

This Life is What We Make It

Let's oftener talk of noble deeds,
And rarer of the bad ones,
And slay about our happy days,
And not about the sad ones.
We were not made to fret and sigh,
And when grief sleeps to wake it,
Bright happiness is standing by—
This life is what we make it.
Let's find the sunny side of men,
Or be believer in it;
A light there is for every soul
That takes the pains to win it.
Oh! there's a slumbering good in all,
And we perchance may wake it;
Our hands contain the magic wand—
This life is what we make it.
Then here's to those whose loving hearts
Shed light and joy about them!
Thanks be to them for countless gems
We ne'er had known without them.
Oh! this should be a happy world
To all who may partake it;
The fault's our own if it is not—
This life is what we make it.

THE OLD TREE'S SECRET.

We will take the house—shall we not Charlie? We had gone all over the roomy, old-fashioned house, my little wife and I, from the dusty, cobwebbed garret to the neglected cellars, and we now stood together at the back of the garden, critically surveying its appearance.

It was now a low two-story stone house, built in the shape of a T, with a cluster of tall chimneys in the middle and the three gables hidden in ivy. It had once stood quite out of the town, which had since gradually crept towards it, until what had been a road was now become a street of straggling cottages and villas, extending to the high wall inclosing the grounds. The lawn was shaded with old trees, and the garden choked up with thickets of lilac and snowball. The old lady, Mrs. Gage, who had for forty years resided here leading a very secluded and invalid life had taken no pains to keep the place in order, and she and the property had decayed together; until recently she had died and the house was for sale.

"It looks dreadfully gloomy and neglected," said Cecie, gazing up at the back windows. Mrs. Moss, next door says that for twenty years no one has occupied those upper rooms; and see how the ivy has bound together these shutters on the left. But it is a beautiful old house, and I know that we can make it bright and cheerful. And then the garden—what a delight it will be to the children, and to ourselves; too! We will take it won't we Charlie?"

There was no resisting her pleading coaxing manner. So just very evening I went to see the agent, and before a week had elapsed the house was ours.

With what zeal and enjoyment we entered upon the transformation of our new abode! The masses of ivy were torn down from the gables were judiciously trimmed; every door and window were thrown wide to the fresh air and sunlight, and paint and paper, muslin curtains, and bright carpets and India matting made the house delightful to behold. This much accomplished, we turned our attention to the garden. It was already June, and the season too advanced for much improvement; but we pulled down the rotted arbors, thinned out the thickets of roses and lilacs and I caused a little round table and some rustic garden seats to be placed under an old tree at the further end of the central walk. Here, on returning from my office in the warm sunny evenings, we would sit Cecie engaged with some light stitching, and I with cigar, books and papers, reading to her, while our little ones ran wild up and down the garden walks.

"This is thoroughly delightful," I remarked, one evening. How is it, Cecie that we have managed to live eight years of housekeeping life without a garden?"

"Yes, she answered, radiantly, it is delightful. Living so much in the open air one seems to take a new and fresh growth, like the flowers. Only—and here she glanced uneasily around—only, Charlie I think—I fancy—that this is not exactly the spot for our *al fresco* boudoir."

Why not? It faces the walk, it commands a view of the house and the whole garden. And these branches hanging so low and clothed in ivy make a nice canopy above us. What is it that you object to?"

"I scarcely know. But somehow I have never liked this tree."

It was a very old tree under which we sat, with a huge gnarled trunk growing in a sloping position near the garden wall, and covered with ivy. About eight feet from the ground the trunk separated into three branches, and here the ivy had matted itself in an impervious mass, concealing the decayed branches with the exception of the extremities, which here and there protruded from the green mass, white and bare.

"They look like skeleton fingers," said Cecie, glancing up, and it gives me the horrors. I think the tree ought to be cut down. It always reminds me of a graveyard or a haunted house."

I did not at the time pay much attention to her remarks. But some days

after she again suggested that our garden table and chairs should be removed to some other spot.

"I don't know why it is, she said uneasily, but I always feel nervous here. I fancy there is something peculiar about the place—in the rustling of the ivy and in the very atmosphere; I often find myself starting and looking around with a vague sense of something horrible. I hate the sight of that tree, with its distorted shape and bare skeleton arms."

"I rallied her upon being fanciful, but promised that 'the skeleton arms' of which she complained should be cut off. She sat silent for a moment, then said seriously:

"Charlie, did it ever occur to you that certain objects in nature—trees, for instance—may have an individual life of their own? I don't mean the mere vegetable life, but a sort of mysterious spiritual existence. Now I can't help fancying that this tree is conscious of what is going on beneath it—that it remembers things which it has witnessed in its long life and were it able, could tell us some horrible ghostly story of the past. You may laugh, but I assure you that I never sit under this tree, even on a sunny noonday. Without feeling a chill creeping over me, and a sense of something mysterious and horrible, which makes me almost afraid."

"Of course," I said; "having once imagined that the dead branches resembled skeleton arms and associated them in your own mind with the idea of a grave, you will be haunted with all sorts of dismal thoughts and fancies in connection with the tree. But since you don't like it, Cecie, I will have this bugbear removed, and we will build a pretty Summer-house on the spot. I will speak to the men to-morrow, when they come to take down the wall."

The portion of the wall to which I alluded separated our garden from that of our next door neighbor. It was a stone but the mortar had fallen out and left more than a pile of loose stones, which I feared at any moment to topple down on the children, as they played about it. So I concluded to have it pulled down and a light wooden paling placed in its stead.

Over therein the next house, lived an old gentleman and his wife, who passed much of their time in their garden, cultivating flowers and small garden fruits in which they appeared to take great delight. They had called on us a cheerful and kindly old couple; and when the old wall was pulled down and before the new one was up, the way lay open to a more familiar intercourse.

One evening by their invitation, we stepped over into their garden to see a collection of roses upon which Mr. Warren prided himself. These duly admired the old lady expressed to Cecie her pleasure in having neighbors who were neighbors. She had lived ten years in their present abode, and, in that time had only twice seen Mrs. Gage!

"She wasn't always such a recluse," said the good lady. "I remember that when she and her husband first came here, a young married couple (I was a child then) they were merry, gay and fond of society. It was their daughter's fate which so sadly changed them. You have heard the story?"

We had not been very long in this town, yet Cecie remembered to have heard something about a daughter of Mrs. Gage running away to join a lover at a distance, and being never afterwards heard of.

"Her name was Emily," said Mr. Warren, "and she was the handsomest girl in town. She was an only child, and had been all her life petted and indulged, and allowed to have her own way. Such children don't generally turn out as well as they should; and Emily Gage rejected many good offers, to fall in love at last with a handsome and dissipated fellow who made his appearance here for a short time. Being unable to give a satisfactory account of himself, Mr. Gage forbade his visiting his daughter, and the two then agreed upon an elopement. This was put a stop to, and the young man shortly afterwards left the place. The girl however, was very closely watched, the parents having cause to suspect that she was in secret correspondence with him. And one morning she was nowhere to be found—only a note slipped under the door of her parents' sleeping-room informed them that she had gone to join her lover—that she had taken with her all her jewels, together with five hundred dollars, which her father had left in his writing desk; since she would need money for traveling and other expenses. And that was the last that they ever knew about her."

"But could they not find the young man?" asked Cecie.

"They found him, after a long search but he denied all knowledge of Emily and her intended flight. They had corresponded, and she had assured him that she would yet find means to join him, but her letters had then ceased; nor had he ever since heard from her. This was his story. Some believe it but others, though nothing could even

be proven against him, has dark suspicions of him. And the strangest thing was that having passed the garden wall every trace of the girl was utterly lost."

"The garden wall?"

"I forgot mention that it was in that manner she escaped. She mounted the sloping trunk of the old tree at the foot of the garden walk—the same under which you so often sit—and then stepped along its horizontal branches to the top of the wall. This was rendered evident by the broken twigs and scattered leaves at the foot of the tree. On the round outside the wall was found her shawl which she had doubtless dropped or forgotten in her haste. That was all. To this day the mystery of her fate remains unrevealed, though undoubtedly there was foul play somewhere. The jewels and the money were great temptation to crime."

That evening my wife said to me: "That horrible tree, Charlie! Did I not tell you that it had a secret to reveal? Perhaps it knows what became of that poor girl!"

Next Cecie went on a visit of a few days to her mother, taking the children with her. Before going to my business I gave orders respecting the tree. I wished every trace of it to be removed before her return, when perhaps she would forget all about it and its gloomy associations.

Returning home in the evening I was met by the workmen with countenances of interest and mystery. Their information startled me. While busied in cutting down the tree, they had heard something rattle and fall within and on examination discovered within the bones of a skeleton, though whether human or not they could not tell. Communicating the fact to Mr. Warren, who was in his garden, they had by his advice desisted until my arrival.

I went to the spot, and with the men and Mr. Warren examined the tree.

Through the opening already made the bones were clearly to be distinguished; and I directed that the trunk should at once be felled. When this was done there was exposed a hollow stump, in which lay a mass of human bones, with remains of a woman's dress and beneath these and the decayed wood and dust which had gathered over them gleamed the lustre of jewels and gold and silver coin.

I looked at Mr. Warren, who, white as death, had staggered to a garden bench.

"My God! he exclaimed. It is—Emily!"

Yes it was Emily. Of this there could be no doubt. The tree had long held its fearful secret, and was still unable to reveal it. It had given up Emily's skeleton, but how came the poor girl to be immured within this living tomb?

Further examination, however revealed the whole horrible truth.

"I see how it all was," my old neighbor said, in a broken and faltering voice. "She had thrown her shawl over the wall that it might not be in her way, and then mounting the tree to where the three great branches meet; and there, hidden by the great mass of ivy lay the fatal trap. Through that great hole she slipped, and the ivy closed over her living tomb."

He shuddered, and the tears gushed into his eyes.

We neither of us expressed the thoughts which chilled and moved our hearts to pitying horror.

Had her death been sudden or had she here slowly starved and pined to death? Her cries could not have been heard, for the house stood apart, and her parents had left home and gone in search of her. I thought of Cecie's strange fancy concerning the old tree, and lost myself in vague conjectures as to the nature of those mysterious influences which sometimes affect our humane perceptions, how or whence we may not know. This was the secret which the old tree had so long held. And I may add that to this day Cecie knows nothing of it; for besides the clergyman who gave Christian burial to the remains of the poor girl, no one but our selves who made the discovery ever knew the secret. We thought it best that it should be so.

But I observed that Cecie never after complained of the uneasy influence which had before so annoyed her. With the removal of the tree and the burial of the bones, nature resumed her bright and joyous sway in the old garden.

The Beautiful Octoroon.

An old citizen of New Orleans, who had been rich before the war in lands and negroes, but who was stripped completely by the occupation of his plantation by Federal troops, told a story of an octoroon girl since the war.

The girl was one of the most beautiful of her race, and of course had been trained by her mother to be as wise as a serpent, if not as harmless as a dove. She knew just how beautiful she was.

A very rich young man—that is, a young man with a very rich father, saw her and fell in love with her. A great

many young men had done the same thing, but she put a very high price on herself. A house furnished ever so well was all very well for common girls but she held herself far above that sort of thing. She was perfectly willing that the young man should have her but marriage was her price nothing less. When he told her how much he loved she assured him that love was not worth a whit to a woman unless it was legalized, and that if he loved her as he said he did, he ought to be willing to make the sacrifice she required that he might possess her. He begged, stormed, swore, entreated, wept, wailed and howled, but to no avail. She was as cool as a cucumber. She loved him and he loved her; why not marry?

The young man was so infatuated that he mustered up courage and went to his father.

The old man was very stern with him. His son marry an octoroon! Never!

"Do it, sir," he said in the regular irate father style, "and you will never look me in the face again."

In vain the young man appealed. In vain he remarked to the old gentleman that he had been young once, and ought to know how it was himself. The old man did not see it in that light.

"But, father," pleaded the young man "she is no common woman."

"I don't suppose she is. Were she, you would not so rave over her."

"All I ask is that you go to see Marie. Go and see her, and I know you will welcome her as a daughter. Go and see her."

The young man was confident that the charms that had enslaved him would capture his father.

"I will go and see her," said the father, "to please you, but it will not alter my decision. But I will go and see her."

The old gentlemen did go and see her and he found that his son had not exaggerated her qualities. She was exceedingly beautiful, exceedingly bright, exceedingly accomplished, and as keen as a razor. She was the wisest young octoroon in New Orleans, and she took good care to put her best foot forward. She talked the old gentleman out of his prejudices, she made him interested in her, and when he left her presence he went out in a sort of a dazed way.

He did not return to his son at all, but avoided him. The young lady said to her mother, after the old gentleman had gone, "I don't think mamma I shall marry Edward. I don't like him as much as I thought I did, and marriage without absolute love would be to a nature like mine, a hell upon earth."

"Don't talk rubbish to me," remarked the mother. "You won't throw over so excellent a man with such brilliant prospects, will you?"

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. My shrieking soul is frightened at the thought of trusting my future with a young and changeable man. I require love. I require the entire devotion of a heart as true as my own. And besides, mamma, suppose the cruel father should disinherit the son! That would be terrible. I think my duty to myself and to you requires me to shake the young man. But I shall do nothing hastily. I will consult my heart."

The next day the old gentleman called again and enjoyed an hour or two of the girl's society, and when Edward came again he was not permitted to see her.

"She loves you," said the mother, who did see him, "with a love furious in its intensity; but she will never be the means of making you unhappy. When your respected father gives his consent and is willing to receive her as a daughter, she will rush gladly to your arms, but not till then. Marie is full of passion, but duty keeps it in check. Her very love for you prevents her from making you miserable."

"But I must see her."

"Impossible?" was the heartless reply, and the door was slammed in his face.

It was impossible that he should see Marie for a very good reason, viz. his father was with her trying to persuade her to accept his "protection," which the astute young man rejected, as she had a similar offer for his son.

The young Edward found himself in a very singular position. He could not see his love without the consent of his father at all to get his consent. He could make nothing at all of it.

About a week thereafter the mystery was cleared up. He received the following from his father, dated New York:

My DEAR SON: All you said to me of Marie is true. She is indeed everything that is lovely in person and mind. She is at once the most beautiful and the wisest of her sex. I should be perfectly willing for you to marry her but for one trifling fact. I have found it essential to my happiness that I should marry her myself, which I have done. I have provided for you amply, and shall probably never see you again. My wife and I propose to live hereafter in Paris. I hope to here from you occasionally. Papa.

CALL

—AT THE—

CENTRE DEMOCRAT

Job Office

And Have Your Job Work

DONE

CHEAPLY, NEATLY AND WITH DISPATCH.

Now is the Time to Subscribe

FOR THE

"CENTRE DEMOCRAT,"

The LARGEST and CHEAPEST Paper in Bellefonte.

ONLY \$1.50 PER YEAR, IN ADVANCE.

OFFICE:

COR. ALLEGHANY & BISHOP STS.
BELLEFONTE, PA.