

AUGUST.

SONNET—BY HENRY PRINCE.

What stir is this on summer's broad highway?
Why ring the fields with peans loud and long?
That rise and fall like oceanic song
On rock-bound coasts when storms have died away?
Why thus in homage droop the warrior plumes
Of full-ear'd corn in vales that wave like seas?
Why blush lascivious on teemful trees
The luscious fruits beneath long glowing noons?
Why broods the air, imbathed with one vast sigh
Of incense sweet,—like an expectant host,
Who waits, in longing, for the guest lov'd most,
Nor bids the feast begin till he draws nigh?
The song is man's,—the homage nature's voice,
Tis AUGUST, Harvest King, that now bids both rejoice.

THE

GOLD OF CHICKAREE.

BY

SUSAN and ANNA WARNER.

AUTHORS OF

"WIDE, WIDE WORLD," and "DOLLARS AND CENTS," "WYCH HAZEL," etc.

CHAPTER XI.

Hazel glanced at the gray chair,—no, she could not disturb that. She begged a shawl of Gyda, and was off, out of the door without more ado. But not to find Primrose. It rather suited the young lady's mood to be by herself; and so, noiselessly, Hazel flitted along through the starlight, without however being able to reach a point which looked straight down into the Hollow beyond the bend. The uneven ground, the unknown distances, baffled her. Standing still, she heard nothing. The starry sky overhead was not more calmly quiet than this portion of the darksome earth appeared to be. A little frosty, the air did not stir enough to rustle the leaves on the trees. Crickets and some other fall insects had it all their own way. Wych Hazel went over to the ground on the other side of the road and tried that. Frosty, and still, and starlight, it was on the other side of the road; in the bright gloom even her point of view did not seem to be changed. Her next move was back to the cottage. There she stood still upon the steps. Presently the door opened behind her. "My little lady!" said Gyda.

"I am here, all safe."

"Won't you come in?"

"But I cannot hear anything!" said Hazel.

"I might go a little bit down the road—"

"No," said Gyda. "He wouldn't have you, nor forgive me if I let you. There'll be no great trouble, my lady; my lad's men will do what he bids them; and if there's trouble, he'll get it over."

"Do you think so?"—She drew a long breath, stepping down off the stone again and listening. The old woman's hand came softly to hers to draw her in, for the watch had already lasted long; but just then a faint reddish light arose in the dark sky above the Hollow.

"What's that?"

"It's fire, my lady."

"There!" Hazel exclaimed. "O don't stay here—you will get cold; but just leave me."

Gyda would not leave her, however, nor lose sight of her. Their words drew Prim to the door, who had earlier returned to the cottage. They all stood looking. There was a glow of light certainly; it brightened and spread for a while; yet it was rather like the glare from a good-sized bonfire than the token of any more serious conflagration. Nevertheless they watched it, the younger woman painfully; until they saw that the light was stationary, did not increase, then certainly was less, then evidently fading. "It's all getting over," said Gyda; "and it's no great thing at all. Come in before the master gets back. It's your wisest."

"I never was famed for being wise," said Hazel, her spirits taking a little spring as the fire went down. But she turned and went in, and stood before the peaceful fire on the hearth, looking into its red depths. Primrose sat down, but with a different face, sober and meditative in another way. Gyda went out to her kitchen. Perhaps Hazel was tired of standing, for she presently knelt down on the hearth stone, holding out her fingers to the blaze, covered with the red light from head to foot. She looked rather pale, through it all.

"Prim," she said suddenly, "did you ever stay all night up here?"

"No. Never."

"Then of course you do not know where we are to make believe sleep."

"I suppose it will be in that room where our things were laid. Mrs. Boerresen will tell us. Hazel, will you mind, if I say something I want to say?"

"I cannot tell whether I shall mind or not?"

"Shall I say it?"

"Yes, if you want to," said Hazel, devoting herself to the tongs and the fallen brands.

"It is only just this.—What are you going to do about dress?"

If ever anybody was astonished, it was perhaps Miss Kennedy just then.

"Dress!" she echoed, looking at Primrose and then down at the trim, invisible brown riding-habit, which, looped up and fastened out of the way, had been perforce retained through the evening. Very stylish, no doubt, as all her dresses were; though in this case the best style

happening to be simplicity, the brown habit with its deep white linen frills was almost severely plain. "Prim,—I have not the faintest idea what you mean!"

"I don't mean now, to-night, of course."

"Any time. What do you mean by 'do'?"

"Manage—"

She looked as if she were searching into the subject, with a doubtful mood upon her. She went on. "Do you suppose Dane would like you to dress as you have been accustomed to do?"

Wych Hazel rose to her feet. Whatever Mr. Rollo's own right to comment upon her or her dress might be, she was not in the least disposed to take the comments at second hand.

"I should think your recollection might tell you," she said, "that Mr. Rollo feels quite free to find fault with me whenever he sees occasion."

"But, Hazel," said Prim meekly,—"don't be angry.—Do you want to wait for that?"

Hazel gave a half laugh. "People always think I am angry," she said.—"I wonder if I am such a tempest?"

"You are not a tempest at all," said Prim still meekly; "not now, certainly; but I know you can feel things, and I don't want you to feel anything I say, except pleasantly. Indeed I don't, Hazel."

"I am glad you think I can feel things, but I suppose my comprehension is less lively. I do not even know what 'managing' about my dress would be. I never 'manage!'" said Hazel, with a fierce onset upon the brands.

"I know you haven't. But don't you think—perhaps—you will have to? Don't you think it will be best?"

"I don't know how, and I never do it, and I do not know what you mean," Miss Wych answered, sending a column of sparks up the chimney and shewing a few in her own eyes. Primrose eyed the sparks which flew up the chimney, with an unrecognizing face.

"You know, Hazel," she began again, "your dress is always so beautiful."

"Well? If my guardians ever find it out, they never object."

"But you know, Hazel! you know!" exclaimed Primrose in some distress. "How shall I speak to you? Your guardians would not meddle, I suppose, either of them; but don't you think, now, that Dane will want you to do a little as he does? Do you think he will like to dress expensively? and you know you do, Hazel. And he gave up his cigars, long ago."

If Prim could have known all the minute thorns she was sticking into her friend! Hazel was vexed enough to laugh, or to cry, or to do anything, almost.

"I am glad he has,"—she said, "but really I have nothing answering to cigars in all my list of expenses."

"O Hazel! don't you think so?"

"No. I suppose you like them better than I do."

"What, cigars?"

"Yes. I should think any man would be thankful to get rid of them. Mr. Falkirk never smokes."

"I don't like them. But men do. And Dane always smoked such delicious cigars—I used to catch the sweet scent of them often in summer time, when windows were open, and then I knew he was lingering about somewhere near; in the garden or in the meadow." Prim gave the least little unconscious sigh as she spoke. Hazel glanced at her, and her own face grew very thoughtful. The subject of dress was left quite in the distance.

"And he has given up all that," Prim went on; "and I thought, perhaps, you had not thought about it. All this about dress, I mean."

"No, I have not," said Hazel. "Especially as I do not know what 'all this' is. What to do with cigars seems clear; but my dresses hang in the dark. Never mind,—a girl with two guardians is not likely to go very far in any direction." And Hazel carefully set the tongs in place, and swept up the hearth; and then suddenly caught up her shawl again and wrapped it round her.

"What can have become of that fire?" she said. "It is an age since we came in. Let's go and see."

But opening the door revealed only the quiet, clear, starry sky and the still air. No glare of fire; no sound of voices; the crickets seemed to be going on comfortably and much as usual. The air was a trifle more chill, too; and after a few minutes of fruitless watching the two girls came indoors again; but they would not accept Gyda's proposition and go to bed. It was not very late they said; and once more the three women sat down round the fire to wait. After a time, however, Primrose gave it up and went off. Hazel sat still, pondering. Not in her great chair now, but down at the corner of the hearth; with a disturbed mind going over Prim's enigmas. Something about her was sure to displease,—that seemed to be as near as she could come to it; and a restless, uneasy sort of pain crept into her heart and over her face. But the minute returning steps were heard outside the door, Hazel darted away to where Prim was already asleep.

Could Prim have been set to talk to her? she thought as she looked. Nevertheless the question lifted its own head now and then,—that, and one other sorrowful thought which the evening had left; she was ready to join him in singing anything—except just what he loved best! And Hazel went to sleep with a sigh upon her lips.

CHAPTER XII.

COFFEE AND BUNS.

Wych Hazel sat watching her friend at her toilet. "Prim," she said, "will you be angry?"

"Me? Angry? No. About what?"

"Because," said Hazel, "your dress is not looped right. And I want to alter it."

Primrose laughed a little. "What's the use?" she said. "Next time it will be wrong again. I can't reach the mystery of your loopings. They are loopings, but your dress is never in a bunch anywhere—only falls into place in a lovely manner. I can't be like that, Hazel."

Hazel's busy fingers were making changes. "There!"—she said. "Now it is a great deal more 'beautiful.' Do you feel demoralized?"

"Hazel!" said Prim facing round,— "did you suppose I meant that? When Dane likes everything to be as beautiful, and as right, every way, as it can be? Look at his horses; and look at his own dress."

"Ask him to look at yours,"—Hazel said with a laugh, and pushing Prim gently before her into the next room.

Breakfast was well seasoned with talk, and the talkers lingered over their meal, until Dr. Arthur declared that if the rest could stay there all day, he could not; and so broke up the sitting.

"Miss Kennedy," he said as they left the table, "will you come to the door a moment, before you put on your hat, and let me see your eyes?"

"See my eyes!"—Hazel followed him doubtfully.

"Yes, I want to know how they look now they are open. How nearly do you feel like yourself again?" he said, in the midst of a somewhat close and earnest examination.

"I am perfectly well, thank you."

"Perfectly well."—For instance did you thoroughly enjoy riding on horseback yesterday?"

In spite of the evident good faith of the doctor's question, Wych Hazel's cheeks gave such instant swift answer, that he was fain to turn his eyes away.

"Not the October air," he went on gravely, "nor the coloured leaves, nor the sunshine; nor even the exhilaration; but the exercise. How is that, compared with a year ago?"

"I am not quite so strong for it, I think," Hazel answered unwillingly.

"Imperfectly well," said Dr. Arthur. "And for what you are most inclined when the ride is over?"—but again the tell-tale face warned him of dangerous ground.

"I have not been riding much,"—she said deprecatingly. "I am all out of practice."

"That goes for something. Always supposing that it always used to be so when you happened to be 'out of practice.'"

Hazel was silent.

"These guardians!" said Dr. Arthur with some emphasis. "I cannot imagine what Mr. Falkirk was thinking of, when he kept you away all summer, letting you wear yourself out!"

"He did not keep me. I kept myself," said Wych Hazel.

"Did you! Suppose Mr. Falkirk had kept himself here?"

Rollo came to the conference at this point. He knew the reason of his friend's care, for he questioned him with relation to his professional curiosity the evening before. But he had a clue to Wych Hazel's three days' sleep, which Dr. Arthur could not have.

"Dr. Maryland, I thought you had more sense!" said the girl impatiently. "The last time you saw me, you said the only thing was to let me have my own way."

"Depends a little upon what direction the 'way' takes," said Dr. Arthur. "You don't want another sleep, do you?"

"Thank you,—I have had one."

"Had one!" Dr. Arthur exclaimed. "Not like that?"

"Not precisely like that," said Hazel demurely. "I have had several different ones."

Dr. Arthur laughed, and gave up his research.

"I begin to comprehend Mr. Falkirk!" he said. "Dane, if you can brave this lady's displeasure, I wish you would see that she does not overtax herself for three months to come. Nor then, without my permission."

"But it is miles and miles from here to Chickaree!" said Miss Wych as she ran in.

The inconvenience of having two guardians is, that when you have got rid of one you have to face the other. And that other had to be faced at the dinner table to-day. It was well that the twelve miles' ride had not taken down Hazel's strength below the mischief point. Rollo, it must be remarked, had been obliged to gallop back again after very slight tarrying.

"Good evening, Miss Hazel," said her elder guardian as he met her in the dining room. "I think I have not seen you since this time yesterday."

"A little later than this, sir. It was after dinner when we parted."

"Quite so. Why did we not meet at breakfast? I was here. You were not."

"No, sir. That seems to have been the reason."

"Why were you not at home?"

"Well, sir, I was in charge of my other authority, and could not get home till he said the word."

Mr. Falkirk surveyed his ward.

"Miss Hazel, your notions are usually determined by your own will, and by nothing else,—in my experience."

"My dear sir, if you remember your experience so imperfectly, it cannot do you much good. Have I ever been allowed to go anywhere alone?"

"Why did not Rollo bring you home in proper time?"—very shortly.

"First there was a man in trouble, and then a mill," said Miss Wych, composedly pouring water from her carafe. "And so of course such small affairs as women had to wait."

"What was the matter?"

"The man met with an accident. The mill was set on fire. But both were cared for satisfactorily—you need not be uneasy, Mr. Falkirk. Two such energetics as Mr. Rollo and Dr. Arthur suffice for all the common events of life."

"And you—where were you?"

"Miss Maryland and I, sir, were summarily bestowed at Mrs. Boerresen's for safe keeping."

"Who is Mrs. Boerresen?"

"My dear Mr. Falkirk!—if you only would stir about a little you would learn so much!" said Wych Hazel. "Mrs. Boerresen is a quite remarkable person of foreign birth who lives near Morton Hollow."

"Rollo's old nurse!" said Mr. Falkirk.

Wych Hazel bowed her head with extreme sedateness and went on with her dinner. Mr. Falkirk made a gesture of extreme impatience.

"It seems to me, Miss Hazel, that your other guardian had time to see you safe home, before allowing himself to be claimed by his own affairs. If you had not discretion enough to come, he should have had enough to bring you."

"It needs valour as well as discretion to run away from one's guardians," said Miss Kennedy lifting her brows. "I should have been quite happy, sir, I am sure, to ride home alone."

"Why didn't he bring you?" growled the elder guardian. "Or why didn't you make him bring you?"

"Yes, sir. Did you ever try to make Mr. Rollo do anything?"

"Quite out of order!" grumbled Mr. Falkirk; "quite out of order! Miss Hazel, it may need valour and discretion both, as you seem to intimate, but I must beg that you will not have the like thing happen again. If you cannot get home in proper time, I prefer that you should not ride with him. I thought the fellow knew better!"

A glance, lightning-swift, from under the dark lashes fell upon Mr. Falkirk's unconscious face. The girl waited a little before she made reply.

"How am I to know beforehand, Mr. Falkirk? Mills are uncertain things. And men. You are really sure of nothing but women in this world."

"What do you mean about a mill burning?" came very deep out of Mr. Falkirk's throat.

"Some of the Charteris men set it on fire. The mill was not burned, because watch had been kept; and at the first sign of fire all hands went to work taking out cotton bales till the fire was reached. There was something of a bonfire outside."

"Hem. How much loss?"

"Not much. A thousand or two."

Mr. Falkirk went no further into the subject, or into any other, till the desert had been taken away and he was fingering the nuts. Mr. Falkirk took no desert. And in the midst of cracking a hard nut, effort availed to crack something else."

"Do we go to town this winter, Miss Hazel?"

"I have taken no thought whatever about the winter, sir."

"Do you intend to stay here?"

"I thought we agreed, sir, to let the winter question wait?"

"I made no such agreement, Miss Hazel. On the contrary, if we let the question wait, there will be no house to receive you when you make up your mind to go."

"Then we will wait."

"No, Miss Hazel, if you please I will have your decision. If it makes no difference to you, it makes some to me. Either here or New York—but you must say which."

"O, if you put me in a corner, Mr. Falkirk, I shall stay here," said Wych Hazel.

"I suppose so. And now, Miss Hazel, will you kindly go a little further and give me your reasons?"

"My dear Mr. Falkirk, you know we agreed long ago, that between you and me reasons should be left to take care of themselves. Do let the winter question rest!"

"I thought we agreed long ago that between you and me there should be confidence," said her guardian somewhat bitterly.

Now Mr. Falkirk was unreasonable, but it is not in the nature of men to know when they are unreasonable. So making a great and ill-adjusted effort with his nut-cracker, it slipped and did Mr. Falkirk's some harm, instead of the nut. Mr. Falkirk dipped his finger into cold water, wrapped it in his handkerchief, and went off, disgusted with the world generally.

"We never did!" thought Hazel to herself. "I plainly told him it could not be." But for all that she felt just a little bit troubled and hurt.

Four days of storms, during which Mr. Falkirk passed himself off for sugar and salt, and even Mr. Rollo was somewhat hindered of his pleasure, ended at last in a brilliant Saturday afternoon. But though Wych Hazel did send