don't talk like that, Bella."

"Very well, sir," said Isabel, looking up with her bright smile. "I will give you some pretty talk. I will take lessons in music from Hilda Marston, so as to be able to teach all the dear little unwashed—I was going to say brats—but I correct myself, all the dear little youthful inhabitants of your estate at Massam, and you shall have the pleasure of listening to our mutual performances."

"Very well," said Sir George; but the next moment Isabel began to talk of something else. She had forgotten all about Hilda Marston. She allowed her to drift out of her mind, and away from the luxurious pleasures of her life, under the impression "that she would do very well."

But this was far from being the real truth of the case. By this time Hilda had left Miss May's (her old schoolmistress's), and had taken rooms, and begun her struggle for daily bread.

She advertised in several papers, but no one, in all human probabilities, ever read the modest lines in which she announced that she was prepared to receive pupils, although these modest lines cost her a little sum that she could ill afford to spare. Then she asked for permission, and paid for permission, to place her cards in the music-shop windows of the part of the town in which she lived, but still without any result. She had been a fortnight alone in her little rooms, with only disappointment for her companion, when one morning she received a note from Miss May, inviting her to go to her house during the afternoon, as she had heard of two likely pupils for her. They were old pupils of her own, Miss May wrote, and wanted a musical young lady to practise constantly with them, and Miss May thought that Hilda might probably suit them.

Poor Hilda! She was sensitive and tender, and she trembled when she heard of the near approach of what she had been so anxiously hoping for. Often I think of the timid gentlewomen who are left to fight the world's hard battles. Men go into these with honour, and mostly the best men win, but what can women as a rule win? A bare living and no honour. This is the real truth as regards this world; perhaps in the next the meek daughters of toil may meet with a better reward.

Miss May's school was not a very grand establishment. It was situated in Brixton, where a neat villa, enclosed in its own grounds, and guarded from the outer world by a high brick wall, was rented by Miss May, and had been rented for the last twenty years. It was an old-fashioned, old-established school in fact, and Miss May herself was now an old woman. But she was a good soul. A little eccentric, perhaps, and of sharp and sarcastic tongue, but a woman who meant well, fearing God, and trying her best to keep His laws, and also acting well towards her neighbours.

She was a lady, too, and had a hard hit now and then at the "great families of yesterday," amongst which she principally lived.

"I never mention people's grandfathers, my dears," she used sometimes to say to her pupils. "Mine, poor man, was the Vicar of Normanton, yet, you see!" And she would shrug her angular shoulders, to the great edification of the girls. "But he had better have been a linen-draper, or a grocer, or a tavern-keeper, or something that makes money. Then I should not have had the enjoyment of your society." And the old woman used to laugh and show her white, prominent teeth.

But in spite of her queer ways she was very kind. She had taken a sort of fancy to (and she took strong likes and dislikes) Hilda Marston. For one thing, she came of gentle birth, and for another, Hilda was clever, good-looking, and upright. The shrewd old woman saw a good deal with those blinking eyes of hers, and she thought she saw in Hilda's face the indications of a true and honest heart.

"If she had been a linen-draper's daughter with twenty thousand pounds for her fortune, all the men would have been raving about her," she thought. "As, poor girl, she is only a clergyman's, and a gentleman's daughter, no one will ever rave about her, and she will probably end her days, as I shall end mine, a lonely old maid teaching the children of those whose grandfathers were born in the position of her grandfather's servants."

So she had tried to do her best for Hilda, and was unwilling to let her go, when the girl announced she must leave her kindly roof.

"Wait here until you really get some pupils," she urged. "Your little stock of money will slip away in no time if you don't. You are quite welcome to stay here."

But Hilda's sense of right would not allow her to do this. She knew that Miss May had worked hard for her money, and still worked for it, and as her staff of governesses was complete, she felt that she had no right to encroach on her old friend's kindness. So she went away, and took two small rooms near the Victoria Station, as she thought that this would be a central situation to travel from to the different parts of London, where she hoped to find her pupils. But none had ever come. Her money (as Miss