WHAT IS A WIFE.

BY A CYNIC.

What is a wife? A fellow soul
That shares our joys and troubles—
But halves our pleasures on the whole,
And all our sorrow doubles.

What is a wife? Our reverse side,
Grim shadow; twin existence;
For let good luck or ill betide
We still have one subsistence.

What is a wife? A plant that twines
Young olives round our table;
And bids us joy in our hard lines,
And love them—if we're able.

A wife is—what? A double prize;
Much angel, but more Tartar;
Bliss which exalts us in such wise
As martyrdom the martyr.

Our slave while we her will obey;
Our solace when contented;
Our ruin when she has her way;
Our torment when prevented.

Our friend when fickle Fortune smiles;
Our light when noon oppresses;
Our hope when we have done with fears—
Wet blanket in successes.

What is she? To sum up, a wife
Is—speaking with urbanity—
The harsh, strong, bitter pill of life,
And blister of humanity.

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES.

A Novel.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

PART I.

CHAPTER X. (continued.)

"Under this arrangement," the Baroness struck in, laughing, "our good hosts have passed successfully over their two steps, and may have themselves ready for their third."

"Things have gone happily with them," said the Count. "In their case death has done with a good will what in others the consistorial courts do with a very bad one."

"Let the dead rest," said Charlotte, with a half serious look.

"Why so," persevered the Count, "when we can remember them with honor? They were generous enough to content themselves with less than their number of years for the sake of the larger good which they could leave behind them."

"Alas! that in such cases," said the Baroness, with a suppressed sigh, "happiness is only bought with the sacrifice of our fairest years."

"Indeed, yes," answered the Count; "and it might drive us to despair, if it were not the same with everything in this world. Nothing goes as we hope. Children do not fulfill what they promise; young people very seldom—and if they keep their word, the world does not keep its word with them."

Charlotte, who was delighted that the conversation had taken a turn at last, replied cheerfully:

"Well, then, we must content ourselves with enjoying what good we are to have in fragments and pieces, as we can get it; and the sooner we can accustom ourselves to this the better."

"Certainly," the Count answered, "you too have had the enjoyment of very happy times. When I look back upon the years when you and Elward were the loveliest couple at the court, I see nothing now to be compared with those brilliant times, and such magnificent figures. When you two used to dance together, all eyes were turned upon you, fastened upon you, while you saw nothing but each other."

"So much has changed since those days," said Charlotte, "that we can listen to such pretty things about ourselves without our modesty being shocked at them."

"I often privately found fault with Edward," said the Count, "for not being more firm. Those singular parents of his would certainly have given way at last; and ten fair years is no trifle to gain."

"I must take Edward's part," struck in the Baroness. "Charlotte was not altogether faultless—not altogether free from what we must call prudential considerations; and although she had a real, hearty love for Edward, and did in her secret soul intend to marry him, I can bear witness how sorely she often tried him; and it was through this that he was at luckily prevailed upon to leave her and go abroad, and try to forget her."

Edward bowed to the Baroness, and seemed grateful for her advocacy.

"And then I must add this," she continued, "in excuse for Charlotte. The man who was at that time suing for her, had for a long time given proofs of his constant attachment to her; and, when one came to know him well, was a far more loveable person than the rest of you may like to acknowledge."

"My dear friend," the Count replied, a little pointedly, "confess, now, that he was not altogether indifferent to yourself, and that Charlotte had more to fear from you than from any other rival. I find it one of the highest traits of women, that they continue so long in their regard for a man, and that absence of no duration will serve to disturb or remove it."

"This fine feature, men possess, perhaps, even more," answered the Baroness. "At any rate, I have observed with you, my dear Count, that no one has more influence over you than a lady to whom you were once attached. I have seen you take more trouble to do things when a certain person has asked you, than the friend of this moment would have obtained of you, if she had tried."

"Such a change as that one must bear the best way one can," replied the Count. "But as to what concerns Charlotte's first husband, I could not endure him, because he parted so sweet a pair from one another—a really pre-destined pair, who once brought together, have no reason to fear the five years; or be thinking of a second or third marriage."

"We must try," Charlotte said, "to make up for what we then allowed to slip from us."

"Aye, and you must keep to that," said the Count; "your first marriages," he continued, with some vehemence, "were exactly marriages of the true detestable sort. And, unhappily, marriages generally, even the best, have (forgive me for using a strong expression) something awkward about them. They destroy the delicacy of the relation; everything is made to rest on the broad certainty out of which one side or other, at least, is too apt to make their own advantage. It is all a matter of course, and they seem only to have got themselves tied together, that one or the other, or both, may go their own way the more easily."

At this moment, Charlotte, who was determined once for all that she would put an end to the conversation, made a bold effort at turning it, and succeeded. It then became more general. She and her husband and the Captain were able to take part in it. Even Ottilie had to give her opinion; and the dessert was enjoyed in the happiest humor. It was particularly beautiful, being composed almost entirely of the rich summer fruits in elegant baskets, with epergnes of lovely flowers arranged in exquisite taste.

The new laying-out of the park came to be spoken of; and immediately after dinner they went to look at what was going on. Ottilie withdrew, under pretence of having household matters to look to; in reality, it was to set to work again at transcribing. The Count fell into conversation with the Captain, and Charlotte afterwards joined them. When they were at the summit of the height, the Captain good naturedly ran back to fetch the plan, and in his absence the Count said to Charlotte:

"He is an exceedingly pleasing person. He is very well informed, and his knowledge is always ready. His practical power, too, seems methodical and vigorous. What he is doing here would be of great importance in some higher sphere."

Charlotte listened to the Captain's praises with an inward delight. She collected herself, however, and composedly and clearly confirmed what the Count had said. But she was not a little startled when he continued:

"This acquaintance falls most opportunely for me. I know of a situation for which he is perfectly suited, and I shall be doing the greatest favor to a friend of mine, a man of high rank, by recommending to him a person who is so exactly everything which he desires."

Charlotte felt as if a thunder stroke had fallen on her. The Count did not observe it; women, being accustomed at all times to hold themselves in restraint, are always able, even in the most extraordinary cases, to maintain an apparent composure; but she heard not a word more of what the Count said, though he went on speaking.

"When I have made up my mind upon a thing," he added, "I am quick about it. I have put my letter together already in my head, and I shall write it immediately. You can find me some messenger, who can ride off with it this evening."

Charlotte was suffering agonies. Startled with the proposal, and shocked at herself, she was unable to utter a word. Happily, the Count continued talking of his plans for the Captain, the desirableness of which was only too apparent to Charlotte.

It was time that the Captain returned. He came up and unrolled his design before the Count. But with what changed eyes Charlotte now looked at the friend whom she was to lose. In her necessity, she bowed and turned away, and hurried down to the summer-house. Before she was half way there, the tears were streaming from her eyes, and she flung herself into the narrow room in the little hermitage, and gave herself up to an agony, a passion, a despair, of the possibility of which, but a few moments before, she had not had the slightest conception.

Edward had gone with the Baroness in the other direction towards the ponds. This ready witted lady, who liked to be in the secret about everything, soon observed, in a few conversational feelers which she threw out, that Edward was fluent and free-spoken in praise of Ottilie. She contrived in the most natural way to lead him out by degrees so completely, that at last she had not a doubt remaining that here was not merely an insipient fancy, but a veritable, full-grown passion.

Married women, if they have no particular love for one another, yet are silently in league together, especially against young girls. The consequences of each an inclination presented themselves only too quickly to her world-experienced spirit. Added to this, she had been already, in the course of the day, talking to Charlotte about Ottilie; she had disapproved of her remaining in the country, particularly being a girl of so retiring a character; and she had proposed to take Ottilie with her to the residence of a friend, who was just then bestowing great expense on the education of an only daughter, and who was only looking about to find some well-disposed companion for her—to put her in the place of a second child, and let her share in every advantage. Charlotte had taken time to consider. But now this glimpse of the Baroness into Edward's heart changed what had been but a suggestion at once into a settled determination; and the more rapidly she made up her mind about it, the more she seemed to flatter Edward's wishes. Never was there any more self possessed person than this lady; and to have mastered ourselves in extraordinary cases, dispose us to treat even a common case with dissimulation—it makes us inclined, as we have had to do so much violence to ourselves, to extend our control over others, and hold ourselves in a degree compensated in what we outwardly gain for what we inwardly have been obliged to sacrifice. To this feeling there is often joined a kind of secret, spiteful pleasure in the blind, unconscious ignorance with which the victim walks on into a snare. It is not the immediately doing as we please which we enjoy, but the thought of the surprise and exposure which is to follow. And thus was the Baroness malicious enough to invite Edward to come with Charlotte and pay her a visit at the grape-gathering; and, to his question whether they might bring Ottile with them, to frame an answer which, if he pleased, he might interpret to his wishes.

Edward had already begun to pour out his delight at the beautiful scenery, the broad river, the hills, the rocks, the vineyard, the old castle, the water-parties, and the jubilee at the grape gathering, the wine-pressing, etc., in all of which, in the innocence of his heart, he was only exuberating in the anticipation of the impression which these scenes were to make on the fresh spirit of Ottilie. At this moment they saw her approaching, and the Baroness said quickly to Edward, that he had better say nothing to her of this intended autumn expedition—things which we set our heart upon so long before, so often failing to come to pass. Edward gave his promise; but he obliged his companion to move more quickly to meet her; and at last, when they came very close, he ran several steps in advance. A heartfelt happiness expressed itself in his whole being. He kissed her hand as he pressed into it a nosegay of wild flowers, which he had gathered on the way.

The Baroness felt bitter to the heart at the sight of it. At the same time that she was able to disapprove of what was really objectionable in this affection, she could not bear to see what was sweet and beautiful in it thrown away upon a poor paltry girl.

When they had collected again at the supper table, an entirely different temper was spread over the party. The Count, who had in the meantime written his letter and dispatched a messenger with it, occupied himself with the Captain, whom he had been drawing out more and more—spending the whole evening at his side, talking of serious matters. The Baroness, who sat on the Count's right, found but small amusement in this; nor did Edward find any more. The latter, first because he was thirsty, and then because he was excited, did not spare the wine, and attached himself himself entirely to Ottilie, whom he had made sit by him. On the other side, next to the Captain, sat Charlotte; for her it was hard, it was almost impossible, to conceal the emotion under which she was suffering.

The Baroness had sufficient time to make her observations at leisure. She perceived Charlotte's uneasiness, and occupied as she was with Edward's passion for Ottilie, she easily satisfied herself that her abstraction and distress were owing to her husband's behavior; and she set herself to consider in which way she could best compass her her ends.

Supper was over, and the party remained divided. The Count, whose object was to probe the Captain to the bottom, had to try many turns before he could arrive at what he wished with so quiet, so little vain, but so exceedingly laconic a person. They walked up and down together on one side of the saloon, while Edward, excited with wine and hope, was laughing with Ottilie at a window, and Charlotte and the Baroness were walking backwards and forwards, without speaking, on the other side. Their being so silent, and their standing about in this uneasy, listless way, had its effect at last in breaking up the rest of the party. The ladies withdrew to the rooms, the gentlemen to the other wing of the castle; and so this day appeared to be concluded.

TO BE CONTINUED.

AN Irishman who had just landed, went to see his sister who was married to a Yankee. The couple lived very happily together, and when Pat came, the gentleman took him over his place to show it to him. Pat, at the evidences of prosperity, said to his brother-in-law:

"Begorra, you are very happy here with this fine property to live on; me sister hed good luck, intirely, so she hed, in getting you for a husband."

"Ah, yes," responded the married man, "we would be very happy but for one thing."

"And what's that?" asked Pat.

"Ah, Pat," returned the gentleman; "I am sorry to say that we have no children."

"No children!" exclaimed Pat; "thin, begorra, it's not my sister's fault, for she had two before she left Ireland, and that is the raisen me father slat her to America!"

THERE was a row at Oconto, Wisconsin, lately, in which a Bohemian was stabbed only eighteen times. He was united in life, but in death he is sadly divided.

BREVITY iz the child of silence, and a grate kredit tew the old man.

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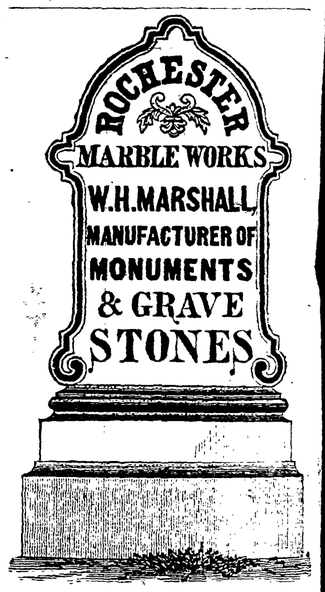

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