POETRY.

MY NEIGHBOR.

My neighbor was a widder, an' she hed a run-down farm.
An' her cows an' pigs an' chickens done a mighty lot o' harm
To my fields ajininin', an' I stood it quite a while,
Till I wouldn't be imposed on in no such kind o' style.

So, I looked my very maddest es I walked up to her door,
Till she looked up at me smilin' while a-washin' up the floor,
An' her cheeks was red as roses an' her hair es black es night;
I forgot to scold an' sauce her, for she seem ed so sweet an' bright.

But my hand was to the plow now, an' it wouldn't never do
To forgit them desperdations jes' by looking at her shoe.
So I gathered up my anger an' I said: "Now, Mrs. Brown."
An' my tone put out her eyes' light an' the lashes they fell down.

But I ain't no man for foolin' an' I went right on to say
How her pigs et all my melons an' her cows et tons of hay;
How her chickens scratched my corn out, an' I wouldn't hev it so,
Gittin' harder all the time, like a madman will you know.

Then the widow she looked up, with a tear-drop on her cheek,
An' a somethin' in her throat that wouldn't let her speak.
But she sobbed an' cried out in a kind o teary tone,
Thet she hed no one to help 'er, an' was poor an' all alone.

An' my hand was off the plow then an' reachin' out for hern,
I hed learnt a sudden lesson that I never thought I'd learn.
Well my scoldin' was a failure, sein' what I thought to do,
For her pigs and cows are all here, an' the widder's with 'em, too.

SELECT STORY.

SEVILLE TOWERS TRAGEDY.

By the author of 'The Gypsy's Revenge,' 'A Woman Scorned,' etc.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUED.

Mrs. Seville felt a cold stab at her heart. It came involuntarily and went almost as quickly, and she could not have explained why she felt it. But there was a certain assumption of arrangement of affairs between Mr. Seville and Miss Curtis, to her own exclusion, suggested by Edna's speech, that she resented sharply.

"You forget Miss Curtis, that I endorsed my husband's plan."

"I suppose so, naturally," answered Edna, "I only meant to say that he and I arranged it first."

She spoke so quietly, that though she scored another hit against the mistress of the house, Mrs. Seville did not know whether the remark was made innocently or intentionally; and rather to give the girl the benefit of the doubt than unnecessarily crush her, she permitted it to pass. Edna, however, was stabbing her wilfully. After a few more passages-at-arms, in which Edna always came off triumphantly, Mrs. Seville left her.

"I see you do not require any help," she said.

"No thank you, dear madam," said Edan, but still she never desisted in her occupation of trying to make herself charming, and Mrs. Seville could not help feeling, as she returned to her husband, that instead of seeing after Miss Curtis' comfort, as she had intended, Miss Curtis had made her feel decidedly uncomfortable and ill at ease. It was early to form an opinion, but she could not help remarking to Mr. Seville, in confidence, which she looked upon as merely another way of thinking aloud, that she had a kind of inward presentiment, that Miss Curtis would not suit.

"Just like you women," he replied, in dissatisfaction. "You are so hard on each other, especially if your adversary is pretty. I should have thought Lottie, you would have been above petty jealousy, and tried to make it pleasant to the daughter of the man who was literally murdered in your husband's stead."

The sentence was so unjust that Mrs. Seville's eyes filled with tears; but she was wise enough not to argue. A woman always loses in argument, or if she wins, loses her husband's love, which is too dear a sum to pay for victory.

"Miss Curtis is indisputably very pretty," she said, running her fingers through her husband's hair, as she fondly knelt by his chair; "but——"

"Come, I will not hear any 'buts' at present, Lottie," declared Mr. Seville yawning. "We must take time to judge of Miss Curtis' merits. She seems a well-meaning girl, and if she cannot teach Gwen and Nora much more than they have ever been set to, even in the 'Stepping Stone to Knowledge,' she must indeed be ignorant. Give her a fair chance and then turn her away if she does not suit you, but don't bother me."

How was it that, at that moment, before Edna had been in Seville Towers half-an-hour at the utmost, an inward conviction seized Mrs. Seville, that turning Miss Curtis away might not prove such an easy matter as she supposed it would be.

But none of these fears showed themselves in her face, as she took her place at the head of the table. Very well, and quite at her best she looked in evening attire. She also had great *savoir-faire* in all the little details which gave her an assumed position. Yet it was by some means that she had not anticipated, that Edna, in getting seated near Mr. Seville at the foot, took precedence of Muriel, which was far from being the arrangement Mrs. Seville had proposed.

Mr. Rayner consequently, as he kept close by Muriel, was not at her right hand. Still, it was a lively dinner-party. Mr. Thompson flirted to the best of his ability with the very lively girl whose position he could not make out, for while Seville treated her with attention, Mrs. Seville was evidently cool. But as for whom she was, mattered little enough to him; she was exceedingly pretty, and that was more to the point for a few hours' amusement.

"I came to see how far your husband had recovered, Mrs. Seville. 'Pon my word, I think he looks younger than ever."

This subject of appearance was always a sore one with Mrs. Seville.

"You are very young are you not?" queried Edna of her host, letting the softness of her glance rest upon him in a dangerously fascinating way. "You look many years younger than Mrs. Seville."

"But I am not though," replied Mr. Seville curtly. "My wife is considerably my junior.',

"Impossible!"

He raised his eyes to her face just then, as she intended he should, and there was something in its fresh innocent prettiness that caught and softened his feelings.

"You must not let her hear you say that," he observed in a kindlier tone. "My youthful appearance is a great grievance to my wife."

"So it would be with me uncle," interposed Muriel, her attention for a moment from Mr. Rayner, whose presence was making dinner and Seville Towers one dream of happiness to the young girl. "Aunt Tottie is so much younger than you, that she has a right to resent being considered the elder. Not that she does though; she is too kind. But I do think she looks younger than you myself; her brow is smoother. Percy don't you think that Aunt Lottie shows that she is younger than Uncle Lennox?"

Luckily for Mr. Rayner's equanimity of mind, he was spared answering the question. Mrs. Seville, who had been chatting with Mr. Thompson, at that moment gave the signal to retire into the drawing-room. Although she had not overheard the drift of the conversation, yet she did not approve of Miss Curtis' assured tone. Certainly she had behaved well at table, better, in fact, than Mrs. Seville had anticipated, that is, she had made no breaches of manner in handling her knife and fork, etc. But then Mrs. Seville would have condoned any fault caused by ignorance or shyness, sooner than have overlooked Miss Curtis' very-much at-home self-possession. At least, so she began to tell herself as she watched, though what she most dreaded was incapapability. We always value what we cannot get, or depreciate that which comes readiest to us.

"Who is she, Seville?" queried Thompson, estatically, directly the men were alone.

"She is the children's new gov."

"You don't say so! What a shame! She is the most delightfully charming creature. I really am quite smitten."

"Marry her then and emancipate her from slavery," laughed Mr. Seville, passing the wine. "I expect a rich husband is her object in coming here."

"If she wants riches, she must not look at poor Jack Thompson. If she would share poverty, she may perhaps have the chance."

Mr. Seville told his guests who she was, and the reason she was with them. He explained everything as she had told him, which, so far from being a veracious account, was a very highly-colored one. The tale thus related, made an indelible impression on soft Jack Thompson's heart, who, like all very tall, overgrown men, had a very sensitive spot there for the woes of weak, fragile woman.

"She is too pretty by half to be earning her living, and it's hard lines for a girl to come down in the world just because her father happened to receive the blow that was meant for another," said Thompson, meditatively. "I think I'll win her. 'Tis a pity you are not free, Seville, for evidently you are the favorite."

"A pity indeed the," he said, well pleased at the compliment.

"Don't you go, Jack, and forget Bella Needham," warned Percy Rayner. "You are the most arrant flirt that was ever born, and you do it all out of kindness. Kindness, forsooth! Cruelty is mild to it. I can never understand a man being gone on every pretty face he sees."

"Neither can I," said Mr. Seville.

"A man is a fool who marries a plain wife," said Mr. Thompson.

"Speak for yourself," snapped Mr. Seville.

"Why, Lennox—man, you never took my remark personally?" exclaimed Thompson, with ready apology. "Your wife is not plain—her face is so clever and kind—she——"

"Tottie is plain, nevertheless; and I chose her, though I am no fool."

"Any man would envy you your possession, Lennox," declared Thompson, with the easy gallantry of one who had travelled much. "Besides, in any remark, present company is always an exception."

But speak as he might, the frown was not lifted off Mr. Seville's brow. He hated any allusion to his wife's appearance, and often fancied, as in the present instance, that a slight was intended, when no such intention existed.

"Mrs. Seville has an intellectual face," observed Mr. Rayner.

"My wife suits me at any rate," declared Mr. Seville curtly; and her looks are my business, I presume."

After which conversation flagged; and later on, Thompson told Rayner how Mr. Seville had once nearly had a duel on this very same subject, but that Mrs. Seville had heard of it and laughed her husband out of it, declaring that, if she were as ugly as sin, she was not going to risk her husband's life over championing her appearance.

So it was more than unfortunate that the same topic should have been revived that evening, the first of Edna Curtis' presence at Seville Towers. She met Mr. Seville's scrutinizing glance as he joined them in the drawing-room, and her heart beat high as she noted it. What would she have said if she had known that he was drawing comparison already, between the governess' pretty face and his wife's good, but plain one?

"Whist or a round game, Lennox?" said Mrs. Sexille, approaching him a few moments afterwards, and laying her hand with a quiet air of proprietorship, on his shoulder, as she bent fondly over his chair.

"Why don't you ask somebody else but me," he replied shortly; and wondering greatly what had put him out, she passed on to Muriel. She little thought of the future that lay before her, and how that day a match was first laid to a mine which was slowly but surely to work its way on till it ended in a big explosion, causing a tragedy by which all Great Britain was to be moved to its very centre.

CHAPTER V.

An extract from Edna Curtis' diary:

"June 14th.—A month ago to-day, I came here. Am I glad I came. If changing scraping poverty for ease and luxury, third-rate society for first-class, over-work and harass for rest and enjoyment were my object, then indeed I ought to be glad. I came here on trial—pshaw!—so she says; but I don't mind a word she utters, she could not turn me out if I did not choose. Do I choose? No! I have failed miserably in my errand so far. With the prayer book, I can conscientiously say, I have done what I ought not (or did not intend), and have left undone what I wished to do. Perhaps to a certain extent, it is well, for at least I have gulled her. She did not like me at first and in regret and commiseration at the injustice of her false estimate—oh! the joke of it—she is ready to humble herself at my feet.

"'Do stay a little longer, dear Miss Curtis,' she says in her fawning way. 'You are not quite wh.. I require for the children'—stupid dolls, the image of herself, more's the pity—'you are inexperienced, as I could only anticipate, knowing your age, and Gwennie and Nora require a firmer hand,' etc, etc., for she goes on like that by the yard. So I am to stay a little longer. As if I am going to listen to her on the matter. And how her husband trusts her! how he depends upon her opinion! how he watches her about! I am sure that first evening I came, he drew comparisons between Mrs, Seville and me, that were not flattering to her. I could read it while we played an insane game at loo, which that duffer, Thompson, took such patient efforts to teach me. I believe I might have caught that Thomson if I had elected. He was not half a bad sort, and he is the only one who has taken thoroughly to me at Seville Towers. But I found out he was poor, and that was an effectual clincher to any love on my part. Whatever my future husband is, he must have riches. An angel without money will never get me; a demon with bags of gold would stand a better chance. I missed Mr. Thompson when his short visit ended, though I was rejoiced to see that sneaky Rayner hurrying off with him. The house felt clearer, the atmosphere brighter without that man. He was always studying one's face with a pair of unpleasant, dissecting eyes, and I believe the effect of his scrutiny was, that he warned Muriel against me; but I will be even with him yet, or else my name is not what it is. The commencement of my stay here was so lively, I had hopes that a full swing of gaiety was opening up before me—that a road, strewn with excitement and bustle, would land me into a meadow crowned with a rich marriage. But all such expectations have died away. Mrs. Seville herself confided in me, with a happy blush on her plain face, that 'she and her husband were so united, that they never desired outside society.'

"'So wrapped up in each other,' as Muriel puts it, 'that they only have a few stiff dinner-parties,'—which is almost a necessity for a country lawyer, 'and that but three times, at the most, in the winter.'

"Thompson came merely as a friend of Mr. Seville's, anxious for his welfare after such a lamentable catastrophe, and partly urged to fix an early date by Percy Rayner's impatience to see the love of his heart. And they are engaged 'indefinitely' now. What fools! happy fools' No chance for years and years to have anything to live on but love. They have my best wishes that they may starve on it. If I had the least inclination to admire one single trait in Mrs. Seville, it would be her perfect housekeeping. With the unexpected and additional influx of three, the evening I made my debut here, there was not the slightest hitch in the table arrangements; we might have been expected and prepared for. It is this capability of hers, that makes her husband depend so entirely on her judgment—that, and her manner of fussing him up as if he were the king of Europe. She says he is more that to her. Certainly, I never saw any woman so infatuated with her own husband. Men seem to like this. 'Where's my wife?" is his first question on coming home 'What does Lottie say?' if he consulted on any point; or 'does your mother approve?' when those wretched children, who hug him and hang round his neck, plead for any treat. And I thought I could oust her so easily from her position. Wait, Edna! patience my dear; Rome was not built in a day. 'Slowly, but surely," is your motto. Undermining takes longer than any other work, but it is powerful when it is properly effected. I am not going to be baulked—see if I am.

"What must I say about the children? To be candid, I will confess that children, from their very nature, are hateful to me. I think this world is spoilt by children, nasty, tale-bearing, little simpletons. Supposed to be so innocent, and yet for ever betraying every secret and every movement about them. Fine innocence, indeed! If I were a member of parliament I would have every creature born into the world, hidden away in convents or country establishments, till they were quite twenty years old, and never let loose to worry their elders and pester society as they now do, to the detriment of everyone else. Of all the children, however, that ever cumbered this earth, and to whom all the household have to bow as if they were beings of superior mould, are these children at Seville Towers.

"'Such sweet dears!' says Muriel of them.

"'Such hateful little nuisances,' I think.

"Gwennie is ten, and already knows infinitely more about all the 'ologies written (though hitherto they have only been taught by their mother, who is a sort of living Hayden's dictionary) than I do. Her innocent girlishness has some time since discovered my inneficiencies. I told her that the Falls of Niagara were in Asia—just as though it mattered where they were so long as we were not near. But if she had been going to be swallowed up immediately, she could not have jumped up in a more excited way, as if my words had electrified her, and declared she would go and tell mamma. I had hard work to keep my hands off her. 'Not yet, not yet,' I kept whispering to myself; but I inflicted a hundred lines and a promise of dire punishment if she ever repeated a blunder which was merely the result of a troubled mind over-burdened with regret at leaving my mother and home. Then Nora, aged eight, whose sharpness is the pride of the family, looked at me, her elbows on the table supporting her elfish face, and said—

"'Mamma told me to be good to you because your ma did not love you. Why are you sorry to leave her? Did you not come here sooner than mamma wanted, and stopped our visit to Aberystwith, only because she turned you out?"

"I was mesmerised for a moment, then I jumped up and shook her till she had scarcely breath left in her body, for I know I had none left either, or I should have gone on longer. Luckily she was so bewildered it frightened her. Gwennie's eyes even seemed to be starting out of her head. But they are such awful children and allowed to speak out their opinions so freely, that unawed, she turned to me and said, in a solemn, convinced way, that was terrible:

"'Mamma never treated us like that when she taught us. I shall ask her to teach us again. Nora and I don't like you, Miss Curtis.'

"'You horrid child,' I replied hysterically. 'I am sure there is no love lost between us, you are most dreadful to manage. Your mother spoils you; but if she thinks she is going to set you against me, by running my mother and me down, she—she——'

"I ended abruptly, because I heard footsteps approaching in the passage. My hot passion died down as if by magic; and considering that I should appear in a better light as the oppressed rather than the oppressor, I burst into a flood of tears. I was only just in time, for Mrs. Seville with a smile on her face, entered. It died away as I buried my head in my handkerchief; and on her inquiring what was the matter, both Gwennie and Nora began a garbled report. They spoke so excitedly and loudly, that of course it was impossible for their mother to make out a single word.

"Hush dears,' she said; 'I am afraid you have been naughty. Let Miss Curtis explain; I am so sorry you have made her unhappy.'

"'But we——' 'She said, mam——.' Again she checked them and bade me speak. I suppose this was very magnanimous conduct on her part. But explain to her!—it went against the grain indeed.

"'I do hope my children are not causing——'

TO BE CONTINUED.

"Yes, madam," said the clerk in the furniture store, "you will find that bedstead as represented. It is full width, made out of the best walnut, and, you can look for yourself, there's no man under it."

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Not finding it, they turned their attention to the old man, and proceeded to torture him in the hope of securing information regarding his hoard. Fire was applied to the soles of his feet, but notwithstanding the agony endured, he refused to give them any information, remarking that they might go ahead and kill him, but he would not tell where the money was. Seeing that it was useless to torture him further, the fiends bound and gagged the old man, and then commenced another search of the premises, this time going about the work in a more systematic manner. As a result they finally ran across something more than $150, and taking this amount they made off, leaving their victim bound and gagged.

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