The Old Story.

"Break, break, break!
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

"And the stately ship go on
To the haven under the hill,
But, oh! for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!"

—Tennyson.

"Yes, I will go."

I was tired and annoyed nearly to death. I sat at my window, watching the stream of busy life pouring up and down Broadway, and feeling lonely, miserable, and depressed. I had only returned a week before from the fashionable watering-place, whither I had gone with the rest of the world, and where I had danced and flirted to my heart's content; and now that the esason was over, and I was in the city once more, and the whirl and excitement passed, reaction followed, and I felt utterly wretched and desolate. What mattered it then, that I was an heiress and belle—that every luxury wealth could command was mine, since none of them brought peace to my restless heart. I wanted something; I hardly knew what; I wanted to love and be loved; and I did not want to become a blase woman, which I felt at this rate I would soon be.

Just then, like an inspiration, flashed across my mind the remembrance of my little, gentle cousin, Winnie, whom I had known and romped with when a child. She was a wife now, and living in some out-of-the-way town on the seacoast, and had repeatedly invited me to go and see her; but in the constant round of gayety in which I lived, I had hitherto felt little inclination to bury myself alive, even for her sake. But now it seemed the best thing I could do, and I rose, exclaiming:

"Yes, I will go."

"Well, if you will, you will, I suppose," said a gay voice at my elbow; "but before you go, ma chere, you must come with me, and visit Ray De Lacy in his studio. Ah! what a start that was, and what a flush this is. That proud, dark face of yours tells tales at times, I see, Lady Isabel. Well, well! I never should have supposed that the belle of Saratoga could wear the——"

"Pshaw, Marian, how you do run on!" I exclaimed, half angrily. "There sit down, and don't talk nonsense and I'll be ready to accompany you in five minutes. What takes you to Mr. DeLacy's studio this morning?"

"Why, don't you know he is painting my portrait? I have given him two or three sittings already. And oh! by the way, I must tell you something he said yesterday. We were sitting chatting away, you know, and by-and-by the conversation turned upon you and your many conquests. 'Mr. De Lack," said I "How came it that you escaped heart-whole?'"

"'Because,' was his reply, 'I have not the audacity to lift my eyes to the reigning belle. She is an heiress, and I am but a poor artist, whom she considers honored sufficiently by a gracious smile.'"

"'Why, Mr. DeLacy,' said I, 'don't you know "Faint heart never won fair lady." Who knows but——'"

"Marian Hunter, you did not dare to——"

"Oh! what a flash-shot from your black eyes, that time," said Marian, clapping her hands and laughing. "Yes, but I did dare. 'Who knows,' said I, 'but where others fail you may succeed,' be he only laughed and shook his thick curls and there the conversation ended."

"And there I hope it will end," I said coldly. "I hope, Miss Hunter, you will have delicacy enough not to make Ray De Lacy or any one else think me a fool. No man shall boast that I loved him unsought."

"Come, don't be angry, Belle, I will do nothing to wound your feelings, or even your unbearable pride, though by so doing, I should insure your happiness for life."

There was a slight touch of sarcasm in her tone as she spoke, but I thought best not to notice it; and together we entered the carriage and drove leisurely along. I leaned back among the cushions, and fell into a delicious reverie of—Ray De Lacy. The high heart-beating that his name had caused had scarcely yet subsided, and I knew not that the keen eyes of Marian Hunter were reading each inward thought in my tell-tale face.

"Well, Miss Seabright," she broke out at last, "I would like to know how long you mean to sit silently there with your eyes fixed on your folded hands, and that absent half-smile on your face. Now, I suppose, if I were to tell you you are dreaming of the blue eyes of Ray De Lacy, you would deny it. Ah! I knew I would make you blush. Well, no matter, where was that you were informing yourself when I interrupted you, that you were going to go?"

"To my cousin Winnie's."

"Ah! where may that be?"

"In Minton, a little seacoast town."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Are you crazy, to leave the city now, when the Winter campaign is about to open ? Think of the conquests you will lose—think of the triumph it will be for the rest of the belles who will no longer find themselves eclipsed—think of—but my feelings overpower me, I cannot continue."

"I have thought of it all, and will go."

"Well, it's too bad; but here we are at our destination. And Belle," she added, as we ran up the stairs, "it has one advantage, I will find out whether De Lacy loves you or not, before we leave."

"Marian——"

"Oh! don't look so angry and alarmed, I won't commit you in the least. Hush, here he is."

We entered the studio. Ray De Lacy, who had been lying on a lounge, smoking a cigar, started up at our entrance, and while his dark eyes lit up with pleasure, exclaiming:

"Ladies, I was about to go out in search of sunshine, but you have brought it into my studio. You do me proud, by——"

"Oh! there, there, Mr. De Lacy," interrupted Marian, flitting gayly around the room, "spare your compliments for those who can appreciate them. Come, show me what you have been doing lately. Ah! what is this?"

She had lifted the screen off a half-finished picture and gazed, upon it so intently, that I went over to see it. It was nothing very wonderful, however—only a sweet, young, child-like face, with soft, wistful, hazel eyes, and waving, sunshiny, hazel hair.

"What a pretty face," exclaimed Marian; "who is it, Ray?"

"Only a fancy sketch!" he answered, laughing, though the color rose to his forehead. "Do you like it?"

"Yes, I never saw a sweeter face."

"And you, Miss Seabright—what is your opinion?' he asked, with an eagerness he could not conceal.

"Oh! I like it. It is pretty enough," I answered, feeling my lip curl as I spoke. "You will meet a hundred faces equally pretty any afternoon on Broadway."

His face instantly grew grave, almost sorrowful in expression; but without a word he threw back the screen and hid it from view.

"By the way, Mr. De Lacy," said Marian, "do you know this city is about to be deprived of its 'bright particular star.' Are you aware that Bella, here, is about to take unto herself wings, and fly away?"

She spoke abruptly, and fixed her eyes keenly on his face, but no change was there. I saw the effort he made to wear a look of concern, as he replied:

"I really was quite ignorant of that melancholy fact. May I ask where Miss Seabright intends going?"

I was looking out of the window, and plucking to pieces a rosebud growing there; so Marian replied for me:

"Oh! to some out-of-the-world, heathenish place in the country. For my part, I think she must be crazy to leave the city—just in the beginning of the season, too."

"Marian, I have to call at Madame Du Monde's," said I, suddenly turning from the window, and drawing out my watch; "it we do not hurry, I fear we will be too late to see her."

"I am entirely at your disposal," said Marian, courtesying. "Good-morning, Mr. De Lacy. I shall see you to-night at the opera."

He bowed to Marian, who was already rustling down stairs, and held out his hand to me.

"Good-morning, Miss Seabright. Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you again before you leave us?"

"I fear not," said I. "I leave to-morrow. Adieu, Mr. De Lacy."

Five minutes more, and I was seated beside Marian, driving slowly down Broadway.

"Well, mabelle," said Marian, "I begin to fear Ray De Lacy is heart-whole, as far as you are concerned, after all. He heard the announcement of your departure with the utmost indifference."

I turned impatiently away and made no reply.

'I wonder if that face he showed us was really a fancy sketch! If not, you have a formidable rival,' continued Marian.

I faced suddenly round, and said, shortly:

'Marian Hunter, I neither know nor care. Once for all you must drop this subject, or we are no longer friends.'

Marian, ever good-natured, only replied to this rude speech by arching her eyebrows, and smiling slightly, and as a moment more brought us to Madame Du Monde's, the conversation dropped.

'The shades of night were falling fast,' as longfellow has it, when the lumbering old stage coach brought me to my cousin's door. It was a pretty little bandbox of a place, down on the seashore, so close to the sea, at first, that I was frightened.

To be continued.

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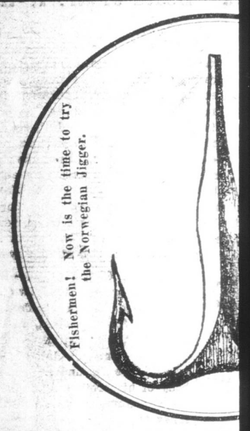

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