Old Friends

The old, old friends!
Some changed; some buried; some gone out of sight;
Some enemies, and in this world's swift fight
No time to make amends.

The old, old friends—
Where are they? Three are lying in one grave;
And one from the far-off world on the daily wave
No loving message sends.

The old dear friends!
One passes daily; and one wears a mask;
Another, long estranged, cares not to ask
Where causeless anger ends.

The dear old friends,
So many and so fond in days of youth!
Alas that Faith can be divorced from Truth,
When love in severance ends.

The old, old friends!
They hover round me still in evening shades;
Surely they shall return when sunlight fades
And life on God depends.

—*W. J. Linton.*

IN THE FIRELIGHT GLOW

"Miss Thirza told me if you called, sir, to ask you if you'd go up and see Miss Amy, as she's all alone."

A shade of reluctance crossed the face of Charles Rickard, but he answered:

"Certainly, if she is well enough."

Perhaps it was selfish, but it seemed hard to him just then to leave the sunny brightness and fresh air for the depressing atmosphere of an invalid's chamber, especially when he had come expecting to see some one brighter and fresher in his eyes than the November sunshine and leaf rustling breeze.

He entered, however, with a smile, and was soon seated opposite Amy's couch, noting with inward compassion that the dark eyes were more sunken, the face more wan and eager, than when he last occupied that place.

"Poor little thing!" he said, crossing one leg over the knee of the other, and staring at her. "How long have you been left alone?"

"Only a few days," said Amy, returning his gaze with one so piercing that he felt as though she must read his inmost heart. "I don't mind. I like it. They have gone to London to be shown—at least, Tita to be shown, and Thirza to take care of her."

Rickard uncrossed his legs.

"To be shown!" he repeated.

"Yes. You know that Madelon and her husband were coming from the Cape, didn't you?"

He nodded, and thoughtfully jingled the pendants to his watch-chain.

"Well, they are here—children and all; but must go back on the third—in about a fortnight. And they have brought back with them an unreasonable brother of Fred's—Bernard by name—who wants to marry a wife and take her back with him."

She paused, but her auditor said nothing.

"So Madelon thinks it would be very charming if he would take a fancy to Tita. So it would for her. She came down here and told us all about it; what a nice fellow her brother-in-law is, how handsome, and a great deal more, and has carried those two back to London to see him."

"Pf! How stupid!" as there was a crack, and a little gold pencil-case, declining to be bent any farther, came in two pieces.

"Very," said Amy, drily. "You should break yourself of the habit of fidgeting things about. For my part I hate handsome men."

"No—do you?" and he called up a look of concern that brought a sudden laugh from the invalid.

"Don't be uneasy. I, at least, don't include you among that class."

"Does any one?" he asked, with indifference.

"How can I tell? Probably not. By the way, this Mr. Bernard Colvin has eight hundred a year."

"Has he?" said Rickard, adding, in an undertone: "Confound him!"

"For shame!" said Amy, whose ears were unnaturally quick. "What made you come in this afternoon?"

"What indeed!" he said, trying to fit together the broken pencil-case.

Amy was silent, and when he raised his eyes after a few minutes he saw in hers a gleam of tears. He looked away quickly and reddened with compunction, though ignorant of what he had said to hurt her.

"I suppose it was to hear about Tita," she said, sharply, recovering herself. "Mr. Rickard, do you think you ought to come here so often?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because you are poor, and so are we. You're angry, but I can't help it. We have no father or mother, and Thirza is too soft-hearted to say anything. I can see you are vexed that Tita is gone to London, but you can't ask her to marry you. You couldn't support a wife, nor have you any prospect of being better off soon. Yet you come here constantly and try your best to make her care for you. I don't think it's manly or fair."

He did not answer or look up; but for a space surveyed his boots. At last he broke the silence with:

"Have you anything to read? I'll send you some books up. Well, I must be off. Good-bye."

They shook hands and his large form filled the doorway, then vanished, while the cripple, having listened till the front door closed after him, sank back and pressed her thin fingers to her eyes.

"I wish he had said something," she moaned. "I have sent him away, when perhaps he would have stayed. I have hurt him through my wretched spite and jealousy, and he would not even be angry."

She lay with her eyes hidden, and burning tears squeezing their way through the closed lids; but when Mrs. Judd, who was half-housekeeper, half-nurse, appeared with her tea, she had conquered herself sufficiently to avert inquiry.

Poor Amy had always been a cripple, but of late she had given up the crutch, with the aid of which she had once contrived to move from one place to another, and resigned herself to lying on a couch day after day, conscious of her increasing helplessness. She was a little soured by the contrast she afforded to her three sisters, who all reveled in the possession of health and beauty.

A few days later, Thirza, the elder, who had arrived at the sober age of thirty, and Tita, the youngest of the family, returned to Milhurst. They entered Amy's room together, before removing their hats, alike yet widely differing.

Tita ran forward and pressed a warm kiss on each slim cheek.

"Here are we two selfish wretches back again at last, with heaps of things to tell you."

"How have you been, ducky?" asked Thirza, advancing as Tita drew back, kneeling beside the sofa, throwing her hat aside, and laying her face, with its tumbled fair hair, against her sister's; then lifting it to look anxiously into her eyes.

"Just as usual," said Amy; "but I am glad to have you back. After tea you must tell me everything."

She repressed her impatience until the evening, and then all three settled themselves comfortably for a long chat, having previously excluded the lamp, in deference to Amy's preference for the firelight.

Thirza had all the narration to herself, for Tita gazed into the fire; and Amy silently watched Tita, about whose eyes and mouth hovered a look of pain and weariness that should not have belonged to her years. She was evidently debating some point in her mind, a point the shrewd cripple quickly divined.

"And do you like him, Tita," Amy asked, when the account of the last few days was ended.

She looked round with a start.

"Like whom?"

"This Bernard Colvin."

"Yes, well enough."

"Well enough to marry him?"

"What! on a week's acquaintance? No, thank you."

"I should know a man through and through in a week. Thirza, did he admire her?"

"Of course he did," and Thirza smiled at the absurdity of the question. "But have you had no one here while we have been away?"

Amy's blush was visible even in the uncertain light.

"Only Charlie!"

A perceptible quiver passed over Tita, and her dreamy look changed to one of attention, though she did not move.

"He sent me some books," Amy added, and there was an uncomfortable silence.

After a few minutes Tita said she was tired, and with a good-night kiss to each went to bed.

"I am afraid," said Thirza, later on, "that she would marry this man out of pique, because Charlie says nothing. I think he ought to speak out, and come to an understanding with her. I am sure it would be better."

"Thirza," said the cripple, irrelevantly, "have you never, never once, been the least bit in love?"

"Never, dear."

"Are you quite sure? I can't understand it."

"I am glad that it has been so," said Thirza, kissing the thin hand that was laid on her hair.

"And I," Amy answered slowly, "I should not have lived all these years without you. Since father and mother died you have been—oh! I could never say what you have been to me! I know I sometimes seem ungrateful, but I am not really. You are crying! What have I said? What is the matter? Is it for yourself, Thirza, or for me?"

"Not for myself, dear. I have no troubles but yours; and all yours you do not tell me; but I guess."

She turned a glance on Amy, and saw the transient color flood her cheeks—a self-betrayal that the cripple instinctively hid with her hands, while her bosom heaved and a choking sob would have vent. Thirza drew her head to her own breast, and kissed and fondled her as a mother would have done, crying over her a few quiet tears of love and pity.

On the following day, when the last red tinge from the wintry sunset was fading out of the sky, and the firelight, seeming to gain confidence now that the sun was gone, was dancing over the old-fashioned furniture of the Hawthorne Deane drawing-room, Thirza sat by the hearth, holding in her hand a letter which she had been reperusing by the uncertain light.

It was from Madelon, who wrote in high spirits, resulting from the belief that her project with regard to Tita's future was to be realized. Thirza was refolding it when she started, for there struck upon her ear the infrequented sound of wheels upon the gravel.

While she was still wondering, the door was opened, and the servant, without seeing that the room was occupied, ushered in a gentleman, with "What name shall I say, sir?" to which he replied by giving her a card.

Miss Nicol came forward.

"Mr. Colvin!" she said, in a low, startled voice. "Has anything happened? My sister—"

"Your sister is perfectly well," he said, as they shook hands.

He was a trifle embarrassed—a thing unusual with him—but the dusk concealed the fact.

"Pray sit down," said Thirza. "I will ring for lights."

Bernard Colvin remonstrated.

"I like the twilight," he said: "And it will make it easier for me to tell you why I have come."

"I think I can guess," she said, placing Madelon's letter in her pocket. "I heard from Mrs. Colvin this morning."

He looked at her suddenly and intently.

"You know how I am situated," he began—"that I am compelled to quit England when my brother does—not a fortnight hence."

Thirza bowed.

"Think of that, then, and do not condemn my present proceeding as hasty and ill-considered. Miss Nicol, I have come to ask you to be my wife."

She was silent from extreme surprise, and he went on:

"I know too well that it seems very abrupt—that it is at least unusual; but I can only plead that this course is forced upon me. On the first evening on which we met at your sister's I resolved to ask you as soon as I dared."

"I did not expect this," murmured Thirza. "I thought it was Tita. I am very sorry—"

"Sorry!"

"It is impossible, Mr. Colvin. Do you know that I am older than you?"

"Yes; your sister told me so. That is nothing to me. I see in you what I never thought to meet—my ideal of what a woman should be. Miss Nicol," and he took her hand and held it firmly, "for heaven's sake set aside all prejudice, all conventionality, and answer me simply from your heart. I have never cared for any woman before and I want you for my wife. I have seen you but four times, but if it were a thousand I could not admire and respect you more. Dare you trust me with yourself? In other words, do you—could you ever care for me?"

The hand he held trembled in his and Thirza was silent. It was the first time such words had ever been addressed to her, and in her heart she knew that she dare trust him implicitly, that she would follow him to the ends of the earth. But—there was Amy. Besides which, she was saying to herself:

"He does not love me. He wants a wife and thinks that I should suit him; but that is not love." For Thirza Nicol at thirty had not lost her faith in sentiment.

"I am very grateful, Mr. Colvin," she said, slowly, "but I cannot be your wife. I am sorry if you are feeling disappointment, but forgive me if I think that it cannot be very keen."

He dropped her hand, and stared hard at the fire, where, from the glowing coals, a mocking face seemed to smile at him in derision.

"But it is," he said, in a low voice, "My life is a very lonely one. I thought—I was too sanguine. Will you not take it into consideration? May I not come back after six months and ask you again?"

The undertone of pain in the first words went direct to Thirza's heart. But there was the cripple.

He met her soft, compassionate gaze as she shook her head, and in that long look what had been a dull sense of pain and loss grew into something more like despair.

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure."

He rose.

"Then good-bye!"

"You will stay and have a cup of tea or something? Are you going to walk back to the station? It is seven miles."

"No, nothing, thank you. I shall just have time to catch the up-train."

And a few minutes later he had plunged out into the now thick darkness, with very different feelings from those with which he had come.

He strode along the gloomy, lonely road; whose high banks increased the obscurity, as unconscious of his surroundings as if asleep, with head bent, and mind full of new sensations of anything but a pleasant character.

He was in love, and he knew it, for the first time in his life. He had come to England in the hope of finding some amiable, good woman to share his future, and he was to return with his future all dark before him.

That he should never marry he knew. For him there was but one woman in all the world.

Charlie Rickard, wandering uneasily through the leaf-carpeted lanes, had seen him go to the house, but not also seeing his departure strolled away in another direction, with a heart almost as heavy as that of the man he envied.

And Thirza? She listened until she heard the gate swing to, and then sat down by the fire. When the tea-bell rang an hour later she roused herself and ran upstairs.

"Where have you been?" was Amy's greeting. "I have been awake an hour at least. What have you been doing?"

"Sitting by the fire thinking," said Thirza.

"Are you not well, dear?"

"Perfectly," Thirza answered, with a smile, and the invalid withdrew her great eyes but half satisfied.

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A year had skimmed as lightly away as years generally do, and it was again winter. The leafless trees were marked out darkly against the pale afternoon sky, as a young man turned in at the gate of Hawthorne Deane. As he skirted the cedar that had at first hidden the house from view, he saw the drawing-room window red with the firelight glow. He advanced slowly, and stood looking.

There by the mantelpiece stood Tita, and by her side, with her hand in his, was some one whom the looker-on did not know. He sighed heavily.

"She has yielded?" he said to himself. "Will mine?"

He saw Tita lay her fair cheek against the sleeve of her lover's coat, and turned away to the door, ashamed of his minute's espial.

Still he stood on the step, prolonging his own suspense, from fear that when it should be ended the reality should prove even harder to bear.

As he waited in the increasing darkness the slight figure of a woman came slowly along the path that wound round the house, drawing a shawl closer about her with an audible shiver, and stopped where he had done, looking in at the pair by the fire.

"Amy is gone!" she murmured; "and now Tita will go! What is to become of me?"

The echo of his sigh escaped her. Bernard Colvin half moved to speak to her, yet hesitated for fear that his sudden apparition would be too startling. But the reflection that the next step would probably be to the door, induced him to step out from the shadow of the porch with outstretched hand.

"Who is it?" said Thirza, shrinking back.

"It is I," said Colvin, with perfect faith in her recognizing his voice. "I have come back."

She gave him her hand, which was trembling, saying, as if to account for it and for her agitation:

"You surprised me! I have been ill—in trouble! We have lost our sister!"

He retained her hand, and made a motion with his other to the occupants of the room.

"I have been envying that man," he said, in a low voice. "Thirza, I have come to ask you again—to see if such happiness as his may be mine! And I was waiting—I dared not put it to the proof! Thirza, love, life is worthless without you! Can you love me? Speak, love, for Heaven's sake! Don't keep me in suspense!"

Thirza could not speak—her voice was choked with tears, but she held out both hands toward him with a gesture that was sufficient answer. He caught her to him—the pain of twelve long months compensated in that first kiss on Thirza's proffered lips.

An American walking through a town in Wales saw a procession with flags flying, trumpets blowing, and a man hoisted shoulder high, and asked, "What is all this about?" "Why, that is the pig man," was the reply. A little while and he met a similar procession, and another man uplifted. "What is up now?" "Oh, that is the anti-pig man." There was an election fight over the question whether some pigstyes were to be removed. The styes carried the day.

The figures which represent the spread of the telegraphic system in Europe are enormous. Russia leads, very naturally, in total length of miles, her aggregate being over 50,000 miles. But in length of wires Germany comes first, as she has nearly 160,000 miles. Finally, Great Britain is highest in the number of messages in which she reaches 30,000,000. France stands very high in all these respects, without being first in any.

The Cause of Hydrophobia.

"And what," said a visitor to Pasteur's laboratory, "is the result of the experiments which you have recently been making on hydrophobia?"

"If you desire," said M. Pasteur, "we will go down to the cellar where the animals inoculated with the rage are, and you can there soon see for yourself."

The visitor descended into the basement in company with M. Pasteur, with certain uncomfortable sensations in the calves of his legs, fearing a possible encounter with some one of the inoculated dogs; and he found himself in a vast cellar, into which air and light were poured through great tunnels. Immense cages were ranged round the sides of this subterranean apartment, and in each of these cages was a dog. Here were all sorts of canines, the bulldog, the terrier, the spaniel, the poodle, etc. Over each cage was a placard indicating the day of the inoculation of the animal. "Up to this time," said M. Pasteur, "I have been able to discover but little; still, I consider it a first step. Before I began my experiments it was believed that hydrophobia could be communicated only by the saliva, and people were frequently astonished at seeing dogs that had been bitten by mad dogs remain, sometimes all their lives, without manifesting any symptoms of the dreadful malady. I have discovered the virus of hydrophobia in the brain of the dog, in the spinal marrow, and in the whole of the nervous system generally. One drop of this virus, preserved from contact with the microbes of the atmosphere and introduced into the brain of a healthy dog, invariably gives him hydrophobia, and he dies of it within fifteen days."

"Look," said M. Pasteur, "Here is an animal inoculated with the virus about ten days ago. Just put your foot up to his cage." The visitor did so but with fear and trembling. "You see, he licks your foot with every manifestation of affection. In two days he will be dead. He is now in that period of affectionate manifestation which generally precedes by two or three days the period of violence, in which he will bite anything that comes near him. Here is another one. Just give a kick at his cage. See how he springs at you! He will die to-morrow. Notice his harsh and curious barking. He is affected with hallucinations, and no longer recognizes anybody. He was inoculated just fourteen days ago, and he will be dead to-morrow. Men have the same symptoms, with this exception, that the duration of what may be called the incubation is usually thirty or forty days, and that they have a horror of water, a phenomenon which is never seen in the case of dogs."

"There are five cases on record of men who have not died after being bitten by mad dogs. That was because the saliva had been subjected to the influence of the atmosphere, and that a kind of struggle was going on between the microbes of the virus and the microbes of the circumambient air. These latter appear sometimes to neutralize or modify the effect of the virus; but with the virus in the pure state, as I extract it from the brain of one of my dogs here, death in a fixed period is certain, and up to this time we have found no remedy for this pitiless affliction.

"Now, I hope, if my life is spared, that, after many comparisons and experiments, I shall finally get a remedy; but, before getting to the end of my researches, must exactly establish the organic constitution of the microbes of this virus, for these invisible beings differs from each other as a man differs from a horse, and a horse from an elephant. They are also subject to divers influences, and that which diminishes the power of some augments the capacity of others. This accounts for the manner in which I treated the charbon, which was slaying thousands of sheep every day before the invention of my vaccine matter, which is nothing less than the virus itself reduced. By exposing the virus to an atmosphere of forty degrees during a certain time, the microbes becomes so feeble that when they were in the body of an animal they only communicated the very lightest charbon, and thus forever guaranteed the animals against the epidemic."

—*Paris Letter.*

A "Soft Thing."

Young Smalled, who had married a rich wife, was discussing the subject of marriage with a number of friends the other evening over the rear fence, when he was heard to remark:

"It is a fact, gentlemen, that I am not fond of hard work, and when I married I was determined to have a soft thing."

"Well, Smalled," replied Yeast, "you may have been successful; but there is one thing certain, and that is it would be a pretty difficult job for any one to produce a softer thing than your wife got when she married."—*Statesman.*

The exports of wheat from San Francisco from July 1, 1881, to July 1, 1882, amounted to 22,560,622 centals, valued at $36,905,317.

SKOBELEFF'S LAST VICTORY.

Graphic Story of His Defeat of the Turkomans.

On the failure of the first expedition sent against the Tekke Turkomans, in 1880, Skobeleff undertook to subdue them. This task was a serious one, for the Tekkes, like all fighting Asiatic races when flushed with victory, were dangerous enemies, hard to beat. When the mud fortifications of Geok Tepe, in which they had concentrated some 20,000 fanatical warriors, were invested by Skobeleff's small army of about 7,000 of all arms—the remaining 10,000 men of the force being occupied in keeping the communications open—the real difficulties commenced.

Sword in hand the Turkoman "Ghazis" made furious sorties in bodies of two or three thousand just before dawn; falling heroically on the parallels, approaches and breaching batteries, which they more than once captured, driving such of the Russian troops as were not at once cut to pieces completely out of the trenches; so that these points had to be strongly reinforced and covered, keeping the whole force often day and night under arms. In one of these sallies Skobeleff's famous white charger, on which he had made the Turkish campaign, was killed under him, and he himself was in imminent danger. The loss of this horse, which he took for a bad omen, seemed to shake his resolution somewhat. He telegraphed to Tiflis desiring that another general should be sent to take command "in case he was killed" in the final assault, which he proposed delivering almost immediately; and General Pauloff actually left for this purpose. Skobeleff said openly that he would not survive if the attack failed, and significantly observed to his staff "that if it did fail there was nothing for it but their revolvers."

The assault was made by escalade, at a point midway between a breach effected by the batteries and one made by a mine run under a bastion or mud cavalier some 300 yards distant from the first breach. Now, the defenders expected the assault to be made by the breaches, and had made every preparation to repel it at those points; and thus they were taken altogether by surprise. On their being driven from the rampart, which took some time to effect, the artillery was dragged through the breaches, and, being mounted on the wall, opened an effective cannonade on the crowded interior of the enceinte, while the cavalry moved round outside to cut off the retreat of the fugitives. Organized resistance having ceased, the Russian infantry descended into the enceinte; and, orders having been issued to give no quarter, some 6,000 to 7,000 of the enemy were massacred, an equal number being shot or cut down by the Cossacks and dragoons outside while attempting to escape.

Many of the Russian officers themselves were completely sickened by the slaughter, which was horrible. The Cossacks, as usual, spared no one, and made no difficulty about cutting women's arms off to get their bangles, and so forth. As contingents from the Akhal, Salor and other, Turkomans were then in Geok Tepe (all the hordes having for the time made common cause against the Russians), this severe lesson joined to the subsequent plundering of cattle and all the available effects of the Tekkes, completely broke the spirit of these hitherto unconquered nomads. In a few days all the tribes sent in delegates tendering unconditional submission.

Skobeleff's loss during the siege and assault amounted to 1,700 killed and wounded, among whom were many good officers, and one general (Petrosaievitch), a man of considerable literary ability, who was much regretted.

The justification of the massacre at Geok Tepe is that the Russians having determined to annex Turkomania a severe example was absolutely necessary; a war of a very harassing and protracted nature would otherwise have probably dragged on for years, involving great expenditure both of men and money. And then, in the storming of fortresses held by warlike and fanatical Asiatics, who invariably expect to be killed if the place is taken, isolated resistance is going on throughout. Few if any Ghazis will accept quarter; it is even dangerous to go near them when they are lying badly wounded.

On the conclusion of the campaign General Skobeleff repaired to St. Petersburg, where it is said he was very coldly received by the emperor. Anyhow, he almost immediately applied for leave and went to Paris, where he made his famous speech against the Germans, and returned to Russia, where he received an ovation on arrival and en route. His sudden death is generally thought to be rather mysterious; and certainly no man alive seemed less likely to die six months ago than Skobeleff, and none more likely to be entering upon a new career.—*St. James' Gazette.*

It is estimated that the population of the United States on June 1, 1890, will be 64,476,000; by 1900, 81,529,000, and on June 1, 1910, 101,310,000.