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Select Poetry.

TIRED MOTHERS.

A little elbow leans upon your knee,
Your tired knee that has so much to bear;
A child's dear eyes are looking lovingly
From underneath a thatch of tangled hair.
Perhaps you do not heed the velvet touch
Of warm, moist fingers, folding yours so tight;
You do not prize this blessing overmuch,
You are almost too tired to pray to-night.
But it is blessedness! A year ago
I did not see it as I do to-day;
We are so dull and thankless—and too slow
To catch the sunshine till it slips away.
And now it seems surpassing strange to me,
That, while I wore the badge of motherhood,
I did not kiss more oft and tenderly
The little child that brought me only good.
And if, some night when you sit down to rest,
You miss this elbow from your tired knee—
This restless, curling head from off your breast,
This hissing tongue that chatters constantly,
If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again;
If the white feet into their grave had tripped,
I could not blame you for your heartache then.

STOLEN FROM THE GRAVE,

—OR—

The Doctor's Wife.

CONTINUED.

"I SHALL then repeat that she died of cramps," she said, with a defiant air; "and if you choose, you can put me to the lie. It would be simply absurd to tell the story now, even if the woman's own father should come. It seems likely that Mr. Stanley has come across some friend of hers."

"Did Mrs. Summerville answer Mr. Stanley's letter?" the gentleman asked.

"Yes, and without a word to me. She wrote him that Mrs. Paulier died suddenly at my house. What a position that places me in!" she exclaimed fiercely.

"No one could suppose that you were in any way interested in Mrs. Paulier's death," remarked the doctor, with apparent carelessness, but in reality watching every look and motion of the woman before him.

She started, and a spark shot from her eyes.

"What do you mean?" she cried.

"Simply what I say," was the quiet reply. "Of course the fact that you did not tell the truth at first about this affair would make it awkward to tell it now; but it would seem that nothing more could be imputed to you than an error of judgment. I do not see how you are to be seriously compromised. Of course, if your cousin is the one to make the inquiries, you can easily explain it to him."

Mrs. Burkhardt sighed impatiently.—"She did not care to say that her cousin was precisely the one to whom she would least like to explain the story of Mrs. Paulier's death."

"It is then probable that Mrs. Paulier's family are in search of her," the doctor remarked, as though he felt obliged to say something, and did not know what else to say.

"It would seem so," the lady replied shortly.

Then she lifted her eyes full to his, and said sternly:

"Doctor Thayer, I blame you for this, and my opinion is that you can explain it. To whom did you send

the watch and miniature I gave you?"

"His look of surprise more than half disarmed her angry suspicions."

"You mistake!" he said decidedly.

"I did not send, I gave them to the person who had a right to them. That person was not Mr. Stanley, nor any one connected with him, so far as I know or can judge. I am as much astonished as you can be at Mr. Stanley's making inquiries about the lady. I have heard that she was a lady. I would furthermore say that I have never told how Mrs. Paulier died. When, if ever, I feel obliged to tell it, I shall inform you of my intention. I cannot be suspected of working in any sly or underhand manner—though no one can deny my right to keep my own secrets; and the secrets of others, when I become possessed of them."

"Certainly! I did not mean to insinuate any suspicion of you," she said immediately.

Doctor Thayer rose.

"Shall I see Miss Fairfield now?"

And he left the room, scarcely waiting for the affirmative nod which answered him.

He was the Hall physician, and had visited Miss Fairfield daily for the last three months. There was no need of any great ceremony, therefore, in making his calls.

Mrs. Burkhardt looked after him with a lowering face as he left the room.

"How that man baffles me!" she muttered. "Here I have been trying for ten years to find out whom he knows belonging to her, and have failed. But I believe he tells the truth—he is too much of a gentleman not to."

She got up, and walked uneasily to one of the windows, looking out, but seeing nothing, her face full of irritation and something very like fear.

"What a fool I was not to have had that apothecary prosecuted!" she muttered, clenching her hand in the lace curtain that fell about her. "If it must come out now, it would place me in a frightful position. That old fool is capable of believing that I got her poisoned. I don't know but Doctor Thayer would think it possible. Men are such villains themselves, the moment they know that one woman hates another, and has reason to wish her out of the way, they are ready to believe anything. I am glad that the creature and her child are dead; but I have not yet become a mixer of doses."

Mrs. Burkhardt spoke truly. When her own interests were concerned, she could be hard and unjust, she could shield tacitly the sins of others, and could be guilty of almost any sin of omission, if the temptation was sufficient; but she could not commit a crime which no sophistry could excuse. An overt act was something which she could not grieve over.

Miss Fairfield found the doctor rather absent that day. He did not give, she thought, his customary attention to her daily aches and pains. Neither did he entertain her with that brief resume of the news of the day with which he had been wont to favor her. He even showed signs of impatience when she began to tell him her dreams of the night before.

"I feel as though something particular is going to happen," she said; "for last night I dreamed of troubled water—waves running high, and dashing over ships and bridges. You may think that dreams are nothing, doctor; but with me they are always followed by something."

"I do not doubt it," replied the doctor dryly.

The invalid went on, without perceiving any mockery in the tone of this remark.

"I remember well how I dreamed three nights in succession of a wedding before that poor Mrs. Paulier died at our house, twelve years ago. And the very night her little girl died at the poor-house, I dreamed about her—thought I saw her mother pointing into an open grave, and trying to hold the child back, the little thing kept smiling and walking straight toward it. I thought that if she should step into that grave, the earth would fall on her, and she would be buried alive. The very next day I heard of her death."

Doctor Thayer looked at his patient with mingled astonishment and suspicion. Was it possible that there could

be such a striking coincidence between dreams and realities? or was the woman probing him?

He soon perceived that his latter guess was incorrect. Nothing was further from the gentle invalid's thought than either the desire or ability to try him so, or the knowledge which could prompt that desire. He saw that he had merely added one more illustration of the saying that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. A sense of honor prevented him from yielding to his desire to encourage Miss Fairfield to gossip on this subject. She was garrulous, and had perfect faith in him; but if there was ever to be a time when he should ask for information of any one in Mrs. Burkhardt's house without first consulting Mrs. Burkhardt herself, that time had not yet come. He had a far more valuable source of knowledge in Mr. Stanley, with whom he proposed to communicate at once.

"There is no accounting for dreams," he said, rising.

And, with this trite remark, he took his leave, and went down-stairs.

Mrs. Burkhardt stood on the piazza as he went out, but did not seem disposed to detain him.

"I find that you have a sibyl in your house," he said, as he lifted his hat on passing. "Miss Fairfield has dreamed a dream."

He stepped into his buggy, bowed again to the lady looking after him, and drove swiftly down the avenue. Near the entrance-gate he met an open carriage driving up to the house. It contained an old gentleman whom he had never seen before, he thought. This stranger was about fifty years of age, hale and keen-eyed, and, in passing, he favored the doctor with a glance like an arrow.

"Pretty good eyes," thought the doctor coolly, for it had been Greek meeting Greek.

Dismissing the incident from his mind, he drove rapidly homeward. His home was the same little cottage where we first saw him: but there have been various changes and improvements made there during the last ten years.—More land has been added, a stable built, and a conservatory run along the south side next the parlors. Everything shows taste, and though the place is not imposing, there is evidence that money is not lacking. Indeed, there are many who wonder, and have long wondered, why Doctor Thayer does not buy a statelier mansion—though nothing can be more charming than this little retreat.

In its small way, Vine Cottage is as admirably ordered as the Hall. A man stepped out of the garden—as the doctor came up, and, with a respectful bow, took the doctor's horse.

"Any calls, Tim?"

"No, sir."

"Put him up, then."

Going directly into the house, the doctor passed through the long, airy, parlor to a small room in the rear which he used as a study. There were his books, and there he wrote his letters, and there he retired when he wished to be alone. Not that he was much troubled for solitude; for, save when Charles Wilson came out to stay over night or to dine with him, or Meeta Coolidge came once a year with her children to spend a week, or when he invited some occasional guest, Doctor Thayer dwelt alone with his servants. Poor Anne Thayer, weak, selfish, but loving, had died before she had been a year married—died in the full flush of happiness, and before she had ever seriously saddened her husband's heart, or embittered her own. Her few faults were all forgotten by him, and only her virtues and her love for him were borne in mind.

"Poor child!" her husband used to sigh when he thought of her.

"That word told the story. To him she had been a child; gentle, loving, but no companion nor help-meet. He had no desire to marry again in a hurry, and, with years and added culture, had been more fastidious and hard to please."

But the place was lonely, and the doctor seldom crossed his threshold without a sigh. This time, however, he forgot all loneliness, having a troop of thoughts for company.

"How could I have become so listless about that child—that young lady, she is now?" he thought aloud. "Clearly, something is about to be revealed. I

must write to Mr. Stanley at once.—Heaven grant it may not be too late!"

With anxious haste, the doctor unlocked and opened a secretary, and took out a package of letters. They were the letters which he had received twice a week from the convent ever since he had placed Rose Paulier there. The first fourteen, received in seven years, were merely acknowledgments of remittances, and a few lines from the superior, stating that her charge was well and doing well. The next one informed him that Miss Rose, being sixteen, and old enough and capable of teaching, desired his permission to be independent, and remain at the convent as a teacher. She could now pay her own way there. The doctor had consented, but urged that she should consider him a friend, and continue to inform him of her progress. The next letter had been from the young lady herself—a mere line formally stating that she was well, and that the next year her salary would be so much increased that she would be able to commence repaying him the money he had advanced for her education. This letter he had answered in a very stiff way.—He had not expected nor desired the money to be repaid, he said, and should feel hurt if she insisted. Still, he had no intention to dictate to the young lady.

After that, there had not been a word till that very spring, in March. Then two letters came—one from the superior, and one from her young charge. Rose desired to become a nun, but did not think it right to do so without first informing him; and the superior assured him that she had no doubt of the girl's vocation, and did not believe her resolution to be from any excitement of feeling, but the result of a conviction that such a life was best suited to her. To these communications he had answered that Rose was in no way under his authority, and was old enough to choose for herself. He earnestly recommended, however, that she should see something of the world before deciding to give it up. That was all that he had heard or written.

He took up this last letter from Rose, and read it over in the full glow of newly awakened interest and feeling. It had been received when he was very much pre-occupied and had dwelt in his mind but a brief time. It was a pretty letter, neatly folded, well written—altogether answering the doctor's idea of what a young lady's letter should be.—Something sweet and gentle in the tone of it—something sad, too, but with a constitutional, not conscious, melancholy—struck him as he read it this second time. He paused, too, over one sentence which he had not noticed at first:

"I promised you when I came here that I would never do anything of importance without first consulting you.—Perhaps you have forgotten this promise—but I have not."

It all came up before him—the drive on that June morning, and the pale little cheek pressed against his breast, while, with an earnestness which woke a new echo in his heart when he remembered it, he had required that promise from her. It all came back. "You may have forgotten, but I have not." It sounded like a reproach.

In all these ten years Doctor Thayer had not once seen Rose. At first there had been reasons why he could not; later, he had seen no reason why he should. The convent was scarcely a place for a gentleman to call, particularly when he could give no explanation to the world for his going there; and they had not seemed to expect him. For ten years he had lived within six miles of this girl, whom he had called the first child of his heart, and had not once set eyes on her.

"I will go this afternoon," he said; "and now for my letter."

The letter was written, sealed and directed to Mr. Stanley; and there the writer stopped, remembering that he must get that gentleman's address—a somewhat embarrassing necessity, since there was no one to ask but Mrs. Burkhardt. To-morrow would have to do for that. Then the doctor rang the bell and ordered his dinner to be an hour earlier than usual, and that his carriage should be at the door immediately after dinner. This little household moved like clock-work, and at precisely four

o'clock the tinkle of a bell announced that dinner was served. At the same instant the door bell rang.

"I cannot see any one unless the business is of importance," the doctor said to the servant, as he went through the entry.

Presently the girl came into the dining-room with a card in her hand.

"The gentleman says his business is of importance, sir," she said; "and he would like to see you for a moment to arrange for a future interview, if you cannot see him now."

The doctor glanced over the card, and read: "Samuel A. Markham, Attorney, London." His eyes sparkled as he read.

"Is he a fresh-faced, white-haired man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Keep the dinner hot, then, Ann, and add something to it. Perhaps the gentleman will dine with me."

Doctor Thayer found his visitor standing, hat in hand. A gentleman evidently; rather handsome, now he saw him well, and with a prompt, business-like look about him which suited the doctor admirably.

"The business on which I come may not occupy more than a few minutes," said the stranger briefly, declining the seat the other offered him. "It would be well to ascertain that at once, lest I detain you unnecessarily."

"The doctor bowed, and the gentleman proceeded:

"My card will tell you my name and profession. I have been for many years the confidential legal adviser of the late Mr. Walter Stanley, of London."

"Late!" exclaimed the doctor, involuntarily, his countenance changing.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Stanley has been dead about a month; and, in obedience to his will, I have come to this country to discover, if possible, some trace of a near relative of his."

Doctor Thayer's eyes flashed up as he repeated the word "relative," and for a moment he forgot his visitor, and stood fixed in thought, putting link to link of the chain of seemingly detached events and incidents.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said then. "Pray seat yourself. Or perhaps you will dine with me? I was just seating myself at the table when you came in."

The gentleman smilingly accepted the courtesy, and followed his host into the dining-room. Evidently this grave but fine-faced country physician had something to tell him, and knew what he had come to ask. Business was business, but the Englishman could not help noticing that the dining-room appointments, simple as they were, showed a highly cultivated mind, and acquaintance with the usages of the best society. He had never before heard of Doctor Thayer, but the feeling of respect with which his clear, keen face had inspired him on their chance meeting in the Hall avenue, was increased by what he saw of his menage. A man who had such silver, with such an initial on it, who knew enough to buy such an engraving as hung over the sideboard, whose cook knew how to make a chicken-pie, who, moreover, had the good sense to offer his guest pure native wine instead of counterfeit foreign ones—such a man Mr. Samuel Markham could conscientiously call a gentleman. The Englishman had been nearly poisoned more than once by the ingenuous hospitality of those who had, on account of his nationality, felt obliged to offer him what they called port wine. He also admired the courtesy of his host, who would not ask an explanation which he was plainly anxious to receive.

Only the preliminaries of their business were spoken of during dinner. Mr. Stanley had died of gout in the stomach; had been suffering from it during several years. He had been intending to come to America in company with his attorney, though against the advice of his physician, and had probably hastened his death by the exertions of he had made to prepare himself for going. He had been many years trying to find out where this relative of his was, had at last got a clew of her, had written to a lady at whose house he had heard of her having been some years before, and had learned from his correspondent that the lady he was in search