

take his place as possessor of Atherstone Abbey, where the widow of his brother and her young son Humphrey alone remained. His heart was yearning for his home. The idea of announcing his marriage had become perfectly hateful to him, and it seemed quite unnecessary as far as his child was concerned, for it was apparently dying of the malaria of the country. Yet he was too good and noble to abandon the poor insane woman, who was lawfully his wife, and had I not been there I know not to what desperate deed he might have been driven. But now was my time to give him my life as I had vowed, though to my own utter misery. I went to him, and asked him to entrust his wife to me. I would remain with her in Mauritius, and tend her carefully as though she had been my sister, while he might return to Atherstone to take his rightful place, and enjoy a civilized life once more in his own old home. He could not resist the temptation of so great a release, and he accepted—letting me see plainly enough that if his poor wife's miserable life should come to the speedy close he anticipated, he would then return to claim me as his own. This is more than twenty years ago, and now—such is the irony of life—his Malay wife yet lives, a helpless idiot, while he has long been dead and I am dying. Maurice went, and he took his sinking child with him, because he could not bear that it should die in any other arms but his. He did not expect it to live many hours after he left the shore. One only condition I made, in a sort of vengeance on my weak heart, which I felt still clung to him too fondly, married though he was: I stipulated that there should be no sort of correspondence between us; he was never to write to me, nor would I write to him, unless it were to announce to him the death of his wife. I compelled him to accept this condition—and he did. We parted then for ever. I never heard from him; I never knew how he fared in this sad world till the day came, long years after when I saw the announcement of his death in the papers.

Una, now comes the revelation which I fear will be so terrible to Humphrey Atherstone, and, for his sake, to you. When I heard that he had succeeded to his uncle as sole and rightful heir, I concluded, of course, that Maurice's own son had died, as he had been expected, on the voyage home. Indeed, it never occurred to me that he could survive, judging from the suffering state in which he was when he embarked from the Mauritius with his father. But, as soon as I read your letter with the account which it contained of him whom you call "Edwards, the Malay" the whole truth flashed upon me only too clearly, and I saw unmistakably that he is in truth none other than Edward Atherstone, the legitimate inheritor of the Abbey and all the estates of his ancestors. The chain of events is perfectly plain to me. You saw that "Edwards" was brought as a child from the Mauritius by Maurice Atherstone. He took no child with him but his own son. I saw the vessel weigh anchor, while he stood on the deck with the boy in his arms, and the ship was to touch no shore till it reached England. Doubtless the sea breezes revived the child, so that he still lived when they reached home; but Maurice probably expected that he would not live to grow up, and therefore said nothing of his parentage, for I knew it was his purpose never, if his child died, to reveal the marriage, which he felt to be a disgrace to his family. Having once concealed the boy's relationship to him, it would become daily more difficult for him to own to it, and as months and years rolled on, and the child's strangely evil propensities revealed themselves in painful contrast with the noble qualities of his reputed heir and nephew Humphrey, to own him would become a task almost beyond the power of a man so proud as Maurice. The marriage of his son to a gipsy girl must have greatly increased his unwillingness to let the children of such a union represent in future years the noble race of Atherstone. Yet I believe he must have intended to do justice at the last, and that the suddenness of his death alone frustrated his purpose. Probably some half intimation of the truth, made in his last moments to his nephew Humphrey, rendered him to a certain extent doubtful of the estates, without his having sufficient knowledge of the rightful possessor to restore them, and this will account for all that has been mysterious in his conduct; while on the other hand it is

probable that Edward had gained from his father some idea of his claim, without any certainty, and and the effort to find documents explaining it was the cause of his continual lurking round the Abbey, of which you tell me, and which must have been done with the view of stealing into the house unseen. This, however, is certain—Edward Atherstone is the legitimate possessor of his father's house and lands, and I have been allowed to live long enough to do a last service to him who was the one love of my life, by restoring his son to his rightful home. I leave it to you, Una, to reveal the truth to Humphrey Atherstone. Your tenderness will soften the pain of the disclosure, for I can see but too clearly how deeply you love him. It will be bitter to him, no doubt, and to you, for his sake. Yet to me, in this awful hour, it seems worse than folly to give a thought to the perishable possessions of the mortal world, while still it is possible to gain an entrance to that abiding city whose Builder and Maker is God—Shall not I, who squandered all my life on an earthly love, knock at its doors in vain?

And now, Una, farewell, till we meet before the great white throne.

CATHERINE AMHERST.

To the very last word of this long letter Una Dysart read on, and when she came to the close where the signature had been traced, scarce legibly, by the stiffening fingers of the dying woman, she let it fall from her relaxed grasp, while her head sank upon her hands, and Humphrey's name passed from her lips in a low wailing cry.

(To be continued.)

## Children's Department.

### THOU AND I.

Strange, strange for thee and me

Sadly afar;

Thou safe, beyond, above,

I 'neath the star;

Thou where flowers deathless spring

I where they fade;

Thou in God's paradise,

I 'mid the shade.

Thou where each gale breathes balm,

I tempest-tossed;

Thou where true joy is found,

I where 'tis lost.

Thou counting ages thine,

I not the morrow;

Thou learning more of bliss,

I more of sorrow.

Thou in eternal peace,

I 'mid earth's strife;

Thou where care hath no name,

I where 'tis life.

Thou without need of hope,

I where 'tis vain;

Thou with wings drooping light,

I with time's chain.

Strange, strange for thee and me,

Loved, loving ever;

Thou by life's deathless fount,

I near death's river;

Thou winning wisdom's lore,

I strength to trust;

Thou 'mid the seraphim,

I in the dust.

### "A THORN AT THE RIGHT MOMENT."

"Carlo! Carlo! where are you?" "Here, mother, in the shed. Do you want me?"

"Yes, my boy. I have no more firewood, so you must go into the woods and get me some."

"All right, mother; but I say, mayn't Nellie and Susie go too?"

"Yes, certainly. I'm sure Nellie deserves a holiday, good girl that she is; and as for dear Susie, bless her, she is sunshine itself, and ought to be always out in it."

Carlo and his sisters were soon off.

Nellie carried a basket with some bread and cheese in it, lest they should be hungry before

they got home again. She walked along, singing cheerily and swinging her basket to and fro, whilst Carlo and little Susie ran races up the hill-side, Carlo's bare feet twinkling amongst the long grasses.

At last they reached the beautiful green forest, so cool and shady, and they all sat down upon a bank of moss, glad of the rest and their long walk.

"Oh, Nellie, give me some bread and cheese."

"What Carlo, hungry already? You have done no work yet. Hadn't you better wait? You will be more ready for it by and by."

"No, give it me now, there's a dear."

What sister can you refuse a brother anything reasonable when he asks in such a nice way as that?

Nellie began at once unpacking her basket. Susie patted Carlo's curly head with her little fat hand, said, "Greedy boy!" then darted away laughing, for she expected a tickling in return; but Carlo only pretended to jump up, he was so comfortable, and Susie came dancing back, and seating herself by Nellie claimed her share of the bread and cheese. For some time the children were silent—so quiet, in fact, that two little brown sparrows flew down on to the ground close by their feet, and began picking at the crumbs they had let fall. Susie was so delighted, she clasped her little hands together, and immediately off went the birdies, for they were timid, and did not know what a dear little girl she was.

Now Carlo, when he had finished his bread and cheese, lay stretched at full length, with both hands clasped beneath his curly head, lazily thinking; and, alas! Satan, who is always on the watch to spoil happiness and make us naughty, began whispering in his ear, and instead of allowing him to consider himself the happy, contented boy he really was, tried to make him discontented and ungrateful; and Carlo, instead of jumping up and shaking him off, listened, till his good angel sorrowfully spread its wings and flew away; and when Nellie said, "Now, Carlo dear, it is time you began to look for the wood," he said,—

"Oh, bother! I'm not going to move yet."

"Carlo dear!" "You need not 'Carlo' me. Why don't you get up and look for the sticks yourself? you never do anything but sew. I have all the hard work."

Poor Nellie! The tears came into her eyes at this unkind speech, but without a word she got up and began searching for firewood, hoping thereby to shame her brother and make him jump up to help. But no, he only began to whistle and kick his legs.

The two little sparrows were disgusted with him, and made such an angry chirping that Carlo first put his fingers in his ears, and then took up a stone to fling at the poor little brown birdies. Fortunately he could not throw very well lying on his back, so he did not hit them.

Susie had gone, after one sorrowful look at her naughty brother, to help Nellie, and before very long they had a nice large bundle, which Nellie bound together with some green twigs she took from a hedge.

"Now, Carlo dear, will you carry this for me?" she asked in a cheerful voice, coming back to the place where Carlo was still lying on the moss.

"Carry it yourself," was the rude answer.

Satan needs very little encouragement. Carlo had listened to him first of all, so he had no difficulty in making him listen still, and poor Nellie found her brother in a worse temper than when she left him.

Sadly she took up the heavy bundle and set off home with it, Susie by her side carrying the basket which had held the bread and cheese.

They looked back when they had gone about a hundred yards, and saw that Carlo was slowly following, his hands in his pockets, and his grey felt hat stuck jauntily on the top of his curly locks.

"I wish he would speak to us," said little Susie, with a quiver in her voice; "he is generally so kind, and does such funny things to make me laugh."

"Never mind, dear, he will be himself again soon, we won't provoke him by saying anything. I dare say he will soon catch us up and take the bundle out of my arms."

But Carlo did not "come round," and the two little girls walked sadly along till they came with-