

Poetry.

HARVEST HYMN.

"The autumn and the chilly wind Blows black across the barren hills; The withered leaves their cold graves find...

Literature.

TEMPTATION:

The Lady of Ashurst.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was six miles to the station, and the time consumed in going over the ground was spent by Frank in gloomy anticipations of the future.

He plainly saw that, if necessary, even his own would be used to sink Bessie's fate beyond his reach, Frank felt placed inferior as to what might happen to himself...

The carriage reached the station just as the train was leaving, and a group of travellers were standing on the platform among whom Frank recognized Bessie.

When they parted Mr. Welby said to him in a few days, Frank, and said to Mrs. Leon Ashley that Mrs. Welby and my daughter will always maintain the acquaintance of herself and Miss Evelyn Ashley as soon as possible.

"Thank you sir; I will be sure to tell them." "And, Frank, I say," cried out Rufus—"inform that pretty dark-eyed fellow who calls herself your cousin, that I am coming to throw myself at her feet. I think we shall make a charming miniature couple, from the description I have had of her."

"I thought people preferred their opposites. You should fall in love with a goddess, Rufus." "While you run off with a fairy, I suppose."

The carriage drove up and the war of words ceased; the two girls promised to see each other every day on which it was possible to do so, and they parted. When Bessie found herself seated beside Frank and on her way to Ashurst, a sudden feeling of shyness came over her.

"I am glad that you have come with unfeigned courage and unbroken courage to comfort your father's will. It is of iron, Bessie, and I much fear that he will yet find means to bend you to his purpose.

"He has crushed Evelyn's resistance; he has separated her from me as effectually as if an ocean rolled between us, and you will yet see what he will accomplish toward bringing you into subjection."

"He may try, but he will find that when he and I meet on this battlefield, it will be as Greek encounters Greek. I owe him nothing; he has done nothing for me; gives me nothing—then why shall he assume authority over me? I shall resist it from the very first, and continue to do so to the end."

"You give me new life, Bessie: new powers of resistance to the tyranny that has acted as a blighting incantation upon me. But let me advise you on one point—do not too soon show your repugnance to comply with your father's wishes. He admires your style of beauty, and rude as he is, you may chance to win the power to soften him a little in our favor."

"Thank you, Frank, for furnishing me with the carte du pays before I encounter this formidable party of mine. 'Forewarned is forearmed,' you know, and I intend to crush down my native impetuosity and become as wary as the fox, as subtle as the serpent, in my intercourse with him."

"As if you could do that! I should as soon expect the leopard to change his spots, as such an out-spoken virago as you are to be circumspect and prudent with your exacting father," said Frank with a touch of his old playfulness.

"Never fear, Frank; I can manage Minny, and I will make her help me to manage papa. See if I don't. You and Evelyn shall yet walk hand in hand and breathe life, and I will lead my will with the wisp existence with my painter ladie, helping him to bear the narrow fortune fate has allotted him."

"The sound of wheels had brought her out and in another moment the darling of her heart was clasped in her arms. She murmured: 'Oh! my precious one, do I hold you to my breast again—safe, well and happy as I would wish you always to be? My Bessie—my darling—I never knew how dear you are to me till we were separated. I have looked forward to this hour of reunion with a yearning wishfulness that words may never express.'

"I am as happy as a queen, Minny, and glad to get back to you again; oh! so glad; for I have missed you every day, though I had so much that was novel to amuse and interest me."

"Mrs. Ashley unbound her clinging arms and holding Bessie off, looked at her charming face with a fullness of joy she rarely felt. In this first moment of meeting it was happiness indeed to have that radiant creature near her—to hear the sound of her voice—to watch the light of her lovely eyes. She murmured: 'You are more charming than ever, Bessie. But oh! my love, do not fascinate Mr. Ashley so much as to induce him to take you from me. I could not bear that.'"

had been prepared for her, but she was too much excited to eat, and after drinking a cup of coffee, she sat till a late hour with Frank and Mrs. Ashley, who seemed never tired with gazing on her sparkling face, never weary of listening to her beloved voice.

"She had many incidents to relate—some burlesque, others sentimental, but she never once referred to the subject of her last letter to Mrs. Ashley, nor to the recent conversation held between Frank and herself."

"Bessie was silently gathering her energies to defeat every effort made to alter the destiny to which she had sacredly pledged herself, and she did not care to argue on a subject on which her mind was already made up."

"For so young a girl she had remarkable force and decision of character, and had Mrs. Ashley understood the resolute yet generous nature with which she looked at death, she would at once have changed her tactics and accepted the alternative offered her, painful as it was—much as it might compromise her own interests in the future."

"They parted at a late hour of the night, and Bessie slept as soundly as youth and fatigue usually do. It was late the next morning when she awoke, and after making a graceful toilet, she descended, to find Mrs. Ashley and Wentworth waiting breakfast for her."

"The latter looked up from his paper, and exclaimed: 'I declare, you are greatly improved, Bessie. If you are really improved, you really found the elixir of beauty in your northern tour.'"

"Thank you, coz.; I fancy that I have only rubbed off the rust of my country breeding, and gained a fashionable air; that is all."

"If you have lost nothing good, and gained no evil in your absence, Bessie, I shall be more than ever your friend. I have certainly improved, and I think Mr. Ashley can do no less than approve of your appearance. I have dispatched a messenger to announce to you my arrival, and to say that we will go there immediately after breakfast. I have already ordered the carriage."

"A slight smile stole over the face and Bessie assumed her place at the table without reply. The smoking coffee, light muffins, and fresh bread from the Potomac were ready to eat. It was late the next morning when she awoke, and after making a graceful toilet, she descended, to find Mrs. Ashley and Wentworth waiting breakfast for her."

"The latter looked up from his paper, and exclaimed: 'I declare, you are greatly improved, Bessie. If you are really improved, you really found the elixir of beauty in your northern tour.'"

"God forgive you for speaking thus to me, Bessie. Some day you may recall your words, and feel remorse for having uttered them. I do not claim a parent's authority over you, I certainly feel for you the affection of one. But I forgive you for wounding me so deeply, and I promise never to press this subject upon you again."

"Now you are my own dear Minny again," she joyfully exclaimed, Bessie, "and I beg ten thousand pardons for the ill-treatment I uttered. Under no circumstances could I ever cease to love my own dear Minny, though I foolishly said so."

"Mrs. Ashley permitted the ruby lips to touch her cheeks, but she avoided the loving eyes that sought forgiveness for their owners outbreak of temper, and she arose and left the room without another word."

"She will withdraw from the contest, Bessie, but she will silyly set your father on; see if she don't. I begin to understand Minny's tactics better than she thinks I do."

"Oh, Frank, how can you—how dare you suspect our dear Minnie of such deceit as that! I can't be so easily deceived myself capable of double dealing as she thinks of her."

"Perhaps I'm wrong here, but we shall soon see. When a stout, lowly over your father's horizon, it seldom takes long to burst."

"Bessie made an ineffectual effort to smile, as she replied: 'You have made Mr. Ashley as great a bugaboo to me as Minny used to be to me with when I was a little child; but I won't be scared at him; I won't tremble in his presence; and above all, I won't marry Mr. Francis Wentworth at his command.'"

"For which resolution Mr. Frank Wentworth returns you his most earnest thanks," he replied, "bowing with mock reverence before her. 'Only stick to your colors, Bessie, and maybe that little sensitive plant, your sister, will pluck up courage to think that her soul is her own and not permit it to be shrivelled into a nutshell under the tyrannical yoke she bears. Oh, Bessie, be a true friend to my poor Evelyn, and I shall love you better than I did in my life.'"

"I will try my best, Frank; but here is the carriage, and I must run up stairs for my nuba, and put on my prettiest looks to disarm the fierceness of the terrible old man I am going to meet. I must be a strange piece of humanity, Frank, for I feel more as if I were a conflict with a rattlesnake than making myself ready to meet and embrace a father I have never known."

"With these characteristic words, she dashed from the room, but presently returned, accompanied by Mrs. Ashley, looking grave and dignified enough to have won the approbation of the fastidious and travelled Leon Ashley himself."

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