

AFTERWARDS.

Where shall we two be, Sweet,
After an hundred years?
Our lips shall have ceased to meet,
Our hearts shall no longer beat,
Our eyes shall have shed their tears.

Well, if it be so, Sweet,
Why do we weep and wail?
A lifetime is all too fleet
For prayers that in vain entreat,—
Or cheeks that are tear-washed pale.

Ah! it is bitter, Sweet,
No one will say thee nay:
Glance from your love-lifted seat
Down to the soul at your feet,
Has it a happier day?

But let us brave it, Sweet,
Brave it as best we can;
In struggle against defeat,
Till all things are made complete,
We stand pure woman and man.

B. D.

MY ADOPTED CHILD.

"Is that Oldtown Church, yonder, if you please, sir?"

A girl spoke to me. I turned and looked at her. There are women of sixteen. This was a child. She wore the scantiest of cotton dresses, belted at the waist, a pair of leather boots and a white apron. In her hand she carried a sun-bonnet, and her hair cropped close like a boy's, curled in black rings about her head. The face was a baby's face in sweetness and innocence, the little brown hands the hands of toil. No young lady this, yet there was nothing coarse and vulgar about her unless it was her hands.

"That is Oldtown Church, my dear," I said; "are you going there?"

"Yes sir, to see the wedding. Are you?"

I was, more fool I, though I did not say so to this child. The bride for whom the bells were ringing was to be mine once—would have been but for the accident which had crippled me and changed her heart. She had done nothing treacherously, but I saw the truth and set her free. She took her freedom gladly and we were two. She had quite forgotten me, no doubt. I believed that I never could forget her.

I knew exactly how she would look in snowy silk and lace and coronet of pearls. I had dreamed of her in bridal robes so often.

I nodded to the little thing beside me, trudging over the meadow path with the tall grass almost to her waist, and looking at me so wistfully.

"I never saw a wedding," she said.

"No?"

"No, sir. Grandfather said I might come. He didn't care himself. It's a long walk too, from the tavern, and he's very old."

"Does your grandfather keep the tavern?" I asked.

"No, sir—I wish he did!" said the child. "He has only his fiddle, and people half the time don't care for tunes. What can he do, though? To-night there's a dance, and he's to play for them. That's why we stopped."

A poor fiddler's untaught grandchild—as poor as decent poverty could be—yet her presence somehow cheered me. Half-child, half-woman, and all a child at heart. Innocent, beautiful and kindly, I encouraged her to linger at my side. I said to her:

"I will show you a place where you can see the bride well. It is in the gallery. Will you like that?"

"I don't know," she said. "I haven't often been to church. We pray together in lonely places, grandfather and I. Will you be there, sir?"

"Yes."

"I know I should like it."

"Come with me then," I said, and she followed.

I had meant to hide myself in the gallery, and see my lost love married quite unseen. This companion had not been in my roll at all. But I liked it. No friend, no relation, not my own sister would I have had beside me; but this elfish thing was too innocent to fear. I led the way up the dark old stair, and toward a spot quite sheltered from general view. Then I sat down and she stood leaning over the balustrade.

The church was full of bonnets. Here and there only a masculine head. The minister was in his seat reading, in a position taken for effect. He was a handsome man, and knew it perfectly well.

Girls whispered and giggled, matrons fanned themselves and men yawned. Soon the soft roll of carriages on the gravel path was heard, and the bridal party entered. I saw her at last, Aletta.

"Is that the bride?" half sobbed the girl's voice at my side. "Is it a real lady? Oh, how pretty, how beautiful! Look! Look!"

She touched me with her little brown hand and looked at me, her eyes sparkling.

"Did you ever see her before?" she asked.

"Is she like that in everyday clothes? Oh how pretty, how pretty!"

Men have no right to weep. I put my head down upon the cushion of the pew and hid my eyes. I felt the child creep down beside me.

"Poor man, he's tired!" I heard her whisper, and she put her little hand out and patted me softly by stealth.

"Is it all over?" asked the girl.

"Yes, child," I said, "all over."

"Then I must go," she said. "Thank you for being so kind to me, sir. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," I said, and her little leather shoes patted over the aisle and down the stairs,

and I had seen, as I thought, the last of her. When she was gone I missed her strangely.

I went home when the church was quite empty. It had not been as hard to bear as I had feared, and oddly enough I found myself thinking of that child's little gypsy head and those beautiful long fringed eyes. I wondered at myself, but it was so.

"I should like to see the child again," I said; and as I spoke I spied a crowd about a tavern door upon the road.

"What has happened, friend?" I asked of a tinker near by.

"Only a blind fiddler dropped dead," he said. "But there's a gal there wild about it."

And then I passed him and went in. An old man lay upon the floor, and across his body a girl lay flung herself. I knew the gypsy hair and the brown neck, the scant cotton dress, and the sun-bonnet, hung with a handful of wild flowers upon the floor: and I bent over her touching her little despairing head.

"My child," I said, "he is happier than we are."

And she looked up.

"He was all I had," she said; "all, all!"

So I had thought when Aletta gave me back our betrothal ring. My heart ached for her. I said no other word, but led her to another room, while two men bore the dead man upstairs. She wept wildly, but my presence seemed to comfort her.

After awhile she drew closer to me, and sitting on a stool, leaned her forehead on my knee. Soon my hand rested on it, and in an hour she had sobbed herself to sleep.

I said a few words to the landlady when I arose to leave, and she promised to attend to my orders, enforced by the contents of my pocket-book.

"The girl shan't go until I hear from you, sir," she said. "Indeed I don't know where she would go. She seems friendless; and such a child for her age! Thank you, sir."

And I went on my way again, thinking not of Aletta, but of the dead fiddler's grandchild—the sun-browned waif, so simple and ignorant and friendless and alone.

I was young yet—not five and twenty—a bachelor, and likely to be one my life long. I had no proper home to take her to, and no friend to aid me. At last, in my extremity, I thought of Betty,—old Betty, who had once been my nurse, and who loved me as she might her own son—and in the gloaming I made my way to her poor home. I found her trimming her vines in the bit of garden ground, and had my usual kiss across the garden fence even before the gate was opened.

"I've been thinking of you," she said. "I knew it was you as soon as I heard some one coming. 'Tisn't every young gentleman would weary himself coming to see an old lady like me. Sit down, honey, and rest."

"I came to ask a favor, Betty."

"Just name it, Master Bertie."

"Will you take a boarder, Bertie?"

"Bless me! in my two rooms?"

"Only a child, Betty."

"A child, Master Albert?"

I told her of the fiddler's death, and of the girl.

"I have money enough," I said, "but no female relative. I can only come to you."

"You always were kind hearted from a boy," she said. "I'll take the little girl, Master Bertie."

Then she put both hands on my shoulders.

"You haven't fretted, have you?" she asked.

"Fretted? Why?" I asked.

"Nay, why indeed?" said old Betty. "Better fish in the sea than ever were caught yet."

Then in a moment more she added, "I've been to see the wedding."

I felt my face flush.

"Shall I bring the girl to-morrow after her grandfather's funeral?" I asked.

"When you please," said Betty. "But, Master Albert, what do you mean to do with her? You are doing all this in a hurry. Just think a bit."

"I am going to adopt the child," I said. "It will make me happy to have a young thing to care for."

Betty laughed.

"You'll have young things of your own, please God, some day, she said. "Why at your age, life is before you."

"I shall never marry, Betty," I said.

She caught my fingers in a close grasp with her horny, hard-working hand.

"I wish you was back again a baby on my knee, Master Bertie," she said. "I'd like to sing you to sleep as I did then. Ah! it's a grief to us old women to see the young we've nursed grow up so tall and old, with their troubles so shut up in their own hearts that we can't comfort them. Going? Well, then good night! I'm ready for anything that will cheer you, Master Bertie. I ought to say Master Albert always, now, I suppose, but the old times do come back so!"

I left her leaning over her gate looking wistfully at me, knowing as a mother might have known the grief which I had buried in my heart. And if her words had given me pain, it was like some ointment which makes the wound smart in its very healing. It was something to be loved so well, even by the old nurse.

Late the next day I led my young charge from her grandfather's grave to Betty's cottage. She kept my hand upon the road as a little child might. I had no thought but that she was one, until old Betty's cry of "Goodness, Master Bertie, I thought you said a young child! Why,

this is a grown girl!" startled me into consciousness.

"It doesn't matter, does it, Betty?" I asked. She turned to the girl.

"Take off your bonnet," she said, a little grimly. "I want to look at you. What is your name?"

She obeyed. "I'm only Nellie Hay," she said, and stood to be looked at. Betty looked sternly at first, then pityingly.

"La, no! Master Bertie, it don't matter," she said. "I don't see any harm in her. There's a peg behind the door, child. You can hang your bonnet on that." And I left the two together.

Not long, though; every day found some new errand to take me to the cottage. I put on elderly airs, and gave advice. I had sent her to school, and went through grave examinations on Saturday afternoons. I told Betty that when I was a man of middle age I should take my little daughter home, and she should keep house for us. And I began to fancy, very soon, that there could be no such happiness as that a parent felt.

The girl was growing tall, and I was only ten years older than she was; but when she checked her light tread to keep pace with me, when the childish laugh bubbled and rippled at something which could only make me smile, I felt that years are not the only things which age us.

I was working hard at my profession, too. I had hand and heart full. In a year I found that I could pass Aletta on her husband's arm without a pang. In a year more I wondered whether she had really changed, or whether I fancied black curls more than I did golden bands, for I found myself thinking my little daughter much the prettiest.

In the sultry summer evenings I used to leave red tape and parchment and go out to Betty's cottage to have tea with my adopted child. Then, while she polished up the cups, Nellie Hay and I used to walk down to the river side. Tall as she was growing, I had a way of holding her hand still: and we had such pleasant talks, such odd unworldly chatter! These walks and simple tea drinkings rested the brain, wearied with law business, quarrel and quibbles and stratagems, more than I can tell.

The rough hands had grown softer now, the waist taper, the bust full. The sweep of woman's robes, the tread of woman's light-shod feet, had taken the place of clumping leather boots and scant cotton skirts.

I knew this, but Nellie was a child to me all the same. Was I not by adoption her father? Had not my early grief and the staff on which I leaned aged me before my time? Of course she always would be young to me; and why I felt so angry if by chance some gay young farmer chatted with her over the fence, or some neighbor saw her home from church, I could not tell.

"An old man's temper, I suppose," I said, and sighed like a young one.

So three years passed. At the end of that time Aletta's husband died. They had quarreled, and she had made him wofully jealous, it is said, and all his property save a mere pittance was willed to stranger.

One day a lady in black walked into my office; when she lifted her veil I saw Aletta Stanton's face, closer to me than it had been since we parted. My heart gave no wild throb. I felt as though she were a mere stranger.

Courteously and quite calmly I heard her business. She intended to contest the will and needed advice. I gave her what I could. I referred her to a brother lawyer as the one who would best espouse her cause. As for myself I told her truly that my time was too much occupied to undertake anything more, and I wished her success.

She looked at me wistfully, with her great blue eyes full of tears as she rose to go.

"It was cruel of him," she said, "cruel to leave me so poor, but he was never kind, never—not in the honey-moon even."

"I regret to hear it," I said.

"I could expect nothing more," she said.

"I did not love him—I never loved but one—and that one—"

She paused and looked at me.

"That one I love still," she said.

And Heaven knows no feeling of revenge or petty triumph was in my heart when I looked in Aletta Stanton's eyes if I did not understand her, and courteously bowed her out.

"Did I ever care for that woman?" I thought, "or is it all a dream?"

I took my adopted child to the theatre that night and we saw the Lady of Lyons together. It was her first play-going experience, and she enjoyed it immensely. She wore a white dress and bonnet and the coral drops I had fastened a few days before in her pretty little ears. I could not help looking into her eyes and touching her hand with mine. When I left her I kissed her.

"Good-night, my child," I said.

And she answered "good-night," with a cheek dyed on the instant deeper scarlet, and ran away as Betty came out to chat with me.

From that night I dated an odd change. My adopted child seemed shy of letting me keep her hand—shy even of chatting as she did. She was graver, more womanly. I fancied she did not care for me as she did. Perhaps some of those young fellows who so often escorted her home from church, had won her from me. I grew a little moody. I found myself in brown studies when I should have been at work. At last I determined to discover whether I was really to lose my child, and went down to the cottage. I found her there sitting at work with Betty.

After all, it was no easy task. I could not do as I had hoped. I tried jesting, and spoke

of one and the other young fellows near. "We shall have Nellie stolen from us, I suppose," I said. "There is nothing so easy lost from a family as a pretty daughter. But who is to have you, Nellie?"

She looked at me as children look before they burst into tears—her chin quivering, her throat swelling—then she dropped her work, and stole from the room without answering me.

"What ails the child, Betty?" I asked; "have I offended her?"

Old Betty stood before me sturdy and stern—a look in her face that I had never yet seen there.

"Master Albert," she said, "whatever she was when she came here, Nellie is no child now. Oh, Master Albert, I can't believe you've done it on purpose. You couldn't—such a sweet innocent thing—but it's done. All I can say is, go away, or let her go, and maybe the wound would heal. I ought to have spoken in time. I was an old fool. Oh, how could you, Master Albert? How could you?"

"What have I done?" I cried. "I would die rather than harm her."

"And yet you have made her love you," said Betty, sternly. "You who knew you would never love her. You've been very selfish, Master Albert."

A new light dawned upon me, a radiance brilliant beyond my hopes.

"Betty," said I, "you are dreaming. She must think me old enough to be a grandfather, with my long face and bald crown, and this crutch. I've had one dream broken; don't set me dreaming again for heaven's sake."

Old Betty looked at me, then caught my face in both her hands and kissed me.

"Master Bertie," said she, "I shan't tell you a word more; go and find out what you want to know for yourself. You silly, handsome, good-for-nothing fellow!"

I found my child under the grape vine: her face was wet with tears. I sat down by her, and put my arm about her waist.

"Nellie," said I, "don't shrink from me. I am your true friend whatever answer you may give me now. I am older than you. I am not vain enough to think myself a young girl's beau-ideal. But I do love you dearly, Nellie. Can you love me enough to be my wife? If you cannot, if another claims your heart, do not say yes from gratitude. Tell me the truth, and still retain a father's, a brother's affection, Nellie."

I bent over her, and my life seemed in her keeping. Until that moment I had not known myself I loved her madly—I felt it now—better, far better than in my youth I had loved Aletta Stanton.

"Nellie!" I said; "Nellie!" and a brown hand was laid of its own accord in mine, and beneath my gaze the dark eyes did not dare to lift themselves, but hid their sweetness on my breast. Nellie was mine.

I sat with her beating heart so near my own, and thought it all over. I remembered the child in her cotton gown standing in the gallery of the church on the wedding day. I remembered the child whom I had taught; the girl with whom I had passed so many happy hours. I felt that this living life, sprung, phoenix-like, from the ashes of the dead, was the purest feeling of my life.

So my old fancy of keeping house with my child came true at last; only when she crossed the threshold of my home with me I called her wife. And the touch of her brown hand brings comfort with it; still her sweet voice is better to me than all the music in the world; and, as in my youth I fancied myself old, surely in my age I shall believe myself young, for while we are loving and being loved youth can never die, and while we live I and my Nellie must love each other.

THE Emperor William does not submit to be overcharged by his tradespeople. During his stay at Teplitz, a carrier was employed to convey to the railway a large quantity of luggage belonging to the Imperial household, but on presenting his bill, the steward of the palace thought the charges too high, and refused to pay unless a reduction was made. The carrier declined to make any, and has summoned the Emperor before the Tribunal of Teplitz.

OUR CHESS COLUMN.

Solutions to Problems sent in by Correspondent will be duly acknowledged.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. S., Montreal.—Letters, &c., received. Many thanks.

Student, Montreal.—Correct solution of Problem No. 194 received.

A. G., Renfrew, Ont.—Correct solution of Problem No. 192 and 193 received.

B. R. F., St. Louis, Mo.—Postal received. Many thanks. Shall be most happy to carry out your proposal.

H. B., Montreal.—It is not yet terminated.

The following extracts, the one from *Turf, Field and Farm*, and the other from *Land and Water*, will show that Chess on this side of the Atlantic is obtaining a considerable amount of public attention, and at the same time it is pleasing to remark with reference to Canada, that she can claim a fair share of credit in the matter. So far it is well for the past. But what about the future? Is our Canadian Chess Association, of which our American contemporary speaks so highly, still to maintain its efficiency? Have any measures been taken to secure a full representation of Canadian players at the next Congress? Where, in the wide Dominion, is the next Congress to be held? These are important questions which we should like to be able to answer to any anxious inquirers.