

# THE STAR AND BANNER.

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## THE JOYLESS SPIRIT.

BY MRS. MARY E. HALL.

Yes, this world is cold and dreary,  
And a chill is on my heart;  
And my trembling soul is weary,  
From the oft-repeated part.

I've wept o'er faded friendships,  
Till my eyes have swollen with tears;  
No longer bitter are the words,  
Unheard for, and alone.

I've traced the choicest buds of hope,  
And watched the opening flower,  
Oh! blissful was the hour,  
When I raised the dewy cap,  
Its fragrant drops to sip,  
Dark disappointment rudely came  
And dashed it from my lip.

The feeble wreath that fancy twined,  
To bind upon my brow,  
Like withered, scattered garlands lie,  
Nor can be gathered now.

The gilded hues the future wore,  
So dazzling to my sight,  
Eloped such my eager grasp,  
And sunk in rayless night!

My heart has grieved at others' grief,  
Mine eyes have wept to see  
The sufferer vainly seek relief,  
But no one weeps for me;  
I've oh! rejoiced at others' joy,  
Yet why should I repine,  
That no one cares to hear a sigh,  
Because no joy is mine?

For friendship is a smiling mask,  
Whom only to deceive,  
And I'll thrust it from my heart,  
Why therefore should I grieve?  
Its hoarded words and winsome airs,  
The rainbow hues it wore,  
All, all are past, forever past,  
(To charm me never more.)

For the world is cold and dreary,  
And a chill is on my heart,  
While my trembling soul is weary,  
And longing to depart.  
No tea here I find me here,  
(To charm me never more.)  
For those that fasten round my soul,  
Are all of heavenly birth.

## Female Piety.

The gem of all others which enriches  
the countenance of a lady's character, is un-  
faded piety. Nature may lavish much  
on her person—the enchantment of the  
countenance—the grace and strength of  
her intellect, yet her loveliness is un-  
equalled by piety through a sweetness  
and power of her charms. She then be-  
comes unearthly in her desires and as-  
pirations. The spell which bound her af-  
fection to the things below is broken,  
and she mounts on the silent wings of her  
faith and hope, to the habitation of her  
God, where she may remain until she hold  
communion with the spirits that have been  
ransomed from the thralldom of earth, and  
wreathed with a garland of glory.

Her beauty may throw a magical charm over  
many princes and conquerors may bow  
with admiration at the shrine of her love;  
the sons of science and poetry may em-  
balm her memory in history and song, but  
her piety must be her ornament—her  
pearl. Her name must be written in the  
"Book of life," and when the mountains  
fade away, and every moment of earthly  
existence is lost in the general wreck of  
a crown that may remain as well as the list  
of the mighty through who have been clothed  
with the mantle of righteousness, and their  
voice attuned to the melody of heaven—

With such a treasure, every lawful gratifica-  
tion on earth may be purchased; friend-  
ships will be doubly sweet, pain and sor-  
row will lose their sting, and her charac-  
ter will possess a price far above riches;  
life will be but a pleasant visit to the earth,  
and death the entrance to a joyful and per-  
petual home. And when the notes of the  
last trumpet shall be heard, and sleeping  
millions wake to judgment, its possessors  
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## THE MAIDEN'S CHOICE.

A TALE OF FILLIAL AFFECTION.

Alice Dempster was what is called a pretty, comely girl. She was not beautiful; but still she could scarcely pass along the street, even in England, where beauty is less rare than in any other country, without being noticed. She was the daughter of a poor widow in a village in Devonshire—the picturesque and charming county. Mrs. Dempster had been the wife of a tailor, who, out of his earnings, had bought a cottage in his native hamlet, in which his widow had resided after his death. She had little else save this cottage, except her daughter, who was indeed a treasure of affection and love. But then Alice was one of those frail and delicate beings who give pain while they do pleasure to a parent's heart. From about twelve to eighteen her mother was her devoted nurse. Never was pale face, or hectic cough, or meagre form, or constant languor, watched with more intense anxiety by a parent; it seemed never off the young girl's face. Mrs. Dempster had a lodger, and he came off rather badly; but he never grumbled or complained; he would, on the contrary, sit with the poor widow, and comfort her under affliction with a rude kindness of manner which soon won her heart. John Morrison was a railway clerk, with a small salary at a station about a mile off. He had lived with Mrs. Dempster six years, and had mainly directed the education of little Alice. Of a studious and serious turn of thought, he spent all his leisure hours in reading. Mrs. Dempster had sent Alice to school when a mere child; but village educational establishments is not usually the place to learn much in, and that of Dame Potter was not an exception. But John Morrison took a fancy to the little Alice; and finding her fond of study and her book, took great pains with her.

About the age of eighteen Alice outgrew her ailments. Her cheeks filled out, her eyes became lustrous and clear; Mrs. Dempster began to feel the effects of her long vigils and constant watchings. She moved about with the tread of an old woman; her appetite began to fail her, and positions were gradually reversed. Very soon a cozy arm chair in the bright sun by an open window, was the usual place of the mother, while Alice bustled about, did the work of the house, and attended to the invalid. Mrs. Dempster had no particular illness; she was simply worn out with anxiety and fatigue. But if she suffered she had also her reward, for Alice was now her devoted nurse.

But Alice was eighteen, and pretty, I have said, and the men made the discovery as well as her mother. John Morrison, a sedate young man of eight and twenty—himself remarked it to Mrs. Dempster, as did many others. In the neighborhood were several extensive farms, and among others one belonging to Mr. Clifton. Mr. Clifton was very rich, and had two sons, Walter and Edward. Walter was a very handsome, lively, pleasant fellow, full of generous impulses, but somewhat too fond of riotous pleasures, of the bottle and the cards. With plenty of money at his disposal, he was the centre of a group of frolics that were, on many occasions, the alarm of the whole country, and Walter Clifton was the wildest of the lot. It is true that he was generous; if he broke a head or damaged a field, he paid the expense; and if he broke a heart he was sorrier for it. One hot summer day, Alice was sitting sewing by her mother's side; the window was open, and the warm air poured in upon the face of the invalid. Her eyes were pleasantly fixed on the honey-suckle, Jasman, and oleander, which twined around the window, and the roses that filled the strip of the garden before the house, but more pleasantly still on the innocent sweet face of her child.

Suddenly two horsemen pulled up before the window; they had often been noticed before, but this was the first time they had ever halted.

"Mrs. Dempster," said the dark, handsome young man, while the other, a fair youth, held back and blessed, "we have pulled up to ask for a drink of milk, or beer, or anything you can give us. It is a long time since we have drunk any thing in your house, but it will be with pleasure we shall renew our custom."

"Welcome, welcome, Master Clifton," replied Mrs. Dempster, without raising her eyes; "indeed a long time since you used to come and listen to my poor husband's stories, and drink his good milk."

"A long time," when your daughter Alice there, was six years old," replied Clifton, "and Ned and I were springs of boys. Poor Mr. Dempster, we missed him very much when he came home from school."

"He often talked of you when he came home from his voyages," said Mrs. Dempster, as the young men were shown in by Alice.

"I suppose you have forgotten us," continued Walter, addressing Alice, by whom he had been shown in. "I have forgotten the young girl, blushing; 'I have forgotten the name of my old friend, Walter nor Ned.'"

Meanwhile Alice was bustling about, preparing a plain but wholesome lunch of bread and cheese, to which the gentlemen did ample justice. This done they remained an hour in conversation, Walter chiefly addressing himself to Alice, Edward to the mother.

Soon, Walter became a regular, Edward an occasional visitor. Walter soon allowed his admiration of Alice to speak forth; he lost no opportunity of peeping with his eyes, and soon began to whisper words of affection. Alice listened with downcast looks, but made scarcely any reply.

After about a month, Mrs. Dempster asked him to take tea and spend the evening. She propped the dining parlor which was rising on both sides; and as she now had a rich farmer and merchant captain's daughter, she had induced to foster the daughter of her child's mother. John Morrison was one of the party. Mrs. Dempster had confided in him her secret; and after one or two objections to the character of the young man, he consented to be present.

It was about an hour before tea-time, when he came to this resolution; and as soon as he had done so he went into the garden.

John Morrison was a pale, good-looking man, of moderate stature. He had no pretensions to be handsome, but none would have looked at him without noticing his marked and speaking countenance; to admire, not the beauty, but the power and intelligence. But why he was now so overcast and sad? Let us listen, we may hear.

"And is it for this I have trained her up? Is it for this I have devoted my existence to her for several years—for in the girl I saw the dawning woman—to be the victim of the wild and reckless youth who will break her heart? But she will be rich, easy, comfortable. Well! if she could be happy I should be glad; but Walter Clifton loves with the love of a boy—a love of impulse—give him his toy, and he will soon tire of it and break it!"

"What are you taking to yourself about so freely?" cried Alice, tripping from behind some bushes where she had been out-grooming flowers for the evening. "But how pale and ill you look! Shall I get you any thing?"

"No Alice, I am well in body, but the mind is ill at ease."

"Are you ill, John?—my friend, my brother?"

"Ah yes!" cried he, passionately, "there it is; I have been a fool; I have taught you to treat me as a brother, and the idea could never enter your head of thinking of me as aught else."

"Certainly not," said Alice, anxiously. "But it had mine, Alice, cried John, forgetting all reserve and prudence, 'for since you were twelve years old, I looked on you as one who might be my future wife. Six years have passed away, six long and happy years—nearly seven—during which, each day I have loved you more and more. I waited and watched, putting off the day of declaration until you were quite a woman; and it is now too late.'"

Alice groaned, astounded, hurt and pained to the last degree.

"Too late," said the usually calm young man, in tones of deep and widely passionate feeling, "and all my dreams are fled. I hoped, if heaven blessed me with your affection, to be united to you on your nineteenth birthday; we could then have made my two rooms up stairs ours, and left your mother yours. She would have found no change, save that in place of one child she would have two."

"Oh John, John! why did you not speak before? I never thought—I never supposed—I—I—"

"Alice, it was not to be. So, no more of it. I must go away, not just yet, it would startle your dear mother, but by and by."

"My friend, my brother," exclaimed Alice, as she gazed on his pallid face; "flashing eyes, and trembling lip."

"Say no more dear child. Be happy with the man of your choice. You have the prayers and good wishes of John Morrison."

And the young man turned away and went up to his room. An hour later he sat down to the tea-table of Mrs. Dempster, far cooler than poor Alice, who scarcely had courage to look up. The talk was varied, and generally trifling, Walter not being one of those who can think seriously enough to converse any other way. Presently he spoke of a grand subscription ball for the following Thursday, to which he invited Alice, in the name of his mother and sisters, who would call for her in the old-fashioned carriage.

"But I cannot go," said Alice, quietly, while, despite herself, her eyes flashed with pleasure at the idea; "my mother cannot remain alone; besides I dance very indifferently."

"My dear Alice," said John, in a kind tone, "I will take care of your mamma. We will sit up for you until any hour of the night; go, it will do you good, you who never go out."

"Yes; go by all means," added Mrs. Dempster.

"Now you cannot refuse," continued Walter, shaking Morrison's hand heartily, "I, Mary, and Jane will be round at seven, or so mind—be ready."

After he had gone there were some rare discussions that night. Alice had no dress to go in; that had never been thought of. Mrs. Dempster thought more of her daughter than of herself; it is true, but a ball dress is a serious affair with persons of small income. After supper the debate was resumed, but with no satisfactory result, so all went to bed. About eleven o'clock next day, while Alice was turning out all her finery in search of something suitable, a man entered with a parcel for Mrs. Dempster. It contained a beautiful gown, sent by Morrison, who had risen early, and gone into town on purpose to purchase it. Alice turned pale, and sat down; but recovering herself, bent over the kind parent to hide her tears. Mrs. Dempster—good and proud mother—was in raptures, both at the dress and donor, and immediately sat down to a table to begin getting out.

When John came home that night his greeting was indeed hearty and warm. The mother declared that he was more than a son to her, while Alice said across a word. Her look, however, was eloquent indeed. It expressed gratitude, pity, sorrow—a thousand mingled shades of feeling which words could not have expressed. John was rather serious in his manner and tone, but by no word or look did he betray his peculiar state of feelings. He was reading to them all that evening, while they worked at the dress; and even made jocular remarks on Alice's taste for flattery and dancing, with such success as to remove from the young girl's mind all recollection of her mother's words. She was generally consoled, that John seemed to be making all his own; but when Mrs. Dempster was three and twenty, John twenty-eight; Walter was handsome, John was plain; the son was lively and gay, the other serious. Now, all this to a girl of eighteen with little experience, rendered comparatively painful.

The evening of the ball came round.

At seven Alice was already dressed; and John Morrison looked at her with undiminished admiration, while her mother was—naturally enough—in raptures—as mothers always are when they look on their fair and charming offspring. About half-past seven the carriage came. There were Walter and Edward, the two Misses Clifton, (the mother's two indisposed) who were all in costume with Alice. They did not stop long; all were young and all were eager for the hour when the music should invite them to join the dance—an amusement, when it leads not too often to late hours, both healthful and conducive to cheerfulness of mind.

John Morrison remained with Mrs. Dempster despite the efforts of the Cliftons to take him with them. For some time nothing was spoken of but the beauty, grace and elegance of Alice; then the conversation turned toward the subject of a marriage with Walter—she having distinctly announced his intention to make a formal demand of her hand on the Saturday, if he obtained the young girl's consent that night. John hid his lips and to change the conversation opened a book and read aloud. Mrs. Dempster listened a while; and then, the stilling and quiet, the silent night asserted its influence, and a full sleep John continued reading for a half an hour and then laid down his book and fell into a deep reverie. He was half asleep and half awake for hours. Suddenly he started up as the clock struck four, and found Mrs. Dempster preparing to go.

"Not home yet," said John, smiling, "the little disappointed girl."

"It is so seldom she goes out," replied Mrs. Dempster, "I do not expect her home yet."

At this moment the sound of carriage wheels was heard. There were two, not one. They throbbed upon the pavement. It was daylight; and within a hundred yards they discovered the carriage and gig driven by Alice. Alice was in the gig driven by Walter, while some friends filled the vacant places in the other vehicle.

They came up at the door. Alice leaped out; then with a bow, and a "good morning," the party sped away homeward. As she entered the room, both noticed that all Alice's elasticity of step—her spirit—her all her loveliness was gone.

"You are tired, love," said her mother kindly; "here is a nice cup of tea; you look so serious, I suppose Master Walter has been proposing to you. I suppose too, I shall lose my child next. Never look so serious. It is quite natural; and I do not say it by way of reproach."

"Mamma," replied Alice, gravely, "I have had two offers this week—one on Monday last and one this morning. You look surprised, mamma, and, my dear friend, look vexed. I should be sorry if you concluded my words should pain you."

"On Monday, I accidentally discovered that John Morrison had loved me as his future wife for six years."

"John!" exclaimed the mother looking at them both with an air of amazed astonishment.

"Yes, for six years; and I scorned his love. I thought him too old, too grave for me, and I owned my affection for Walter. This morning Mr. Clifton made me an offer of his hand and heart, and I rejected him!" cried both in amazement.

"I rejected him," replied Alice gravely, "and, dear mother and dear John, if you both will consent, I wish from this day to be considered the future wife of John Morrison."

"Alice, why is this?" exclaimed Mrs. Dempster, who was naturally at first in favor of the rich husband.

"My Alice," cried John, "this is too much happiness."

"Why is this?" replied Alice, earnestly; "because John is generous and good, and Walter is selfish; because John loves me, and Walter treats me as an incubus and a bore."

I declare to you, mother dear, that I now love John as much and more than I do Walter, as I love you more than I do a steamer."

"But speak, Alice, dear," cried the enraptured young man, "explain all this."

"It is my mother who shall judge," replied Alice; "I will recite two conversations now clearly fixed on my memory, word by word, but only one of which I shall recollect after this morning."

She then related, word for word, what had passed between her and John, and afterwards the scene between Walter and her in the gig.

"I have begged you to ride alone with me," said Clifton, warmly, "that I may pour out my feelings to you. I love you, dear, with all my heart and soul; I wish you to share my fortunes; to be my wife at once—immediately. My friends have already consented; your mother has hinted her gladness to acquiesce; we wait your consent."

"Walter," replied Alice, with downcast eyes, "before you go any further, I have something to say to you which may change your sentiments. I have a mother who is alone in the world; she has nobody to love and nurse her; as long as she lives, I can never leave her. She has been my devoted nurse; wherever I go there must she be."

"Oh! but this is nonsense Alice," cried Walter, instantly; "I have enough of old people at home. I mean to travel for a year or two in France, in Italy, and to return only when I come into my property."

"Then, Walter Clifton," said Alice, raising her head, and speaking firmly, "I can never be your wife! You first seek me differently situated to myself. Not Mr. Clifton, I would not leave my mother for one I have loved for years, much more for one I have not known a month."

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I declare to you, mother dear, that I now love John as much and more than I do Walter, as I love you more than I do a steamer."

"But speak, Alice, dear," cried the enraptured young man, "explain all this."

"It is my mother who shall judge," replied Alice; "I will recite two conversations now clearly fixed on my memory, word by word, but only one of which I shall recollect after this morning."

She then related, word for word, what had passed between her and John, and afterwards the scene between Walter and her in the gig.

"I have begged you to ride alone with me," said Clifton, warmly, "that I may pour out my feelings to you. I love you, dear, with all my heart and soul; I wish you to share my fortunes; to be my wife at once—immediately. My friends have already consented; your mother has hinted her gladness to acquiesce; we wait your consent."

"Walter," replied Alice, with downcast eyes, "before you go any further, I have something to say to you which may change your sentiments. I have a mother who is alone in the world; she has nobody to love and nurse her; as long as she lives, I can never leave her. She has been my devoted nurse; wherever I go there must she be."

"Oh! but this is nonsense Alice," cried Walter, instantly; "I have enough of old people at home. I mean to travel for a year or two in France, in Italy, and to return only when I come into my property."

"Then, Walter Clifton," said Alice, raising her head, and speaking firmly, "I can never be your wife! You first seek me differently situated to myself. Not Mr. Clifton, I would not leave my mother for one I have loved for years, much more for one I have not known a month."

At seven Alice was already dressed; and John Morrison looked at her with undiminished admiration, while her mother was—naturally enough—in raptures—as mothers always are when they look on their fair and charming offspring. About half-past seven the carriage came. There were Walter and Edward, the two Misses Clifton, (the mother's two indisposed) who were all in costume with Alice. They did not stop long; all were young and all were eager for the hour when the music should invite them to join the dance—an amusement, when it leads not too often to late hours, both healthful and conducive to cheerfulness of mind.

John Morrison remained with Mrs. Dempster despite the efforts of the Cliftons to take him with them. For some time nothing was spoken of but the beauty, grace and elegance of Alice; then the conversation turned toward the subject of a marriage with Walter—she having distinctly announced his intention to make a formal demand of her hand on the Saturday, if he obtained the young girl's consent that night. John hid his lips and to change the conversation opened a book and read aloud. Mrs. Dempster listened a while; and then, the stilling and quiet, the silent night asserted its influence, and a full sleep John continued reading for a half an hour and then laid down his book and fell into a deep reverie. He was half asleep and half awake for hours. Suddenly he started up as the clock struck four, and found Mrs. Dempster preparing to go.

"Not home yet," said John, smiling, "the little disappointed girl."

"It is so seldom she goes out," replied Mrs. Dempster, "I do not expect her home yet."

At this moment the sound of carriage wheels was heard. There were two, not one. They throbbed upon the pavement. It was daylight; and within a hundred yards they discovered the carriage and gig driven by Alice. Alice was in the gig driven by Walter, while some friends filled the vacant places in the other vehicle.

They came up at the door. Alice leaped out; then with a bow, and a "good morning," the party sped away homeward. As she entered the room, both noticed that all Alice's elasticity of step—her spirit—her all her loveliness was gone.

"You are tired, love," said her mother kindly; "here is a nice cup of tea; you look so serious, I suppose Master Walter has been proposing to you. I suppose too, I shall lose my child next. Never look so serious. It is quite natural; and I do not say it by way of reproach."

"Mamma," replied Alice, gravely, "I have had two offers this week—one on Monday last and one this morning. You look surprised, mamma, and, my dear