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The Cobra Capello.

BY JAMES R. RANDALL.

"The Cobra Capello, though exceedingly venomous, has an aspect of gentleness and docility."—ENCYCLOPÆDIA.

Beautiful—yes! for her basilisk eyes,
Gleam out when the features are luscious and mellow,
Beautiful—yes! but adown the disguise
I detect just a tinge of the Cobra Capello.

And I think mother Eve looked exactly like this,
When she played suck a prank on uxorious Adam;
I've a chronic dislike to a serpentine kiss,
And never eat apples in any style, Madam.

Beautiful—yes! as she paddles her fan
'Mid the broidered lagoons of her robe of white muslin
And the tight little boot taps a quick rataplan,
In a way most piratical, not to say puzzling.

She prates of Tom Noddy, the handsome young goose,
Of Don Trombonetti, divine on the flute,
And then, with a smile that's as arch as—the deuce,
Quotes pert panegyrics on somebody's foot!

She'll sing you a hymn or tell you a fib,
(Just one of those cynical, feathery trifles.)
And then, with a smirk that I think rather glib,
Sigh after some monster that left with the Rifles.

She vows I'm a miracle walking with men—
(Ugh! I swallow it all with a groan and a cough.)
For I know that most women are comical, when
Their night caps are on and their visitors off!

Aye, rattle ahead and prattle away,
But, in sepulchered thought, I brood over another;
We parted, alas! about nine months to-day,
And we never must meet again—somehow or other.

They tell me, poor bird, it is painful to see
How you've changed since we rode in the hot summer weather,
And oh, if I felt you were pining for me,
I'd hew me a path that would bring us together.

In your solitude, still, do you sing the old song!
O, the "Long, weary day," shall it cease for us never?
But here in the ruck of the sumptuous throngs,
Your name in my lone heart is sacred forever!

Ah me! I am chill, for 'tis fearful to sit
By the Cobra, when languished with tenderer matters—
Ha! I see that my secret is guessed—every bit—
For she's nibbling her lip, and the fan is—in tatters.

Beautiful—yes! but I shall not succumb,
Though witeless from Beersheba even to Dan—
Heigho! if my heart were but under her thumb,
She'd crumple it, too, like the innocent fan!

Our Future.

[From the New York World.]

The Southern States promise to be the motive power by which our capitalists and commerce shall be dragged out of the rut in which they have been stagnated since 1860. Last year the South was in debt, and its surplus money was mortgaged to and swallowed up by Northern capitalists. This year they are comparatively free from debt, because their credit is limited. Their crop of cotton, tobacco, etc., are likely to realize in money value more than ever—at least $300,000,000. The Southern crops differ from those of the North and West, essentially so far as they affect our money markets, inasmuch as they command specie in the markets of the world, even on their own soil. Europe and America compete to buy Southern products on Southern soil, for cash, at the option of the Southerner, in greenbacks or gold. Besides the $300,000,000 of produce salable for cash, in the markets of Europe and America, the Southerners, owing to their poverty and the crushing policy to which they have been subjected by Congress, and the sentiments which swayed Northern capitalists, have this year raised corn, wheat and other food, which will leave them with a larger amount of surplus cash on hand than the South has ever seen in any one year since the foundation of our republic. The Southern States before this year were dependent on the Western States for the bulk of their food, but now they are not wholly independent of them in this respect, but they have commenced to be exporters of wheat and flour. The Southern States will this year realize from their products a cash surplus and net profit, over and above all their expenses of living, of at least $60,000,000. It is no use shutting our eyes to the fact that there is a strong popular prejudice against the national banks throughout the whole Southern country, so that the New York city bank managers will do well to prepare in time for the absorption and retention in the South by private hoarding of at least $60,000,000 in greenbacks, and perhaps some gold. The New York banks are not in the condition they ought to be to respond to this drain for $60,000,000 in greenbacks. The South will not be put off with national bank notes, owing to the strong prejudice which exists against them there. The temporary locking up of greenbacks by stock gamblers, limited to about $10,000,000, is of trifling importance compared with the locking up of $60,000,000 greenbacks in the South. Reference to the contraction of greenbacks by Mr. McCulloch will awaken some doubt as to whether the aggregate amount in circulation will be sufficient to respond to this Southern drain for $60,000,000, without producing a financial crisis in the North. On October 1, 1865, the amount of legal tender notes in circulation was $678,126,948, and on September 1 of this year they were reduced to $387,823,291 legal tenders, and $62,205,000 three per cent. certificates; making the total outstanding legal tenders $459,028,291, showing a decrease of $228,000,000 since October 1, 1868. These are startling facts. They are the opening up of a new era in financial affairs, in which the Southern States are destined to produce a revolution in our banking and currency systems for which every prudent banker and merchant will prepare. "Bank contraction," enforced and inevitable, is near at hand from this drain of greenbacks to the South.

Passengers per steamship Crescent City, Capt. Weir, for New York: M. A. Bailhache, Mrs. M. A. Bailhache and child, A. Fortier, F. C. Krandeet, John Darby, S. K. Darby.

Go to the Academy of Music Monday night and see the great sensation, Millie Turnour.

THE LOUISIANA STATE SEMINARY.—The next session of this popular and flourishing institution of learning begins on the 7th of September, 1868. The faculty consists of a full corps of able instructors, versed in all the branches of literature and science usually taught in universities. The surrounding country is high and rolling, and as healthful as any part of the world. The terms of the school, including every expense except that of clothing, is $410 per annum, $200 of which is payable in advance, and the balance in equal payments January 1st and April 1st. Prof. D. F. Boyd, the superintendent, makes the comfort and interest of the students his chief and only aim, and we know of no one to whose guardianship we would sooner trust the training of our youth.

"WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL."—We quote these few words to show that language was not thought strong enough to imply that a man who would not do right was a mean man. We have heard several times from negroes, that men and women with white skins would say to them, "If I were you, I would not live with those old negro-drivers; old so and so used to be rich, and I reckon the top rail is at the bottom, sure enough," etc. If it would not give these people a publicity that might gratify, we would publish their names. We say it anywhere, open and above aboard, that the Southern men who are busying themselves in widening the breach between white and black—who are trying to induce the negroes to break contracts, and to work for them for a portion of the crop, and abusing those who formerly owned the negroes, and raised most of those owned—we say he is a mean man, "worse than" a carpet-bagman or a scalawag. We again repeat, our duty is plain—to make a fair contract and stick to it; treat the trusting kindly; try and induce him to improve his condition by saving his wages, and taking care of what he has; don't sell him liquor at any price; don't sell him gewgaws, to make his wages easier to be paid; in that render unto him full justice. In the end it must work well; the trusting will soon learn who is true and who false, these selfish, contemptible mischief-makers will be detested by the negro, as he always has been.—[Southern Farmer.

Charley Pettengill, the favorite comedian, tonight, at the Academy of Music.

The man of letters—The type-setter.

[From Every Saturday.]

A SISTER'S STORY.

I.

We were waiting tea for David. He was so often late that this was no unusual occurrence. The lamps were not brought in, and little Winnie was reading in the firelight, while I sat watching Erle as he stood upon the rug with that look of thought that he so often wore. I had fallen into one of my dreamy moods, as I often did when we sat in the firelight thus; going back in my thoughts to the time when Erle and I were young and merry-hearted boy and girl, and Winnifred a baby—to the time when the dark cloud fell upon our home, and the fatherless children were left orphans with only the little one to take the vacant place. And from that looking on—on into the misty future when I should resign the first place in my brother's—ah well! who can follow the dreamy fancies of one whose life is blended with the lives of others, and who has lost all anticipations for herself alone? So I dreamed on, looking in Erle's beautiful face—beautiful, though careworn, and with lines of silver in the dark hair, which age had not brought there—and from that to Winnie's bright childish head—so indifferent! Surely she and David were unlike Erle and me! Yet there was not so much difference in our ages as any one would think. I—with my serious, gloomy face—looked, as every one told me, more than three years older than David, with his bright laughing look and young winning manners. Every one said so but himself. He would not have it so. He would see no change in nine years, and said I was the same little, shy, demure girl he left eighteen, when he first left home.

We were very proud of David and Winnie, and used to talk for hours together—we two elder ones, in a sort of protecting, fatherly way—of their lives to come—with some imagining, even then, of how differently the sun would shine upon us and upon them. I had been used to think that Erle's heart, as well as mine, was bound up in those two; but I had then begun to learn that he had thoughts and hopes that I might sympathize with, but might never share. I had just come back from my dreaming to think that David was even later than usual, and that the room was very silent without him, when Winnie closed her book with a little low laugh.

"Effie, this story would suit you exactly, for it ends happily for everybody."

"That's right," said I, cheerfully. "And so it ought." They used to joke me about being, as they said, so very practical, but I was rather proud of it, and encouraged it as far as I could; so, as I got up and rang the bell, I said, "And so it ought." Winnie, leaning forward on her low seat, looked up at Erle. "Erle, if you were an author—which you never will be—and were writing about a knight—a good, true knight, you know, who does everything right and falls in love with a princess, and a little poor maiden is in love with him, how would you make it end?"

"Does the princess love him?"

"Yes, of course; everybody loves him."

"Then I suppose he must marry the princess," he said, thoughtfully, "and the lowly little girl must die of her unspoken love. That is how it generally is, I think."

His voice was very low, and I thought he spoke more earnestly than he need have done for such a thing.

"And is that ending happily for everybody?" laughed Winnie. "How could it end better if he did not love her? what effect would her love have upon him?"

"He doesn't know anything about it, Fred," said David's merry voice, as Winnifred sprang up to greet him. "I will tell you how he would end it. The princess would discover a worm i' the bud on the damask cheek of the humble young spinster, and though she adored the knight with all the ardor of a princess's nature, would resign him nobly; retire into privacy until she made her appearance at the wedding in high life, when the knight, at least fully appreciating the charms of a domestic character, married the maiden all forlorn—not so forlorn just then as might be, considing she was in the full enjoyment of a courtly husband and various wedding gifts from her magnanimous sovereign. There—whatever he may say—that would be Erle's version of the story, wouldn't it, Fred? Effie, I'm afraid I'm rather late to-night, are you angry?"

"No, I'm not angry this time," I said, "as it is such a very new offense."

"I'm certain the tea has been made a long time," said he, gravely taking his seat at the table, "and that our little mother," (that was one of Winnie's names for me) "has a smouldering fear that it is cold, and that Erle will be cross when he finds it out."

"I should like to know which of my two brothers would be the crosser in such a case," said Winnie, bending over the back of his chair; "and Day, please, what is a smouldering fear?"

"When little girls learn foreign languages," said David, cutting away at the bread, "they must confine themselves to simple and arranged sentences; but a young man who is master of his native tongue may use it as he pleases. Erle, I have a message for you; Effie, I have a parcel for you; Fred, I have—nothing for you."

"And how did you carry that, Day?" said she, quickly.

"O, I managed—being strong."

"Well, go on. I will listen to Erle's message, and share Effie's present. That will do for me, thank you. Now, which is to come first?"

"Erle," he asked, "have you been over to Upton to-day? Not another troublesome day's work with the steward, I hope, and that highly injured race of tenants?"

"No; everything is going on well. The new cottages are nearly finished; the tenants all ready with their rent, I believe; and every one ready to greet you very gladly when you go to take possession."

"Well, I'm too comfortable at home to think of that; but I'm afraid all this bothers you sadly, Erle."

"My dear boy, I don't know what I should do without it; but when is my message forthcoming."

"Bibe a wee. Before that comes, I have a piece of general intelligence for the company at large."

He turned from Erle as he spoke, and, after the merry tones before, his voice sounded almost constrained. It may have been only because his head was bent so low while he was speaking, or perhaps, indeed, it was my fancy that made these few words sound different.

"Mr. St. George and Hope have come home a month sooner than they intended. I saw them to-day."

Winnie was the only one who answered. Erle looked at me for a moment, then, meeting my eyes, his lowered suddenly as the dark, crimson spread slowly over his face. I busied myself with the cups, looking at none of them again.

"Where did you see them, Day?" asked Winnie; and the careless, natural question was a relief to all.

"I saw their carriage at the station, and I waited for them. They are in town still with Fletcher, the attorney. It was the trial brought them home. Mr. St. George is very glad to be at home, though."

"And Hope is not, I suppose," said Winnie, laughing.

"Hope has the peculiarity of never being glad to come home, hasn't she, David?"

"Hope," said I quietly, pouring out David's third cup of tea," and speaking because no one else answered; "Hope is fonder of home than any one I know, and she makes a home, too, more than any one."

"It is a lonely old place without her, anyway, said David carelessly.

"Hopeless, I think, eh, Erle?" said Winnie demurely; "but tell us how she looked, Day."

"I don't know. The same as she always looks, I think."

"She could hardly grow old or change much in any way in four months, Winnie," said I; "but what was Erle's message?"

"Something, of course, about this lawsuit, but I said I never should remember. I think Mr. St. George looks upon you, Erle, as a brother defendant, instead of a possible juror; and now let me see where is Effie's parcel."

It was a little painting of a fisherman's wife and child, looking, with frightened, eager faces over the stormy sea for a boat they could not find. A remembrance Hope had brought me from abroad—a little remembrance that has been near me through years of happiness and sorrow; and that is first to meet my eyes, among so many unfamiliar objects, when I raise them from this paper as I write. After I had looked at it and admired it quietly for a long time, and Winnie had put her little head on one side and criticised it artistically, I asked David to hang it for me. As he took it from my hand, looking at it still with an absent kind of look, he said, "I think they will call here on their way home. Hope said, when I left them, that they would surely call, if they passed at any respectable hour. She is very fond of you, Effie."

"Not more fond of me," said I, "than of you, and Erle, and Winnie."

For, surely, why should she be, when I was so very different? Only her kind and loving heart could make her so. "But, Davie, you are worse than incorrigible not to have told me this before."

"Don't be cross, little mother; there is no scope for your celebrated housekeeping talents to display themselves to-night. It was an anticipation of mighty preparations on your part, I'm sure, that Hope said so emphatically that they could hardly stay a minute, as dinner would be waiting for them at home."

"What a comfort it will be to have them back," said Winnie again. "The whole country looks desolate round Oakley Court when they are away. Erle, your rides to Upton are more pleasant when you call there aren't they?"

Erle had seated himself at the piano and Winnie stood beside him. As she spoke he looked up, still playing—and nodded, with a strange, bright light in his eyes.

"Sing one of my songs, Erle," she whispered, coaxingly, and he struck into the symphony of "The Minstrel Boy." As he began to sing, I heard carriage-wheels pass under the windows. I knew David heard them too, because he lost the restless look he had had while talking to me, and grew quite still and quiet. Erle and Winnie heard nothing but the music, and as they were far away from the door, they never even turned as David opened it.

Twelve years, with their lights and shadows, with their waiting and hoping, have passed me by since that night; but not before me now, as clear as then, comes the picture that I saw when Hope came in among us, in her youth and radiant beauty.

Passing David with a smile, she took both my hands and kissed me eagerly. I held her from me with a strange intent look into her face while she blushed a little soft bright blush. Still I held her, fascinating her to look at me, for I would not have her turn and see—it did not matter that I should see—how white David's face had grown, and how he strove to hide the trembling of his lips.

It did not matter that I should see that Erle was watching him—a new light breaking upon his face—a new sorrow, a strange, half-comprehended sorrow—in the eager, flushed face and tender, passionate eyes.

Looking back, I know that one glance had fixed it on my mind forever. Then I thought I saw them all the time I gazed in Hope's face.

"Are there many changes, Effie, in these long four months?" She asked it laughing, but I could not answer so. The little slender figure standing before me was as graceful as ever; the large eyes were as bright and deep; the waving dark hair just as usual round the dainty little face with its changing light; and yet there was a change, and I knew what it was. That night I read its secret as I read theirs; but I answered her quite lightly: "David seemed so uncertain whether you were changed, that I thought I must look for myself."

She turned to greet Erle and Winnie, as she asked, quietly, "And are you uncertain, too?"

"No," I said, almost hastily, "not at all."

Then we talked all together for a little, till Erle turned aside with Mr. St. George; Hope followed him with her eyes. "How well he looks to-night! Effie, you can hardly feel anxious about him now," she said, in her low, earnest voice. "How different he is to most men one meets!"

I did not wonder that she said it, but the light in his dark eyes awed me strangely and I could not answer. Then we spoke of my picture and of their journey. "We are all very much obliged to the trial for bringing you home, Mr. St. George," said I; "but I hope you won't go back when it is over."

"Hope shall decide," he said, looking down upon her. "I am afraid she will not let me rest. I should not like her to hear me tell you, but I assure you I heard her promise a certain Austrian cavalier to be back again within a month."

Never shall I forget that moment, could I live to forget all else! I cannot try to tell the dead despairing feeling that seemed to fall upon me. My first quick thought was that I must not look at Erle or David, yet I saw the two faces more clearly it seemed to me than I had ever done before. The still, white agony of Erle's shocked me even less than the firm, compressed determination to bear, so strange on David's merry lips.

There was nothing could be hidden after that! It was only a minute before Hope touched her father's arm. "If you must make remarks, please try to make them intelligible, sir—what do you mean?" He laughed heartily. "I mean that I heard him ask you, and that you said you would, indeed, if your poor old father could be induced to listen to reason."

"And why, papa?—tell that."

"Because he thought you were necessary to him."

"Effie, don't listen to his nonsense;" a really anxious look was on her face, though she tried to smile. "The Austrian cavalier is an old gentleman, older than himself, with a delicate, helpless young wife, who has taken a fancy for me, and is happier with me than with most people; and she is so anxious to come to England that we said, if he did not bring her, we would go and fetch them."

So that was all, and the lesson had been needlessly learned; but then, more than ever, I felt I could not look at them, and I joined nervously in the conversation till they left us.

"What was the matter, Effie—what was the matter with us all?" asked Winnie, pushing back her bright hair, as she came to wish me good night. "I did not enjoy this visit at all, did you?"

"It was so short, dear," I said, hesitating. "Good night." David had taken the St. Georges down to their carriage, and when I heard his footsteps pass the window, I knew why he walked away alone.

Erle was standing against the chimney-piece, looking down into the fire, his face half hidden. When he had been alone a few minutes, he said in a slow, sad voice, without turning:

"Did you know of this before?"

"Of what?"

"Of David and — Hope."

"How, Erle? Why do you put their names together?" A lump was rising in my throat, and I dare not look at him.

"Did you know that David—loved her—so?"

I looked up at him in a very passion of grief. "O Erle, Erle! until to-night I never guessed what misery she could bring."

"Hush! is this my little Effie—in anger with Hope? Dear why should she bring misery?"

"Because—because—O Erle, she does'nt love him—and there is nothing but sorrow."

"She does'nt—love—him." He only repeated the words slowly and dreamily.

"And, Erle, he does not know, and there is suffering to come."

"No, Effie, not for him. How do you know she does not love him?"

"Do you not know it?"

"No—before Heaven—no!"

"Then I cannot be sure; but if I read her rightly, it is not David she loves!"

There was a long silence, then Erle spoke, steadily and firmly. "It is quite clear to me—the right and the best. He could make her so happy, she could make his life so bright, and it will all come right when I am gone."

"Erle, what do you mean? Where are you going?"

"Away; but only for a time, Effie dear. When it has happened I will come back to you. Little mother, you will not spoil my plan?—you could not do it."

"O Erle! not that. Look back upon your life. Slighted by our father—set aside for a younger son by the mother you loved so well—even the property that should have been yours given to him by that old miser whose very name I hate, not strong enough for the life you chose, and giving up all your suffering years to us! O Erle, dear Erle, and should he take this too?" Then my love and sympathy rose up in all its strength, and I cried out passionately for his right. But he stopped me as I clung to him, "Hush, Effie! I have done nothing yet of the trust that was left with me."

I looked up, tearless now, determined not to add to the pain that was so visible upon his face. "But, if he guesses this, he will never be happy again."

"He shall not guess."

"And Erle, suppose—suppose she loves you better?"

"Even then he shall not know; he shall not see me take his blessing. But no need to think of that. She does not, dear; and now let us arrange."

I cannot tell of the hours we sat there, making and unmaking plans; silent sometimes for long minutes, with our hearts too full for speech. The faint dawn was breaking like a line of hope far away, when at last Erle left me; everything clear and distinct in the future we had marked out.

As I closed the drawing-room door, David came out of the library. He started on seeing me, and asked why I was so late—"Making plans for to-morrow, Effie?" I told him yes, and smiled to see that but for the wistful look in his great blue eyes, his face had its old brightness. "And have you been making plans for the morrow, Day?" He was beside me then, and I put my hand upon his shoulder as I asked it. He answered with a simple "Yes," but he looked into my face as if to see how much I meant.

"Then, David, I hope they were of love and happiness, for I think that your to-morrow will have both. Good night." He held me fast. "Effie, our future is to be spent together—do you forget that? Why, of course, there must be love and happiness."

"Ah, David, we shall see."

"Effie, you are smiling with your heart full; you guessed aright, at least you saw it, and you know all that my own heart knows. It is like you to teach me hope, dear little mother; but we know each other too well to hide the truth."

"David, I know it all, and I say it still."

He kissed me with his own bright smile, in which there was so much of the hope he was not conscious of. We parted then, and the line of light was broad and bright when I left watching it at last.

II.

"Effie, why do you not try to persuade Erle against this wild scheme? I wish you would, he would listen to you. Why should he go? If he wants money, there is plenty lying idle; and as for occupation, I'm sure I don't know what my place will do without him. I wish he would give it up. Do urge him to do so."

"I don't think he will, Day; he is bent upon it, as you said, and really I think it may be better for him."

"Effie, this is hardly like you. What do you need for him? A good brave man, to whom everything is easy, whom everybody loves—a home for him here with those he loves. Why, Effie, what can you wish for him more than this?"

"Perhaps, David, he will value these things more when he has learned what it is to long for home and rest. Any way, I believe he knows best, and will be led by wiser, tenderer hands than ours. And as you never questioned yet his good and noble aims, do not begin now, dear; he never disappointed us yet—did he?"

David turned away with a sigh, and I bent my eyes upon the wet work that was to go with Erle.

So, upon a bright May morning, when the early sunshine turned the tear-drops on the flowers into dancing, glittering gems, silently and tearlessly I bade good-bye to my best loved brother, and he set out with David—so sad and so unconscious—for Portsmouth. How I envied Winnifred her passionate sobs, as I held her closely in my arms in the rooms that had grown suddenly cheerless and chilling.

While our grief was fresh as ever, David came back with last messages for us all, and with a mournful look upon his face which—I said to myself over and over—would soon give place to the gladness that was natural there; but which deepened and deepened day by day, until that one day came.

We had had a cheerful, loving letter from Erle, describing brightly and amusingly his bachelor home and strange life, and David had taken it with him when he rode to Upton, that he might read a part of it to Mr. St. George and Hope on his way home.

It was a cheerless October afternoon, I thought, as I drew the curtains slowly, looking down the darkening road, and listening for the quick tread of David's horse, which I knew so well, even far off.

Winnie startled me at last. "Listen, little mother, there is Day; but how slowly he comes!"

While the groom took his horse, I stood with the curtain still in my hand. Winnie ran out to meet him, and when I saw his head bent so low to her, as they came in, I knew he hid his face from me.

We dined quite merrily that evening. Often since have I wondered how we did it. David told us of everything at Upton, of what Mr. St. George said of Erle's letter, and of other things, but not one word of Hope; and even Winnie asked no question of her, she was so full of Erle's letter, over which we all laughed merrily and freely, and yet two hearts were sorely aching.

David was late in joining us in the drawing-room, and I did not look up as he came in.

"May I have one story before I go, Day?" Winnie pleaded.

"Are n't you tired of them, dear? they are all just the same."

"But make a new one."

"What about?" He asked it wearily, still avoiding my eyes as he sat down and leaned forward on his seat.

"Keep to our old favorite knight, only make it new; make him want something he cannot get."

"Will it kill him, then?"

"No, I think not."

"But, of course, you know, Day. Shall you make him go on living?"

"Well, yes, he wants it. Now, what else?"

"You must tell me. Is it a thing quite impossible?"

"Most impossible."

"Yes, go on. What is he going to do about it?"

"About it? nothing."

"Yes. And presently?"

"Presently, perhaps, he will grow a better knight, and be content, and not try to win anything more."

"Had he many other things?"

"Very many."

"Now tell me how it ended."

"I don't quite know yet, little one. I will tell you another time."

Seeing his weary look, I sent Winnie to bed at once; and then, when we were alone, I sat down upon the floor at his feet and cried bitterly. I could not help it—childish as it was—I had borne the suspense so long, and I think it is harder to bear for others than for one's self.

He stroked my hair with something of Erle's old, tender touch.

"Effie, little mother, I could bear it better if you did not mind."

The gentle, pitiful words only made it worse, and my sobs overpowered me.

"David, David, is it sorrow for you?"

"I think so, Effie; but I will not tell you quite yet, you look so sorry for me."

"Perhaps it never will be, Day."

"Yes, I know it is coming, Effie; I know the happiness is not for me. I will try to bear it as a man. Effie, do not make me weak."

The strange, far-away look in his eyes almost frightened me, and I thought, perhaps, it would be best to lead him to talk of it; so I asked hesitatingly, and he told me, little by little, of how he had spoken to Hope, and how she had answered him gently and kindly, but in a way that left him, he said, no shadow of hope.

"It would have ended forever, I think," he said, "but that Mr. St. George came in so suddenly. I wish it had; I would have buried these wasted years and gone out to Erle."

"And did she say — did she tell you why Day?"

"No; she heard me patiently, and seemed sadly, and said she had never thought that — that I loved her so—that we were too like brother and sister; and that she loved me too well to give me in return for mine any but a perfect and entire love—as she could not. Then I asked her if she would let me try to win it, and she begged me not to. And I asked her if there was any one—O, you know—and she said, with her clear eyes looking full into mine, 'There is no man in England, David, whom I love better, except my father.' I moved towards her in my passionate eagerness and was beginning a last appeal, when Mr. St. George came in, but—she had motioned me away, Effie. I must learn to see my future now without her; but it is so dark!"

"And, David, you must try again. That is due to yourself and Hope."

I did not feel at all comfortable as to the truth or wisdom of that speech, even then, but I felt that it must not rest there; I could not see my bright boy's life grow dark, and no effort be made.

That very night I wrote to Erle. Perhaps I felt that a talk with him would comfort me. Perhaps I felt too restless to sleep or read. Perhaps I felt some vague hope that that was the best step to take. At any rate I wrote so; and though I did not tell all, and tried that my letter should not pain him, I told him of what had passed. It seemed so natural among us to tell each other everything!

Then the days went on, and the year was drawing to a close. Though David tried to be his own bright self among us, even Winnifred noticed the change in him. He had lost his keen sense of enjoyment, and we seldom heard the old light ring of his laugh. So we waited, and it was with a sad and heavy heart that I stood with David at the open hall door—following our old, old custom—while the distant bells pealed in the Christmas morning, and the singers below us sang the old, old story which has shed its deathless glory on the Christmas tide.

"There is the star, David, waiting, as it waited over Bethlehem, to lead to God."

"Yes; but Effie, if He whose birthday we are keeping looks down upon the earth where He has lived, he must feel saddened, even there."

"David, I can feel the Christmas peace floating in upon us."

"And he came to give us life," David said, as if to himself.

I turned to him with a yearning in my heart.

"A new, abundant life, David—a new, abundant life."

He bent and kissed me tenderly, but his face was so sad that a few words came into my heart almost as a rebuke. "And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy!" We were not doing so as we closed the door with the Christmas in our home.

"Winnie, what a good thing the Christmas morning service is; I feel a perfect longing for it to-day."

"It always makes us feel better, doesn't it, Day?" she asked, with childish earnestness.

"Yes."

It did, and we came home with a new brightness round us, like a glory from the grand old Christmas message.

"Effie, here is the Oakley carriage."

David heard, and I saw his heightened color as he moved to meet them.

They came, they said, to fetch us all, and to bring their Christmas greeting, and though they gave it lightly and lovingly, I noticed Hope's face was very pale, and her eyes restless and wandering.

"I will leave Hope," Mr. St. George said at last, "while I go on and leave her presents with the rectory children. Winnie, will you come and see them?"

Winnie went gladly, and we three were left, as we so often used to be, as we so seldom were then. The carriage had hardly driven off, when Hope sat down on a low seat before me, which was turned away from David, and took a letter from her pocket. Her voice was very calm, very quiet.

"I had a letter from Erle this morning, and he inclosed this for you, Effie."

Now this was such an odd thing for Erle to do that I looked up with quick, sudden surprise, which Hope must have misinterpreted, for the crimson rushed to her face in a moment. Then—never glancing at David—I laughed a little forced laugh.

"I trust yours is longer than this, Hope;" but I held it as if it were very precious to me all the same. I saw a sharp look of pain pass over her face; but it was hidden from David, and her voice was unchanged.

"I will tell you of mine first, please. I think he writes to me because he knows that it is to tell something that will make you sorry; and he thinks it will be better told by me, because, he says, you are fond of me, and—" she made a little pause, and seemed to draw in her breath before she went on.

"He has decided not to come home any more; he loves that country better than his own. He has quite decided not to return; he is very happy there, he says, and he has—formed a tie—so close and loving in that new land, that—his life can be no more lonely. He says he leaves his sisters with one who can well take his place, and he trusts to me to tell them, because he always felt as if I were his sister; and I ought to have told you differently—but I could not. That is all."

David had risen as she repeated these words, and had come round where he could see her face. He asked one breathless, wondering question: "Did Erle write this?" and when she nodded, and made as if she would pass her letter to him, he turned away. I felt as if in a dream when I opened mine; there were only three lines, except the words of love at the end:

"*Dear Little Effie*—Hope will bring you this, and will tell you of my resolution. I have my own home now, and cannot leave it. God bless you all!"

Holding the letter tightly in my hand, I left the room. I did not mind what Hope thought. She would know what this was to me, and I must be alone. I don't know how the time passed; Winnie disturbed me at last, coming to tell me the carriage was waiting. I went down, calmly, knowing it was best that we should go, and when Mr. St. George spoke so easily and naturally of Erle's decision, of his attachment to foreign lands, and of his finding a wife there, the dreamy unreality of our misery melted away, and I began to wonder and doubt, with a strange mixture of happiness and pain.

The evening was pleasant, if not very cheerful, and when, at last, we found the snow was falling heavily, we were persuaded to remain till next day. Winnie, tired out, was glad to go to bed at once, and I was relieved, for I felt that our own home would seem dreary to us all that night.

"Effie," said Hope, rather suddenly, "papa cannot spend his Christmas night without music; let us sing something."

I could not understand Hope that night, so pale she was, until she spoke, and then flushing so suddenly; nor had I ever seen until then the little soft hands trembling and uncertain. She looked withal so beautiful as she began to play, that I glanced involuntarily across at David, as we stood each side her, but he was looking only at the music. Then we sang, "For unto us a child is born," we three—missing the voice that used to help. After that we sang Pergolesi's "Glory to God in the Highest." Then Hope, looking up at David, said, with strange thoughtfulness: "Go and sit down, please, both of you, while I sing alone."

"I know that my Redeemer liveth." Sometimes, even now, I hear the clear notes ringing in my heart, with their beautiful triumphant words! I did not look up until she had finished, then I saw that David had covered his face. Mr. St. George left the room after that; but Hope, hardly seeming to think of us, turned the pages of the book before her and sang, softly, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," then she came quietly from the piano.

"David," she said, stopping beside him, with a gentle touch upon the hand that hid his face, "does my singing make you sad?"

"Yes, sad—without hope." His low words were strangely distinct in the quietness.

"Can I sing anything that will give you hope?"

To him, as well as to me, the question sounded strange, ending so with her name. She had not thought of it till she saw the flush on his face when he looked up. He answered with trembling lips: "You can do it, Hope, with a few words and no music."

And she said, with a little smile, "Then it is easily given, David."

He was looking at her in such wonder and bewilderment that she moved away towards me.

"Effie, let us go to bed; this Christmas Day is gone forever. As papa would say, it is to-morrow morning already."

It was only a few days after that that David came in from Upton, and, meeting me alone, drew me to him, with a dancing light in his eyes. "Effie, little mother, kiss me in my happiness."

"Then it is so, Day?"

"Yes, it is so, thank God!"

* * * * * * *

Erle's home and mine. For away stretch the rich and boundless pastures; near me, at the open glass door looking out upon them, Erle is resting. The old look of pain is not so often on his face as it was when Winnifred and I came out to him nine years ago, and I do not feel afraid even when he tells me that sometimes he feels as if the resting time were near. I never cease to be grateful that I came; he says I have made this look like the happy old home where we grew up together, as we are together now.

We talk for hours of the old times, but never speak of that night when he read David's secret, and never of that letter that he wrote to Hope. There was the gladsome music of childish voices in their home before they heard who had been Erle's one close friend and lived with him as a brother. We found him here, a true and faithful companion. We watched him, after years went by, stealing Winnie's heart; we watched him stealing into hers; and we gave her to him without a fear or doubt of their happiness, and we looked into each other's eyes, and felt there need be no fear of further partings till the last one came. So we are together, here in our fair Australian home—the old number. We have cheering, loving news of our dear ones across the sea, and my life is full of happiness; yet I often sadly feel how powerless I am to reach the depth and earnestness of Erle's.

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