

The Democratic Advocate.

WESTMINSTER, MD., SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1889.

VOL. XXIV.-NO. 23.

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Original Poetry.

EARTH'S FAREWELL.

Written for the Democratic Advocate. BY OLIVE LITTLE.

That word dead and gone forever, While mine eyes are filled with tears, And who can say that it must never, While mine eyes are filled with tears.

Grief and pain no more can know them, Sacred memory of the past; Only in that heavenly mansion Shall my joys be known at last.

When in the grave I sweetly sleep, From my sad and lowly fate; Will there be one kind heart weeping Alone, all sad and lonely?

No, only Angels then will meet me In that heavenly home above; There I hope that I may meet thee, Where that are gone that I love.

In the memory of the living, Who will give one thought to me, When in life eternal living, I say earth farewell to thee. Silver Star, Maryland.

Select Story.

DIANA.

From Belgium.

Few people were better liked in Dimford than Miss Hardwicke of the Manor. She was kindhearted to a fault, hospitable, and generous. She was handsome, too, and came of a good old family. Besides all these claims to popularity, she had five thousand a year in her own right, which, you may be sure, did not make her any the less popular. It was entirely her own fault that at the age of sixty seven she was still Miss Hardwicke, for her admirers had been legion. The admirers of single ladies with £5,000 a year are, indeed, not far to seek, as a rule; but Miss Hardwicke in her young days, with her bonny face, and her warm, impulsive heart, was a bargain no man need have regretted, even had these possessions been her only dowry.

People said she wondered at her living alone in the grim looking Manor—for it was a grim old mansion, though the grounds were like fairyland—and a few sage gossips had been heard to predict, with many headshakes, some day the poor dear old lady would find herself murdered in her bed. For the Hardwicke diamonds and family plate were famous all over the country, and Miss Hardwicke—being a woman, and therefore self-willed—would not take the advice of her friends and well-wishers, and consign those valuables to the safe keeping of the bank. Indeed, to all appearance, the old lady's jewels and plate were the source of much keener anxiety to other people than to her possessor.

"What was the use of the solid old safe let into the wall in the east corridor," she would ask placidly, "if one could not have all one's belongings under one's roof?" At all rates these things remained, secure and unmolested.

On the April night on which my story opens, Miss Hardwicke was in quite an excited frame of mind, for she expected a visitor. Not that visitors were anything unusual at Dimford Manor; but this visitor was the daughter of Clemency Hardwicke's last surviving male relative, namely her nephew, James Darr, who had sailed for America twenty years ago, married there, and, quite recently, died there. His aunt had heard of his death—begging her to be a friend to his only child, Diana. Miss Hardwicke's heart warmed to the girl when she had never seen her, and she counted the days until her arrival with almost childish impatience and longing. Diana was not, however—the letter said—to proceed to Dimford immediately on her arrival in England, but to spend a short time in Southampton with a sister of her mother's. So Miss Hardwicke had been both surprised and delighted on the morning of the 4th of April to receive a telegram from her grandniece saying that she had just arrived in Liverpool and would come straight on to Dimford, arriving about seven o'clock. The old lady, therefore, had been very busy all day superintending with loving care the arrangements of the pretty rooms which had to be occupied by the somewhat stranger.

"So nice of the dear child," she mused, as she slowly paced up and down in the freights, "to come straight here instead of going to Southampton! I wonder if James has talked to me to her. Poor James! He was always a fine, warm-hearted fellow. I feel I shall love the dear girl."

As she glanced at the time piece for the twentieth time in as many minutes, carriage wheels were heard grinding up the drive, and a few moments afterwards the hall bell clanged loudly. Miss Hardwicke hastened into the hall, trembling with excitement. I tell you, she was just entering muffled in heavy wrappings.

"Auntie!" she exclaimed nervously. "Dear, dear Aunt Clemency!" As she spoke she threw herself into the old lady's arms, and sobbed convulsively.

Aunt Clemency's kind heart was utterly won by a moment, and then she took the lovely girl into her affection for ever. And indeed Diana was very winning and lovable. She was a handsome girl, too, with well-cut, if rather large features, thick brown hair, cut short in the then prevailing fashion, and a pair of splendid, heavily lashed eyes. But handsome as she was, her principal charm was her manner. Frank, loving, and impulsive, there was a quaint air of almost boyish audacity about her which was irresistibly captivating. She looked quite twenty, but in reality, as her aunt knew, she was only seventeen. Her conversation was bright and original, and by the time dinner was over Miss Hardwicke felt as though they had known each other for years.

"Am I like my father, do you think, auntie?" Diana asked as they sat in the drawing room after dinner.

"Well, dear," replied the old lady, "I can hardly tell. It is so long since I saw your poor father. But they tell me that he was a boy."

"I had a splendid portrait of my father," went on Diana, lifting her clear, dark eyes to her aunt's, "and letters, and papers, and that. But do you know I lost the bag they were in, on board the steamer, or between the docks and the railway station at Liverpool. I was provoked, because, with a wisp of little smile, 'I didn't know if you would take a strange niece on her own credentials.'"

"My dear!" said her aunt, deprecatingly. "I came over with such a queer girl," went on Diana, looking dreamily into the fire. "I felt liked her at first. She had soft dark eyes, something like yours, and a pretty countenance of manner. She wasn't bad looking, if she hadn't had a deep scar right across her left eyebrow. She said she had fallen and cut it when a child. Well, at first we were good friends, and quite confidential. I told her I was coming here to you, and then she told me she was almost herself. She said she was quite alone in the world, and was going to let me see—I think she said an actress."

Miss Hardwicke looked very grave. "My dear child," she remonstrated, "what a most objectionable acquaintance for you! I hope and trust that you—"

"Wait a minute, auntie," interrupted the girl, laughing. "By and by we had a kind of row" (certainly Diana's expressions were a little strong), "because—well, I went into my cabin, which was a little one I had all to myself, and found her with my bag open—the one I lost afterwards—turning over all my things, and she cried and told some fearful lies, which of course didn't deceive me. So we were rather cool after that. But it struck me as odd that she should disappear, because I had all my spare money in you. I never used to lock up things, but I will after this."

"Quite right," said Miss Hardwicke impressively. "We must never put temptation in a fellow creature's way. And my dear, you should not enter into conversation with strangers. A young girl cannot be too careful in traveling alone. I have no doubt she was some low, dishonest creature, whose object from the first was to steal my money."

"For one thing, I happened to come down the east corridor a little way behind her when she was suddenly caught her gown on the heel of her shoe, and nearly measured her length on the floor. Hastening to her assistance, I was petrified by hearing her use language which from the lips of a man would have been well—strong, to say the least of it; but from a lady, was simply appalling. I never was so taken aback in my life. Of course, she blushed and stammered some excuse, but, by Jove, that sort of thing takes a good deal of erasing."

Miss Hardwicke looked troubled and uneasy. "Yes, I remember I once did hear her say—"

"—'confound it!' she said, unhearingly; but she seemed so sorry and ashamed directly, and explained that it was a bad habit she had got into, and that her poor father had frequently used these expressions. She promised not to do it again."

"It was not 'confound it' she said upon this occasion," observed Mr. Lennox calmly. "Nothing at all like it. Another thing, by the way. I found her in the stable yard yesterday, laughing and joking in the most familiar manner with Jorkins" (Jorkins was the coachman). "New to the country, I thought, young as she was, she—she doesn't know what good breeding is, I think it is high time some one gave her a hint."

"You have taken a dislike to her, Chester," said his godmother, with a little sigh. "And I had hoped—had thought of your marrying her."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Lennox hastily. "I had as soon marry a circus rider!"

"At this moment Diana herself, dressed for walking—down the steps from the terrace, her hands in the pockets of the short jacket she wore, her hair looking as though it had been pitched on anything but a lady's head, and her eyes sparkling up into an unmistakable glare. And what was more, the air she whistled suggested much more of the music-hall than of the drawing room."

"My dear!" exclaimed the old lady, aghast. "Not at the air whistled, or its associations, but because the fact of a lady's whistling at all, and in such a manner, is the most unbecoming, if not, disgraceful, and seeing this, Miss Darr took her hands out of her pockets, ceased whistling, and linked her arm lovingly in her aunt's."

"Ah, auntie, I am a sad tomboy, I fear. Do tell me when I transgress the bounds of English youth ladyhood. You know," with a little giggle, "I have not had the advantage of most girls. Mr. Lennox," turning her eyes towards him, "I know you are often shocked at my ways. Please don't hesitate to tell me when I say or do anything very dreadful."

Mr. Lennox replied, somewhat stiffly, that he should not think of taking such a liberty, and that he would not do so. He turned off in the direction of the garden. Hardly had she died of his footsteps on the gravelled walk down the carriage, when she was coming rapidly up the avenue. To Miss Hardwicke's surprise, the vehicle seemed to be loaded with luggage. It stopped at the hall door, and a slight girlish figure in morning gown and hat, holding out a bag and feeling really vexed with her own conduct, stepped out of the carriage, and looking rather bewildered.

"Please, ma'am," he said hesitatingly, addressing Miss Hardwicke, "this young lady says she is Miss Darr, and that you expect her."

"What exclaimed his mistress in amazement. "Diana?"

Diana clasped her aunt's arm.

"Auntie!" she whispered breathlessly, "it is that girl—the one I told you of! The girl who travelled in the steamer with me!"

"What incredible, what barbed assurance!" uttered Miss Hardwicke. And quite with indignation she advanced towards the new comer, who was leisurely paying the cabman, but who, seeing the old lady approach, took a few steps towards her, and looked nervously and hesitatingly from her to Diana.

Miss Hardwicke bowed stiffly, and waited.

"But, auntie, it is not I, but she," said the girl, with an appearance of timidity.

"I do not understand you, I fear," replied the old lady with much dignity.

"But, aunt, I am your niece, Diana Darr," said the stranger in faltering tones.

Miss Hardwicke turned to the flyman, who was assisting to remove the luggage.

"Let those boxes remain where they are," she said. Then to the new comer she went on to say:

"There must be some mistake, I think. This young lady," laying her hand on Diana's arm, "is my niece, Miss Darr."

The girl's face flushed, then turned deadly pale, and she said, "I have spoken of you to my father, and he has spoken of you to me. I do not remember me," said Diana, with an accent of compassion in her fresh young eyes, and a shocked, troubled look in her eyes.

"I never saw you before," stammered the other in some confusion.

But Miss Hardwicke had heard enough. "You need not try to impose upon me, my shameless woman!" she exclaimed excitedly. "I know who you are and all about you! Go at once, or I shall send for a constable to remove you!"

The stranger looked considerably taken aback; then said, in indignant tones, "Certainly I shall go. I have no wish to intrude where I am not wanted. Good afternoon, madam." And, with a slight bow, she got into the fly again, and was driven rapidly away.

The dinner Mr. Lennox was informed of this barbed attempt to impose, and reproved Miss Darr gravely for having allowed herself to talk over and confide her family affairs with an utter stranger. Indeed, his remarks upon the subject were so graphic and eloquent, that at their conclusion poor Diana, to her aunt's dismay was discovered to be in tears.

"Oh, do forgive me, aunt," she sobbed hysterically. "I never thought of doing any harm. She seemed so friendly and innocent. I see now how very, very foolish I was. Then, rising abruptly, she hurried from the room. Miss Hardwicke glanced at her god-

son reproachfully, and that gentleman himself looked rather uncomfortable.

Diana did not appear in the drawing room for some time, and was very quiet and subdued all the rest of the evening. Chester did his best to make up for what he felt had been unbecomingly harsh, but without avail.

"You must forgive me," he said, quite touched by her evident dejection. "I did not mean to vex you so deeply. I spoke hastily, and perhaps a little unjustly."

"Oh, you are so quite right," she answered with a little sigh. "She was sitting on a low chair near the fire, her hands clasped in her lap. She despised fancy work of all kinds, and possessed the art of sitting perfectly idle in an easy and picturesque manner. Chester was certainly not in love with her; nevertheless, he could not but acknowledge that, if a little wanting in womanly grace and gentleness, she was, notwithstanding these deficiencies, a strikingly handsome young creature. And he had never seen her look so wistfully as she did to-night."

Miss Hardwicke awoke from her usual after dinner nap, she proposed that—in accordance with a promise which it appeared she had made Diana some time ago—the famous diamonds should be unearthed from the safe, and brought down stairs. Accordingly Chester was intrusted with the key, and one of the servants summoned to assist him in bringing down the brass box containing the jewels. They certainly were splendid diamonds, and as case after case was opened and their contents flashed and scintillated in the lamplight, Diana drew a deep breath of admiration.

"Oh, auntie they are matchless—magnificent—just as I said," she said, with a look of admiration on her face. "I have often heard my father speak of them, but I never dreamed they were anything like this!"

The old lady was pleased at the evident impression the treasures created.

"Come here, my dear," she said, with a loving smile, and making the girl kneel before her, she clasped the superb necklace round the slender throat and insisted on trying the effect of the whole suit. Even Chester uttered an involuntary expression of intense admiration at the result. Diana's cheeks were flushed to a deep pink, her splendid eyes shone in a lovely way, and she looked as though the fiery jewels gleamed in her hair, in her ears, on waist, neck, arms, and fingers, contrasting effectively with the filmy black gown she wore, and flashing out quivering rays of light like a thousand fireflies. She looked like some Eastern queen.

When the diamonds were again consigned to their velvet beds, Chester, at his godmother's request, took them up stairs again. Diana, who had quite recovered her usual good spirits, begged to be allowed to accompany him.

"I will help to carry the box," she said, laughing, "and besides, I do so want to see the effect of the diamonds on the coachman."

"What a curious key!" said Diana, watching attentively as Chester fitted it into the lock. "You have to press a little knob somewhere above, haven't you, before the key turns?"

"Yes," said Chester, smiling. "Who told you?"

"Auntie told me. She said no one knew the secret of it but herself and you. But as I am one of the family, she told me too."

As Diana looked at her aunt with a pretty air of importance.

As she spoke the door of the safe swung slowly back, and Chester stepped in. The safe itself was let into the wall, and was about the size of a very small room. All the Hardwicke plate, except that in daily use, was ranged methodically on the shelves which were lined with velvet, and modestly arranged in canvas leather bags. The bag containing the jewels had a special corner for itself.

Chester, having deposited the box in its corner, turned to his companion, who still stood in the corridor.

"Would you like to come in?" he said, holding out a hand, and feeling really vexed with her for her unreasonable prejudice against this lovely girl, who seemed to try so hard, at times, to be gentle and conventional.

"Take care. Neither you nor I can stand upright here."

Diana entered cautiously, for the ceiling was low, and Chester exerted himself so far as to unroll from their wrappings the carefully chosen punch bowls, flagons, candlesticks, &c., and to relate the many quaint legends concerning them, which the countless generations. Diana was deeply interested, but the lock, with its concealed spring and curious action, and the way in which the carefully chosen punch bowls, flagons, candlesticks, &c., and to relate the many quaint legends concerning them, which the countless generations. Diana was deeply interested, but the lock, with its concealed spring and curious action, and the way in which the carefully chosen punch bowls, flagons, candlesticks, &c., and to relate the many quaint legends concerning them, which the countless generations.

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