

finding, as in a mirror, each her own image in the heart of the other. Some women can have no half-measures; they must love wholly and trust altogether; and they must receive back as much as they give.

I tried to write down some of these tender scenes, but I have torn them up; words that are altogether sweet and precious when spoken sometimes look sentimental and meaningless when they are written down. What they came to was this, that two women tried to spoil one man by attention and thoughtfulness, and did their best to make another man vain by their exceeding love for him. I do not think either was much injured.

In September we all four, Miss Rutherford acting chaperone, went to the Lakes together in order to complete my recovery.

I have been in many places since the year 1858, and enjoyed many holidays. I have learned to know this beautiful garden set with all manner of delights, with mountain, stream, lakes and forests, with all kinds of sweet flowers and singing birds to raise the heart of man, which we call England. I have dreamed away the hours in the pleasant land of France, among old castles by the stately Loire, or where the white cliffs of Normandy face their sisters of Albion. I have sat among the sweetest of Germany and wandered among the woods-scented pines round mountain feet, but I have had no holiday such as that. A dreamy time, when one was still weak enough to allow the sentiment of the situation to dwell in the mind, with a clinging for the last time to the role of Celia, while all sorts of sweet phrases and endearments gathered themselves together and took shape in my heart, to be expressed in music when I might find time to set them down, with a new interest in listening to the talk, so truthful and so old-fashioned, of the lady whom chance had joined to our party, who ought to have been set in a bower full of flowers and fruit, with pious ladies about her of angels—not churchy angels—ladies could be pious twenty years ago without ecclesiastical rubbish—and faces of holy women full of trustful thought. With this, the old admiration for Leonard, the strong, the brave, the handsome Leonard.

One evening, after sunset, we were in a boat on Derwentwater, Leonard, Cis, and I. Leonard was rowing as gently, letting the oars dip slowly in the smooth water, and then resting, while the boat made slow way among the wooded islets. Cis and I sat side by side in the stern; she was steering. The dark foliage was black now, and the lighter leaves were changed into a dark green. The lake was still and quiet, now, and then a fish came to the surface with an impatient splash; or it really was getting too dull down below; or a wild fowl flew over our heads with a whirr, or a noise of voices, mellowed by distance, came across the water from the hotel, and far off, somewhere a man was blowing a horn, and the echoes flew from hill to hill.

"Blow, bagpipes, blow, set the wild echoes flying," Celia quoted softly.

And then we were all silent again.

It was Leonard who spoke next. "Deeper darkness had fallen upon us now, clouds were coming up in the west, and the breeze began to rise. The boat was quite motionless, on either hand an islet, before us in the distance the lights of the hotel reflected in the water. And again the sweet rolling echoes of the horn.

Said Leonard, speaking slowly.

"There is a thing I should like to tell you, Cis, if Laddy will let me. It is a thing which he told me in his delirium, a thing I ought to have suspected before, but did not, so dull and selfish as I was. Can you guess what it is?"

I could guess very well. There was nothing else that I could have told unknown to Cis already.

"I thought I was the only one who knew," Leonard continued, "but I was not, the Captain knows."

"He knew before," I murmured. "Tell Cis, if you please, Leonard, if you think well. But remember, it is all a thing of the past—forgotten—torn up by the roots."

"When I went away, Cis, dear," Leonard began, "I left you in the charge of Ladislav. You were, I told him, in my concerted way, to be his peculiar trust, he was to look after you to watch you, and to anticipate everything that you could want."

"And so he has done," said Cis. "Haven't you, Laddy?"

"The reason I gave him was that I loved you, my queen, and that if things went well—all looks so easy to a boy—I proposed coming back, and telling you myself—in five years' time. Observe, please, the extraordinary selfishness of a boy of eighteen. At that age one cannot possibly think of anything but oneself. Well—I went away—I came back—Fortune had been kinder to me—far kinder than I ever deserved. I am loaded with the gifts of Heaven. Don't think me ungrateful, because I talk little about these things. I can only talk of them to you two. But that is nothing. While I was away, Cis, you grew from a child into a woman."

"Yes, Leonard."

"What I did not think of was that Laddy was growing too from a boy to a man—what I forgot was that there would be one girl and two men—that both men might love the same girl."

"Laddy?" Cis cried, with surprise and pain.

"Forgive me, Cis," I said, "Leonard has told you the truth. For a time—it was early this year, I think—what he hinted at was the case, I fought with it—and I beat it down, because it was hopeless, and because of the promise I gave to Leonard. But it is true that there was

a time when I gave way, and—ventured to love you, otherwise than a brother may. Why did you tell her, Leonard?"

"Because I want her and myself to feel more what we owe to you, Laddy, to your unselfish labour, your watchfulness, and the sacrifice of your own interests. He loved you, and he gave you up, Cis. I wonder if any words of mine could make you understand what that meant to him."

"It could never have been, Leonard," I said.

"How could it? Celia was my sister always."

She laid her hand in mine and one arm upon my shoulder.

"Always your sister, Laddy dear. And henceforth more and more. There is now nothing that we have not told each other."

Henceforth, more and more. Yes, as the time has gone by, nothing has dimmed the steady trust and affection which Celia has showered upon me. I can see now, too, how different her life would have been, how wanting in fulness, had things been different, and had she married me. Some women are happiest with a man of action; how could the life of a dreamer like me satisfy the aspirations of a girl who worthily fills the place of Leonard's wife, and has stepped gracefully into the rank to which his success has raised her?

About that one thing we never spoke any more.

Leonard rowed us quietly back to the hotel, the lawn of which ran down to the water's edge. The garden was full of visitors, for the evening was warm. They looked at us as we passed them, Celia with her hand on my shoulder in the old familiar fashion, staring with that half-impatient, furtive way in which English people at hotels look at each other and at strangers. In the *salon* was nobody but Miss Rutherford, quietly waiting our return.

She asked Leonard to take her into the garden for a walk, and left Celia and me alone.

Then I sat down to the piano, and collected my thoughts—all those noised thoughts of which I have spoken—and began to play them.

It was no improvisation, because the ideas had been long in my head, and many of them had been already noted down and tried over, but it was the first time I played the piece as a whole.

"What is it, Laddy?" Celia asked, as she saw me striving to talk to her in the old fashion, with my fingers on the keys, a language unknown to the outer world. "What is it? I cannot understand it yet."

"Listen, Cis. It is a love poem of two young people—we will call them 'Leonard and Cis.' It tells how one went away, and how after five years he came back again, not a prodigal son, but covered with honour; how they fell in love at once, and how after many difficulties, which were got over in a most surprising and extraordinary manner, quite as if those two lovers belonged to a novel, which, of course, they did not; and how they were finally married, and lived happily for ever and ever. Now listen."

The symphony came forth from my brain clear and distinct, and after a few bars of prelude, flowed straight on to the end. I have written plenty of music since, though I am not, as Celia affects to think me, a great composer, but I have written none that has pleased me so much, that dwells so constantly in my mind, and where I have found such fulness of expression. It is, I am sure, by some such masterful wave of passion that the highest expression and the noblest conceptions are brought together in the brain, and great works are produced.

I could see in my own music—and Celia could see it as well—in rippling music showing the peace and sunshine of early maidenhood; then the yearnings and unconscious reaching out of hands in thought for a fuller and richer life; then the awakening of Love the glorious, like the awakening of Adam in the garden to look about with wonder, to walk with uncertainty, to feel his way in broad daylight, to fear lest it should be a dream, and that the vision should pass away, and all be nothingness again. Presently followed the growth of passion till it became a great river for strength. And, lastly, the Wedding Hymn of triumph.

"Do you understand it, Cis?" I asked. "It is meant for you, and written for you. I shall copy it all out, and give you a copy, as my wedding present."

"I think I understand—some of it," she replied. "How can your pupil understand it all at first? Oh! Laddy, you have made me very humble to-night. How can men love women as they do? What are we, and what can we do, compared with them, that they should lavish such affection upon us?"

"Ask Leonard," I replied, laughing.

And outside the people were all listening in the garden. When I finished there was a general applause, as if I had been playing for them.

That night, an hour later, I heard below in the garden the voices of those who sat up still.

"Who was it playing?" asked a girl's voice. "He has a sweet face; it is a pity he is deformed."

"It is a certain Pulaski—Pole, I suppose. Patriot most likely. Count, of course, or Baron, or Duke"—this agreeable person was a man, perhaps the young lady's husband—a some adventurer, most likely, who goes about trying to pick up a rich English wife by his tale of misfortunes and his pianoforte playing. To-night's performance was an exhibition. No doubt he wants to fascinate that extremely pretty girl, almost as pretty as some one else I could name."

"Nonsense, sir, a great deal prettier; and,

besides, she's engaged to the tall young man, who is a Captain Coplestone and a Crimean officer. The old lady with them is a Miss Rutherford. She is his aunt, and plays propriety. I do not know anything about the pianoforte-player."

"Well, I'm glad she is not going to marry a hunchback, pianoforte-playing Pole."

Listeners, as has been frequently observed, never hear any good of themselves. But I played no more at the Derwentwater hotel, because next day we returned southwards, and began all of us to prepare diligently for Celia's wedding.

CHAPTER LI.

I have come to the end of my story, the only story I have to tell from my own experience. How should it end but with a wedding? There is no romance where there is no love; there is no pleasure in the contemplation of love unless it ends happily, and is crowned with orange blossoms; love is the chief happiness of life, as everybody knows—except, perhaps, John Pontifex—and has ever been completed by the wedding bells.

Ring, wedding bells, then; shake out the clashing music of your joy over all the fields, startle the farmer at his work, rouse the student at his desk, strike on the ear of the sailor out at sea, echo along the shore, mingle with the roar of the saluting guns to greet the ship's crew when they come home, so that they may know that during their three years' cruise the world's happiness has not altogether died away. Bring back to the old the memory of a day long gone by. Lift up the heart of the young with hope. Put ambitious thoughts of such a day of victory into the mind of the maiden who would like nothing better than to hear the bells ring for herself on such a wedding morning, and walk in such a procession, decked with such white robes and such orange wreaths. May they ring for every one of our girls, so that not one shall miss the love of a man but those who are unworthy.

They were married in the old church, the parish church, a mile from the town.

It is a day at the end of October, a breezy day of autumn; the clouds are driving across the sky, light clouds which leave plenty of clear blue sky and sunshine, the leaves are lying all about the old churchyard, drifting in heaps against the headstones and whirling round and round like unquiet spirits within the iron railings of the vaults; at the edge of the pumers' corner is a small new cross, quite simple, which I have not seen before. It is "In memory of Lucy, wife of Captain Richard Coplestone, late of Her Majesty's Tenth Regiment of Dragoons, who died in this town in childhood in her twenty-first year." Poor Lucy! Poor hapless victim of a selfish and cold-hearted villain! I knew that Leonard would put up some monument to his mother's memory, but he had not told me that it was done already. Doubtless he wished it to be there before his marriage.

The churchyard is full of people waiting to see the wedding; the honest folk from Victory Row are there. I shake hands with Jim Hex and his wife and half-a-dozen more, who know me in the old days of Mrs. Jeram's guardianship. They care less for the bride than for the bridegroom, these children of Victory Row. That a boy, so to speak, who used to run ragged about the logs on the Hard, who played on the doorsteps, who was accustomed to fight Moses daily, and on small provocations, before the sign of all; who actually, only the other day, did not disdain to remember the old time, and cowed Moses again at the Blue Anchor; that such a boy should have become such a man was not, of course, unexpected, because out of Victory Row have come plenty of distinguished men—though not put down in books—Nelson's bulldogs, mind you, and a few Wellington's veterans. But that he should have developed to that height of greatness as to be a real Captain in the Army, and come home to marry nothing short of the daughter of the Mayor, and her a lady as beautiful as the day, that was, if you please, something quite out of the common.

Here is the Captain, marching up the walk in uniform and epaulettes as becomes a great occasion. Fall back, good people, don't crowd the Captain. God bless the Captain. Is the Captain looking well to-day? And a happy day for him, too, if all's true that's said. Which if any credit is due to anybody for that boy turning out so well, it's due to the Captain. There was only one Captain for these people. Other persons held equal rank in the navy, it is true; there were, for instance, Captain Luff, Captain Hardport, Captain Bodstay—who was only a retired master with Captain's title—all living not far away from Victory Row; but they had their names assigned to them as well as their titles—ours had not. The old man, pleased to see so many people gathered together to do honour to him and his, stops and has a word to say to every one, and then goes on to the church, where he stands by the altar, and waits.

The Rev. John Pontifex and Mrs. Pontifex his wife. The sailor folk know nothing of them except as residents. So they pass in the silence of respect, John Pontifex and his long tail coat on, and a very, very voluminous white muller round his neck.

The Rev. Verney Broughton. He it is who is going to marry them. Ah! quoth John Hex, and a right sort, as he has heard, either for a glass of wine or for a marriage, or for a sermon. From Oxford College, he is, and once taught Master Leonard a morsel of learning,

which, no doubt, helped him agin them Roos-bans.

Among the people, bustling and here and there with importance, is the historiographer, Ferdinand Brambler, note-book in hand. He goes into the church; he dashes down observations in his note-book on a tombstone; listens to the people and jots down more observations, and then, absorbed in meditation, is seen standing motionless as if grappling for the mastery of language. This is a great day for Ferdinand.

Round the church door are all the younger members of the Brambler family, told off to strew flowers at the feet of the bride. Augustus is with them, bearing in his hands a pair of new white cotton gloves, and an air of immense dignity. These crowds, this ringing of bells, strewing of flowers, and general excitement all attest in his eyes to the greatness and glory of the Legal. Nothing in the Scholastic, and even a prize-giving, ever came near it. All the children are dressed in new clothes presented by the Captain, so that they may do fitting honour to the occasion.

Leonard had pressed me to be his best man, which, indeed, was my proper place. But I wanted to play the organ for Celia's marriage, and I had promised myself to play my own Love Symphony, which she alone knew. It was a fancy of mine. Forty-four, my faithful little ally and friend, begged to come with me to the organ loft.

It is after eleven, and time to go up the stairs. What are these heavy heels tramping in the aisle? They are Leonard's company, with, I believe, about half the regiment, come to see Gentleman Jack married. I remembered the faces of the regiments; they were at the Blue Anchor that night when he thrashed Moses, and made him give up the papers. Jem, the organ-blower, is in his place; Forty-four is by me to turn over the leaves. Stay one moment, Forty-four, let us look through the curtains again. There is Leonard going up the aisle. He is in uniform, as are his best men as officers of the Garrison—the young naval officer whom they call Grit, and a man of his own regiment. A brave show of scarlet and gold. His brother officers are mostly in the church, the Colonel among them.

"There comes Uncle Ferdinand," says Forty-four. "Oh! how beautiful he will describe it!"

All are there but the bride. She is coming. Now, Forty-four, for Celia's Symphony.

The music rolls and echoes among the rafters in the roof. As I play I am a prophet, and see before me the happy years unfold their golden wings. All is as it ought to be; let those who have to sit during their lives outside the halls of human joy take pleasure in the prospect of others' happiness, and be thankful that they can at least look on.

"There is the bride," whispered Forty-four.

"Oh! how lovely, oh! how sweet she looks."

My Wedding Hymn of Prayer and Praise—Listen to it, Celia—I knew that you are listening—as you stand for a moment before the altar beside your lover waiting for the words to be spoken. Listen. There is no joy, says the music, given to men and women like the holy joy of love; there can be no praise too full and deep for the gift of love; there can be no prayer more eloquent than the prayer for the continuance of love. Listen! it is the voice of your heart speaking in the music which rings and rolls about the pillars of the old church—I learned it reading in your heart itself—it is singing aloud to God in gratitude and praise, singing in the music where I have enshrined it and preserved it for you.

I finish my symphony, and the service begins. The words are kind and low as they mount to the organ loft. I have pulled the curtains aside, and we watch, we three, Forty-four, Jem the organ-blower, and I, from our gallery, while Leonard holds Celia's hand in his, and they take the vow which binds them for ever to each other. You are crying, Forty-four? Foolish child!

All is over, and they have gone into the vestry. Come, we have played Celia's Symphony before the wedding with her Hymn. Now for the March. Mendelssohn alone has reached the true triumphal rapture. His music is the exultation of the bridegroom; it is a man's song; the song of a man who bears his bride away; the song of the young men who clap their hands; the jubilation of clarions and trumpets which throw their music abroad to the winds that envious men may hear; and though the women cry, like foolish little Forty-four, we drown their tears with song and shout. A bridegroom's song of triumph this.

But the bride is gone, and the bridal company with her; the children have strown their flowers upon the ground; the carriages have driven off; only the people are left; they too, are leaving the church; in a few moments we shall be alone in the loft.

Consequently, Leonard has come home. Leonard has won his bride; Celia has gone from us. Shut up the organ, Forty-four; let us go down and join the wedding guests. Somehow I do not feel much like feasting.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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