

Autumn Song

Into the fields flew a little bird; In the joyous sunshine his song was heard; And wondrous sweet was the sound of his lay.

"Fairwell, I am going!" it seemed to say;—"Far, far away Must I travel to-day."

To that sweet field-music I lent an ear; It made me merry and glad to hear; With an aching joy, with a gladsome pain, My heart rose lightly, then sank again.

"Say heart, say heart, Art thou breaking for pleasure, or breaking for pain?" The leaves around me fell sadly down, Then I said, "Alas! the Autumn is nigh! The Summer swallow has homeward flown. Perchance, thus love and longing fly— Far, far away With them they drift."

But the sunshine streamed around me now; Back to me quickly the little bird flew; Ah! how, as he flew, I was glad to see—"Love knows no Winter in his years."

Nay, nay! For love, there is no such thing; It is, and it must be always, Spring!

JANE HEARN'S TRIAL

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED.

He could not meet her gaze. He felt as if he were stifling, though the breeze blew softly in from the sea and the freshness of an Autumn evening was in the air.

"Isn't this the path that leads to the pine woods—our favourite walk?" he said presently.

And Jane answered "Yes." She was aware by the sure intuition of some coming evil; she felt like a child whose some one was leading into a dark world of mysterious horrors.

Robin sang no more. A thousand stars in place of one here and there on the velvet of one lone, for the wind was rising as the night fell.

Colonel Daubeney, looking like a silhouette against the dusky sky, paced restlessly up and down, up and down, as if he were waiting for those whom he watched and waited had not been Guy Challoner and Jane Hearn, he might have thought that passion and despair had won the day, and that never more should he see his dear sweet face or listen to her gentle voice.

As things were, the Colonel knew that though the parting between the one-time lovers might be of the very blackness and bitterness of death itself, Guy would strengthen the woman he loved to do the right, and shrink from the thought of seeing her fair white lilies, even for his own sake, as from the touch of a red-hot iron. He trusted Guy utterly; but this waiting tried him sorely.

How would Jane, how would she come back from that fatal walk along the shore? What should he do to try and comfort her? Would Guy come with her or would she come alone, widowed and desolate heart, even though still a wife?

Just before she went out she had been singing; should he ever hear her sing again? What was to be done about Walter Hearn? Doubtless he could oblige Jane to go back to him; and then there was her income—the fortune that she had inherited so miserably squandered; yes, that would be a temptation to the man, no doubt. How the Colonel wished that Walter Hearn were one of those men, actively cruel, repellent, gross, from whom the law can easily protect any woman! As it was, there was no law against a man slowly breaking his wife's heart by neglect and indifference; no law against a man treating his wife with rather less consideration than one would an article of furniture in his household; nor yet, if a woman were fool enough to leave her worldly possessions unguarded, could a man be prosecuted for making away with them.

No; there was no appeal against Walter Hearn—none—she had left the law under cover of a false name and false position. Granted this, what end was to be gained by dragging Jane's name before the public and giving that unrighteous critic the chance of saying that she had been "faithful on both sides, no doubt!" Even when a woman's womanhood would be dragged through the mire by staying with a man whose only pleasure is to degrade her, there are still found cruel and unrighteous ones who will say that, be things they may, her place is by her husband's side, while hands are not wanting to cast a stone at her bowed head. What chance, then, was there for Jane, who had no blackened bruises to show, but only the faded color of her face? "Perhaps the blackguard may not want her back," thought the Colonel, trying to cheer himself up a bit; "perhaps he might be willing to accept a—consideration to leave her alone."

Jane, forever separated from Guy Challoner; Jane, wry-hearted and sad-eyed; Jane, never singing about the house as she used to; but yet Jane safe under her own roof, watched over, loved, comforted perhaps a little in God's good time, by him who had been her dear one—these were the visions that the old man was conjuring up as he passed and to in the gathering darkness. But the visions quickly fled at last, chased away into the gloom by a ghastly reality. As solitary figure came slowly toward him through the gloom, he saw, he clasped hands falling against her dress, the ghastly whiteness of her face showing strangely in the faint gray light that still lingered.

"Where is—where is—" stammered the Colonel, losing his head completely, and wishing Ellen were near to help him in his sore extremity.

"Guy?" said Jane, completing his sentence for him. "I left him in the wood, the wood above the shore where we have had so many walks and talks together. I went because he told me it was best so. I looked back and saw him lying on the ground. I was glad to think that he was dead. I had looked up, I might have gone back, and then I should never have left him any more. Guy will not come here again; he is going away to night; we have said good-bye to each other, you know. It will be a long good-bye, guardedly—a long good-bye."

If she had wept, if she had sobbed her heart out over this sorrow that had come upon her, the Colonel thought he could have borne it better; but those dim, lack-lustre eyes, those pallid lips that spoke so calmly, and in such strange, dreamy fashion, of this terrible parting in the words!

"Come in, my dear, come in," he said, trembling.

Jane smiled. "Great heaven!" he thought; "what a smile!" And putting his hand in his, she let him lead her in as he himself had led a little child.

Jane's eyes were dry; they had the dull and vacant look you may see in those of a sleep-walker, who has been so long tormented by excess of misery; she only knew that she and her dear love had given each other a kiss good-bye, and that that was for a long, long time.

CHAPTER III.

"Let it be as a dream that is past, and like a tale that is told—let it be as though it had never been."

Jane's eyes were going back into the old barren, arid life; the old life of ceaseless self-repression, of utter lack of sympathy, of cheerless days, one following the other in an endless monotonous procession.

She was like one who, looking out at a sunny peace and rest, a beautiful land "flowing with milk and honey," and then dragged

back into the sandy desert already traversed with sore pain and travail. She had learned what were the possibilities of life, and then been set face to face with its black realities.

She knew that last "whim" had been most successfully carried out. He had had his fling, and now, as he pleasantly put it, he was coming home again to settle down into an exemplary domestic character.

Jane knew full well what that meant. She knew the old routine of life—the utter disregard of everything and everybody save the whim of the hour; the utter indifference to his wife's happiness that had characterized his conduct from the early days of their married life; the cultivation of a kind of society utterly detestable to her; the spending of every possible farthing he could lay his hands upon, and worst of all, the posing as a gentle-spirited victim to domestic worry—a great soul linked to a woman who neither understood or appreciated him.

She knew what had been the galling of the chain that bound her life, and now had she not also tasted of the sweetness of liberty and peace and love? And now she was to be set back to the old routine of life, and the story of Guy's love, his tenderness, his ceaseless thought of her, all their happy companionship together, must be "as a dream that is past, and like a tale that is told."

There were no measures in the world, she believed herself free she had given herself up body, heart, and soul to the new life, the exquisite new life that had opened out before her. Her days, her nights, had been full of a single and fixed purpose, the attainment of a goal. She had searched her own mind for entering into those grand pursuits she loved. She did not want to try and turn herself into an aggressively domestic woman; she was not to be made into a power of being receptive and appreciative, to be at once amiable to him and proud of him, and to be both these things with understanding.

The old life of pain and struggle, which she had turned into a dull and dreary and a little, as though it were the story of some other woman that Jane had once read with a mighty pity stirring at her heart.

Now it was the new life, the new beautiful life that she was to live, the new vista before her, that must be set aside at the call of right and duty.

In Jane's eyes marriage was a holy thing, not a mere contract to be broken at will. If a man, for the sake of sex, in defiance of the purity of her own womanhood had to leave her husband, then her own duty was to leave her husband, and then her own duty was to leave her husband, and then her own duty was to leave her husband.

This was Jane's creed—an old-fashioned one, no doubt, as the world goes now, but sweet and pure as the scent of these old-fashioned flowers that are going out of favour now-a-days, too.

"I have done no wrong," she said, lifting her head, sad, tired eyes to the old Colonel's face, and making him feel as if it would do him good to swear a good round oath at things in general, and in particular, and Guy had done no wrong. We do not know, either of us. When we did we kissed each other many times, and said good-bye.

The quiet, hopeless resignation of Jane's look and voice maddened the Colonel. And yet there was nothing to be done—absolutely nothing.

Mrs. Daubeney was so frightened by Jane's stony calmness, direct eyes, and white, weary face, that she hardly dared speak at all; which was perhaps a good thing, since there are times in life when even the gentlest words scar like hot irons, and such a time had come to Jane Hearn.

She made all her own plans, packed all her own things, went about the house quietly seeing to this or that—more able to think of what ought to be done than either her guardian or his sorrowing wife. She had decided to go down to Southampton and meet her husband.

"I want to leave all the old life behind me," she said. "You will not see me for ever so long. Walter will not care to come, I know—you remember he never did. He will write to you, and I shall write to him. You must not mind if I have not much to say about myself. I do not think there will be much to say."

"You will be very lonely in London, Mrs. Daubeney ventured to say, gently stroking Jane's hand—the hand whereon the wedding-ring glinted, and where once a single anemone, Guy's gift, had shown with softest lustre. "London is a lonely place for any one who has no friends."

"I shall not mind," said Jane. "I think I am a person who is better without friends—than with them. I have seen many of them, and they have done me more harm than good. You know, Mrs. Daubeney, I have never had a friend since I was a child."

The story of Guy's love for Jane Hearn, and hers for him—the story of those madly happy moments by the Western sea—was to be buried deep down beneath the earth and forgotten. Few people knew anything about it, and Jane was going away from about it, and Jane was going away from about it, and Jane was going away from about it.

She had thought that in a time to come, some day, she would tell her friends and Guy about it, and she would tell her friends and Guy about it, and she would tell her friends and Guy about it.

But now, as a two-edged sword, she thought that she might never see Guy again, and she thought that she might never see Guy again, and she thought that she might never see Guy again.

It was so in this case; the slow agony went on day after day, week after week. One day, as she sat in the parlour, she saw a paragraph, a strange and wonderful sensation came over her, the letters danced and wavered a moment before her eyes, and then—yes, she was away on the shore near the sea, and she was with Guy, and she was with Guy, and she was with Guy.

She heard the low murmur of the sea, felt the warmth of the sunshine, and she felt the grasp of her lover's hand on hers.

But just as Guy turned and looked upon her, just as he looked upon her, just as he looked upon her, she felt the cold hand of death upon her forehead, and she felt the cold hand of death upon her forehead, and she felt the cold hand of death upon her forehead.

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The Winter was past, the Spring was coming. The buds began to swell upon the branches of the trees in the London parks. Last year's leaves, lying brown and withered on the ground, were swept up into heaps, to be carried to the water.

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change of victims, much to their own advantage. Laughing, talking, and making more noise than was at all well-bred, the trio at last set off in pursuit of their respective gains.

The bird he had down upon more—silence, time to think, these were the things she craved for. The rest was coming; the silence was near. The day was unusually fine and warm for so early in the year. It seemed as if the wind had worn itself out, and the last few days had been quiet, with but few gusts of wind.

Jane was sleeping with a smile upon her face. She was sleeping with a smile upon her face. She was sleeping with a smile upon her face. She was sleeping with a smile upon her face.

Softly the shadows lay upon the bosom of the sea; birds were singing their sweet farewell to the day that was done; the room where Colonel Daubeney and his wife sat at a cheery pipe knit fire began to grow dark, the fire for the flicker of the resinous flames. They were loved the gloaming, and always put off ringing for the lamp; as long as they could. Many a time and oft did they hold long converse at such times about their dear child Jane, who had gone out of their lives and left a silence such as may be felt when a strain of music, passing sweet, dies into silence.

What was that low far-off sound! Was it the sound of a voice loved and lost? Was it the sound of a voice loved and lost? Was it the sound of a voice loved and lost? Was it the sound of a voice loved and lost?

She had a presentiment, and to a certain extent she had not failed, for Walter Hearn admitted that his wife was "improved," and joked about that whim of his as a thing that had had good results, and taught him a lesson in common sense.

Mrs. Daubeney only wept silently in answer. Her heart was full—full of dire and dread forebodings which she shrank from putting into words.

Walter Hearn's wife had been found lying dead upon her bed; she had died in sleep, the smile still lingering about her lips, her cheek pillowed on her hand.

Jane Hearn's Trial was over. Her tired body, her weary mind, her aching heart, her struggle to hold the right, no matter at what cost, had drifted out into the "dream to come."

Not alone, for no tidings ever reached her home, or the mind of the old Colonel, who had said that she would never be heard of again. That story is one that will never be told "until the stars give up their day."

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