

Poetry.

A GEM.

Into my heart a silent lock
Flashed from the careless eyes,
And what before was shadowy took
The light of summer skies;
The first-born love was in that look,
The Venus rose from out the deep
Of these inspiring eyes.

My life, like some lone, solemn spot
A spirit passes o'er,
Grew indistinct with a glory not
In earth or heaven before;
Sweet trouble stirred the haunted spot,
And shook the leaf of every thought
The presence wandered o'er.

My being yearned and crept to thine
As if, in times of yore,
Thy soul hath been a part of mine,
Which claims it back once more;
Thy very self no longer thine,
But merged in that delicious life
Which made us one of yore.

There bloomed beside thee forms as fair,
There murmured tones as sweet,
But round thee breathed the enchanted air,
'T was life and death to meet.
And henceforth thou alone wert fair,
And, though the stars had sung for joy,
Thy whisper only sweet.

Select Tale.

THE SCOTCH PASTOR'S WIFE.

"Come hither, Annie," and Lord Maxwell's fair daughter glided to his side, and sat down on a stool at his feet. It was a pleasant scene—that quaint old drawing room, with its dark cornices of richly carved oak, its chair covers and tapestry wrought in the most approved fashion of our grandmother's days, its black walnut reading desk, with the large family Bible chained on it, and the hassock standing before it, on which stood Lord Maxwell's chaplain, the young and goodly George Herbert, was wont to kneel at hours of morning and evening prayer. In a high arm chair sat Lord James Percy Maxwell, a worthy representative of the gentleman of the old school, with his flowing wig, bright knee-buckles, and blue coat and golden buttons. At his feet nestled the sweet and winsome Annie.

We are sorry, for the romance of the thing, dear reader, that we cannot tell you Annie Maxwell was peerlessly beautiful; but we must content ourselves with saying in broad Scotch, that she was a "sweet and sonsie lass."

Her eyes were very blue, and their gentle mirth was softened into a look of demure propriety by their long, golden fringes. Her brow was neither high nor low, though it was sweet and womanly; and her hair, of a rich brown, was brushed smoothly away from her sunny face, and knotted behind with a black ribbon. Her close-fitting dress of blue merino suited exquisitely well her clear, soft complexion; and altogether, she was as winsome, cheery a little maiden as ever graced hall or cottage; and so thought Lord Maxwell, as, with her hands crossed over his knee, she sat and looked into the fire.

"Annie, pet bird, how would you like to be married?" The girl said nothing, but the blush deepened on her cheek, and a half smile played upon her rosebud mouth. "Say darling, would you not like to be mistress of some stately castle, and be guided through life by some kindly hand?"

"Nay, father, dear"—and now the smile faded from about her lips—"nay, father, ask me not to leave you; do not send me away from Maxwell Grange, for I fain would dwell here always!"

"Nay, darling," and with a fond pride, he smoothed back her sunny hair. "nay, but you must leave some time, or Annie"—and his voice grew solemn—"some time I must leave you, and I would not that it should be to loneliness. Annie, my child, I am an old man, and must soon die."

But she twined her white arms around his neck, and besought him not to leave her his motherless girl.

"Nay, my dearest, be calm," and he gently put her from him. "Nay, love, I must leave you, and Annie, will you let me leave you the wife of Lord Say? He is good and noble, and the proudest elderdom in England would be his wedding present to his sweet Scotch bride! He has been to see me again to-day, and I have promised him my influence in his favour."

"You are twenty-two now, dear child, and I fain would see you happily married before I die!—look up Annie, and tell me will you be Lady Say?"

But her only answer was a gush of passionate tears, as she hid her fair face on his bosom.

"Annie,"—and this time his voice trembled, though one could not tell whether with grief or anger—"Annie do you love another?" Still there was no answer, but the flush deepened on the maiden's cheek, and the long lashes drooped over her tearful eyes.

"You do, Annie! Who is the wretch that has dared to steal that innocent heart. Speak, child; your father commands it?"

And this time the maiden spoke. Rising from his arms, she stood erect, her slight figure drawn to its fullest height. "Father, he is no wretch, no villain!—I love George Herbert!"

"George Herbert, forsooth!"—and the proud man looked at her fiercely, as if he would have dashed her from his sight. "And so he is the pitiful traitor who has stolen into my house, in Christian garb, to ruin the happiness of my innocent child? Villain!—but he shall answer for this!"

"Father," and the young girl stood before him, her white hand laid upon his arm, and his own haughty spirit looking forth from her clear blue eyes—"Father, George Herbert is no traitor;—never has he said to me, by word or act, that he loved me; and if I love him, it is because seeing how good and noble he is, I cannot help it; and, should he never love me, I will go down to my grave unmarried; for I love him, and, as God hears me, I will marry no other!"

"And as God hears me, you shall marry Lord Say!"

"Never!" and Annie Maxwell seemed to move involuntarily.

"Hear me, girl, hear me! If you do not make up your mind to wed Lord Say within ten days, then will I turn George Herbert from my door, and drag you to the altar by force, if it must be so; for the word of a Maxwell can never be broken!" and, turning away, he entered the door of his own room, and locked himself in. O, how many times, in after years, did James Maxwell regret those harsh words! How many times did his brow throb, and there was no gentle hand to lave it; his heart ache, and there was no soft voice to whisper words of consolation.

Annie Maxwell turned away, with her heart swollen almost to bursting, and, ascending the long, oaken staircase, entered George Herbert's study. The young pastor sat there, his head buried in his hands, and seemingly in intense thought. Annie stole gently to his side, clasped her arms about his neck, and pressing his lips to her brow, murmured, "George, you love me; I cannot tell how I learned it, but I know it; and I have come to give myself to you, to ask if you will indeed call me your little wife. George, dearest, tell me!" and she sank into his arms.

For a full moment, George Herbert held her there in that embrace; then brushing back her sunny hair, he looked into her eyes and spoke:

"Annie Maxwell, you have well said—I do love you more than all things else—more than life itself. God knows how I love you, Annie, but I thought not to have told you this;—the vows of God are upon me, and I cannot do so great a wickedness as to ask your father's daughter to share a lot so far beneath her!" and he put her mournfully from him, and bent his eyes upon the floor.

"Oh, George, you will not cast me off!" and Annie Maxwell knelt on the floor at his feet, and told him of Lord Say, and her father's fierce words and determined threats. George Herbert knew Lord James Maxwell well; he knew that he would do all he said; and he raised Annie from the floor, and whispered—"Go down to the library dearest. I will soon be with you; this is a hard matter, and I dare not decide without much thought and prayer."

And for two weary hours George Herbert knelt in fervent supplication in his little study, and Annie Maxwell sat the while in the library down stairs, weeping—not noisily, nor wildly, but quietly, and very still—the bitter tears of unutterable anguish.

At last the door entered, and George Herbert entered, and folding her to his heart, pressed his lips to hers in a first loud passion kiss, and whispered, "My own, my dearest—my little wife—look up, my sweet one, for already I feel that God has given thee to me. Sad as 'twill be for thee to wed against thy father's will, 'twould be worse, ay, ten thousand times worse, for thee to do such solemn mockery as give thy hand where thy heart goes not with it. 'Tis but a humble lot I have to offer thee, my darling. I have a brother, who is vicar of a small and poor country parish; he will understand me, and believe that I am acting aright. I can be his curate. Say, Annie, darling, canst thou be a poor curate's wife? thou a nobleman's daughter, my own, my beautiful!" Very trustfully, sweet Annie Maxwell laid her hands in his, and answered, like one of old, "Where thou goest, I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!"

Once more he caught her to his heart, as he whispered, "Then, dearest, we will go forth to-night!"

It was an humble wedding, that of gentle Annie Maxwell, in the small country town of St. John.

There was no diamonds on her brow, no orange-blossoms in her hair, and no delicate and costly veil floating over her like a cloud. You would have been puzzled to tell what were the "worldly goods" with which George Herbert had "vowed" his beautiful bride, as he led her into her new home—a little white cottage over which the woodvines and climbing roses had wrought out a fairy poem.

And here sweet Annie Maxwell reigned, undisputed mistress both of her bird's nest home, and the heart of her husband. For a time Lord Maxwell had searched for her, but, on hearing of her marriage, he inured himself in his castle, a prey, some said, to regret; others, to a proud, fierce shame, that he had been compelled to forfeit his plighted word to the bold Lord Say who brought home another bride, on short wooing, and the world jogged on as of old.

There were just as many tears in it as before—just as many sighs—but there was more happiness, for, in a sweet nook, far away from the din of the great world-life, George Herbert and his Annie rejoiced in their pure young love.

They were poor, and it made his heart ache sometimes that his sweet bride must lead so different a life from that to which she had been accustomed; and yet his eye kindled with joy to see her bright face, as she went dancing about his home like a fairy, or to hear her merry voice, instructing the good humoured Scotch lassie, who was the only assistant in their simple home.

And their evenings—O! what happy hours they had then! In the morning there was housekeeping to attend to, and sermons to write; in the afternoon callers to be entertained, and parishioners to be visited; but the evenings—ah! then they had only to be happy. How proudly George would smile, when he had drawn the round study-table before the brightly-blazing fire, and wheeled the study-chair beside it, and his sweet wife would lay her head on his bosom, sometimes smiling, and sometimes too intensely happy even for silent smiles, she would look into his eyes, with the bright joy-tears trembling on her long lashes! And there they would sit, with the fire-shine brightening over them, and the kitten lying at their feet and purring.

Sometimes he would lay her fair head back on his shoulder, and sing to her, till her heart went beating time to the music of his voice; and then she would talk to him, in her own sweet tones, of all things good and beautiful, of poetry, and the wondrous songs that fairy whispers seemed thrilling through the cloisters of her own pure spirit.

And, at last, they would kneel together, with his fond arm clasping her, and bless God for all this happiness; and, though their earthly father was far away in the gloom of his stately palace, love-rays floated over them from the throne of their Father in heaven,—angels watched over them, and they slept like the blest.

Time passed on, and another visitor came to gladden their little circle—a very tiny one indeed, but O, so dear; and now their evenings were merrier. How proudly the young father held his little Lillias, and Annie—love had smiled all the jealousy out of her heart, and she heeded not that another occupied her old time-worn place in her husband's arms.

And when, at nine o'clock, the nurse came to take Lily away, what kisses and blessings and good nights there were, and then, as in the old time, would the girl wife nestle fondly in her husband's arms.

Three years passed by, and Lillias had grown strangely beautiful. She inherited her father's classically regular features, and her mother's deep, soft eyes, and golden hair. Hers seemed "a face to look upon, and pray that a pure spirit kept her."

She loved the beautiful, too, with all her mother's passionate devotion; and would sit for hours in her little high chair, drawn to the window, and look forth with her spiritual eyes, over the waving woods and distant mountains, rising, dim and soft, up into the clear blue sky; until Annie would almost tremble lest she should see angel-faces in the clouds, and hidden voices should call her away from the earth-land.

But no—she lived, grew, and brightened before them, until she was nine years old; and, by a succession of providential events, George Herbert had been called to the pastoral charge of the church of which Lord Maxwell was an occasional attendant. The young clergyman had looked forward with dismay to the prospect of meeting the grim old lord; but they had been settled in their new abode for three weeks before they saw him.

One evening Lily and her nurse went forth for a long walk over the hills.

The girl had left the beautiful child for a few moments, in order to exchange a few words with an old friend; and the sweet Lily had wandered onward till she thought herself lost, and sitting down by the road side, wept bitterly.

Presently a carriage stopped before her, and an old gentleman alighted, who, apparently, had been attracted by her beauty.

"Why do you cry, dear child?" he asked, at the same time caressingly brushing back her curls.

"Because, please sir, I am lost," and the little maiden looked up into his face with her spiritual eyes.

"Well, dear child, will you go with me? I have nobody to love me, and I will give you a beautiful castle, and pearls and diamonds, and pictures. The sweet child had never heard of pearls or diamonds; but she had seen a castle, and she thought pictures must be pleasant things, because Mamma had said that their new home, at Sutherland's rectory, looked like a picture; and the old man's words seemed very beautiful.

But she thought a moment, and answered:—"No, thank you, sir, I cannot go with you; Papa would cry so, and then I must go home, and say my prayers at Mamma's knee." And, as she spoke, there was music in her voice which thrilled the old man's heart strangely, and made him wonder he had not noticed it before. Almost mechanically he asked, "And what do you pray for, little one?" more for the sake of hearing her voice again, than from any curiosity as to what would be her answer.

"For Ma, sir, and Pa, and Grandpa!" and she smiled into his face with her large, trustful eyes.

"And what do they call you, child, angel?" and he lifted her fondly to his bosom.

"Lillias Herbert is my name, sir, but Papa calls me his Lily?"

"My child, my child," and the old man covered her sweet face with tears and kisses, as he told her he was that unseen Grandpa for whom she had prayed these many years.

The fair Lily looked at him with all the innocent trust of childhood, and whispered, "Please, sir, won't you go to see Mamma, sir?"

"Yes, child-angel. I will go to see your mamma, and you shall come and live at Maxwell Grange."

And so the sweet child was carried home in that handsome carriage, and the old man raised his Annie, when she would have knelt at his feet, and whispered, "It is I that should ask you to forgive, but I will not; I'll only ask you, darling, if you'll come again and gladden the old man's home?"

And there were tears and smiles, and joyful kisses, and once more Annie Herbert's gay laugh echoed through Maxwell Grange; and little Lily went roaming over its broad halls, in her snow-white garments, like a beautiful spirit.

O, what a blessing seemed to brighten all their lives! and the proud old man learned lessons of wisdom and purity from the little one whose white arms were wreathed about his neck.

One evening, George and Annie left them together—the old man and the beautiful child-angel—and sought the little study which had witnessed their first strangely-spoken vows of love.

There was a bright fire burning, as in the old time, and the old books were neatly ranged, their gilded lettering glowing in the fire-light; and still, as then, George Herbert sat in the chair; but this time he did not put his Annie from him; there she lay, her head resting on his arm, peacefully as an infant in its mother's arms. They had been speaking of the old time, and George had been recalling all the fond pride with which he had watched his bustling little wife in those early days, till a tear glistened in Annie's eyes, as she answered, "Ah! dearest, I am happy with you, and Lily, and father, in my dear old home; but the jewels he has given me are not half so sweet as the roses you used to twine in my hair; and, amid all my after life, memory will never sing me a pleasanter tune than those dear old chimes of our love in a manse."

Miscellaneous.

DEATH OF FATHER MATHEW.—Father Mathew, the renowned Apostle of Temperance, died at Cork on the 9th of December. His career has been remarkable, and his influence among his countrymen in Great Britain and America will long be felt.—Theobald Mathew was born in Thomastown, Ireland, Oct. 10, 1790. He was left an orphan at an early age, adopted by an aunt and educated in Kilkenny Academy, and at Maynooth. He was ordained to the priesthood at Dublin, having previously entered upon his philanthropic labours among the poor. The curse of whiskey, brought so fearfully to his notice among these wretched people, roused him to unwonted enthusiasm, and he determined upon a crusade against the demon