

## BEFORE THE GLASS.

A maiden twines the rainbow pearls  
About her golden hair,  
While loosely yet some wayward curls  
Caress her forehead fair;  
Then clasps around her graceful throat  
More pearls on velvet warm:  
Ah! never yet did white robes float  
About so sweet a form.

She rises: toward the mirror tall  
She turns her sainted feet,  
Her glances quickly rise and fall,  
So fair a sight to meet;  
The gentle blushes come and go  
As eyelids droop and lift,  
For ah! she cannot choose but know  
She has the fatal gift.

Will knowledge make her wise in time,  
And teach her that her dower  
Is fruitful source of many a crime,  
Has victims every hour?  
Go, Ethel, win in beauty's race,  
Remembering, ere you start,  
Unlovely is the loveliest face  
That hides a truthless heart.

## MY STEP-DAUGHTER.

BY ELLA WILLIAMS.

"I suppose you have broken the matter to Eleanor?" I said to "my widower," only three weeks before we were to be married.

"I could not do it after all. We may as well surprise her, and it will be all over at once," said Mr. Eustace, stroking that handsome beard, which had been one of his great attractions to me.

"I verily believe you are afraid of your own daughter. Your long delay is a great injustice to her, and it makes me unhappy—yes, miserable."

"I am sorry, but I rather like your scolding, Lizzie. I have always been used to silent, self-contained women, who would not move an eyelash if the heavens fell."

"Is Eleanor one of that sort?"

"Yes, the oddest girl in the world. I wish she had a little more nonsense about her."

"I have enough for two."

"I give thanks for it. You are

—— Not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food."

"The compliment may be well meant, but it sounds doubtful. I shall never trouble you with perfection. Do you think our marriage will make Eleanor unhappy?"

"No—yes—I don't know," said Mr. Eustace, on the rack with my perverse questions.

"How will Hugh like it?"

"Oh, he swears by Eleanor; he will take his cue from her."

"Then I shall make two wretched by going into your home."

"What is the use of talking about it? We love each other, and that's enough," said "my widower" crisply, in what I suspected would be his married tone. Mr. Eustace stayed as late as any young lover, and I hoped most heartily that his daughter did not sit up for him.

I scolded him no more on that evening, but when he was gone I crept very silently to bed with a little sister, and did more hard thinking upon the case of Eleanor Eustace than I had ever spent on her father. I had a vision of the tall, pale, dignified girl (I had seen her once in church) suddenly dumfounded by the sight of an actual step-mother.

It was not too late to renounce him for her sake, but could I do it? I was the eldest of five sisters, nearly all grown up, and beginning palpably to crowd me out of the home nest. Mr. Eustace was the captive of my bow and spear, the first and only one. We were a family of hearty, not to say boisterous manners, terribly prone to call a spade a spade. I was already twenty-eight; it would be a fearful ordeal to be the old maid of our sisterhood. And, after all, Mr. Eustace would be sure to go further, and Eleanor might fare worse.

But at least I might have the grace to warn her of her fate. I rose up in the small hours and lit a candle, in fear and trembling, for I think this must have been the first deed done in secret in our house. I put pen to paper without losing a moment, lest my courage, like Bob Acres', should all ooze out of my fingers' ends:

"DEAR ELEANOR EUSTACE: Your father is going to marry me three weeks from to-day. He will not tell you, and I feel that I must. I believe it will be almost as hard for me to enter your home as a second wife as it will be for you to receive me.

"Ever your friend,  
"LIZZIE MORTON."

I posted this deed of darkness before daylight, and on the second day the answer was handed in to the breakfast-table with other letters:

"MY DEAR MISS MORTON: Your kind note of the 18th is received.

"Yours sincerely,  
"ELEANOR EUSTACE."

That was all. I had sent her a bit of my heart and she returned a stone. In my anger I tore the dainty little note into shreds, and cast them

into the fire-place. My little sister picked out the pieces and tried putting them together like a dissected map. She made out the name "Eustace," and announced it triumphantly.

"Did he want you to elope with him before your wedding clothes were done?" asked Haviland Morton, our naval cousin, who stayed with us between voyages. "I suppose you would sooner give him up than do that?"

"I should hope so," said mother severely, with an eye to the younger girls. Secret marriages never turn out well.

"I am not so certain, saving your presence, auntie," said Haviland. "It seems to me all that girls marry for in these latter days is the fuss and new dresses. It would be a delightful thought to take to sea with me that my love and I belonged wholly to each other, and nobody knew it. I would not have so much as a pair of white gloves to distract our attention from the beauty and glory of the main fact."

We all made up a face at Haviland's absurdity, and I went to try on my new dresses.

I said no more to Mr. Eustace of his daughter, thinking all the more; and the wedding day came like all days, if you wait long enough. We were married at noon, and Mr. Eustace drove me in his carriage the ten miles that lay between my old home and the new. As we approached the latter, he grew absent and restless. I knew by a fellow-feeling that he was thinking of his daughter, but I would do nothing to relieve him—he deserved half an hour of misery.

Eleanor came to meet us as her father opened the door, a girl who might have sat for Teunynson's Isabel:

—— "The world hath not another  
Of such a finished, chastened purity."

My first feeling, as I stepped across the threshold where another woman had ruled before me, was a very meek one. If that woman had re-embled her daughter, how could her husband find anything to admire in me?

"My darling Eleanor," said Mr. Eustace, and paused. It is amazing how affectionate people become when in distress.

"My dearest girl, this is——"

"Mrs. Eustace, I believe," said Eleanor, holding out her hand to me with a faint sweet smile. "Shall you like to go to your room first?"

I followed her up-stairs, leaving a very dazed-looking husband in the hall below. In all the appointments of the room I saw the delicacy of Eleanor's taste.

"You have been too good," I said, taking up a vase of tea-roses to hide my embarrassment.

"Not at all. You will be my guest, you know, until you can guide the house for yourself."

"I will be anything, if you will not look so terribly resigned. You may scold me every day for marrying your father, if only you will like me a little at last."

I was in quite a little flush of emotion, but the ineffable calmness of her manner, as if she had reduced everything to its lowest terms and left not a superfluous in the world, steadied me in a moment.

"I think I shall like you very well," she remarked as she left me. When Mr. Eustace came up-stairs, he was very happy.

"Don't you see, Lizzie," he said, "how much better it was to let the thing come to pass naturally than for me to have a scene with Eleanor beforehand? She had probably heard of the marriage from outside people."

"I suppose so," I said, allowing Mr. Eustace to plume himself on his delusion as he amused me and did not hurt him.

Eleanor not only submitted to me, as to a new weary evil, but to the seven other spirits worse than myself, in the shape of my brothers and sisters, who overran the house like an inundation, carrying all before it.

It never entered their honest heads that they could be otherwise than heartily welcome.

They fraternized at once with Hugh Eustace, and, by dint of sheer good nature and stupidity, they sometimes made a breach in Eleanor's reserve.

They dragged Haviland in their train at last, to see the oddest girl in the world.

"You will not like her," I said; "she is not at all your sort, but I will not have you tease her."

"How can you tell what is my sort? Because you are lately married, you need not take it upon you to know all men by these presents."

"Eleanor is very silent. You must not expect her to talk to you."

"Does she never say 'Yes' with an interrogatory mark after it?"

"Never."

"Then take me to her quickly, lest I be snatched away before mine eyes have looked upon this miracle of women."

Haviland's manner was as perfectly subjugated by the yoke of Eleanor's serene quietness as I could desire.

When we "appeared" at him for his opinion he professed to be disappointed; but he came every day, with an excuse or without one, and studied her with the eye of an artist. A faint little flush sometimes rose to her cheek when she met his gaze. He was with us one day when my sister Annie suddenly laid hands on Eleanor's hair, and, with a dexterous turn or two, laid it in loose waves about her head. It was always "Majonna-wike" before.

"You have no idea," said Annie, "how lovely you look when your hair is loosened up this way—more 'fluff,' you know. Isn't it so, Haviland?"

"Excuse me," said Eleanor, drawing herself gently but completely away from Annie. "It is a weakness of mine that I cannot endure to be handled in that way except——"

"Except what?" said Annie, bewildered.

"Except by those whom I love very much."

"Would you not also make exception in favor of those who love you very much?" asked Haviland in a low voice, regarding her intently. It seemed to me that everything stood still for an instant, even the hands of the clock. A burning flush spread over Eleanor's face.

"There is only my brother," she burst out with a sort of cry, and went quickly out of the room.

"I declare!" said sister Annie, looking after her with mouth open.

"Oh, Haviland, how could you! She will never forgive you," I said.

"I don't want to be forgiven," he said, lightly; but he went away quickly to the station, and did not come near us for three whole days. Eleanor repaired her fortifications and received him with the same dead calm of courtesy. He resumed his daily sittings with us, but he threw no more stones into the deep waters of Eleanor's nature.

Nothing could be more desirable than that these two should love each other. I longed to beg Eleanor only to look into his eyes, and see the interest written there, but the words were never spoken. I left them alone together whenever I dared, and forbade any of my tribe, on peril of banishment, to make the least approach to a joke on my match-making. I said a word or two of my hope to Mr. Eustace, but he was utterly sceptical. "Eleanor is too cold and calm to love any man, and too conscientious to marry without it. I should like to see the man who should be bold enough to kiss her. Walking up to the cannon's mouth would be nothing to it."

I wanted to see him, too; but as the days went on and Haviland's departure began to be talked of, I was forced to think that he was not to be that bold man.

Eleanor was very busy with Hugh's outfit; he had been at the Naval School, and now had conspired with Haviland to sail in the same ship.

The Winona was under repairs at St. Bo's, and Mr. Eustace and Eleanor went there with Hugh, staying at the hotel a week to buy the last things and say the last words.

Eleanor came home so wan and haggard that for many weeks there might as well have been a ghost in the house. It was very difficult to offer consolation when none was asked or expected, but I could not altogether refrain.

"I had no idea you loved that boy so much," I said, awkwardly.

"You are very good, but I am afraid I cannot talk about it," was the discouraging reply.

"If you can love a brother so much, how you would worship a husband," I said, trembling at my own bravery in thus walking over her boundaries.

Eleanor actually laughed.

"Do you know," I went on, "I think Haviland was just ready to fall in love with you if you had given him the least crumb of encouragement."

"Did he tell you so?"

"No; but one could see it with half an eye."

"You are very clear-sighted in such matters, perhaps."

"I have lived longer than you, Eleanor, and I know that a man cannot go all the way to a woman; she ought to take the least little step towards him."

"I could not do that," said Eleanor.

"Oh, I know it; and so you have let the best fellow on earth slip away from you!"

"Nature made him and then broke the mould," said Eleanor, with a smile.

"You did not know him as I did."

"I dare say I did not."

"But when he comes home again, if he is in the same mind, will you try to like him?"

"Yes, I think I may safely promise that."

The tears came to my eyes in my earnestness, and all at once I found Eleanor crying too, like any other woman.

"My dear little step-mother," she said, "you have my father's worries and your own to bear; I will not trouble you to carry mine."

Then she left me, and I could not help thinking that she might love Haviland after all.

Eleanor came slowly out of her sorrow for Hugh's departure, and we settled into the quiet routine which seemed likely to last forever. The Winona was spoken at sea occasionally, and very thick letters came for Eleanor, of which she would read a page or two aloud and keep all the rest for her own hunger. Nearly two years went by, and we began to speak of Hugh's return. A sweet cheerfulness that I had never seen before in Eleanor seemed to crop out of her glad heart. I was very happy with my step-daughter. There was not a cloud as big as a man's hand in our sky, when Eleanor pointed out to me with trembling finger a line in the newspaper. Her eyes besought me to tell her that she had read it wrong. It was a Winona telegram; she had been struck in the night by an English steamer, and sunk with all on board.

As she rose up and fled away with her grief, like a wounded animal, the lines of her face were drawn and settled like those of a middle-aged woman.

"How does Eleanor bear it?" was Mr. Eustace's first question, his own grief fading out beside hers.

"Come and see," I said, leading him into her room, where she lay, pale and quiet, and able to speak of her loss without tears.

I left them together, but it was useless to hope that they could comfort each other.

"She bears it better than I expected," said my husband, rejoining me after a very few minutes.

"If she would only rave and tear her hair, it would be a great relief to my mind, but this calmness is unnatural," I said.

"Not with her. She is not warm-hearted; she does not feel things as we do."

I did not contradict him. Where would have been the use? But it struck me all at once that the first Mrs. Eustace, who was said to resemble her daughter, must have had a very lonely life of it.

The ill news was soon verified, but Eleanor had believed it from the first. She went about the house at first as she had always done, but loss of appetite and disturbed sleep gradually told upon her strength. She learnt to hold her hand tight on her heart as she mounted the stairs. One little industry after another dropped from her weak hands, and, without comment on my side or hers, she soon lay every day and all day on a sofa.

She never called herself ill, and would lie for hours in silence, with a far-away look in her eyes as if she were gazing seaward. My face must have expressed a little of the yearning pity that overflowed my heart.

"Is it for me that you are unhappy?" she asked, doubtfully, one day.

"Yes; I find I have not fortitude enough to bear other people's misfortunes."

"You may easily bear mine. I have been very happy since I knew that my waiting would be short."

"You have had but a dull, lonely life, Eleanor. I cannot wonder at your indifference to it."

A sudden rosy brightness transfigured Eleanor's face, and, for the moment, she was more lovely than I can tell.

"You are wrong, believe me," she said. "I have had my share of happiness; no woman could have more. It was like some great tropical bloom, long in coming and soon gone, but it was unutterably perfect."

I looked at her with wide eyes, and the draw-bridge of her reserve fell instantly. She lay still for a long time, and I could hear the thud of her heart-beats.

When I was leaving her, she showed me a key on a chain that she always wore about her neck.

"Some time you will use this to unlock my desk," she said, "and find there what I cannot say to you now." Not many days after she went out of life as calmly as she had passed through it.

In her desk was a large packet of letters, bound with a strip of paper. On this strip was written the precious secret which she could not part with while she lived. "Bury me with these letters on my heart, and write over my head only this, 'Eleanor Eustace, beloved wife of Haviland Norton.'"

She had said on my wedding day that she thought she might like me very well, and I have reason to believe she did so, never any less and never any more, while I grew to regard her with a passionate admiration.

For a long time after her death, life, alone with my widower, was a very tame affair indeed.

## THE MAD ENGLISHMEN.

A STORY OF OSTEND.

Journeying lately in the diligence from Ostend to Ghent, I fell in with a Belgian travelling companion, with whom I had some agreeable chat relative to the country through which we passed, and its inhabitants. He was a native of Ostend, a town which has endured many vicissitudes of fortune, and of which he seemed to know many amusing stories. One of these I shall try to recall to remembrance, in the words in which it was told:

In the year 1817, two Englishmen arrived in Ostend; and from their movements, appeared to be two singular originals. One was short, stout, and red-haired; the other tall and thin. The short one was named Richard Mowbray, and his tall companion was William Featherington. Both were in the prime of life, between forty-five and fifty-five. From head to foot both were gentlemen, and their passports were in the best order and regularity. Upon stepping ashore, they were conducted, at their desire, to the Scheid inn, in the Gudele Street. The host was by name Rysvoort, and his inn had by no means the best reputation in Ostend. The innkeeper was of course enchanted by the arrival of such unlooked-for guests. They occupied the best apartments in his house, and ordered the choicest fare. The cook busied herself in settling before them a most miserable dinner, and our host did the same by two bottles of execrable wine. The islanders ate and drank with the most perfect satisfaction. But the reckoning? Upon this head the host was quite at ease. The next morning his enormous charges were paid with the utmost indifference. Thus far all was excellent; but Van Rysvoort, unused to such birds of paradise, feared every moment they might depart, and continue their journey to Brussels. He very sagely concluded that the Englishmen did not cross the sea to see Ostend merely, and to pay roundly for his bad cheer.

The pair, however, showed no signs of departure; a diligence offered them every opportunity