

COURAGE.

Because I hold it sinful to despond,
And will not let the bitterness of life
Blind me with burning tears, but look beyond
Its tumults and its strife;
Because I lift my head above the mist,
Where the sun shines and the broad breezes
blow,
By every ray and every raindrop kissed
That God's love doth bestow;

Think you I find no bitterness at all?
No burden to be borne like Christian's pack?
Think you there are no ready tears to find
Because I keep them back?

Why should I hug life's ills with cold reserve,
To curse myself and all who love me? nay!
A thousand times more than I deserve
God gives me every day.

And in each one of these rebellious tears
Kept bravely back, He makes a rainbow shine,
Grateful I take His slightest gift; no fears
Nor any doubts are mine.

Dark skies must clear, and, when the clouds are
past,
One golden day redeems a weary year;
Patient I listen, sure that sweet at last
Will sound His voice of cheer.

—Celia Thaxter.

A BACHELOR'S CHOICE.

"If you please, sir, could I speak to you a minute?"

Mr. Vail looked up from his pile of books and papers, not without a spice of impatience. No man likes to be disturbed at his work, and Mr. Vail was in no way different from his kind. Betsey Blossom gave her head a little toss.

"Because sir," she said, "I think you ought to know without delay that I am obliged to go down South to look after the orange orchard that my half-brother, John Dorey, bought for me. John never hadn't half sense, and he's married a Florida girl that's a dead match for him, and between 'em both things is goin' to rack and ruin. And if I expect to have anything left out of my investment I'd better look sharp for it. So, if it wouldn't be any inconvenience to you, sir, I think p'raps Persis Bolton could be induced to take my place as housekeeper here."

"I will take the matter into consideration."

Mr. Vail's words were slow and incisive as drops from a thawing icicle, and even Betsey's volubility was checked as she withdrew her unwelcome presence.

"He ain't more'n half pleased with the notion of Persis Bolton," thought she. "Well, it serves him right. He'd ought to get married long ago."

Adrian Vail waited until the heavy "chump, chump" of Betsey's heels had descended the cellar stairs. Then he pushed his papers impatiently back, and shut down the silver filigree lid of his inkstand. Once rudely interrupted, the chain of his ideas were not easily knit together. He rose and paced the study floor once or twice, and, strange to say, his thought ran in the same current as those of Betsey Blossom.

"It serves me right, I ought to have got married years ago."

On the floor an expensive tiger skin was eaten in great patches by the devouring moth. Across the foliated plaster cornices overhead long spider webs were weighted down with dust like swinging black threads: the window curtains were faded in streaks, and some one had forgotten to take away a branch of rare orchids, once exquisite beyond description, now a mere mummified drift of dry leaves in a coisonee vase. If ever a place need the eye and hand of a mistress, it was Vail Towers.

Something in the dried-up orchids seemed to strike the chain of association where-with the poet asserts "we're darkly bound."

Adrian Vail remembered who had brought him that bunch of flowers more weeks ago than he cared to remember. The shadow of a smile hovered on his lips—a certain softness came into his long-lashed brown eyes.

"Yes" he repeated to himself, "the woman spoke truth for once. I ought to be a married man. I've fallen too much into the habit of regarding myself as a foregone case of old bachelorhood. But I'm not yet forty years old, and Ellice Harral is by long odds the prettiest girl in the neighbourhood. Why shouldn't I marry Ellice Harral? The old Towers would look like a different place with Ellice's Scotch-gold head glancing through its gloomy passages, her blue eyes lighting up that sepulchral old front drawing-room. Why on earth have I never thought of it before? I'll go over to Doctor Harral's this very morning. Ellice is too lovely a human rose to remain long ungathered on the stem, and I must be prompt in my measures. Yes, it's the strangest thing in the world that it never occurred to me before. There was once a time—and half a smile crept over his face—"when I remember fancying myself in love with Thankful Trevor, that quaint little dove-eyed Puritan. We danced the Virginian reel together one night, and I took her, with the rest of the party, to gather trailing arbutus the next day in Linsley Woods. There she is now, I declare!"

For before he was aware of it he had come opposite the latticed windows of the little Trevor cottage—and there, sewing behind the diamond-shaped panes sat Thankful her-

self, the autumn sunshine glinting on the reddish gold of her hair.

"Not a bit older than she was twenty years ago," thought Vail, as he lifted his hat. "It's rather strange, now one comes to think of it, that Thankful Trevor hasn't married, too."

In a moment the window-sash slid softly up. Miss Trevor had evidently misconstrued his momentary pause.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Vail?" she asked. "My big datura tree is all in blossom—the one your mother gave me so long ago. Do come in and look at it, won't you?"

Vail acceded promptly to the softly-worded request. All of a sudden it had occurred to him that of all people he knew, Thankful Trevor was the daintiest housekeeper and the most womanly woman—the one of all others to advise as to this new step he was contemplating.

"Yes," he said absently, regarding the tall, flourishing bush, "it is a beauty. Do you know, Thankful—" he paused a second, wondering if he ought to have said Miss Trevor instead—"I want to ask you a question."

"About the datura? Would you like a slip?" she asked, innocently eager.

"No; about something more important still. About my future life. I have just made up my mind—what do you think? Thankful?—to get married."

Thankful Trevor stood quite silent, her gold-brown head slightly drooping, a faint pink flush on her cheek, just the color of the trailing arbutus they had hunted together so many years ago. Vail colored, too—he was getting a little embarrassed in spite of himself.

"And so," he went on, in a sort of blind desperation, "I was going to ask you—"

All in a second, as it were, she had glided forward and laid the sunny head against his arm, her two hands on his shoulders.

"Oh, Adrian, you need not ask me!" she said softly. "You might have known it before—that I loved you, Adrian! Always, dear, since the old days—and your mother knew it too, and when she gave me the little datura bush, she told me that some day she hoped you would give me something dearer still—your heart! Dear Adrian, I am so happy! Her words have come true at last!"

Vail drew a quick, convulsive breath. He bit his lip, but in an instant he had fully resolved what to. He could no more fling off the proffered love of this shy, pretty creature, this sweetheart of long syne, than he could have repulsed a white dove who had flown into his window for shelter during a thunderstorm.

"My dear little girl," he murmured—and Thankful's ear never detected the subtle ring of regret in his tone, "Heaven help me to be worth of your choice!"

At the same moment the door-bell tinkled softly.

"It's a visitor, Adrian," whispered Thankful, hurriedly adjusting the tendrils of red-gold hair on her innocent brow, and straightening one or two crumpled ribbon bows.

"Wait here under the datura tree until I come back. I won't be long; and oh, Adrian I have so much to say!"

He sat down on a blue-ribboned wicker chair under the long white trumpets of the datura. Thankful had made this back porch into a sort of improvised conservatory, with purple clematis vines, pots of odd South American cactuses, and the tremulous fronds of rare Jamaica ferns. He had a sort of stunned feeling, yet it was not altogether painful, except for the certainty that he should never say those words to the beautiful Ellice Harral, which he had already begun to study within himself. He felt like a widower before his time—as if Ellice Harral had somehow been wronged of her rightful heritage, and—

"I thought I'd tell you first, Thankful, for you have always been so sweet and good to me," Ellice's over-high flute-voice was saying behind the green Venetian blinds. "We are to be married in a month, for he has just received the command of one of the big ocean steamers, and delays are quite out of the question. And we have been engaged for a year."

"Then it is Captain Carlyon?"

"Who else should it be? Kiss me, darling. Tell me that you are glad!" coaxed the beauty.

"Oh, Ellice, I am so glad," Thankful's fervent voice responded. "More especially because—" and here the soft accents became so low that the unintentional eavesdrooper could no longer follow their murmur—but Ellice's high, sweet voice succeeded them in a peal of laughter.

"What!" she cried in the cruel audacity of her thoughtless youth: "not to that old bachelor! Why, he's a hundred years old, at least!"

"He's not forty yet," said Thankful, indignantly. "He is just thirty eight."

"He's got lots of grey hairs around his temples," assented Ellice, derisively.

"What if he has?" retorted Thankful—and Adrian Vail smiled as he thought of the little white dove, of which Thankful always reminded him, with its feathers wrathfully puffed out. "Many people grow prematurely grey, why shouldn't he?"

"Oh, well, that's just as one feels about it," said Ellice, carelessly. "If you're satisfied—but Claude Carlyon is only six-and-twenty, and as handsome as Apollo!"

"He can't be handsomer than Adrian," protested loyal Thankful. "I may tell Adrian, mayn't I?"

Ellice Harral hesitated a little.

"Why—I don't want everybody to know yet," she hesitated—ye fates! and she called Adrian Vail everybody. "But, of course, if you like to tell him, dear, as a profound secret, for I want to take all the villagers by surprise—"

And so the sweet high voice died away toward the front door, and mingled with the distant sounds of the out-door world—and Thankful Trevor came back again to the porch.

Adrian was standing up now to receive her. There was a new light in his eyes—His arms were held wide open.

"Come to me, darling," he said, "and bless my future life with your priceless love!"

How near he had been to making a fatal error! But in those last few minutes the scales had fallen from his eyes, and he saw life as it really was. Ellice Harral had vanished from his future like some unsubstantial shadow, and in her place remained the truest and sweetest of all prizes, gentle little Thankful Trevor!

"I never deserved such a piece of luck," he said to himself.

Reason and Dogma.

It is a strange fact that the tendency of the modern mind is to reject dogmas, which rest upon authority in the very domain wherein authority holds good, and loosely to admit them on the strength of that same authority, in that other domain wherein strict logic proves that authority ought to constitute their basis. The most popular form of Christianity to-day is that which professes to adhere to the spirit of Christ's teaching and to disregard the letter, or, in other words, to admit the sentiment and to set aside the doctrine. Be good, be honest, lend a helping hand to your neighbor when in need, and you have accomplished all that the law and the prophets require of you, all that Christ requires of you, and as for those positive tenets which separate Christians into warring camps, the less you think and talk about them the better. They are the bane of the Christian religion, they have been the prolific source of dissension among its votaries, and have in the long run led to the most deplorable results. Besides they are not only purely speculative, but they utterly lie outside the pale of demonstration. Not only is the dogma of the Trinity one of pure speculation, in no way calculated to influence our daily conduct, but it is utterly impossible by any process of reasoning to prove it. Thus reason and speak many *soi disant* Christians to-day, and they imagine not for a moment that they are reasoning and speaking at random. For, in truth, not only is dogma the basis of our practical conduct, not only is it the sap, and root; and trunk that nurture the tree and make it blossom and bear fruit, and diffuse a delightful fragrance all round, but it appeals to our intellect through authority and not through reason, as these people seem to think it should.

The essential point of their mistake, indeed, lies right here, that they profess to allow to reason alone a deciding voice in all matters appealing to human mind for acceptance, and profess to reject authority as a motive of certitude. Now, the Catholic Church frankly admits that authority is the only ground, but a sufficient one, on which rest the mysteries of our Faith, that is an adequate motive of belief, that doctrine matters, or supernatural truths, are accepted on its validity as such a motive, and that reason is incompetent to deal with them. On the other hand the church jealously guards the sovereignty of human reason in its own domain, and teaches that truth in the natural order should be admitted which have responded to its test and have not been proved by a strictly logical process. Thus the Catholic Church justly relegates the doctrines of religion to the domain of authority and all truths of the natural order to the province of reason.

Now, what course do the champions of modern thought, so called take? They precisely reverse the above order, and while, as we have just seen, they reject religious doctrines because they do not respond to the touch-stone of reason, they admit an infinite variety of truths in the natural order on the sole grounds of authority. One has but to say to such people that this or that view of teaching a scientific matter has the indorsement of Huxley, or Haeckle, or Wallace, or Romanes, and they embrace it at once and unquestioningly. And the wider grows the scope of the inductive sciences the more and more marked is this tendency to substitute authority for rational demonstration in matters where the latter should be naturally looked for. We do not by any means wish to insinuate that the authority of scientific experts should be rejected, for we know how utterly impossible it would be for each single individual to verify for himself every truth of science, but we merely wish to point out the inconsistency of those who are willing to accept even more than the legitimate testimony of scientific experts, while they pool-pool the authority on which religious truths repose.—*Catholic Review*.

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