

MY FRIEND.

[The following touching poem was written in the prison dead house at Camp Chase by Col. W. S. H. A fellow prisoner was engaged to a beautiful lady; she proved faithless, and her letter came, breaking the truth. Soon after he died, and this was Col. H's reply.]

Your letter came, but came too late,
For Heaven had claimed its own;
Ah, sudden change from prison bars
Unto the Great White Throne!
And yet I think he would have stayed
For one more day of pain,
Could he have read those tardy words
Which you have sent in vain.

Why did you wait fair lady,
Through so many a weary hour?
Had you other lovers with you—
In that silken dainty bower?
Did others bow before your charms,
And twine bright garlands there?
And yet I ween in all that throng
His spirit had no peer.

I wish that you were by me now,
As I draw the sheet aside,
To see how pure the look he wore
Awhile before he died.
Yet the sorrow that you gave him
Still had left its weary trace,
And a meek and saintly sadness
Dwells upon his pallid face.

"Her love," he said, "could change for me
The winter's cold to spring;"
Ah, trust of thoughtless maiden's love,
Thou art a bitter thing!
For when these valleys fair, in May,
Once more with bloom shall wave,
The northern violets shall blow
Above his humble grave.

Your dole of scanty words had been
But one more pang to bear;
Though to the last, he kissed with love
This tress of your soft hair,
I did not put it where he said,
For when the angels come,
I would not have them find the sign
Of falsehood in the tomb.

I've read the letter, and I know
The wiles that you have wrought
To win that noble heart of his,
And gained it—fearful thought!
What lavish wealth men sometimes give
For a trifle, light and small!
What many forms are often held
In Folly's flimsy thrall!

You shall not pity him, for now
He's past your hope and fear;
Although I wish that you could stand
With me beside his bier.
Still I forgive you; Heaven knows
For mercy you'll have need,
Since God his awful judgment sends
On each unworthy deed.

To-night the cold winds whistle by,
As I my vigils keep
Within the prison dead house, where
Few mourners come to weep.
A rude plank coffin holds him now,
Yet Death gives always grace;
And I would rather see him thus
Than clasped in your embrace.

To night, your rooms are very gay,
With wit, and wine, and song;
And you are smiling, just as if
You never did a wrong.
Your hand so fair, that none would think
It penned these words of pain;
Your skin so white—would God your soul
Were half so free of stain!

I'd rather be this dear, dear friend,
Than you in all your glee!
For you are held in grievous bonds,
While he's forever free.
Whom serve we in this life, we serve
In that which is to come;
He chose his way; you, yours; let God
Pronounce the fitting doom.

The Child of the River.

[CONCLUDED.]

She had vaguely heard that the St. Richmonds were in M—, but, living secluded from gossiping circles, she had not heard it confirmed, and did not believe it, her short vacation from teaching was slipping by in the placid rest which was such a benefit to her after the toil of the academy.

Slowly up the hill she went, till reaching a group of cedars, she sat down to rest. The view of the ocean was somewhat obstructed; she rose and walked to the other side of the trees, but stopped suddenly as she saw a man lying in the shade. She was close by him before she perceived him. Restraint of the exclamation that rose to her lips, she looked at his face and could not instantly withdraw her eyes, for she recognized him! The face she had thought beautiful as a boy, was better than that now; still correctly cut, it was now stronger, nobler. To no different man could the boy have grown, unless surrounded by perverting influences.

Those sensitive purely cut lips felt the influence of his dream, for the beam of a smile came to them as Meribah looked. He moved slightly and murmured words that thrilled the girl's heart as it had never been thrilled before.

"O child of the river; O my child love!"
As the words left his lips, he opened his eyes to meet the eyes of Meribah. His smile grew radiant; for a moment she appeared the

thought it was only a continuation of his dream. Meribah saw that he thought so, and she turned to go before he should fully awake.

Her movements roused him. He sprang to his feet and seized her hands; he looked down at her face with so earnest, so intense a gaze that it reached to Meribah's soul. He forgot everything but the present moment; he knew and realized that this girl was the sole love of his life—that in her eyes was his happiness; and instinctively he knew that her heart was his as it could never be another's. He pressed her hands, still holding her by that powerful, appropriating gaze.

"At last! After all these years," he said. "And I did not know why I was not happy! I told you I should come and tell you why I gave you this ring. It is my claim upon you; you are mine." He held her off and looked into her eyes. Silent, and strangely happy, Meribah lowered her eyes. His gaze searched her face with the keenness of intense love.

"Tell me!" he said, "for I love you. Tell me!"
With that mingling of renunciation and appropriation which is characteristic of love, Meribah bent her head towards him. He watched eagerly for her lips to say what he had asked. They said it—his sentence of infinite happiness.

"I am yours,"
A sword, keen, glittering all-powerful, was suddenly unsheathed between them.

"Indeed, Mr. St. Richmond, how many do you claim?"

St. Richmond dropped the hands he had held; he started back.

"My God! I had forgotten! How much I had forgotten!" he cried.

Meribah, who had become as cold and self-possessed as a statue, turned to look at her who had spoken. She saw an icy, brilliant face; she was conscious of some sort of elegant rose-colored drapery; of white hands carelessly twirling the ivory handle of a parasol.

She smiled; Meribah shuddered for the smile was directed to St. Richmond, and it was a glitter of serpents. Meribah could not know what fierce misery that smile covered.

"My first experience of man's memory is not pleasing," Miss Varian said; "but the experience shall be useful."

She looked at Meribah.

"You are Meribah Rayne, I suppose; I felt a presentiment of evil when I first heard your name."

She scanned the girl's face, and she read it rightly; her voice was softer as she continued—

"But you are not to blame. Shall I hold Mr. St. Richmond to his engagement?"

"As you please."

Meribah would hardly have recognized her own voice.

That moment was the bitterest time in Geraldine Varian's life. Her feelings were more vehement than lasting; her pride was stronger than her love. She had sufficient penetration to know how honorable was St. Richmond's nature, notwithstanding this momentary yielding to the promptings of his heart.

St. Richmond spoke.

"Miss Rayne," he said, "it remains for us to strive to forget this strange meeting, for Miss Varian knows as well as I, that a St. Richmond never refuses to fulfill his promises."

Miss Varian saw the opportunity of wounding St. Richmond; she improved it.

"Knowing the inviolability of such promises, you still would trifle with this girl's feelings, knowing yourself bound. Honorable St. Richmond!"

The aim was correct, and told upon St. Richmond's soul. He thought he had never suffered so much before. He saw Meribah's cheek grow still paler! her eyes drooped with such an expression of pain as he felt himself.

"It is impossible for me to trifle with Miss Rayne; she knows it. Only by the suddenness, the happiness, the peculiarity of my meeting again with her was I betrayed into revealing that which it is always my duty to conceal. You shall never have cause to complain of me again."

The tone of his voice though subdued, was like what one would have expected of him—of his face. He struggled to subdue the thought that in those words was the renunciation of what he held most dear.

"You say truly, St. Richmond," said Miss Varian. "I shall never have such cause again."

She took her ring from her finger and extended it towards St. Richmond. He did not move, he would not raise his hand. She threw the jewel disdainfully over her shoulder. On her face at that moment was a pride and power that commanded the involuntary admiration of Meribah. Miss Varian did not speak again; she turned and walked away.

St. Richmond approached Meribah, but a gesture of hers stayed him.

"I am not yours," she said mournfully.

It was hard for the man to control himself.

"But you have said it; and now I am free," he said.

"But you loved her."
"In one wild moment I mistook intoxication for love," he replied.

"And you may do so again."
"Meribah!"
The tone was pleading: could she resist it.

"Go away a year. You may wish to return to your allegiance to her; you will be free to do so," Meribah said.

"I cannot go," he said; "your presence is what I have longed for all these years. Do not send me away."

His eyes burned, his lips quivered. Meribah averted her face; she thought she could hardly bear his entreaties, and she prevented them.

"St. Richmond, otherwise I dare not thrust my happiness with you."
She would not see the pained and grieved look of his face, she would not look at him. He came close to her but he did not touch her. His voice was low and sweet.

"Dare not? Is that true?"
"It is true," with an effort.

"One year from to-day—here," he said. "Good by."

To both that year of trial brought its wisdom. It was a weary year; but its end saw the perfection of joy.

No bluer, fairer day could have risen than the one which smiled on the clasped hands, the mutual, absorbed gaze in which St. Richmond and Meribah read each other's hearts.

SELF-SACRIFICE;
OR,
ALAN MONROE.

CHAPTER I.

"The 7.23 train? Yes, Sir Astley. Will you have the brougham, or the dog-cart?"

"Oh, the dog-cart." The man lingered. "Pardon me, Sir Astley, but the mornings are cold and misty."

"Well, well, the brougham, then, Gregory; and thank you for the reminder."

"You never was much of a one for taking care of yourself, sir," and the gray-headed old servant withdrew.

"It's something to have one human being to whom my existence seems valuable," reflected Sir Astley Chichester bitterly. And yet, as he threw himself into a luxurious arm-chair, and stretched his legs over a soft Turkey carpet, letting his eye wander carelessly around a richly furnished room, he seemed a man more to be envied than pitied. But "the heart knoweth its own bitterness;" and Astley Chichester, in the prime of life, was a soured, disappointed man. He had strong, deep feelings, and his early manhood had been blighted by the desertion of a woman he fondly loved, on the very eve of their marriage. After this blow he had quitted England, and had only recently returned to his baronial home, Keystone Hall, after an absence of ten years.

True, Sir Astley had returned; but the blow his pride had received was not healed; and he chafed gloomily in his solitary state. In the variety incidental to wandering life—in the warmth and bustle of foreign hotels—in the excitement of travel, the lost love had been partially forgotten—the blank unfelt. But now Sir Astley realized that his heart was cold, his life companionless; and that he, of all men, was least formed "to live alone."

And yet he shrank from again casting his heart's treasure at the feet of a woman—from again placing his happiness and his honor in a woman's power. Want of trust, want of faith—the seeds of bitter doubt and harsh suspicion—had sprung up in the ground that had been so rudely tilled, and who can marvel?

Sir Astley Chichester was not a handsome man; but there was a strong sense of masculine power about him which either drew woman's hearts towards him, or repelled them, according to their different temperment. If fear was overcome, love would predominate. In his unhappy attachment, timidity and awe had prevailed too strongly, and led to its sad issue. He acknowledged to himself that to pass through life without a woman's love, would be to him utter stagnation; and yet he shrank from the effort to win for himself that which his soul craved.

He had met with one fair girl abroad who had taken his fancy; he had basked in her smiles and begun to dream of a future; but in a fatal hour he had watched her, unperceived, and had seen those same smiles, that same winning manner, exercised in full force upon some one else, and he had turned away and left her without a word of farewell.

"If she married me, it would only be because I am Sir Astley Chichester," was his inward comment; and a sneer curled his lip, as again he set a seal, whether justly or not he could never know, upon his transient fancy, which had been but a feeble glance.

But here, at home at Keystone, the want of a help-meet, which has been im-

planted in the bosom of every rightly-constituted man, since the days when Paradise was incomplete to Adam without Eve, asserted itself with overwhelming force, where only one faithful old servant, who had lived at the Hall since Sir Astley's boyhood, showed any solicitude about its master.

Poor Gregory left the library with a sad shake of his white head. "He's off again! Well, well, I can't wonder, though I'm main sorry. Why don't he marry? Ah!"—and he drew in his lips with a heavy sigh—"it cut cruel deep, it did, the jiltin' hussey! I misdoubt he'll never settle down as I'd like to see him, the poor master!"

But the result proved Gregory wrong, and she prevented them.

CHAPTER II.

A First-class carriage, with only two occupants—a gentleman and lady—in the night mail, whirled swiftly to Edinburgh. The lady, who is young and pretty, casts furtive, not to say anxious, glances at her fellow-traveller, and, with some relief, mentally pronounces him middle-aged and eminently respectable; for there is a long night journey to be accomplished, alone, probably, with only this stranger; and it has become really, in these civilized days, a matter of national disgrace, that one of the greatest perils of the age appears to be two people, of opposite sex, travelling "tete-a-tete" in a railway carriage.

She noticed his hat was pressed over his eyes, which were shut, and his chin rested on his woollen muffler. Her presence appeared to him a matter of perfect indifference. So the young lady gathered confidence, and drew from her pocket a letter addressed to Miss Aylwood, at Pierce Rutherford's Esq., M. P., 85, Chester square, London.

My own beloved Blanche, it commenced. It is very evident the contents were meant for no other eyes than those that glow sparkled and glistened over rhapsodies so foolish to all but lovers; therefore we will forbear from publishing poor little Blanche Aylwood's billet-doux. And yet does not this folly bring us nearer to heaven than any other more prosaic stage of existence?

How long Blanche Aylwood's perusal of her precious letter lasted we are not prepared to say; and it is very certain that the moments fled to her unconsciously. She had thrown her veil back, and had been wholly absorbed, when she suddenly became aware that her fellow-traveller had changed his position, and was leaning forward with his eyes fastened on her face; while in them was the scared half-unconscious expression of one startled from sleep under strange circumstances, and a something more which she could not then comprehend. A maniac!—Scream!—Call the guard!—Open the door, and jump out! &c., &c.—all the usual weak, womanly expedients flitted across Blanche's brain, and, as might be expected, she did nothing; and the two fellow travellers, having stared vaguely at each other for a few seconds, relapsed into their respective corners, not again to sleep and read, but to keep a furtive watch upon each other, from very different motives.

The night was wearing on. Silence and weariness were depressing Miss Aylwood's nerves. She felt that to bear this dull solitude any longer was impossible. At the next station I will change my carriage! she reflected emphatically. I'd rather be second class with Phoebe! This was Miss Aylwood's maid. And presently, to her relief, the train slackened speed, and the long, shrill whistle indicated their approach to a station.

But, suddenly, "a change" came o'er Miss Aylwood's "spirit." The gentleman rose, and said, courteously "this is York. We remain here twenty minutes. Can I be of any use to you? Will you allow me to get you some refreshment?"

Blanche blushed at the injustice she had done her companion, for she was too much of a lady herself not to detect the "ring of the real metal."

"Thank you," she answered; "I will get out, for I should like to speak to my maid, if I can find her."

"It is a long train, and may be a matter of difficulty; but, if you will go into the waiting-room to the fire—for it is a very cold night—I will endeavour to do so for you, and send her to you."

"Oh I cannot give you the trouble! I—" But her hand was already in his, and she was stepping on the platform.

At the door of the waiting-room he turned suddenly as he was on the point of leaving her. "It seems impertinent to ask your name, and pray withhold it, if you please; but it would assist my search."

Thus appealed to, how could Blanche refuse?

"Aylwood—Miss Aylwood," she said. "Aylwood!" he repeated, gazing into the fair face with the same fixed look that had startled her. "And so like too! Then I was not dreaming? But what does it mean? Has time stood still with you, Mildred?"

"I am not Mildred," answered the

young lady smiling; "but I am Mildred's sister. You mistake me for Mrs. Rutherford."

"I am Astley Chichester," he answered, absently.

The girl shot a grave pitying glance at him out of her soft eyes, and bowed her head reverently. "I have heard of you," she answered gravely; and then Sir Astley turned away upon his quest.

There was no demur now as to travelling under such protection, and when the train sped on its way, Miss Aylwood and her new-found friend had lessened the distance between them, and broken through their reserve.

It may seem tedious to devote another chapter to a railway journey, but it is a very long distance from London to Edinburgh; and as this journey was fraught with such momentous consequences to Sir Astley Chichester, we must be pardoned if it infringes upon another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

You are very independent to travel so far by night, unprotected, Miss Aylwood, said Sir Astley.

I am not timid, answered Blanche; then she added, with a rising blush, perhaps at the remembrance of her recent tremor, I should not have been alone, but my escort—the friend who was to have been with me, is ill, and was unable to leave Scotland to fetch me.

This sentence was too involved for Sir Astley Chichester's enlightenment; he had not seen the letter commencing, My own beloved Blanche, so he merely bowed and still more earnestly recognized, with feelings of mingled pain and pleasure, the expression and lineaments of his first love repeated, in each particular, in her sister, Blanche.

But even the pathos of love must yield to the pathos of conventional duty, and the Baronet found himself blandly inquiring after the health of the woman who had jilted and wrecked his happiness for ten years. Surely something must have been working a cure, for if not interest, at least it must have been indifference, that prompted the polite conversational formula.

I hope Mrs. Rutherford is well; he asked presently.

Blanche slightly raised her brows—perhaps she was scarcely aware she did so—as she answered, quite, I thank you.

Sir Astley noted the movement, and said, with his usual bluntness, I dare say the past is no secret to you; but within the last two hours I have learnt to forgive the insult your sister put upon me.

Blanche's cheek burnt. She raised her eyes to his, with a flash in them. I was a child at that time; but since I grew to womanhood, and could judge right from wrong, I have blushed for that one act in my sister's life.

Impulsively she gave him her hand, which he detained; but she did not add that the name of Sir Astley Chichester had ever been by her sadly and strangely revered; that many a tender, pitying thought had been given by the younger sister to the self-exiled, forsaken lover, until the ideal had been replaced by the real in her susceptible heart.

There hands were not unclasped when a sudden shrill whistle was heard, the train slackened its speed with that abrupt celerity which betokens immediate danger, and ere movement could be made or terror strike, swift as light that danger came.

There was a crash, and total darkness seemed to fall upon them—seemed for the lamp yet burnt in the carriage, and no outward sign was there of the terrible catastrophe which thrilled the public mind with horror in the next day's papers.

For some minutes was Sir Astley Chichester unconscious; when he opened his eyes, it was with an aching over the temple, and the blood, trickling from a slight scalp-wound. Blanche lay at his feet, perfectly white, cold and senseless—to all appearance, dead.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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