

"'Tis Ever Thus."

As the sun sank in the wild-wood, Buried in a blood-red sea, Fell an Indian chieftain forward, Gasp'd and died—from earth was free—

Then his spirit hastened onward, Never heeding shade or man, Hastened to the beckoning beacon— Hastened as no mortal can.

Awed, dismayed, the chieftain halted, Gazed with fear upon the scene; Saw behind him woe and torment, Saw before him fields serene.

Must he turn from bliss eternal? From his brightest dream awake? To the great hope of a life time, A farewell forever take?

Then with heart of resolution, Strides he to the threatening brink; Steps upon the quivering footway— He must conquer or must sink!

See! again he's creeping onward, Nearer, nearer to the shore; One step forward, firm and steady, And he's safe forevermore.

Thus the barque of young ambition Sinks beneath the surging wave; Sweetest buds have no fruition, Dearest day-dreams but a grave.

SELECT STORY.

Ernest Thornton's Enemy.

[CONCLUDED.]

HE mission was a sad one, and the journey seemed endless, for their anxiety increased as they neared the great city, and their thoughts about Ernest began to assume material shape.

Mr. Gilman confirmed the stories afloat about Ernest's dissipation, and their heavy hearts sank within them; but love urged them to seek him out and try to bring him home once more.

With Mr. Gilman's assistance they found his boarding-place. Up a flight of stairs they were ushered into a pleasant enough room, although carelessly kept and in disorder.

He was too much surprised to speak, and it nonplussed him to have his mother and betrothed suddenly step into his room and throw themselves into his arms.

Not a word was said concerning his changes in business or his dissipation, but they pleaded with him to go home with them; to abandon the city and his occupation, and try the influence of the country and the companionship of friends and home.

He could not resist their appeals, and the next day the three returned to the country. It was a sad return home. It was useless to try to cover up the repulsive truth from the eyes of the world, which gave the gossips and his enemies a chance to vent their spleen.

The disgrace fell heavily upon Rose also, and nothing but her love and the hope that she could yet rescue him could sustain her in this great trial. The thoughtless talking of neighbors, and the ominous, cold shaking of heads, made her lot all the more bitter.

But in spite of all this disgrace and discouragement, and the unfavorable

predictions of the would-be-wise neighbors, Ernest once more threw of this fatal habit under the strong influence of his home, of loving friends and healthy country life—for quiet country life does not demand the stimulants that the restless city does.

A few months after his return home he and Rose were married; but still he had not the home to take her to that he had hoped so confidently to earn in the city. And so they commenced life together in poverty.

Never to this day has Ernest Thornton again indulged the appetite that once came so near being his ruin; and those who know him now as a wealthy, honest, plain-going old farmer, whose word is as good as gold, and who is a model of a christian gentleman, would hardly believe this chapter of his early life.

Invited by Mistake;

OR,

MRS. ESTCOURT'S EVENING SOIREE.

CHELLENHAM is noted for the gaiety and variety of its entertainments: it must be a remarkable sort of party to cause much excitement at Cheltenham; nothing short, one would imagine, of such an affair as the Ingletoun Tournament could hope to effect it!

Mrs. Estcourt's brother, Mr. Amherst was wealthy and eccentric; he had been thrice married, but died a widower and childless; he had been singularly fortunate in the matrimonial lottery, his three wives having been positive, comparative, and superlative, in their various amabilities and excellencies.

He was consequently a most determined friend to matrimony, and had used every argument in his power to persuade his nephew, young Amherst, to enter into that desirable pale. The young man professed great readiness to comply with his desires, but was so long in making his choice, that the old gentleman departed from the world before it was decided.

You are aware, Mr. Tyrold, she said, how important it is that my nephew should shortly select a wife; I wish he would allow me to choose one for him, can you give me an idea of the sort of person he prefers? but why should I ask? I know the catalogue of impossibilities that a bachelor's bride must possess; she must be a kind of union of Corinne, Lucilla Stanley, Rose Bradwardine, and Flora Melvor, gifted with the prudence and self-possession of Miss Edgeworth's heroines, and finished off by the grace and fashion of those of Mrs. Gore!

Nay, said Tyrold, you do great injustice to bachelors in general, and to Amherst in particular; he is far from being unreasonable in his requisitions—he only covets exquisite and perfect beauty; like the knights-errant of old he would fain throw the gauntlet of defiance to the world in assertion of the charms of his lady-love.

I wish my nephew had more sense, said Mrs. Estcourt, (who had never been handsome herself) in rather a pettish tone. That is a very common wish, for uncles and aunts to entertain in behalf of their nephews and nieces, replied Tyrold; but I confess that the infatuation of Amherst has sometimes been too much even for my patience. Life seems to him a mere look of beauty; the most eloquent lips would fail to enchant him if they did not.

"For redness, make Rose's look pale beside them."

Nor would he be satisfied with eyes that beamed intellect and kindness, unless they were canopyed with arched eyebrows, and fringed with silken eyelashes.

But since my nephew is indifferent to mental acquirements, said Mrs. Estcourt, why does he find it so difficult to fix his choice? Surely beauties are not so very uncommon!

They are far too common, said Tyrold; Amherst has been smitten by a beautiful blonde in London; and going next week to Richmond has succumbed to a still more beautiful brunette. Ramsgate has enchanted him with an earthly Titania, and Bath dazzled him with a terrestrial Juno; I wish that, like the prince in the fairy-tale, he could have twenty or thirty portraits of beauties submitted to him at once, and make up his mind to choose the most lovely of the collection.

Would it not be better, asked Mrs. Estcourt, with sudden animation, if the realities could be presented to him in the same manner.

Certainly it would, answered Tyrold. Bacon says, very justly, that the best part of beauty is that which a picture cannot express.

Have you ever been in parties, inquired Mrs. Estcourt, where they have got up a beauty quadrille?

Yes, said Tyrold, and thought it very theatrical and very inexpedient; it caused a decided feeling of envy and jealousy among the guests.

Oh! said Mrs. Estcourt, one must not mind doing a little harm when a great deal of good is to come of it. Tyrold totally disagreed with the lady's logic and morality, but, impatient to hear what she had to propose, did not trouble himself to contravene her opinion.

I know many beautiful girls in Cheltenham, said Mrs. Estcourt; there are others in the neighborhood; I will give a party; the gentlemen shall be such as I would ask on any other occasion, but the ladies shall be all beautiful.

And what will you do, asked Tyrold, if the beauty should happen to be afflicted with two or three ordinary sisters.

I shall not invite them, said Mrs. Estcourt. With the exception of a few necessary clappersons, who will form an admirable background to the picture, my guests shall be all young and lovely. I shall immediately go and write the invitations.

Do so, said Tyrold; whether or not you succeed in providing a partner for life for your nephew, you will make your own name famous in Cheltenham forever. You will have proved yourself a perfect goddess of mischief, not only throwing one apple of discord among the fair ones of your acquaintance, but a whole basket full of them!

Tyrold immediately communicated this conversation to Amherst, and, although he affected to laugh at his aunt's folly, it was evident he was greatly delighted at the idea of the party in preparation for him. But how shall I describe the effect that Mrs. Estcourt's invitation cards produced in Cheltenham? The cool indifference of the professed beauty, who carelessly threw by her card of invitation, saying that of course there could never have been a doubt of her receiving one; the ill-disguised satisfaction of the doubtful belle, who was not quite certain whether she should come up to the requisite standard of appearance; the indignation of the merely pretty girls who received no card, although each had half-a-dozen flirts who had compared her to Helen, Hobe and Euphrosyne; and the triumph of the unmistakably plain, at finding that the passably handsome were as much excluded as themselves.

A singular circumstance attended this party—not one invitation was refused; several of the beauties had previous engagements, which they broke through to favor Mrs. Estcourt with their society. Some people were so uncharitable as to say that the report of young Amherst's search for a wife and the condition of his uncle's legacy, had a great deal to do with their line of conduct; the report had certainly become public, but of course the young ladies gave themselves no trouble about it, and the variety of exquisite new dresses, ordered during the next few days in Cheltenham, would have been ordered all the same had Mrs. Estcourt's beauty party never been thought of.

Did you say, asked Tyrold of Mrs. Estcourt, that you had mustered all the beauties within a few miles of Cheltenham? I have done so, she replied, and, in some instances where I have not known the families, I have prevailed on friends to give me an introduction. I have shown myself so open to all suggestions, and talked over the matter with so many of my acquaintance, that I am sure not one beauty really deserving the title has been omitted in my invitation-cards.

You are much mistaken, said Tyrold; the most beautiful girl I ever beheld lives within five miles of Cheltenham, and has not received a card from you. Mrs. Estcourt stood aghast; she had

thought her party the triumph and perfection of good taste and unwearied activity; she felt much as the Princess Badroulboudour might be supposed to have felt when she was told that the palace which she had thought so exquisite required a roc's egg to be hung up in the centre of the hall.

Do you know Mrs. Gerard, asked Tyrold, who lives four miles from Cheltenham?

I met with her several times a year ago, said Mrs. Estcourt, and have since had the opportunity of conferring a favor on her without putting myself to any inconvenience, by transferring to her, through a mutual friend, a present which I had just received of some rare flower-seeds, which I had no garden to sow in, and no inclination to sow if I had. I cannot, however, imagine that she can be of any use to me; she is a widow, and lives alone on a moderate income—visits no one, and hears nothing; her only passion is for flowers, and the friend who introduced her to me said that she always reminded her of the good woman in the temple of the fairies who dwelt in a house of roses.

All this is true, said Tyrold; but Mrs. Gerard has a brother in London with a family, and she has within the last six months taken to live with her eldest daughter. Mrs. Gerard visits a few friends in her immediate neighborhood, and at the house of one of them I yesterday met herself and her niece.

Miss Gerard is as lovely as a poet's dream: I never saw beauty at once so winning and so dazzling. I will not tell you that her intellect equals her appearance; to say the truth, she reminded me much of Indiana in Madame D'Arby's Camilla; but intellect, as I have told you, is not one of the qualities that my friend Amherst insists on in a wife. Miss Gerard is of a respectable family, perfectly ladylike in manner, and just the sort of person to captivate your nephew at first sight; you must lose no time in securing her.

Mrs. Estcourt paused irresolute; the other beauties invited to her festival she knew to be such by ocular demonstration or by the voice of popular acclamation; but Tyrold, like many other young men, might have been pleased by an easy deportment and showy person, and unguished the possessor of an enchantress. She gently insinuated her doubts.

Perhaps, she said, every one might not think Miss Gerard so handsome as you do.

You can judge for yourself, said Tyrold eagerly, by merely accompanying me to High Street.

Miss Gerard told me she had been sitting for her portrait to an artist, with whom I am acquainted. I called on him this morning, and prevailed on him to allow me to see the miniature; it is a speaking likeness.

Mrs. Estcourt, not without smiling at her romantic errand, accompanied Tyrold to the artist, and was favored with a sight of fair Portia's counterfeit, which was on the point of being despatched to the residence of her aunt. It was perfectly and unexceptionably lovely, and Mrs. Estcourt returned home in high spirits, to indulge her invitation-card to the fair original. Mrs. Estcourt had far too much tact to expect that the quiet, home-loving Mrs. Gerard would leave her garden-walks, her blooming flowers, and her warbling aviary, to pass several hours at a Cheltenham evening party if she had suspected it to be one got up for the purposes of vanity and display.

No; Mrs. Estcourt wrote to her in the kindest and most friendly manner; hoped the flower-seeds had answered her expectations, requested that she and her niece would pass the evening of Thursday next with her, and promised in that event to show her several rare specimens of dried plants, and a new work on botany, illustrated by splendid engravings. A favorable answer was soon forwarded from the house of roses. Mrs. Gerard, grateful for the past gifts of her correspondent, anxious to see the dried plants and the work on botany, and happy in the consciousness that it was the merry month of May, and that she had nothing to apprehend from dark nights and rheumatism, replied that she and her niece would be happy to accept Mrs. Estcourt's friendly invitation, and actually—good, easy, old lady!—prepared herself for a cup of coffee and a biscuit, and subsequent glass of sherry and macaroons, partaken of in company with five or six people as quiet, domestic, and garden-loving as herself!

When Amherst's faithful friend announced to him that a Queen of Beauty had been procured for the approaching festival, he had received the intelligence with even more satisfaction than could have been anticipated. Amherst, although, as I have shown, the infatuated slave of beauty, was not at all deficient in the right sense of what was amiable, kind and benevolent; he had recently, in one of his walks in the neighborhood of Cheltenham, met with a family in humble circumstances, to whom he had been the means of rendering much kind service in London; they had now become possessed of a little legacy, they had

purchased a cottage and some ground close to the residence of Mrs. Gerard. Of her they spoke with the utmost respect, and of her niece with something like rapture, describing her as a ministering angel, dealing to her inferiors not only pecuniary aid, but the kindest and truest sympathy. They did not mention her personal appearance, nor did Amherst ask any questions on the subject, having conjured up in his active and creative mind a vision of an erect figure, with a somewhat faded complexion, a green veil and parasol, and a deer-dowdy bonnet! He was delighted to find that the amiable unknown possessed the beauties of the person as well as those of the mind, and, as he began privately to be excessively nervous about his uncle's legacy, and to be apprehensive, that, after all, he should be obliged to link himself with a blooming termagant or graceful simpleton, he felt quite gratified in the idea that the beautiful and excellent niece of good M. s. Gerard might prove an eligible bride for him.

The evening of the party arrived—the beauties began to pour in, all looking as lovely as nature, their milliners and hair-dressers could make them; chaparrons wisely filed off to enjoy cards and annuals in adjoining room, and the hours had a clear stage and fair play. The whole thing, however, proved a failure; it was all light and no shade; the eye was fatigued with brightness, and longed to rest on some refreshing and quiet object; it gave to the beholder more the idea of a scene in a theatrical pageant, or a beautiful collection of wax-work, than of a meeting of the 'Women of England,' of future wives and mothers.

Neither were the beauties themselves at all in good humor; each had been accustomed to be the star of her own circle, and to look down with a tranquil sense of superiority on the cheeks lacking bloom, and eyes lacking brightness in her vicinity; now she enjoyed these triumphs no longer, all were beautiful—some, perhaps, more so than herself—and in several cases an admirer, who had hitherto been devoted to one alone seemed for the first time to find out that there were others as fair, or fairer.

Have any of my readers been smitten with the vain ambition of collecting a party of wits together at dinner? I they have, and have succeeded in the undertaking, I appeal to them whether the conversation was not far less brilliant and agreeable than when the party was judiciously compiled of wits and commonplace people. There can be no enjoyment where there is not ease; an nothing is so destructive to ease as the spirit of competition. A few of the beauties were engaged in discourse with their accustomed flirts, but the consciousness that the eyes of Amherst, I aunt, or his particular friend, were so to be upon their proceedings, imparted an unwonted constraint to their manner. Mrs. Estcourt proposed music; but beauties are not, usually speaking, a very accomplished race, and there were few "nouns substantive" among the ladies in question—they had all been accustomed to lean on some other person, one could sing duets with her cousin, and another could play on the harp if her sister accompanied her on the piano; but the cousin and sister were not beauties, and had therefore been pronounced uninvitable.

Mrs. Estcourt began to grow very impatient for the arrival of her Queen of Beauty, and made up her mind that Mrs. Gerard was a deal more worldly than she had supposed her to be, and was keeping back her beautiful niece till a late hour, to enhance the effect of her appearance. Such, however, was an uncharitable conjecture; the fact is, that Mrs. Gerard would have arrived the first of the party, had it not been for the sudden indisposition of the solitary steed attached to her small chariot, which rendered it necessary that another of his species should be procured from some distance.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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