

She said so a hundred times and wept abundantly. As for me, I saw that what must be would be, and deemed it wisest to cease opposition. And when, on the evening before he went he wrung my hand and whispered "do you think me right?" I thought of the poor French mother in a little poem I read once, who sobbed:

"I do not understand these things: I only know  
He spoke of Freedom, and I bade him go."

And I said, "Yes I do." He put his arms around my neck, and kissed me. It was dark and lonely after that, for there was only left of him his tears which had mingled with mine upon my cheek.

Ah me! Waiting and watching. Listening for the echoes of far-off strife; picturing horrors; looking for ghosts in the night! I saw "The Corsican Brothers" acted about this time—never, never again will I look upon the terrors of that play. Our dear one had joined the army before Richmond under Grant. What might not happen?

This is what did. We had heard from him now and then, in letters full of camp incidents, but without much to relieve our anxieties. Then came news of the ghastly "battles in the wilderness," and hope that we should ever see him more almost died out, for he wrote not a line nor, though we tried hard, could we gain information. All at once came a telegram—"On my way home, not much hurt, have wounded friend with me." I declare I have no recollection of what happened for hours after. I never realized the grotesque truth of poor Mrs. Nickleby's statement: "It came upon me like a flash of fire and almost froze my blood!" Let me pass all that.

He came; they came. It was the middle of June. Telegram after telegram had told us of how nearer and nearer they were to us, until at last a little thread of steam winding along in the distance told me that a time of trial was at hand, a time of endurance. They, I mean my father and mother and Phemie, had gone to the station. It was Phemie's business to meet him, not mine. I had excused myself from seeing the first of him. "You," said I to Phemie, "have the first claim," to which she answered with a light laugh, and "I wonder what his friend is like." Nevertheless I did stand upon the veranda of our house, and when a handkerchief waved from the window of a carriage slowly passing toward the little rustic gate of his home, I waved mine back, and trembled as any other fool might have done.

Presently my people came back, all three of them, full of news. Hugh's friend was a "splendid fellow," said father. "A perfect hero. Shot all to pieces! Only saved by a miracle! Sent away to recover! A Toronto boy. An old friend of Hugh's. His folks poor—at least not rich, and away in Europe. No place would suit Hugh for him, no care be of use to him, but Hugh's mother's house and Hugh's nursing. Hugh hurt? Yes, of course he was, a mere scratch. It was his general health that had suffered; some kind of low fever. Looked ill. Got a furlough for a month, and would be right as a trivet in no time"—that was father's talk, and as for Phemie!—She said but little, but sat down at the piano, and softly sang a verse from an old ditty:

"Wounded sore my ladie,  
As they bore him from the field."

Somehow I felt sure of what would happen, and it did. That evening Hugh himself came into our parlour, silently, unannounced, and was beside me before I was aware. The first I knew of it was hearing a voice say, almost in a whisper, "And what of you, also, Grace?" I could not speak, but gave him my hand coldly, and turned away, though an iron hand seemed clutching at my heart. "Is this our meeting?" I heard him mutter, and as he sat down he rather reeled than sank into the chair that mother placed for him. "It is nothing," he replied to her startled inquiry. "Perhaps I was rash to venture out so soon." But she looked at him with an expression new to me; and, laying her kind hand upon his brow, said gently, "Perhaps you did, but take courage. All will yet be well." "You think so? You know it?" he eagerly whispered. "Yes, my son; I am sure of it. I know." What did she know? Had I so worn "my heart upon my sleeve" that others could see what should die a secret with me? No. A thousand times, NO! But that night, poor mother looked more cheerful than usual as she kissed me good night, and that night, too, making some trivial excuse she crept to my bedside, and with a glance at Phemie, sweetly slumbering with a smile upon her face, said, very softly, "Yes, I am sure of it. I know." And so was gone.

She did not know. She did not know me or Hugh. Was I a thief, to steal what was not mine nor could be? Was he "a knight whose vows could faithless be? Never, never."

"A few short years of silent grief for me;  
They might have been long years of care for him—  
Keep down, and heart of mine; be quiet, lest  
I should forget perhaps 'twas for the best."

### III.

Shakespeare is called the poet of all time for a very sufficient reason—next to none, his are the utterances of the unspoken human heart. Very soon the circle of the united families was completed, and Charley Forbes was able, what Hugh never would, to tell of his experiences of "the big war" in which the two young men had borne their part. Mental physiologists tell us that there are packed away in the brains of

all of us, myriads of photographs of events in our past lives, and which come forward at the mysterious bidding of some power yet undiscovered. "None of a woman's business to talk or even think of matters, which belong to the repertoire of the psychologist alone," some male person may inform me. I deny it, and I choose to read and improve my mind as I think proper. And more than this, I assert my wish that women studied Shakespeare more than the little they do now. This, however, *en passant*. I am only led to jot it down by my recollection (reproduced photograph, if you will allow me, "male person" aforesaid) of a scene.

It was August, and the first cool breathings of Autumn were just beginning to stir the leaves of eventide. We were all sitting in the old veranda, with Charley in our midst, telling stories, true ones, we all hanging on his words, as picture after picture was drawn of old Virginia, torn by shot and steel. Now, said he, in a low voice at first, but which as he proceeded, rang "louder and louder, like a trumpet call," the last which I have kept is best of all.

"The simplest way to explain the affair to you," said he, "is to describe the scenery, and even that is difficult without the map. The main fact is that Grant's army in the course of its advance upon the Rapidan River, which formed one of the great manoeuvres toward Richmond, was confronted by the region known as the 'Wilderness,' and which extended for from a dozen to twenty miles within an irregular square, of which the Rapidan, Spotsylvania, Mine Run and Chancellorsville were the corners. All this region, except a couple of plank roads intersecting it, is covered by a dense growth of weeds, scrub and underbrush—so dense that no bird can wing its flight within its gloomy, deadly shades. Here were we on one edge, and on the other was Lee, watching for a chance to pounce upon the flanks of any force that might be creeping along the roads I speak of. It was a vital point and well the old Virginian hero knew it. Through that horrible trap one more step was gained by his dogged antagonists. In that trap his dogged antagonist should be caught and crushed. Both armies knew all this as well as their leaders, and in those leaders both had faith, and if they were going to inevitable death, so be it.

"I really cannot picture to you all that we felt. As for me, I was not exactly reckless, but there was I thought a tough time coming, and it had to be made the best of. Hugh I remember said—it was early in the morning on Thursday, the 5th of May, ladies!"

"Never mind what I said. Stick to the facts," roughly interrupted Hugh.

"Well, then, on the morning of the 5th of May we began to move. Soon we began to taste pepper. I don't know how far our—it was Warren's—brigade had got into the tangled darkness, and were wondering where on earth it led to, when crash! came a storm of twigs and leaves, and mud and smoke, driven by a roar, or rattle—I don't know what to call it, except that it was like the breaking loose of a little hell. In that horrible obscurity, that wilderness of tangled woods and clinging underbrush, through whose mazes the pioneer's axe and the lurking skirmisher could hardly penetrate, we had been ordered to force our way. Do you know, ladies, what is the meaning of a commanding general's order? It is that

Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die!

And so with us. We knew Grant. We knew that when he telegraphed that brief sentence, which has become one of his imperishable decorations—"I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all Summer," fate was in those words. We knew that there was something beyond the mere animal conflict of rage and bloodshed. We were not ourselves—we were, if I may so express myself, *apart* in respect to whose mission and duty our little personal affairs were nothing. I don't know ladies, but, somehow, I recognize in this the spirit that through many centuries has built up the stately edifice of our national glory fame and honour. I am, friends, of Scottish descent. Do I not to this day remember the story of that bonny Prince Charlie, who willful, heedless, forgetful of his friends though he was—

"Almost as bad as a Canadian politician," broke in father, at this.

"No, sir," said Hugh. "Politics in those old days meant, and was reality. Then, conscience, patriotism were overshadowed by the cord, the axe and the block. And, later, can you not perceive, in the stern self-sacrifice of a Napier, a Colin Campbell, a Havelock, that there was a nobler politics than is now that of the word canvasser, the caucus engineer. The 'contract' scheme, the newspaper proprietor who retails 'news' on 'commercial principles,' the Cabinet Minister who shakes hands with any crazy loafer who has a vote, the—"

"Hugh, my boy," began father, with a flush of irritation upon his usually genial countenance—

"Charley," said I, "never mind politics; 'go on with your story.'"

"Well, I will. It was a fierce grapple of armed hosts and bloody battles in many tangled woods. In that horrid thicket there lurked two hundred thousand men, and through it lurid fires played; and though no array of battle could be seen, there came the crackle and roll of musketry like the noisy boiling of some hell-chaldron that told the dread story of death."

• W. Swinton.

All through that fearful day it was loud and fire, stifled by sulphurous gunpowder, staggering with fatigue, craving for water, canteens exhausted, faint with hunger, while fast almost as clock-beats, came the dull thuds of comrades falling, like logs, headlong upon the trampled ground. So it was all day long. Looking back upon that scene, I think of it as a dream in the night. Was it I who, side by side with my old friend Hugh, went on with our fighting as if it were a mere task or labourer's work—so many shots to be fired, in a mechanical fashion, not knowing where or whom they struck? Nothing but a huge turmoil, of which we lost as it were the meaning and heeded not at all, so deadened to all sound were our stunned senses. Fighting with shadows! Fighting with an invisible foe among the woods!

"Suddenly what little consciousness I had left was gone, and all was a blank. What it was that struck me I did not realize. I only know that when I came to myself Hugh and I were alone, except for heaps of prostrate and writhing forms, or forms still and silent till the trumpets of God's archangels should sound the 'grand reveille of the dead.'"

We shuddered—even Phemie's cheek paled a little. Hugh only laughed a little, and said "leave all that out, old boy. It isn't interesting at all." "Is it not, my friend?" Charley answered. "Interesting? Well, I don't agree with you. There was I, flattened out. It is a positive fact that as my faculties awoke, and I found myself unable to stir a limb, night came, and only a few stars visible overhead through the shattered boughs, Hugh bending feebly over me, I thought for a moment that I was dead, and he and I had mysteriously passed into the 'silent land.' At all events I knew little after this, and it was days before I found myself in a hospital tent, just realizing that I had been in a battle and got hurt."

They told me afterwards that Hugh had been found toiling along, wounded though he was, dragging me with him, and that when they took his burthen from him he fell fainting, utterly prostrate. Yes. But for him this small person would have never—

"That's enough, Charley," again interposed Hugh; "You are grossly exaggerating, and, besides, there were lots of fellows in our regiment who did more than that; so, to speak vulgarly, dry up, and that quick: do you hear?"

"I hear. There's little more to be said. I got able to be moved, and he insisted upon bringing me here, and here I am."

By a spontaneous impulse we all shook hands with him and Hugh, while tears dimmed the eyes of every one of us.

And the days went on. Hugh's furlough was drawing to a close, and Charley, too, was "fit for duty" once more.

### IV.

Some one has compared a human life to the course of the seasons, and there are few, perhaps, who have not made the comparison for themselves. With us, the Autumn was passing away, and cold chills of doubt and something like distrust began to presage a time of wintry discontent. Why Hugh and Charley should be less friendly was difficult to understand, but so it was. The engagement of Phemie was perfectly well understood. Charley had even congratulated Hugh upon it, saying she was a delightful girl, he was a lucky fellow, and so forth. Charley went even further than this, and said he wished he were the "lucky fellow" in question. Hugh did not quite like this latter expression evidently. It was natural that he should not, especially as Charley spoke with an *emphasis* of hardly called for under the circumstances. An engagement is an engagement, and confers a mutual right of possession upon the parties so bound to each other. One or the other may not value "the property," so to speak, but trespassers must be warned off. Phemie belonged to Hugh, and whether there was now much love for her or not, there *could* be jealousy.

I do not think Phemie was to blame when this apparent coldness began to exist between the two friends. I have already hinted at her nature, and will not enlarge upon its characteristics. She was *incapable* of seeing what mischief was being wrought by her permitting a tone and manner of something more than friendship in Charley. They need not have seemed so confidential when talking together; and when he was earnestly gazing at her face she need not have put on so winning and tender a demeanour. She did not love Charley, and she *did* love Hugh. This I said to myself a hundred times, and I argued with myself as to how could it be otherwise? There was no comparison possible between the two men. One was a heart of gold, the other what people call a very nice, pleasant fellow, without bestowing much thought upon the meaning of the phrase. Surely Phemie could appreciate the difference. Why should I be secretly angry, if she perhaps did not?

There was not much time left, however, for these self-communings, this meddling in my own mind with what was no concern of mine. The day of departure drew near, at length was come. We had agreed that the leave-taking should be at our house, and that thus the hurried farewells at a bustling station should be avoided. The hack came to the door. Hugh folded his mother in a close embrace, and then turning to Phemie, kissed her gently on the forehead with a gently-spoken "Good-bye, darling." My turn came next and last. No kiss for me, but as he took me by the hand he whis-

pered, "It is to you, Grace, that I shall look for letters; will you write?" I could only just speak, as I said, "I will write; you may have faith in me."

And then they were gone. Was it a trick of imagination, or did I really see Charley press Phemie to his heart for a brief instant, no one but I looking their way, and while all was confusion? Was it I who felt glad at the sight? Was it Phemie who waved her handkerchief from our porch, and then danced into the house like a careless child?

Now came the hardest trial of all. I had, in the first place, promised to write—in what character was I to do so? To my sister's lover, calling myself "his sister that was to be?" That was, of course, the proper way. Then, how about Phemie's correspondence with her affianced husband? What would she say in her letters? Would she sustain the affectionate tone of an affianced wife? I must, I thought, hold her to her *duty*. It was *my* duty to hold her to it. I could not, would not, have her, for I loved her dearly, in spite of all—mind that—throw away a treasure that a true woman should prize beyond her very life. I neither would nor could have him able to reproach himself for failure of faith or honour. Why not confess it? In the old play, "Philaster," Bellario says:

"After you were gone,  
I grew acquainted with my heart, and searched  
What stirred it so. Alas! I found it love."

And so had I. But, all the more, he whom I loved should never be able to say he broke his promise. That stain upon his honour should never be my work. I did write many letters; and she wrote some, though not too willingly. Nor did she, in the one or two she showed me, use very loving words, such as one would suppose she ought. It might be fancy on my part, but those to her from him were not over fond either, while at the same time the expressions were tender enough. The words did not seem of genuine metal somehow. Father said his letters were "admirable." Mother only remarked, "Yes, they are very nice, but, Phemie, I wouldn't leave them all over the house for anybody to read, if I were you."

Phemie only laughed. "Nobody keeps letters now-a-days," she said.

"Nobody keeps letters!" I thought. "I keep mine, at all events." And while so thinking I formed a resolution.

How odd it seems, yet how common the fact, that when the hour for sleep has arrived, one has the most to talk about. We two girls almost always had a good long gossip in the solitude of our room before we lay down to rest. The habit had of late been rather seldom indulged in, for my sister either was, or feigned to be, frequently too tired for conversation. I meant, however, to speak seriously upon what was pressing heavily on my mind.

"Why did you laugh, Phemie dear, to-day, when we were speaking about keeping letters?" I began.

"I'm sure I don't know. It wasn't worth making a fuss over, anyway."

"Fuss? No. The word is inappropriate, and don't you think a little—well, cold?"

"How cold?"

"Under the circumstances I mean. Your engagement?"

"Yes, we are engaged, of course. And shall be married some day, I suppose."

"You hope, don't you, Phemie?"

"Now, Grace," and here Phemie's manner changed, and she shot a sharp, quick glance at me; "now, Grace, you are going to be inquisitive, and even scold me, perhaps. Get through it at once, was sister, while I do up your hair." Our eyes met in the looking-glass, before which I was sitting, and there was something of hard defiance in her's, though for an instant only. I felt irritated, and took up the challenge.

"Plainly, then, you know, I think you know—that I have some very decided views upon many subjects, and of those subjects the feelings entertained mutually by lovers is one. When I say lovers, I would imply that they are also engaged persons."

"Well," and the brush in her hand ceased to move.

"I say 'engaged,' as well as 'lovers.' There may be cases in which there is a distinction to be drawn."

"Again, well?"

"And if the two characters should not unite in the same person—"

"No," she burst forth with an angry tone that I had never heard from her before, "So I am one of the 'cases,' I suppose, and, of course, Hugh another! Because I am careless about letters, and don't go into raptures over them, or lay them away tied up with bright ribbons, or wear them next my heart, I am to be analyzed, condemned, told there are to be distinctions drawn! I utterly refuse to be so treated. How dare you, Grace; how dare you!"

"Nay, dearest, listen. I did not say so. Do you not know how anxious I am to see you happy, both of you? If I, older, graver, more of a naturally anxious, far looking temperament than you, express myself badly, forgive me. I mean no harm, but all the best that life can give for you. There should be confidence between us, Phemie, at least until one dearer than I shall claim your every thought."

We were silent for a little while, and I knew instinctively that she was wrestling with some feeling of rebellion in her inmost soul. But soon I heard her sob, and catching her to "my bosom," whispered, "Let me help you, darling." But, with what I know, also, was an effort, she