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IT MAY HAVE BEEN.

- It may have been a fancy, or it may have been a dream.
- Or the fruit of idle musing by a laughing, sun-light stream.
- It may have been a picture in the misty long-ago.
- Or a strain of witching music sung by voices soft and low.
- It may have been the glory of a pre-existent morn.
- Or a ray of heavenly beauty, born with me when I was born :
- But somewhere I have seen it—I know neither time nor place—
- I have seen the lovely image of a strangely lovely face.
- Mysteriously beautiful and marvelously fair,
- With its light brown eyes resplendent and its wealth of light brown hair.
- Not pale and cold and passionless, magnificently grand;
- Neither royally imperious, as born but to command:
- But sweet and pure and lovely, with a modest grace and mien,
- With a woman's deepest feelings and a girlish hate of spleen.
- A being mirrored in the face, that one would like to love
- With the highest, purest passion that a willing mind could move.
- The face is ever with me, though I wander where I will,
- And the brown hair floats around me, and the brown eyes haunt me still.
- I never yet have found it, though I've searched for many a year,
- For the strangely sweet reality I know it's somewhere near.
- I feel it growing nearer, and I'm thinking, by and by,
- That the face my fancy images beneath my gaze shall lie.
- Not only then the image, and not only then the sign,
- But the lovelier reality shall be forever mine.

A FAMILY SECRET.

"DORA LYNTON, Dora Lynton—I think he loves you."
 Although this little soliloquy showed that the speaker had a good opinion of herself, yet Diogenes himself must have pardoned such very justifiable conceit, and also confess that the unknown, "he" had been sorely tempted to commit the crime of loving.
 The pure sunshine was streaming in through the open windows of Dora Lynton's dressing-room, forming all sorts of mosaic patterns on the colored mattings that the whimsical little lady chose to have instead of carpets, and lighting up the pink and white hangings that made the apartments a fitting bower chamber for the fairy-like figure seated at the dressing-table.
 As a rule, Dora was seldom troubled with any superfluous energy, but that afternoon she was more idle than usual; her dinner toilette had been completed, and her maid dismissed full an hour, and still she sat in the attitude she had assumed when Myers had left the room, her head resting on one hand, and her eyes fixed, with something of an admiring glance, on the reflection of her features in the large looking-glass before her.
 At length her reverie was put to an end by the sound of the second dinner-bell, and rising from her seat, she repeated the words:
 "Dora Lynton, Dora Lynton, I think he loves you."
 Dora tripped down stairs to take her place at the head of the dinner-table, where her father and Morley Osborne—the "he" of her soliloquy—were already seated. Both gentlemen looked up with a smile as she entered, and Morley sprang to her chair, which was already placed at the correct angle, but Dora knew as well as he did that he consider-

ed it a privilege which a king might envy.
 Decidedly Cupid had led Morley Osborne in his toils; and what was more, every one at Lynton Hall, from Mr. Lynton down to the under-kitchenmaid—a damsel who was in the habit of irreverently speaking of Morley as "Miss Dora's young man"—knew that it was so, whilst he indulged in the delusion that it was a profound secret, scarcely acknowledged to himself. And all the time Dora felt that he was her captive, and was quite content that it should be so; but—and herein she only exemplified the perversity of human nature—she was not content to "take the good the gods provided" without question or comment. She must needs analyze the nectar in her cup of life.
 She had lately taken a fancy to compare her life and Morley's (for in some way they had become inseparable) in her day-dreams with those of the heroes and heroines in her favorite novels, and in her estimation, they fell far short of the mark; it was all so dreadfully commonplace, she argued. There was not an atom of romance in it. Morley loved her; of that she felt sure, and— Well, she liked Morley in return. He had no relations to please or displease in the matter, and Mr. Lynton would be only too glad to welcome him as a son-in-law; indeed he had hinted at it several times; so Dora, depending on her second-hand experience, that the course of true loves never does and never can run smooth, arrived at the unpleasant conclusion that in her case and Morley's it was not true at all; an imaginary grievance that, in the absence of any real trouble, caused her continual annoyance, from which sprang a vague desire to put Morley, or herself, or both (she was tolerably just on the subject) to the test; but how or when said test was to be applied remained undecided.
 Chance, however—if, indeed there be such a thing as chance—came to her assistance. She had just finished a laughing list of reasons why her father and Morley should not spend more than five minutes over their wine, when her intention of strolling about the grounds was frustrated by the reported arrival of a boy with the information that Mrs. East was much worse and wanted to see Miss Dora. Her face clouded instantly, though, without a moment's hesitation, she expressed her determination to go down to the village.
 "Why, my dear, it will be quite late in the evening before you can come back," said Mr. Lynton, in a tone of mild remonstrance, which was the most marked reproof he ever uttered where his daughter was concerned.
 "Now, papa, don't try to be disagreeable," returned Dora. "James shall go with me. I dare say there'll be a moon and if there isn't, James can bring a lantern home. You ought to be very glad, papa, because you and Morley can have your game of chess in peace."
 "Dora!" said Morley.
 "Well, whatever is the matter?" said Dora. "Are you so afraid of being beaten again?"
 "Why, the matter is, I do not mean to let you go down to the village by yourself in the evening," he replied.
 "Gracious me, Morley, don't look so horrified," said Dora. "I said James was going with me."
 "Nonsense," said Morley; "he's less than nothing."
 "Is he?" interrupted Mr. Lynton, laughing; "then I should be sorry to have such a footman. I pay him ten pounds a year more than the last man I had, solely on the strength of his being six feet two, and possessing such well-developed calves."
 The declaration caused Morley to smile and Dora to make a hurried exit from the room.
 It was a very pleasant walk to the village, and we are not certain that Dora did not find it more so with Morley by her side than she would have done with the redoubtable James walking a few paces behind her, but she was not all inclined to confess that such was the case, and forthwith proceeded to set her companion at his ease by complaining that he was walking "so slowly."
 "I did I not think you fond of such brisk exercise Dora," he replied, quickening his pace. "By-the-by, what makes you speak so crossly to me to-day? Have I offended you in any way? Do you

know, I am almost inclined to be jealous when you treat me so cavalierly, and yet you are ready at a moment's notice to comply with the whims of a servant."
 "Mrs. East is more a friend than a servant," said Dora, sharply. "Mamma made quite a companion of her, and I think the least I can do is to go and see her now and then when she is so very ill."
 "I wonder whether you would come and see me sometimes if I were very ill, Dora?" said Morley, rather irreverently it seemed.
 "I don't know, I'm sure," replied Dora. "It's not very likely you would care to have me."
 "Dora!" said Morley.
 "My name's not an interjection, Morley," interrupted Dora, "and I do wish you would not speak in that silly way, just as if you were a Banshee, or one of those nasty things that come and call people names when they are going to die."
 Morley could not help smiling at Dora's far-fetched similes, and tried to find a more congenial subject for conversation, but without success. Dora was in a contradictory mood, and would not agree to anything. She did not believe it was a nightingale singing in the wood near them, and even if it were, did not particularly admire it; people made too much fuss about the nightingale; and as for the sunset, it was an every-day affair and she had seen plenty of finer ones.
 Poor little Dora! she knew she was cross and miserable; she scarcely knew why; and did not understand that she was committing the folly which most people are apt to mistake for philosophy, in going out of their own rose-strewn path to find the thistles which they feel must be somewhere, as if it were wrong to be happy, wrong to take the good gifts which heaven has provided. As if the thorns and brambles would not come in their appointed time.
 As length Dora and her companion reached their destination, a pretty cottage, situated at the farther end of the village. Space was of but little consequence at Nutbourne, so the smaller houses were all built one story high.— This was no exception to the rule, and was in no way different from many other cottages in the village, except that its garden was more trimly kept, and the cottage itself more completely covered with climbing roses and jasmine.
 Morley preferred waiting in the garden, was at liberty to smoke a cigar and study a new phase in botany in the shape of the herb bed, where he found mental employment in wondering what was the difference between pennyroyal and peppermint, or horehound and sage, and thinking that an impromptu couch of wild thyme might be poetical, but would most certainly not be pleasant.
 The doctor was with the invalid when Dora entered the cottage, so she had to wait a few minutes in the sitting-room until he made his appearance when he spoke a few words in an under-tone to the woman who acted as servant and nurse to Mrs. East, bowed to Dora, and told her the patient was anxious to see her, coupling the information with the injunction that she must not be excited; smiling acquiescence to which, the young heiress entered the room he had just left.
 Something like a shade of pleasure crossed the invalid's face as her glance rested on the new comer. Mrs. East might or might not have been possessed of claims to beauty in her earlier days. Illness and suffering had done so much towards altering her features that it was difficult to judge; only a keen observer would have seen that her eyes, though dim and sunken, were of the same rare blue which gave such a charm to the bright young face beside her.
 Dora sat talking for about half an hour and then rose to depart. She had said truly, Mrs. East had been much more than a servant. Nominally the housekeeper at Lynton Hall, she had really been its head, for Mrs. Lynton relied implicitly on the strong mind and good common sense that was always hers at command; and, to do Mrs. East justice, she was not insensible to this kindness; thus, the interests of employed and employer seemed the same. Mr. Lynton, too, treated her with respect that sometimes almost bordered upon deference, whilst for Dora she exercised the

maternal care which Mrs. Lynton's delicate health prevented her from manifesting.
 Thus things had gone at the Hall until about five years before the period at which our story commences, when its gentle mistress had passed away from earth. For four years after that, Mrs. East kept her place in the Lynton household. At the end of that time she had a severe illness, and like many people who have enjoyed unbroken health all their lives, she was completely prostrated under it. From the first she felt convinced that she would never recover; but, strong-minded to the last, she kept the knowledge to herself, only insisting that some one should be installed in her place at the Hall, begging that she herself might go and live in a vacant cottage belonging to Mr. Lynton—"for a time," as Dora said, when she tearfully agreed to the change; and the woman, looking into the sweet young face, had not the heart to tell her that the parting was forever—that henceforth strangers must fulfill the duties that had been her pride and pleasure to perform, and that in a few short months the old places would know her no more.
 As the weeks went by without any change for the better, Dora began to have some vague presentiment of what the end might be; but this evening her hopes had risen tenfold, for Mrs. East seemed less feeble than she had been for many days, and Dora had not sufficient experience to know that such a change is often the precursor of death.
 "I am glad to find you looking better," she said cheerfully, as she drew on her gloves. "Do try and make haste to get quite well. I shall come to see you to-morrow or the next day. But I must go now, or Morley will be tired waiting for me."
 "To-morrow?" the wistful eyes said, as plainly as eyes could speak, that they had looked on their last sunset, but Dora did not understand their mute language, and, with a bright smile and nod, she turned to go, and had reached the door, when she was startled by the sharp cry, "Dora!"
 "What is the matter?" exclaimed Dora, springing to the side of the bed, where Mrs. East had raised herself to a sitting position, her arms extended, and an expression of severe pain on her features.
 "I cannot let you go like that, my darling," was the reply. "Oh, heavenly Father, forgive me if I have done wrong!—but I cannot. All these weary years I have watched over, and tended you, and loved you, as few mothers love their children, without daring to claim a mother's privileges; but it seems as if I could not die without telling you all."
 "There, there," said Dora, in a soothing tone, gently trying to force the invalid back on the pillow, "I know you have been very good to me, and I love you very dearly; but you must not excite yourself, or they will not let me come to see you again; and what could I do without my second mother, as mamma used to call you?"
 "Dora, she was the dupe of a deception, as you are," replied Mrs. East. "There is not a drop of her blood in your veins. Her child was born dead. I am your mother. Don't turn from me," she continued, pitifully, for Dora had started back in amazement and fear, lest the speaker were delirious.
 "You distress me, and will make yourself worse," she said, at length. "Shall I call Mrs. Hunt?"
 "Not until you have heard my story," replied Mrs. East, evidently struggling hard to maintain her composure. "You may think me delirious; but I know I am dying, and that I have very few hours to live. With that knowledge, I should not dare to tell anything but the simple truth. I was Mrs. Lynton's lady's maid before her marriage. About a year after she left home, I also was married. Some months after, my husband met with an accident, that resulted in his death, and I was left unprovided for.
 In my trouble, Mrs. Lynton sent for me, and finding we should both become mothers about the same time, it was agreed that I should stay with her; and as if her child lived—which, from her state of health, seemed extremely improbable—that I should nurse is as well as my own. At that time Mr. and Mrs. Lynton were living in London,

but in a few weeks he urged her to come down here; and she, always ready to do as he wished, consented. He said that the place would be more quiet for her; but I think that even then he had a deeper reason."
 Here the speaker paused from exhaustion and asked for some water. Dora gave her some cooling drink that stood near, too painfully interested in the narration to urge upon the narrator the expediency of silence, and after a few moments Mrs. East continued,—
 "My only sister had married the surgeon here, a clever but unscrupulous man. He was with me when you were born, Dora; and on the evening of the same day he was called in hastily to attend Mrs. Lynton. A child was born; but, as might have been expected, it was dead, and for many days its mother seemed scarcely more life-like. I never could quite understand how it was; but my sister acted as nurse, and then I learnt that if Mr. Lynton died childless the estate would go to a branch of the family for whom he had a particular dislike. I gave you up to them my treasure, my darling, over whom in secret many and many times my heart has yearned in a mother's tenderness."
 "And did my mother—did Mrs. Lynton know this?" asked Dora, convinced against her will.
 "No; she was far too truthful to take any part in such deception," replied Mrs. East. "Now I can see the sin of which I have been guilty; but then, believe me, Dora, I only hesitated for fear of the suffering it would inflict on myself.
 I will not ask how you will act in this matter; you will choose the right, I know. Mr. Lynton gave my sister and her husband a large sum of money on condition of their emigrating, which they did; but I have letters from them, proving the truth of what I say. These letters are in a small box on the table in the sitting-room. They are my legacy to you, Dora; but do not take them until I am dead. Now go, and may God's blessing always go with you, my darling daughter!"
 Like one in a dream, Dora left the cottage and joined Morley, who was waiting for her at the gate. The very current of the girl's existence was changed, and she scarcely seemed the same thoughtless, wild creature who but one hour before had despised the nightingale and found fault with the sunset; for she said, almost humbly, "I am sorry I have kept you waiting, but I could not help it."
 "Never mind," said he; "I would wait twice the time without a murmur for the pleasure of walking home with you."
 Morley offered Dora his arm which she declined; for how could she, the daughter of a lady's maid, whose education, and even her name, had been obtained under false pretences, claim acquaintance with the well-born Morley Osborne? The bitter lesson had taught her one thing—the strength of her love for him; but the idea, which might have occurred to some minds, that of concealing from him the knowledge she had so recently gained, never presented itself to her. He might shrink from her, might even reproach her harshly for the wrong of which she was the innocent instrument. It would be very hard to bear; but woman-like, she did not think so much of that as of the pain it would cause him.
 Morley did not speak again until they were some distance from the village, and then he said, gently, "Is Mrs. East much worse, Dora?"
 "Yes," she replied; and in spite of all her resolutions, Dora burst into an hysterical fit of tears."
 Morley felt himself somewhat in a predicament. The place was lonely enough, but some one might come by, and he had no wish that he and Miss Lynton should form subject-matter for village gossip; so he led her away from the road into the shade of some trees, and finding an impromptu seat at hand, supported her with his arm until she grew somewhat calmer, when she would have gone away in a humility that was very much like pride.
 "Stay where you are, Dora," he said, peremptorily. "I don't believe you could stand alone; and now tell me the cause of all this."
 "You will hate me, when you do hear it," said Dora with something like a moan.—Concluded in two weeks.