

# A GOODBYE

It was a small party, but a choice one. Mrs. Langdon Wing had just returned from a long sojourn in Europe, where she had come to know many "new" people. She prided herself upon her discretion and discrimination. Indeed, a report had been circulated that it was only in Mrs. Langdon Wing's parlors, among all the parlors within the sacred pale of society, that one might meet really brainy people, who, at the same time, possessed unexceptional manners, and wore good clothes. The source of this report had been uncreditably suspected to be not far from her own "boudoir"—but Mrs. Langdon Wing's was truly a very nice house, and so thought young Dr. George Dover, as he stood there one evening, under the softly-glowing piano-lamp—without any odor. Mrs. Langdon Wing's lamps were said to be the only ones in town which never put themselves in evidence through more than two of the five senses.

Mrs. Wing was immensely flattered to see Dr. Dover, whom she had been coaxing and inviting for a long time. His researches in microscopy had brought him to the front in a wonderful way, for so young a man—for he was said to be very young, though the gray hairs in his beard and a certain severe aspect which his face wore in repose would indicate that he was nearer forty than thirty. He wrote articles in the learned reviews, and his brother physicians spoke of him with awe. He was undeniably distinguished in appearance, with his tall, well-made figure, and his pointed, close-clipped blond beard. In spite of the almost forbidding expression of his features, and especially his eyes, which were of a deep, almost sombre, blue, he was handsome, and he gave an impression of exclusiveness by a general coldness of manner which he allowed to melt into cordiality only under the most extreme provocation. Therefore his smiles were much prized, and Mrs. Langdon Wing, having evoked several of these marks of approbation, flattered herself that she was one of the favored few whom this "difficult" gentleman liked.

She had devoted herself to her distinguished guest this evening even longer than she felt was strictly permissible in a hostess who had at least twenty others to entertain,—and she had introduced him to five or six people, all of whom, though undeniably brilliant in certain special lines, failed evidently to impress this lofty young doctor. His enmity was so apparent that Mrs. Wing, who was closely watching him from a divan not far away, was in despair.

"Why is it," she queried discomposedly of an intimate friend with whom she was stealing a few moments of "off guard" conversation, "that great people do not hesitate to show when they are bored?"

"My dear," replied the friend didactically, "you are now probing the ages. In old times, the great, who were then usually sultans and satraps and all that sort of thing, not only showed that they were bored, but chopped off the heads of those individuals who had the temerity to bore them. Nowadays the heads are only figuratively chopped off,—but their majesties the great are no fonder of being bored, I fancy, than they were forty centuries or so ago."

"Historical information, my dear," returned the hostess, "may be very interesting, but it is not philosophy, and it does not explain things."

"Oh, if you wish me to go into the human nature of the situation, and why men are cross and women whimsical—and people whom you and I think—"

"Goodness!" interrupted Mrs. Wing in a whisper, "what have I done. That exquisite Mrs. Perry—the widow of that rich old General Perry, who died three or four years ago at Cannes—were you there, don't you know?—went out into the conservatory half an hour ago with my Amy—and the nurse has been sent to take Amy off to bed, and I have not set eyes on Mrs. Perry since. What if she should have been left out there all alone—and she is the most refined—and the most brilliant creature! I was just counting on her for my reception next month—she is musical, you know, and poetical, and all that—and now she will hate me. Goodbye, love. I must drive a coup d'état."

A moment later the intimate friend found herself talking with the gentleman who had been wearing the great Dr. Dover, while the lively hostess was bearing that gentleman away—his face wearing a relieved look—toward the conservatory. He recognized the fact, of course, that Mrs. Wing was a species of fraud—but she gave charming dinners, and—well—there are some people by whom it is not half bad to be deceived. Mrs. Wing was one of them.

"You must know her, Dr. Dover," she was saying in her most vivacious tone, "really the most delightful woman I have seen for years. I happened to be at Cannes when her husband died, four years ago—everybody was so sorry for her—though he was an old gonty fellow—and left all his money to her—she was a millionaire—but she is so lovely—tall, and brunette—though her skin is fair enough to go with a Swedish wig—such magnificent dark eyes—like Evangelina's, you will think—everyone does. Where can she be?—peering around through the open door of her beautiful conservatory. Ah! there she is—among the palms yonder, and she is keeping my small daughter up! There is the nurse, too, waiting to take her to bed! What do you mean, my dear Mrs. Perry?"—advancing with her finger shak-

ing in the air and with a look of roguish reproach upon her face—"what do you mean by detaining Amy from her couch? Dr. Dover, let me present you to my dear friend, Mrs. Perry. You have heard of Dr. Dover, Mrs. Perry? We are all very proud of him."

She turned to her little girl—for Mrs. Wing prided herself upon the strictness of her domestic discipline—and did not have time to notice that the color had entirely deserted the handsome face of her distinguished guest, and that the elegant composure of the wealthy widow was distinctly ruffled as she bowed to the gentleman who had been so suddenly presented to her. To Eleanor Perry, indeed, a certain familiar scene from one of Heyse's stories had suddenly recurred, which almost matched the one in which she found herself now taking part. The recollection was all that brought her to herself. A moment later, when Mrs. Wing, having despatched the child with her nurse, turned to address a word to these two guests of hers whom she was so solicitous to entertain, she found them discussing the palm-trees, under the



SHE FOUND THEM DISCUSSING THE PALM TREES.

spreading branches of which they were standing. They showed an interest which assured her that she had made a lucky hit in bringing together two "botany-fiends," as she herself mentally dubbed them, in the vernacular of society.

"Don't fail to come in for Madame Chamouni's song in about five minutes," she said, as she turned to leave them, convinced that they were sure to be congenial—and would accept her next invitation! "I rely on you to bring her in, Dr. Dover—she is absurdly fond of Madame Chamouni, as I happen to know"—and she swept away, with a last playful gesture of confidence.

Eleanor Perry sank down upon the rustic bench where she had been sitting with little Amy, and motioned to her companion to sit beside her.

"We had better go out with the others—perhaps"—he stammered.

"No," she responded calmly, "no—I am glad to see you again. It—it brings back—many things. But we will not speak of those—no, no, so much has happened since then!"

"You—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Perry—but, really, one would think the old days were here now. You are as fair as ever you were ten years ago."

"I do not wish compliments from you, Dr. Dover," she began, coldly. "I never liked them—and you once used to respect my feelings. Oh, let us talk of the island,—the dear little island. Are your father and mother still living? I suppose that your brothers and sisters are all married and moved away."

"Yes, my father and mother are well,—and only my sister Esther,—she was married, but was left a widow—is with them. She has two children, and they are a comfort to my father and mother. But how does it happen that you are over here? I heard that you were never coming any more."

"No, I was not, and after the death of my father and mother, three or four years ago, I sent for my two sisters. They are much younger than I—my brother and my sister Juliet died, you know. I put them at school in Switzerland. After my husband left me, I was so wretchedly lonely that I went and stayed with them, and we had a dear little home together,—but the girls were homesick, and so we came back. They are going out on the island in a day or two, and they are planning a good many alterations there. We shall be there all summer, probably. You will see us then perhaps?"

"I hope so."

"And—let me give you my card. Perhaps you may find time to come and see us sometimes here, Dr.—Dr. Dover,"—she did not mean to hesitate over his name, but she had always called him "George" before. "I know that you must be very busy,—you are getting to be so famous! I heard of you over there, too,—and was proud of my old playmate. Let me congratulate you on all your success."

His color rose a little as she uttered these words in a half-playful tone. With a courteous "Thank you," he dismissed the subject, and asked, "Did you really like it better over there—Mrs. Perry?"

"Oh,—no—I was unhappy there,—and I am just as unhappy here, for all that I can see,—but never mind that. You must have been there a good deal. Mrs. Wing was saying that she used to meet you in Paris. Where else were you?"

"Wherever there is a hospital or a medical school," he answered, smiling. "Oh, I knew that you were sure to do something when you chose the medical profession. Your father was a remarkable physician, though he lived always in the country. It was in your blood. Don't you remember that you were always going to build a hospital which

should be big enough to hold all the sick people in the world, and that you used to go to make them all well?"

He laughed,—and for a moment his face lost the guarded, almost strained, expression which it had worn since they had first begun to talk. "Oh, yes!" he said, "I had forgotten. It was apropos of old Dakin. You will recall it, for I used often to speak of it,—and Dakin, being a hunchback, and so egregiously out of proportion in every way, was a special eyesore to me. I thought that he had not been properly doctored, and I told him once that he ought to go to my father, and have his case attended to. I shall never forget his harsh laugh when I said it, and how he flung back to me some such retort as this: 'I'll have to wait till I get wings, boy, before I get rid of this blessed hump!' I asked my father if this was true, and he told me that it was, and explained to me that, if Dakin were to pay him a thousand dollars, he could not do anything for him. Then I began to scheme, myself,—and hence the colossal enterprise, of which I am flattered to have you remember so much. But alas!—I am no near to curing old Dakin and his ilk than my father was."

"No?" she breathed forth wearily,—and for a moment they both sat silent. Then there was a sudden hush in the parlors outside, which recalled them to themselves. A woman's voice began an operatic aria.

"It is Madame Chamouni," she said quickly. "We have stayed too long. Mrs. Wing will expect us. Come."

George Dover was a cold man by nature, and he thought that his more than thirty years of life and its varied experiences had steeled him to the tender influences of love; but Eleanor Perry had always had a peculiar influence over him. He had decided, decided in cold blood years ago, when they were both of them but twenty, that he could not afford to marry a poor girl,—and he had gone out into the world to seek his fortune. Rumors had come to him that she had grieved for him—one of his sisters had even told him that "Eleanor had been ill, and it was nothing in the world but his going which had affected her," and then she had written to him once or twice—pretty, girlish letters. He had answered one of them briefly and coolly, in accordance with the policy which he had marked out for himself. Then he had heard that she had married rich old General Perry, and had thought how much better that was for her than a long engagement to a poor young fellow like himself, to be followed by a wearing life of small economies and uncertain social and professional struggles. Then he had heard, through the gossips in the little island-town where their love dream had spent itself, that the old man was dead, and that his rich young widow would live abroad hereafter.

But she had come back—come back with all her beauty—all that subtle charm of manner which had made him love her as he had never loved any other woman—as he now began to see that he never could love any other woman—and after all that had passed, she had still been kind to him! He felt a glow of shame—hard, wise, polished, successful as he was—when he remembered the sweet, girlish blush which had swept over her face when that unmitigated snob of a Mrs. Langdon Wing had brought him up to her.

Only a few days passed before he stood at her door. A storm was raging, and he had felt pretty sure of finding her at home and alone, and he was right. Her sisters were away, and she was reading under a lamp in front of her open fire, amid surroundings of such luxury that selfish Dr. George Dover beamed and expanded in a sybaritic refinement of pleasure as he stretched himself on a divan opposite her, and listened to the sound of the sleet on the plate-glass windows.

All of the half-embarrassment which he had fancied that he detected in her manner at Mrs. Wing's was gone now. She was the woman of the world—bright, elegant, anxious to please. If there had been any sentimentalism in her bearing the other night, it was all gone now. He was not sure that she was not more charming that ever in this mood, as she sat before him, in a languid yet perfectly graceful attitude which she had always dropped into, he remembered, when she was talking earnestly—and in a marvellous gown of some sort of silky black stuff, with glints of white in it.

She gave him little time to think, and he was contented to sit and look at her, and hear her clever talk, in which she led him on to speak freely of his life abroad; she imitated the patois of peasants, the shallow chatter of the salons, and the slang of the studios; he told her of his studies, his ambitions—they touched everything but that strange past—and he was in a sort of dream until the striking of a wonderful clock, with a tuncful chime and a little clash of bells at the end, awoke him to the fact that he was staying too late.

After her visitor had gone, Eleanor Perry, who was at heart one of the most trustful and loving of women, and who, on that little island out in the sound, had cherished for this cold, proud, intellectual man a love which he could only imagine, found herself trembling with excitement. She had never understood why he had gone away in those early days without a word of love to her. They had been mates during all of their childhood, and he had been understood between them that they were to go to all the merry-making together, listen to all the concerts together, choose each out of all the rest for companionship. Nothing had ever been said of love. It was all a matter of course,—she was his and he was hers. Then she could remember when he had begun to be different. They were at a little church entertainment. He looked gloomy and uneasy. When she and her sisters were ready to go home, he had left. She did not understand it. She thought that perhaps he

was not well,—but there was an indefinable something in his manner which roused her pride. She determined to watch herself a little. He came over to the rectory two or three times after that. They all played games together, but he was grave and embarrassed. She had caught him looking at her with troubled eyes, but he made no attempt to see her alone. Then he had come over one evening to tell them all that he was going into the city to take medical lectures,—and that he never expected to have any more good times. There was nothing before him but hard work. He had looked very sad when he said this, and she had wanted to tell him that she would write him long, merry letters, and they would have plenty of good times yet,—but he had not said a word about writing. In her heart this had made her love him more wildly than ever. She had an indefinite idea that George was being very honorable. He was poor and he was not going to say a word which should bind her,—but with that girlish perverseness which no amount of education can expunge from the feminine character, she wanted to be bound,—she did not care for poverty, for hardship, for anything, if he would only love her. It had not occurred to her that he could abstain from winning her because he did not feel ready on his own part to face difficulty of providing for two,—of accepting the responsibilities of marriage, even years away. Poor girl! She had never thought of that. She did not think of it even now.

Then, after sleepless nights and heart-breaking days, when every body thought that she was ill, and needed a doctor, and George's father had given her "blue pills," and quinine and powders after the old fashion, she had written a little letter to George. She could never forget when the answer came. Not even her sister Juliet,—she had died while Eleanor had been absent in Europe, but she had been her other self throughout their whole life together—had known what was in that letter, nor when it had been opened. For two days she had carried it about on her heart without opening it at all. She dreaded to see what was in it,—and yet it was from George, and inexplicably dear. Then she had opened it, with a suffocation at her heart which made her little hands quiver and her breath come in gasps. And what a short, conventional letter it had been! It had been "pleasant to find that he had not been forgotten," she was "good to write"; he hoped she was well; he was "very busy, and so much interested that he thought he might one day get to be a doctor." He sent love to all the family. He thought the books of which she had written must be very good reading, and he congratulated her upon getting so much culture. There was not a word about another letter from her. Her whole being was on fire with rage and mortification. She tore the letter up and burned the pieces. She thought of all his tender looks and words,—how he had always singled her out first of all,—how he had told her that no other girl in the village was so pretty,—could dance so well, ride so well, read so well, skate so well, as she! And how her heart had glowed when he had spoken to her so!

Then the days passed on, and she had tried to get over her love for him; but one day it had all come back—and she felt such a longing to see his face and to hear his voice that she had written another letter to him—she turned crimson to this day whenever she thought of it and of the heart-sickening days while she waited for a reply. Then he had come home on a little vacation at Easter time, and had sent word when he went away that, after seeing her and the others at church Easter morning, he had fully intended to call and pay them a little visit, but he had been so busy that he had not been able to manage it;—and then General Perry had come to the island, and he had petted her and been very kind to her, and her sore little heart had found a refuge in his fatherly love. They had traveled, and in the excitement and change she had tried to be happy. After she had been married four short years her husband had died. And now here she was four years a widow—free, rich, more beautiful than ever—and George Dover, established in his profession, handsome, cold, polished, and with that air of exclusiveness which made his attentions precious, had come back to her. She did not know why he had treated her so in the old days. Her only theory was that he had not loved her—that she had been only like a lesser sister to him—that he had seen she was getting too fond of him, and had taken the only honorable way to check her unwomanly emotion—and yet, in her soul, she felt that he had loved her, and had wondered at the mystery of it all. How ought she to treat him? She did not believe that her money had anything to do with this new attraction which he had conceived for her—and she—she loved him just as she had loved him in those old days. She was willing to wait until he could explain the past. But he had asked her if he might come again—perhaps matters might yet be adjusted between them—and still—ah! there was something else, something which she felt might stand as a firm separating wedge between them than all the past. As she sat in the dark in her own room, leaning out into the mild winter night, and trying to collect herself, she heard a faint wail from an inner apartment, and she sprang to her feet and ran toward it. On a richly draped bed there a child was writhing and moaning, as though in pain. On the other side of the room his nurse lay in a heavy slumber, but Eleanor did not waken her. She bent over the child, lifted his tiny body, and rocked him gently into silence, gazing into his strange, shrunken little face with a look of ineffable love. His voice had seemed like that of a newly-born babe, but his face showed that he must be five or six years old. It wore an habitual scowl, and except for its great, solemn eyes,—like his mother's, but without their brilliant gleam—it was plain, to reput-

iveness. His head was peaked, and was set low between his shoulders, on which rested an unsightly hump. But no bright and perfect child was ever surrounded by more of luxury and tended with more unceasing care than this unfortunate one.

"He is surely growing better and stronger," his mother whispered to herself. "Even though he may never be large and straight, he will soon learn to talk and walk like other children"—for little Clarence could speak only two or three words, and the few of Eleanor's friends who had seen him could not hope that he would ever become intelligent; but she would not allow herself to believe that it was anything but his prolonged weakness and ill-health which retarded his mental development. As soon as his body became strong enough to allow his mind to grow, then he would talk to her, she believed, and make a delightful companion for her; some merciful doctor had encouraged her in this theory.

In a week Dr. George Dover came again to see her. This time there were other callers, but he outstayed them. "I hope I did not come inopportunistly," he murmured, when they had at last said good-night.

"You could scarcely come inopportunistly," she replied, smiling. "I shall always be glad to see you."

"You forget that you and I are sitting here alone," he reminded her playfully. "This is not the time for the language of society."

"Oh, I am sincere," she insisted. "I was never accused by my worst enemies of being anything but sincere. And people who have—suffered—as I have," she faltered, "can be nothing but sincere."

He looked at her keenly. He wondered if she had grieved much for the old man who was gone. He knew nothing about the child. Mrs. Langdon Wing was aware that there was a child, and that he was an invalid, but even she had never seen him, and she had not happened to mention his existence to Dr. Dover.

"One would not think that you had suffered, El—Eleanor," he said quickly. "Forgive me,—but the old name—I always liked it—slipped out before I knew it."

She flushed like a girl. "I like it, too," she said simply. "It seems to bring back the old days when I was happy. I do not mind your calling me Eleanor."

"Thank you," he said, in a voice so deep and full of meaning that she felt almost embarrassed. He passed a moment. "I was going to say, Eleanor, that one would never suspect from your face that you had had a care nor a trouble. Your brow is as smooth as it was when you were eighteen—while I—and I am less than a year older than you, if I remember rightly—I am wrinkled and gray, and people take me for forty. I have had a lonely, careworn, hard-working life."

"I am sorry," she said softly, the sense of his strange fatuity, or his strange misunderstanding, rushing over her again,—but you do not know all of my life. You have never mentioned my child. I do not know that you have heard of him." She turned pale under his look of surprise, and her faint smile had something piteous in it. "Your child?" he repeated with sudden coldness.

"There!" she exclaimed. "He is crying now"—as a feeble wail came stealing down the broad stairway. "I will show you that I, too, have suffered."

She sprang from the room, and presently returned, bearing in her arms the fragile, malformed child. He had stopped crying, and as she seated herself, and laid him across her lap, the hunchback turned his dark, inscrutable eyes, so like yet so unlike her own, dully upon the face of their visitor.

An involuntary shudder, which she rather felt than saw, ran over the man's frame. With all his experience in his profession, he could never see such a being as this child without this awful revulsion of his nature.

"And yet—remember, George, this little creature is the dearest thing on earth to me—you say that I cannot have

When he came again, he was told that the child was very ill, and that Eleanor could not see him. When he left the house, he paced the streets for hours. "If the child should die!" he thought! "If the child should die!—But if he should live,—oh, even if she loves me, as I feel sure that she does, I could not ask her to marry me. I could never live with him, and she would never allow him to be sent away from her. Even if I did not see him, the mere thought that he was in the house would make me ill." He shuddered again. "I cannot help it. It would be useless to fight against it. Yet,—if the child should die!—but if he should live, I had better get away. I cannot do my work—I cannot think of anything but her from morning till night. I will take up with that offer that came to me last week,—and leave America."

He heard the next day that the child was worse, and that a day or two more must decide the matter. The brief time was an eternity to him. Poor Mrs. Langdon Wing had miscalculated in regard to these two brilliant beings with whom she had hoped to decorate her assemblies during the season. They had no heart to go anywhere after that meeting in the conservatory, and, save for a formal card-leaving on her day at home, they never went near her beautiful parlors again all winter.

On the night when the crisis came in the child's illness, it was Eleanor's chosen task to watch with him from seven o'clock until midnight. She was distraught and unbalanced from the long strain to which she had been subjected, and she had not slept soundly for a week. She felt herself oppressed to-night with an irresistible drowsiness. Several times she found herself dropping off into unconsciousness, to be roused by the feeble wail that she knew so well, and to trouble lest she should fail to remember to give the medicine,—on which the doctor had warned her, her child's life might depend. Again she felt herself going to sleep, and again she rose with a start to find that she had almost passed another medicine-time. The child was half-awake, and she administered the dose. Then she sat down upon the divan, where she was attempting to hold herself erect, and a strange mood descended upon her. Her thoughts dwelt upon George Dover. She acknowledged to herself anew that he was the only man whom she had really loved, and she almost sobbed aloud that she was to be a second time sundered from him. "He must have felt something of the old attraction for me, that night when we met so strangely at Mrs. Wing's," she reasoned, "or else he would not have come so soon to see me,—and it is plain to me that I cast a sort of a spell upon him,—but he tries to shake it off. Since he has seen my poor baby, perhaps he cannot love me. I could feel that every fibre of his being revolted at the sight of my poor darling. He could never marry the mother of such a child. It would always stand like a ghost between us—and he might be afraid that, if I should bear other children, they might be like Clarence. But if Clarence should die to-night—suppose that his miserable, painful little life should be ended,—suppose I should forget to give the medicine—oh!" she cried, "oh, what am I thinking! I am a wretch! I am a murderer! God forgive me! Oh, I have had a horrible dream! I did not think these things while I was awake! I had a nightmare. Oh, I hope I have not slept over!" She rushed to the gilded clock on the mantel, and thrust back the masses of her hair which she had unbound in her agitation; but it was minutes before her distended eyes could read the hour in the dim light. No, it was only a little past the time. Her nervousness abated. She gave the drops, and it seemed to her that the child looked better. She sat down close beside him, where she could mark every change which passed over his wasted face, and she was able to serve out her allotted period without prematurely calling upon one of the tired nurses.

Two days later, Dr. George Dover again sought Eleanor's house. He had come to his decision. "If the child is worse, I will stay," he said to himself, "as he waited in the parlor to see Eleanor. 'If he is better, I will go.'"

Presently, weak and haggard,—but not more than he was,—she stood before him. Her long vigil had revealed lines and pallors in her face which he had not suspected, but her eyes were bright and brave.

"He is better, Dr. Dover," she said, half-conscious that she was pushing him away forever by her words. "I am told now that, unless some new and unexpected development occurs, my boy may live as long as I do, and be my comfort and solace, as he is now."

There was, after all, a half-note of defiance in her tone. Instinctively, though she could not know what he was thinking, she wished him to understand that she was for her child against all the world.

"That—that is good," he faltered. Then he paused. He thought that he had fortified himself to speak the next words calmly, but great beads of sweat stood out on his forehead when he tried to pronounce them.

"I must not detain you, Eleanor," he hurried forth at last, in a hoarse voice which he could scarcely recognize as his own, "but I felt that, since I have had a most advantageous offer to go to Russia, and study in the hospitals there, I wanted to say goodbye to you. I shall be gone for months—perhaps for years."

"To Russia?" She turned very pale. "Yes. They are experimenting there with the cholera in a wonderful way. I shall probably sail within this week. Goodbye, Eleanor. It has been a strange fate which has thrown us together again."

"Yes," she said, with the whiteness creeping faster and faster up her face, but speaking very firmly; "it has been a strange fate, as you say. Goodbye."—Arthur Beardsley Mitchell in Romance

When he took his leave, his whole nature was on fire. For a few days he had allowed the old love, which he had stamped out in his youth, to repossess him. All the bars of coldness and of calculation had been let down. He had not seen how his comfort could be very much interfered with, nor his career hampered by marrying this woman, who suited him so well. But this child!

What a frightful little object it was!

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