POETRY.

Between the Line.

"Dear Mr. Brown"—I know she meant
"Dear Jack;" that D with sentiment
Is overweighted.
Shy little love! She did not dare;
That flutter in the M shows where
She hesitated.

The darling girl! What loving heed
She gives the strokes; it does not need
Great penetration
To note the lingering, trusting touch;
As if to write to me were such
A consolation.

"The flowers came; so kind of you.
A thousand thanks." Oh, fie! Miss Prue,
The line betrays you.
You know just there you sent a kiss;
You meant that blot to tell me this,
And it obeys you.

"They gave me such a happy day;"
"I love them so" she meant to say,
"Because you sent them."
But then, you see, the page is small;
She wrote in haste—the words—and all—
I know she meant them.

"At night I kept them near me, too,
And dreamt of them," she wrote, "and you,"
But would erase it,
Did she but have one tender thought,
That perished with the blush it brought,
My love would trace it.

"This morning all the buds have blown."
That flourish, surely, is "Your own,"
'Tis written queerly:
She meant it so. Ah! useless task
To hide your love 'neath such a mask
As that "Sincerely."

"Prudence." Those tender words confess
As much to me as a caress,
And Prue—you know it.
But then, to teaze me, you must add
Your other name, although you had
Scarce space to do it.

A dash prolonged across the sheet
To close the note? The little cheat—
No, when she penned it,
She meant its quavering length to say
That she could write to me for aye,
And never end it.

Prue! Love is like the flame that glows
Unseen, till lightly fanned it grows
Too fierce to quell it.
And mine! ah, mine is unconfessed;
But now——; that dash and all the rest—
I'll have to tell it.

"This is Life."

"I have planned much work for my life," she said;
A girlish creature with golden hair,
And bright and winsome as she was fair.

"The days are full, till he comes to wed;
The clothes to buy, and the home to make
A very Eden for his dear sake."

But cares soon come to the wedded wife;
She shares his duties, and hopes and fears,
Which lessen not with the waning years;

For a very struggle, at best, is life,
If we knew the burdens along the line,
We should shrink to receive the gift divine.

Sometimes, in the hush of the evening hour,
She thinks of the leisure she meant to gain,
And the work she would do with hand and brain.

"I am tired to-night; I am lacking power
To think," she says; "I must wait until
My brain is rested and pulse is still."

Oh! woman and man, there is never rest;
Dream not of a leisure that will not come
Till age shall make you both blind and dumb.

You must live each day at your very best;
The work of the world is done by few;
God asks that a part be done by you.

Say oft of the years, as they pass from sight,
"This, *this* is life with its golden store:
I shall have it once, but it comes no more."

Have a purpose to do with your utmost might:
You will finish your work on the other side,
When you wake in His likeness, satisfied.

The Story of a Life.

Say, what is life? 'Tis to be born
A helpless babe to greet the light
With a sharp wail, as if the morn
Foretold a cloudy noon and night;
To weep, to sleep, and weep again,
With sunny smiles between—and then?

And then apace the infant grows
To be a laughing, sprightly boy,
Happy, despite his little woes
Were he but conscious of his joy!
To be, in short, from two to ten,
A merry, moody child—and then?

And then in coat and trousers clad,
To learn to say the decalogue,
And break it, an unthinking lad,
With mirth and mischief, all agog;
A truant oft by field and fen,
And capture butterflies—and then?

And then, increased in strength and size,
To be anon, a youth full grown;
A hero in his mother's eyes,
A young Apollo in his own;
To imitate the ways of men
In fashionable sin—and then?

And then, at last, to be a man,
To fall in love, to woo and wed!
With seething brain to scheme and plan
To gather gold or toil for bread;
To sue for fame with tongue and pen,
And gain or lose the prize—and then!

And then in gray and wrinkled eld
To mourn the speed of life's decline;
To praise the scenes our youth beheld,
And dwell in the memory of lang syne;
To dream awhile with darkened ken,
To drop into his grave—and then?

Dreams and Dreams.

A maiden sits in a window seat,
And to and fro swings her idle feet
As she gazed off at the sunset glow
Over the tops of the hills of snow;
In her lap rests a book, unopened, forgot,
Her eyes are gazing where ours may not,
As she dreams and dreams.

Far up in those mountains of red and gold,
Behind the snow hills so white and cold,
She sees, I doubt not a lover true
On his fiery steed go cantering through;
For the bright eyes flash and the red lips smile
And she sits there gazing a long, long while,
And dreams and dreams.

Oh! the steed is fiery, the lover is true
From the spurs on his boots to his cap of blue;
And the hot eyes flash and the cheeks burn fire
As he spurs his horse through the mud and the mire:
At his side gleams a sword, now useless and cold,
With rare jewels set in its hilt of gold:
Thus she dreams and dream.

He has traversed the world on his steed so fleet
For a maid like this in the window seat,
Scanned maidens of high and of low degree,
And of each one said, softly, "Not thee, not thee!"
Will never a hand point him out the way,
I wonder? Oh, yes! he will come to day,
So she dreams and dreams.

But hark to that sound; was it out of the street?
And was it the sound of hurrying feet?
Oh, my heart, stand still and listen with me
While I press my face to the pane and see,
Is it horses' hoofs on the pavement below?
Have you come, my knight, is it yes or no?
She dreams and dreams.

From that sword the jewels methinks I see
Adorning the hand of a maid like me!
And now I can feel his breath on my cheek,
His hand over mine. Will he never speak?
A voice through the darkness comes loud and clear;
"What, dishes not washed yet? How's this, my dear?"
Farewell, O ye dreams?

—*San Francisco Call.*

PRUDENCE HART.

BY GEORGIANA M. CRAIK.

Though he had scruples, however, about showing ardor in seeking Miss Hart's society, it was by no means his intention to exclude himself from any future intercourse with that young lady. On the contrary, he had by this time assured himself that it was his duty, in a quiet way, to learn what more of her he could, in order to place himself in a position to give such advice concerning her (supposing that advice were necessary) as ought to be looked for from an elder son and brother. Without further loss of time, therefore, he set himself about this virtuous work, and continued it with laudable perseverance through week after week of the advancing spring and early summer, for it proved to be an undertaking of an arduous sort, requiring (or, at least, so he thought) much time for its due carrying out.

As these weeks went on, Prudence showed herself to him in various moods. He saw a good deal of her, and she was sometimes (though not often) silent and demure; she was generally irritating and more or less mocking; she was occasionally gentle and womanly; and in all her moods, except perhaps the first, she got the better of him. They had many encounters together, and she beat him in every one of them. She was ten times cleverer than he was—ten times readier—ten times more daring. And he said to himself again and again: "She is not the kind of woman they think she is; she is not such a girl as it can do Mabel any good to be intimate with; if my mother knew her as I do she would not let her stay in the house;" and yet, though he knew all this, he presently lost the power of opening his lips to make the others know it; for, before he had been acquainted with Miss Prudence a couple of months, the poor young fellow was in love with her.

She had got him in the toils before he had even begun to suspect his danger. Pretty soon indeed he began to be conscious that she was acquiring a certain power over him. He knew that she was flirting with him, but he could not help offering himself to be flirted with; she drew him to her by an attraction that he did not understand, but which he hardly tried to resist; he thought he was studying her, not suspecting that while he was at his clumsy labors she had learnt *him* out and out, and could see through him as through a glass window.

After a very short time had passed, he began to take advantage of every opportunity he could find for being with her, and he was uncomfortably conscious that he seized these opportunities as secretly as he could, and almost conscious (uncomfortably too) that she perfectly understood his method of procedure, and entirely sympathized with it.

"You never talk to me before other people," he said to her once, only half displeased at the demure manner that she always adopted towards him in public, and yet, for conscience' sake, half troubled at it; but when he made this accusation, she gave a little laugh, and—

"Well—shall we have our next conversation before them all?" she answered instantly. "*I* am quite willing, on my side. Suppose we come to the drawing-room now, and let your mother have the pleasure of hearing you reproach me for my silence—and my other faults."

"You always get the better of me," he replied. "If I ever venture to blame you for anything you always turn the tables on me."

"And what else would you have me do?" she asked. "Do you think I am fond of being found fault with?—and what are you to me that I should take fault-finding from you?"

And then the color came to his face, and that last question of hers touched him enough to make his speech fail him. For he had begun by this time (or perhaps had begun) to feel a certain secret consciousness that he should like to be something to her; he believed indeed still that there could be nothing serious between them, but he had thought often that he should like to move her to at least a spark of feeling, to awake something different from this mocking and challenging spirit in her. And the young man who was rapidly growing more in earnest than he yet well knew, was beginning to find that her mocking words had acquired a keen power to sting and wound him.

In addition to these pains, too, that she made him suffer, there was another matter that troubled him not a little. He was afraid of Godfrey. It was true that his brother always spoke of Prudence in a slighting way, which she on her side returned, and that their intercourse, as far as appeared, was a very easy and indifferent one; but Keith had deep experience in his own case that appearances, where Miss Hart was concerned, were by no means to be received with implicit trust, and once or twice at least, if not oftener, it seemed to his eyes (which were perhaps, however, too jealous to see straight) that there was more between them than either of them was disposed to confess.

Once he thought this so strongly, that he even charged her with trying to make his brother care for her; a bold thing to do, and a very unwise one as well, for, as may be supposed, she rose to the occasion, and routed him with humiliation.

"*I* trouble myself about your brother!" she exclaimed, drawing herself up to her utmost height (she was not a tall woman, but many a day she made him feel, for all his six feet, as if she towered far above him). "Do you think I should be likely to try to get a boy like that to care for me, when I would not move hand or foot to entice any man alive?"

And her scorn was so superb that, carried away by it entirely for the moment, he almost humbled himself in the dust before her to entreat her pardon. So, growing always more and more tender over her, and more enthralled by her, Keith came and went during these spring and summer months—not a very happy man, for neither Prudence nor his conscience gave him an easy time of it, but yet loving the chains he had bound himself with too well even to wish to break them.

It was not until August had come that, in plain words, he disclosed the state of his feelings to Miss Hart. Long before that time she had, of course, been perfectly aware of how matters stood with him, for both her natural gifts and her large experiences made any want of comprehension on such a subject quite impossible to her; but it was only on this August day that the words, which a score of times had been very near the young man's lips, finally crossed them and got spoken.

It was a Sunday, and they had met early in the morning in the garden—as, to tell the truth, by a sort of tacit arrangement, they had done more than once or twice before—he coming out an hour or so before breakfast intentionally to find her, and she demurely permitting herself to be found. On this special day he came in search of her while the heads of most of the rest of the household were still at peace upon their pillows, and discovered her soon in a distant part of the garden, pacing up and down one of the gravel paths, in apparently a very thoughtful mood.

"I hope you have not been here long," he said cheerfully, when he lighted on her.

"I have been here for some time," she answered coldly.

"Oh, by Jove!—am I late then?" exclaimed the young man in a grieved tone, and he looked at his watch; but as he read it his face brightened again. "No; it is not half past seven yet. It is you who are too early," he said.

"Too early for what?" she inquired; and then she looked at him with a look that made him ready to sink into his boots, and "If you think I only came out here to enjoy the pleasure of *your* company, Mr. Keith, you are under a curious delusion," she haughtily said.

Upon which he felt so confounded that he held his peace, for (as he had taken it hitherto) he had not had a doubt that it *was* for that reason that Miss Hart, on these Sunday mornings, had been in the habit of shortening her repose.

However, when she rebuked his presumptuous assumption with such severity, he submitted to the rebuke for a few moments in silence, and then merely answered—

"Well, it is for *your* company that *I* come, any way."

"That is a very different thing," she said.

"I suppose it is," he assented, a little ruefully. "But, I say," he remonstrated, after another little pause, "I think you're awfully hard upon a fellow. If you don't consider that you may give one a little encouragement after all this time—by Jove!"—and then his eloquence failed him.

"I don't see why I need give you any encouragement," she said deliberately. "I don't see why any man needs encouragement. You are all alike, every one of you. You think a woman ought to be grateful, and to make a curtsey to you for every civil word you speak to her; but I think differently. From me, I beg to tell you, Mr. Keith, you will get neither curtseys nor gratitude."

"Well, I am sure I don't expect them," replied Keith, rather indignantly; and then he walked on with his heart pretty hot within him.

She had a light summer mantle over her shoulders, and she folded her arms and wrapped it around her, as if it had been a martial cloak. The movement almost seemed as if it were made to show her lover how self-contained and independent of him she was. And so he interpreted it, as he watched her askance, with his heart full of honest love for her, and yet torn with a good many conflicting thoughts.

Did she not care at all for him? the poor lad was asking himself. She was far more than a match for him—he knew that; but yet he remembered words and looks that she had given to him, he remembered (they were rarely enough, indeed, out of his thoughts) two or three tender passages that had passed between them, and he could not believe that her indifference was not assumed. He let a minute pass in silence, and then he spoke to her again.

"I don't know why you come down upon me so this morning," he said. "What have I done? I am sure you ought to be friends with me. If you knew how I felt to you, you would see quickly enough how little *I*, at any rate, deserved to have you say such things."

"And why *you* less than anybody else? You are like other people I suppose," she answered indifferently.

"But all people are not alike," he remonstrated. "Why, its absurd to talk like that. Do you think all women are like yourself?"

"If they had my spirit they would be like me in one respect," she said.

"That is, in scorning me and all my sex, I suppose?" he suggested after a moment's silence.

"In holding their proper place, and not letting you or any of your sex trample upon them," she retorted.

Upon which Keith said nothing. The implied suggestion that *he* was trampling upon *her* struck him as something so wildly wide of the truth, that no ejaculation appeared adequate to express his amazement.

They walked again in silence for another minute or so after this. She puzzled him very much; she troubled him and gave him many pangs. But yet he felt unutterably tender to her, and he longed intensely to give some expression to his tenderness. More than once before now he had been very near declaring his love for her, but some lingering sense of prudence, some lingering sense of doubt, had kept him silent. But now the moment had come when it seemed to him that he could not bear to be silent any more.

"Well, I ought almost to be afraid, I suppose, to say anything more to you," he abruptly began, with his heart beating fast, after the pause had lasted a little while; "and I should be, I fancy, if my conscience were not as clear toward you as it is. But you know pretty well how things are with me, Prudence—I never wanted you or any other woman to knock under to me, but you know I love you with all my heart, and if you can only like me enough to wait for me till I have got a home to offer you, I—I think I shall be the happiest fellow living," said the poor boy, with rather a break in his voice at the last words.

It was an honest declaration, and no woman need have been ashamed to be touched by it: but Miss Prudence Hart had proved her right to the name she bore on a good many occasions already in her life, and though Keith was trembling as he finished speaking, the healthy color in her cheeks hardly either deepened or declined, and she paced on steadily for a dozen steps or more after he had ended his speech, thoughtfully to all appearance, revolving the proposal he had made. She was as cool as a melon, too, when, after that pause, she opened her lips.

"And what would all your people say to you, do you think, supposing I agreed to this arrangement?" she composedly asked, and she turned to him and looked him straight in the face. "As things stand at this moment, they are not—exactly prepared to hear of it, perhaps?"

The poor young man was gifted with only so small and ordinary an amount of self-control that, at this inquiry, he colored to the roots of his hair.

"They may not be prepared for it, but—but I should tell them at once, of course," he said.

"And they would no doubt be highly gratified by the intelligence?" replied Miss Hart suavely.

And then she looked at him again as she might have looked at a beetle through which she had just stuck a pin, and the next moment gave a curious and, perhaps, not a very pleasant laugh.

He was trying to find some answer to make to her sarcasm, and had uttered two or three words, when she interrupted him, not without a good deal of dignity; she was so entirely mistress of herself that it was quite easy for her to be dignified, whereas even self-possession for him was clearly, for the moment, a thing not to be attained.

"Mr. Keith, I am not quite so simple as not to know how the matter stands," she said. "Before you compromise yourself any further, take back your proposal. You have meant it kindly, perhaps, but you have forgotten, I think, to take into account that I am likely to be a little too proud to accept it. If you want me to thank you, I thank you, and—decline your offer. And now," she said composedly, "let us never speak about this again."

But of course he began to speak about it again instantly; he might have hesitated before he opened his lips at all, knowing how much reason there was for hesitation; but, after he had once parted from his discretion, it was not likely that an admonition from her would keep him silent. So he pleaded his cause with all the ardor and the earnestness he could call to his aid, and she walked placidly by his side and listened to him, finding the occupation, perhaps, not unpleasant.

"If it is only that you mind what the rest may say, you ought not to give me up for that," the young man eagerly argued. "And you are not going to tell me, Prudence, that you don't care at all for me? You have as good as said you liked me before now. I don't think that you would have let things go so far as they have—that you would have let me get so fond of you as you know I have been getting—if you had not meant to give something back to me at last."

"You forget, Mr. Keith, that people are sometimes a little weak," replied Miss Hart to this appeal; and then, at last, she cast her eyes modestly to the ground. "*I* was *very* weak if I ever said I liked you."

"But unless it had been true you would not have said it at all!" exclaimed Keith triumphantly; "and the truth of it is all I want you to allow. If you let me know that you like me, you can't imagine," cried the young man, "that I am going to give you up. Prudence, *do* you like me?" And with the last words, which came from his lips with a tremulous tenderness, he ventured to touch her hand, and after a moment, even to take it in his own.

She submitted to this movement for a few seconds, but after that space of time she gave a little, just audible sigh, and drew herself away from him.

"This is very foolish," she said abruptly.

"Foolish do you call it!" ejaculated Keith, with all his face on fire. "It seems to me like—like standing on the threshold of some new world."

"Well, and may not the threshold of a new world be a very risky place to stand on?" inquired Miss Hart. "I am a coward, you see, Mr. Keith, and I am afraid of the unknown. Come, I repeat it is all foolish. Let us forget this last half hour."

"How can you tell me to do that, as if you believed that it was possible?" the young man broke out passionately.

"You have been very unwise," said Miss Hart reprovingly.

"I have to learn that yet," he replied, "Surely, Prudence, I have told you nothing this morning that you did not know before! You allow that, do you not? And, dear," he went on ardently, after a moment's silence, "if you have known that indeed, and if you have still gone on meeting me, how can I believe that all this time you have meant to say no to me at last? You cannot have meant it; there is so much between no and yes. Give me one word of hope, and I will wait—you do not know how patiently I will wait—for the rest."

And then she made no immediate answer to him; but after a little pause, she finally did give him one word of hope.

It was a very cool and cautious word, but, such as it was, it raised him to the seventh heaven. But, as time went on, I am afraid the poor lad found that he had entered into a rather stormy paradise, and that if Miss Hart had disturbed his repose in the days before he had declared himself to be her lover, she racked him with almost unbearable torments in those other days that came after them. For he soon discovered that his expectations of receiving any extended favors from her hands after his elevation was a delusion of the most absolute kind. She gave him not more than she had given him before, but less. She treated him with brusquerie, with coldness, sometimes even with contempt; she made him jealous by parading her apparent preference of other people to himself; and when he reproached her with these cruelties she told him coolly that she practised them for his own good, that he might learn prudence, and wean his affections from her.

"For you know you are very foolish to care about me," she often told him demurely. "There are a great many other girls that it would be far better for you to like." And she would enumerate these maidens sometimes, till she drove him wild with impatience.

"I will marry you or no other woman in this world!" he told her one day, with vehemence. And then she laughed, and suddenly stopped her teasing talk, and looking in his face with a softer look in her eyes than she often let him see—

"Well, I don't think you will ever marry me," she said abruptly; "but, if such an unlikely thing should by chance happen, I will try not to make you unhappy—you good old Keith."

And on this—for she gave him few such tender speeches—the foolish fellow was so moved that, feeling an entire inability to express his gratitude in words, he fairly went down on his knees before her, and kissed the little hand she gave up to him, with all kinds of incoherent blessings stumbling over one another on his lips.

And so, with little visible change, things went on till the summer had passed its height. Long before this, Prudence had made herself much at home in the Verner family, and had won a high opinion for her virtues from Mr. and Mrs. Verner alike. From Mabel she had, perhaps, not quite won so high an opinion, for Mabel's acquaintance with her being more intimate, led now and then to certain suspicions that made that young lady doubtful about the innermost character of her new friend; yet even Mabel was attracted by her too much to be disposed readily to think ill of her. "It seems to me that she is not quite straightforward," she had said, hesitatingly, once or twice to Keith (who, having his own thoughts, too, on that point, had not, perhaps, been able to do much to allay his sister's perplexity); but to her mother she had not said even so much as this. She was a kind-hearted girl, and hardly liked to hint at suspicions that she could not prove; "for if mamma thought there was anything odd about her she would never let her stay," she argued, "and it would seem so hard to send her away. Besides, I may be wrong, and she is so nice in many ways, and I don't believe she means any harm. It is only that—I think—she does not tell the truth," she would say, a little troubled, and yet unable to resolve that, if other people's eyes were shut, it was her business to open them. So she kept silent: and Prudence went on her way rejoicing.

But on a certain morning, when autumn had begun, and the beech-trees were growing red and dropping their leaves upon the lawn, the postman brought a letter to Miss Hart, from which unexpected results ensued. It was a letter addressed in a man's hand, and when she received it at the breakfast table, Prudence blushed a little, and slipped it into her apron pocket unopened, and when the meal was ended took her departure from the apartment rather hastily; after which for a good while nobody saw her any more.

After an hour or two had passed, however, Mrs. Verner was seated by herself in the dining-room with her desk and her account-books before her, when Miss Hart's gentle fingers opened the door, and her soft step having brought her to Mrs. Verner's side, down she unexpectedly plumped there on the floor, giving the elder lady, who was busy with her bills, rather a turn.

"What's the matter, my dear?" she said quickly, looking round.

"Oh, dearest Mrs. Verner, nothing is the matter," answered Prudence sweetly. She had a pretty color in her cheeks, and in her eyes the softest look of modest confusion. "Nothing is the matter—unless you should be angry; but you won't be that, I think, because I am so happy. I have come to tell you first of all. Dear Mrs. Verner, I am—I am going to be married."

"Married, Prudence!" cried Mrs. Verner, quite taken aback, for she had thought she knew all the girl's concerns, and had calmly come to the conclusion long ago that she had never had a lover in her life.

"Yes. I knew I should surprise you," answered Prudence, softly laughing, "for I never told you, did I? But it has been such a long attachment—oh, such a long attachment! and there were difficulties; but he can do what he likes now, and my only trouble, dear Mrs. Verner, is that I must leave you all at once. Yes, at once, for he is going with his regiment to Canada almost immediately, and—and there will be so many things to do you know."

"But, Prudence, where do you propose to go to?" exclaimed the matron, feeling almost scandalized at the rapidity with which Miss Hart was preparing to transact the whole affair. "You can't be married in a moment, child."

"Oh, no; but he asks me to go and stay in London with his brother," explained Prudence, with another sweet and modest smile. "His brother is married. I don't know his wife, but that doesn't matter, does it? And they have sent an invitation to me to go to them, and they want to have our wedding from their house. Are they not kind? Wherever I go people are so good to me," said grateful Prudence.

The news was startling; but of course the only thing was to facilitate Miss Hart's departure. The gentleman who was to be her husband had just come into a very good fortune, she informed them. "I am sure you will be glad to know that I shall not be poor," she told them meekly; and they were very glad of course. They rejoiced in her happiness altogether very heartily. "The only thing we have to regret is that we must lose you," they said to her.

"But you will not lose me forever, I hope," Prudence answered very sweetly to this. "My George hopes only to be abroad for a very few years, and then we shall settle in England, and I hope I shall see a *great* deal of you."

And so when Thursday came she took her departure with smiles and tears. It was quite an affecting parting. Mr. and Mrs. Verner almost felt as if they were separating from a daughter. They gave her a handsome present to help her with her trousseau; they told her to let them have frequent news of her. "The boys will be so surprised," Mrs. Verner repeated, an hour before the end came. "I shall write to Keith this afternoon and tell him. They will both be so sorry when they hear you are gone."

And accordingly, when Prudence was fairly launched on her new life, Mrs. Verner wrote her note, and Keith got it the next morning. He found it on his table when he came in to breakfast, and he read it in Godfrey's presence, and as he read it he gave a gasp and turned deadly pale.

"I say, what's up?" cried his brother in surprise; and then without a word Keith dashed the letter on the ground, and the other picked it up and read it.

The next moment Godfrey had struck his clenched hand on the table with a blow that made the cups and saucers ring.

"Confound her!" he cried furiously.

But Keith only looked at him for a moment, and then walked blindly out of the room. His brother might curse her, but he had loved her too well for that. He felt as if his life was ended. Through the closed doors he heard Godfrey swearing and he sat down alone, like a man who was stunned.

THE END.

Little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth. For a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.—*Bacon.*