

MY VIS-A-VIS.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

From my airy casement high,
Far above the passers-by,
I can see,
Just across the thoroughfare,
Such a charming, debonaire
Vis-à-vis.

I know not the maiden's name,
Yet my lips will often frame
Names as sweet,
As the little mating birds
Nigh articulate in words,
And repeat.

Is it Ethel? is it Rose?
Is it Isabel?—who knows?
Would I knew!
Ah! she looks demure and wise
With her long-lashed, downcast eyes,
They are blue!

But she pays not slightest heed
While I watch her sit and read
By the hour;
Little dreams she that I'm near,
And still less that I dare peer
Into her bower.

Would I might contrive to look
Into that absorbing book,
Pretty maid!
Is it Byron? is it Scott?
Is it—? I know it's not—
Witty Pread?

'Tis a tale of love, perchance,
Or some thrilling old romance
Of the days
When the gallant knight and lord
Won at joust, with lance and sword,
Ladies' praise.

Had we lived in that far time,
When gay troubadours in rhyme
Sang of love,
Then I might have been her knight,
And into the tourney-fight
Worn her glove.

But to-day I only know
She is very fair, and so
This is said—
Ever may good luck attend;
I will be her unknown friend—
Till she's wed!

—N. Y. Home Journal.

FORGET-ME-NOT.

AN IDYL OF ENGLISH RURAL LIFE.

III.

It happened a few days after this that Prue was sitting one afternoon with her cousins and Mr. Davenant in the drawing-room. It had been raining all the morning, but a fresh wind had risen and blown the great purple masses of cloud away toward the east, leaving the blue sky and the sunshine, which made the wet grass sparkle like diamonds. They were just contemplating a drive, when the door opened to admit a visitor. Mr. Morton was announced. It was Harry. Hat in hand he steered his way among the couches, chairs, and tables to where Prue was sitting. She rose, but did not come forward to welcome him; she seemed half-stunned with surprise.

"I expect you are astonished to see me, Prue," he said, as he shook her hand.

"Very," murmured Prue. "I thought you were gone."

"I have come to say good-bye to you. I go to-morrow."

"Won't Mr. Morton sit down?" said Clara, rising and coming forward.

"As you haven't introduced me, Prue, I must introduce myself."

Prue, with scarlet cheeks and a very shamefaced manner, introduced him to Mr. Davenant and her cousins. Eleanor gave a very cool bow. It was one of Prue's vulgar home-friends, she supposed. Rather cool to bring him to Walstead; but this was only a proof that she had been taken too much notice of, and was quite spoiled.

"Is my grandmother well?" It was the first question that Prue addressed to Harry, though Clara had been discussing weather and crops with him in the most amiable manner, having got a notion into her head that he was connected with agriculture.

"Quite well," he answered. "She sent her love to you. She wants you back, I think, Prue, and so does everybody at Hawden."

Prue did not look at him, but sat playing with the tassels of the cushion against which she leaned. Her embarrassment was apparent to all; and Mr. Davenant had not much difficulty in connecting Harry Morton with the friend who was going away, and who had sent the dead forget-me-nots, which he thought were still lying under the bushes in the garden, but which, had he known it, were safely locked up in an old work-box up stairs, together with a photograph and a few other things. The knowledge of this little episode made Harry more interesting in Mr. Davenant's eyes. "A nice young fellow," he thought to himself; "in love with Prue, and she with him, or else I am very much mistaken." But, notwithstanding Clara's chatiness, it was a very embarrassing visit. Prue scarcely spoke, or even raised her eyes, and Harry, noting her silence, became suddenly shy and preoccupied. At last he rose.

"Prue," he said, "I must be off now. Will you walk a short way with me to the station? I have some messages for you from your grandmother."

"It's so very wet," Prue murmured, glancing out of the window.

"Oh, nonsense, child," said Clara good-humoredly. Her sharp eyes had noticed the disappointment and wistfulness in Harry's face. "Go and put your hat on, and show Mr. Morton the short cut through the plantation—it's such a long way all round by the road."

So Prue could do nothing else but obey.

"It isn't raining now," said Harry, as they went down the broad steps of the portico, and came out upon the terrace. "Thank you so much for coming, Prue. I was awfully savage when I saw the room so full of people that we could not get in a word. I have so much to say to you."

He waited, perhaps in the hope that the girl would make some remark; but, as she was silent, he continued:

"It wasn't enough writing to you, though I suppose you got my letter, and—and I was determined to come and see you myself."

Still no answer. Prue was too deeply engaged in knocking the rain-drops from the tall blades of grass with her umbrella to speak.

"Your grandmother didn't know I was coming. I say, Prue," he burst out, "you are glad to see me, ain't you?"

"Of course I am, Harry," Prue said constrainedly, with a stiff little laugh, "and I hope you'll have a pleasant voyage."

"I shall be away for more than two years," he said. "When I come back you'll have quite forgotten me. I think you have pretty nearly done so already the two months you've been away."

"I haven't, indeed," cried Prue, with some compunction at her heart for her coldness to him; "only I was so taken by surprise. I didn't expect you, you know."

"But it did not seem a pleasant surprise all the same," said Harry rather bitterly. "I say, Prue, who is that man there? I never saw such a conceited fellow in all my life. He listens to everything one says with a sort of jeering smile. Does he live there?"

"No," answered Prue, loftily; "he's a visitor, and a most agreeable, gentlemanly man. Please don't abuse him, Harry, as I like him. I dare say you won't be able to appreciate him. One doesn't meet people of that sort at Hawden."

"No, I'm thankful to say we don't," cried Harry—and then stopped; he would not vex Prue by abusing him. Perhaps this man was the cause of her changed behavior to him—but no, it couldn't be. Prue would never think about such a person as that.

It was a very silent and uncomfortable walk all through the plantation, where tall ferns and flowers grew in the shade of the great oaks and elm trees. At last they came to the stile which led into the high-road, where Prue must wish him good-bye. She held out her hand, and her voice rather trembled as she said:

"Good-bye, Harry. I hope you'll have a pleasant voyage, and come back safe."

"Shall you really care whether I come home or not?" he said eagerly.

"Of course I shall," Prue said. "It will make your mother so anxious."

"But for no other reason?" he pursued.

"I don't know. How you keep on questioning! I can't say more than that I shall be very glad to see you back all safe and well."

"And that's all, Prue?"

"Yes, that's all. What more would you have?"

"I would have you as you used to be," cried Harry. "It hasn't taken you long, Prue, to forget me. But think of me sometimes when I'm away."

He took her hand in his firm grasp, and said good-bye. If Prue had looked at him she would have repented of her coldness, for there was an expression on his face that it did not often wear.

"Good-bye," he said again, gave her hand another shake, vaulted over the stile, and disappeared round the turning of the road without another backward glance. Prue remained standing where he left her for some moments; perhaps she half thought he would come back for another good-bye—but he didn't, and she turned homeward with a rather heavy heart.

"Is the young man gone?" inquired Eleanor when she returned.

"Yes," answered Prue, shortly.

"Quite a nice-looking young fellow," continued Eleanor. "A farmer, I suppose?"

"He's a sailor," returned the girl, who was just then in no mood to stand Eleanor's poisoned darts.

"Indeed!" said her cousin, raising her delicate eyebrows. "Now come and sit down and tell me all about him, there's a good girl. I suppose his parents are very worthy people, and he has been brought up in a sort of Arcadian simplicity on bread-and-milk, and you and he have known each other from babyhood, and made daisy-chains together in the most romantic fashion. (Quite a pretty idyl, I declare. I can fancy you two among the buttercups and daisies. When is the ending to come to the story, Prue?"

But Prue had fled. She could not trust herself to stay, for Eleanor's words had brought back her childhood to her—the happy, innocent days when she and Harry had played together in the fields among the birds and flowers, and yet she had treated him—her more than brother—with coldness and neglect! Could it be possible that she was the same Prue of two months ago? In her grief and repentance she sat down and wrote the following little note to him:

"My Dear Harry,—Do forgive me for my behavior to-day. I wish I could see you again

to wish you a proper good-bye. I do hope you will have a very pleasant voyage, and come back to your friends. Good bye. Yours affectionately, PRUE."

And inside the letter Prue put one or two of those dried forget-me-nots which he had sent her; and when she had addressed it to the *Atlanta*, his ship at Portsmouth, and sealed and sent it, she felt a little happier, though her conscience still smote her. Supposing he were not to receive the letter, and that he would never know that she had not meant to be so cold to him; and supposing he were never to come back—but oh, he must!—and then she could tell him how sorry, how very sorry she was—unless he had quite forgotten her, which she hoped wasn't very likely.

IV.

The weeks went by very quickly at Walstead, but somehow since that afternoon when Harry Morton had said good-bye to her at the stile in the plantation, the gayeties and parties had lost some of their savour.

There were moments when Prue suffered from decided homesickness, and a very strong yearning came over her for home; not this grand mansion with all its luxuries and refinements and aristocratic inhabitants, but that real home where she had spent all her childhood; and grannie, who, with all her tartness and severity, was associated with home. And Prue remembered with remorse that afternoon when grannie had cried at the coming parting, and how delighted she herself had been to leave her. Without a regret or a fear had she said good-bye to her, and now—how contradictory is human nature!—she was longing to go back to the quiet hum-drum life.

Her conscience still smote her, too, with regard to Harry. She had never received an answer to her little good-bye letter, and she often wondered whether it had ever reached him. She became very quiet, and Eleanor and Clara both remarked the absence of her usual buoyancy of spirit.

However, one day grannie said something in her letter about not being well, and feeling lonely now that the autumn and long evenings were coming on, so Prue interpreted this into a wish that she should go back home, and she told Lady Kiley and the girls that grannie was wanting her. They were very loth to let her go. Clara was very fond of her, and Eleanor had forgiven her for her presumption in attracting Mr. Davenant's attentions. Eustace declared it to be an awful bore, and even Sir William relaxed from his dignity sufficiently to remark that he was sorry her visit had come to an end.

It was a cold, raw, damp October day when she returned home. The evening fog was already rising when the train stopped at the little Hawden station, and she descended, rather surprised at not seeing grannie or Elizabeth to meet her.

However, she left her box for the carrier to bring, and set out on her homeward way through the misty lanes and damp fog. The yellow leaves were falling from the trees which she had left covered with spring blossoms; the ferns in the hedgerows hung limp and brown; there were no flowers, no birds singing. How very dreary it all looked! She walked as quickly as possible along the old familiar ways, till she came out of the lanes into the straggling village street, past the church and the vicarage, past the huckster's shop; still on, till amid the fog and gathering darkness the gable ends of "home" came in view, over which the tall sycamore stretched its bare branch protectingly.

How dark the house looked! but Prue pushed open the little garden gate and walked up the garden-path with a beating heart. She knocked at the door which was soon opened by old Elizabeth.

"Miss Prue, are you come? Well, I never!" was her exclamation.

"Yes, Elizabeth, didn't you know I was coming? Didn't grannie tell you?" Prue said with a feeble attempt at a laugh, and with a chill feeling of disappointment creeping over her.

"She expected you to-morrow. Well, come in, my dear. I am very glad to see you again, though I suppose among all them fine folks you've quite forgotten all your old friends. Come in."

Prue entered. The house looked very small and gloomy, and the candle that Elizabeth carried in her hand gave her a very feeble light. The parlor-door was open, but it was all in darkness; a sudden tremor seized Prue.

"Where's grannie?" she cried.

"She's gone out to-night to the vicarage; you see she wasn't expecting you, but still she'll be home afore very long, I reckon. But come into the kitchen, there's a nice fire there; you'll be hungry and tired, I know. It isn't the first time you have had tea with old Elizabeth."

Prue sat down by the glowing fire; hungry and tired she certainly was, and cold and dejected, too. It seemed such a tame home-coming after such a long absence, and grannie being away was a great disappointment. However, Elizabeth bustled about and made her some tea and hot buttered toast, and boiled her an egg, which, as she informed her, her own brown hen had laid. Then there were the kittens to be examined, which during Prue's absence had grown into fine cats, and kept aloof from her as from a stranger. It was too late to go outside and see the cocks and hens, but Elizabeth had plenty to do in answering all Prue's manifold questions,

and in detailing all the wonderful events that had happened during the girl's absence.

At last came grannie's knock. Prue flew to the door, and laughed merrily at grannie's astonishment at seeing her.

"Come into the light, and let me see thee. Nay, thou art not changed. And thou art glad to come back again? That is well. I feared all the grand ways and doings at Walstead Abbey would have estranged thy heart from thy poor simple home-folk."

"No, no, grannie," cried Prue, kissing her as she had never kissed her before. "They were very good to me at Walstead, but I wanted to come back to you. I was beginning to weary for home."

"Well, child, I am pleased to see thee back; I have missed thee very much. I wish I could have been at home this evening to welcome thee, but my stupid old eyes must have read the date wrongly. However, it does not matter now, thou art safe here. And how is thy lady grandmother?"

"She is very well, grannie, and sends kind regards to you," answered Prue. "Have you been to tea to the Mortons', grannie? Was there a party?"

"Nay, they are not in a state of merry-making. Has not Elizabeth told thee the sad catastrophe that has happened?"

"No," cried Prue; "what is it?"

"I wouldn't tell the child just when she got in," said old Elizabeth; "but news flies fast enough without requiring any speeding."

"What is it, grannie?" cried Prue again, breathlessly.

"It is a sad tale to tell, child," grannie answered, shaking her head. "The *Atlanta* has gone down with all on board her."

"The *Atlanta*?" cried Prue. "Oh, grannie, there must be some mistake; it cannot be; there must be some saved."

"Nay, nay, there is no mistake; would to Heaven there were. Poor lad, poor lad! who would have thought it! and poor mother, too; she fit to break her heart."

As if in a dreadful dream Prue heard grannie's account of how the news came, and the dreadful grief in which she had found the inmates of the vicarage when Mrs. Morton had sent for her, and when the old lady had said all she could, Prue, with trembling white lips and scared eyes, had wished her good-night and gone to her own little room.

Oh, it could not be true! Harry could not be dead. He had always been so full of life, so happy, so spirited, it was not possible that his merry voice was forever stilled, and his blue eyes forever closed to this world's light. Would she never see him again, or hear his step and well-known voice; would the recollection of him, growing dimmer and fainter as the years wore on, be all she would have of him through her life; would she never be able to tell him how she repented of her coldness to him, and to hear him say, "Never mind, Prue, it isn't worth troubling yourself about?" How during the last month she had been looking forward to his return, and now she would never see him more. It could not be, there must be some mistake; Harry could not be dead, he would—she must come back.

Thus she tried to argue herself out of her distress, but in spite of her terrible truth would force itself undeniably upon her convictions, that Harry was indeed gone. She had thrown herself, dressed as she was, on her bed, with her face buried in her arms. The old clock on the stairs struck the hours and the half hours, the candle burnt low, flared up in her socket, and went out, leaving her in darkness, save for the faint light of the moon, which struggled in from beneath the window curtain and enveloped the room and its belongings with an unreal shadowy radiance. Still she paid no heed; the remembrance of her putting was vividly before her mind, arousing in her an overwhelming sense of utter misery. Poor little Prue! The tears came at last and relieved her grief-stricken heart, and by-and-by her weary spirit found rest in sleep.

"La, Miss Prue, have you never been in bed? What's been the matter? Your grandmother's been down this half hour; it's past nine o'clock. What ails you? You look like a ghost."

These were the first words that fell on Prue's drowsy senses the next morning when she awoke with the bright sunshine pouring in upon her, and old Elizabeth standing by her bed. The old servant in her own mind made a shrewd guess at the cause of the trouble; so she left the girl to herself and went down and told old Dame Reid her idea of the state of things.

So when Prue at last came downstairs, pale, heavy-eyed, and with a dull aching sense of misery in her heart, instead of the reprimand she expected, she found grannie all kindness and gentleness.

All through that long dreary day, and the wretched time that followed, when her trouble seemed more than she could bear, although grannie never made any allusion to it, yet the girl knew that the old lady guessed her secret, and the quiet unobtrusive sympathy helped her a little to bear it.

V.

These were dreary autumn days in Hawden. Prue sometimes felt as if the sunshine were gone—never to return. At times she tried to fancy that Harry was not really dead, and that in a few months' time he would be coming back full of life and health, but the sad reality soon dis-