Be a Woman.

Oft I've heard a gentle mother,
As the twilight hours began,
Pleading with a son on duty,
Urging him to be a man.
But unto her blue-eyed daughter,
Though with love's words quite as ready,
Points she out the other duty—
"Strive, my dear, to be a lady."

What's a lady? Is it something
Made of hoops and silks and airs,
Used to decorate the parlor,
Like the fancy rings and chairs?
Is it one that wastes on novels
Every feeling that is human?
If 'tis this to be a lady,
'Tis not this to be a woman.

Mother, then, unto your daughter
Speak of something higher far
Than to be mere fashion's lady—
"Woman" is the brightest star.
If you, in your strong affection,
Urge your son to be a true man,
Urge your daughter no less strongly
To arise and be a woman.

Yes, a woman! Brightest model
Of that high and perfect beauty,
Where the mind and soul and body
Blend to work out life's great duty.
Be a woman; naught is higher
On the gilded crest of time;
On the catalogue of virtue
There's no brighter holier name.

THAT BEAUTIFUL RIVER.

"I think you understand me," he said. "The wife I loved is as one dead to me. She never existed save in my imagination. You must accept this as your punishment, if indeed you can feel any remorse for your falsehood and deceit. Now, go to your room and let your maid attend you there. I presume you will not care to meet our guests again. I am quite sure they will not wish to see you. Remain in seclusion. To-morrow I will make all needful arrangements for our separation, and they shall be duly communicated to you,"

She lifted her head and gave one long, grave look from her heavy, sombre eyes at the handsome, haughty face, bowed slowly, and went out of the room. The slow swish of her trailing satin robe echoed drearily in his hearing as he stood there pale and statue-like, but he did not turn his head for one farewell glance at the girl who was his wife and who so terribly deceived him.

She went to her room and sunk down wearily upon her sofa. Marie, the maid, came in presently. Her face showed that she knew all.

"Marie," she said, "go and ask Mrs. Le Roy if she will permit me to come to her for a few moments."

The maid returned in a moment.

"Mr. Le Roy is with his mother. He desires that you will not disturb her," she said.

Laurel answered quietly.

"You may go away, and leave me now, Marie, I wish to be alone for awhile."

When the maid had gone she went to the window, drew back the rich curtains of silk and lace and gazed out upon the scene. Night had fallen—the beautiful moonlit summer night. The perfume of roses and honeysuckles came floating heavily on the soft air, the wide expanse of the Hudson shone like a silver sea.

"I must go away from Eden," said the girl-wife to herself, drearily. "What shall I do with my empty, ruined life?"

Strangely enough there came to her a memory of the day she had first met St. Leon Le Roy—the questions she had asked him and his strange reply:

"I believe I should throw myself into yonder beautiful river and so end all," he had said.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Mlle. Marie was very glad to get away from attendance on her mistress for a few hours. There is nothing happens in the parlor, but is immediately communicated to the kitchen, so the *denouement* in high life had immediately become the sensation in low life below stairs. The maid was eager to join the gossips.

So Laurel remained alone and undisturbed in the elegant rooms, where she had spent such happy hours with the husband who now disowned and abandoned her. She stared out into the beautiful summer night with dark, inscrutable eyes, trying dimly to pierce the veil that hid the future from her aching sight.

St. Leon Le Roy remained in attendance on his mother. The poor lady, in her weak, enfeebled state, had sustained a terrible shock. She had fallen from one fainting spell to another, and the nurse and her son remained constantly by her side. At length she recovered her reason, and was given a composing draught. She fell into a light slumber, and St. Leon stole away and consummated that fatal interview with his wife, then returned to watch by the invalid's couch.

He did not intend to deny his wife an interview with his mother, though he did not think it would avail her anything, believing that she would take sides with himself against the wife who had so bitterly deceived him. He did not think it prudent to allow a meeting between them that night; so when Marie came he returned the curt message that swept the last hope from Laurel's heart, and, as it seemed, the last plank from between her and despair.

Mrs. Le Roy slumbered fitfully until midnight. St. Leon sent the nurse to the lounge in the dressing-room, and kept vigil himself by the sick bed, looking more like a statue than a man, as he sat there in the shaded night-light, pale and moveless, as if carved in marble; his lips compressed sternly, a smoldering fire burning in his veiled, dark eyes. His mind was busy with thought and memory. He was going over, step by step, his acquaintance with the false Beatrix Gordon from the day when she had first stood, shy and frightened, in the doorway of Eden, until to-night. He held the key now to many a subtle enigma that had puzzled him in those past days.

"So fair, so young, and seemingly so ignorant of the world, and yet so false," he said to himself. "False to her lover, Ross Powell, first, then doubly false in wedding me in borrowed plumes. There is no faith or truth in women. They are bad and mercenary to the core—all of them, except my honored mother. Yet my wife has the face of an angel. Who would have believed that the greed of gold could have tempted her to such a sin!"

Mrs. Le Roy stirred and opened her eyes. They rested wistfully on the stern, impassive face of her son.

"Your wife, St. Leon," she said faintly, "Have you forgiven her?"

"Could there be any forgiveness for such falsity as hers, mother,?" he asked, turning sternly toward her.

A sigh breathed over Mrs. Le Roy's lips.

"She was such a child," she said, plaintively, almost excusingly. "Have you given her any chance to exculpate herself, my son?"

"Could any exculpation be acceptable?" he asked again, sternly.

"Where is she?" What has been done to her?" she asked, anxiously.

He told her his decision, told her all that he had said to his wife in his outraged pride and wrath. She was weeping bitterly when he had finished.

"Mother, surely you do not blame me and excuse her," he said, wonderingly. "I had no thought but that you would take my part against her."

"I must see her first," she said, almost angrily in her deep earnestness. "I cannot condemn her unheard. You will let me see the child, St. Leon?"

"Of course," he answered, impatiently, "You do not suppose I would deny any wish of that kind you choose to express, mother. But to-night you are too ill and nervous. You will wait until to-morrow."

"Oh, my son, do not be angry with me—I cannot wait. Send her to me now," she wept.

"I am quite sure you had better wait until to-morrow," he began, but at that moment Mlle. Marie pushed open the door and looked in with a pale frightened face.

"Is Mrs. Le Roy here?" she asked. "Because she is not in her room, and I cannot find her anywhere."

"St. Leon, you have driven her away," his mother cried out, wildly.

He sprung to his feet in dismay.

"No, no," he said quickly. "Do not think such a thing, mother. Stay here, Marie, I will go and find her if she can be found. She is not far, of course."

But all the same a hand of ice seemed to grip his heart as he hurried from the room.

She was gone—the dark-eyed bride whom he had loved so well, and who had so fatally deceived him. While Marie gossipped with her familiars she had quietly stolen away. A little, tear blotted note lay on her dressing-table.

"I have gone away, my husband," it said. "I shall never trouble your peace again. Perhaps when I am dead you will forgive me for having loved you, 'not wisely, but too well.'"

And to the pathetic note she had simply signed the despised name of "Laurel Vane."

The white satin dress, the withered roses, lay on the dressing-room floor; the jewels she had worn, some costly sparkling rubies, lay on her dressing-table, beside the little note. A simple walking dress and close hat and veil were gone from her wardrobe; but the next morning the dark blue veil and a pair of pretty dark kid gloves, with the dimpled impress of her hand still in them, were found upon the river bank close to the greedy gurgling waves. They suggested a horrible possibility to every one.

And one week later a mutilated unrecognizable body was washed upon the shore near Eden. The face was defaced beyond recognition; but the golden hair, the dark dress, the dainty linen, were like Laurel's. No one doubted that the despairing wife had sought oblivion from her woes in the deep, swirling river. If St. Leon forgave her now for her sin, he made no sign. He remained silent, grave, inscrutable. But the waif from the river was buried quietly in the Le Roy vault, with all the honors due to his wife. He shed no tears, he spoke no word of the feelings that held sway within him. The separation of death was no wider than he had meant should exist in life.

But Mrs. Le Roy was inconsolable. She wept bitterly for the daughter-in-law who had so deceived her. She forgave her now for her sin, because she was so young and had loved St. Leon so dearly. And there was another reason, which one day, through her bitter lamentations, she revealed to St Leon.

"You must have forgiven her if you had known it, St. Leon," she said. "But she was so shy and she had only known of it a little while herself. She told me first, and I was so happy over the news! There was soon to be a little heir at Eden."

CHAPTER XLIV.

Laurel had left her veil and gloves on the bank of the river with a deliberate purpose.

She desired that her angry, unforgiving husband should believe that she was dead. Since he had deliberately planned to put her out of his life forever, he would, no doubt, be glad to think that she was dead. So, with a heart full of bitterness and wounded love, she had penned that pathetic note to him and gone away.

All her trembling hopes were over now. She knew the worst. St. Leon would never forgive her for the deceit by which she had made herself his wife. He had forgotten his love; indeed, she did not doubt but that he hated her now, and believed Ross Powell's shameless lie against her. Mrs. Le Roy, too, had declined to see her. Of course she took sides with her son. The poor child had not one friend to turn to in her despair.

Her heart beat, her face burned at the thought of the ignominious separation her husband had planned. What did she care for Eden, for the wealth he had sneeringly said she should not be deprived of, now that she had lost him? All the latent pride within her rose in arms against such terrible humiliation. She would have died, indeed, would have faced the cruelest death unflinchingly, rather than have remained at Eden on such terms. Laurel had been a passionate, loving, impulsive child till now. In the hour of her unutterable desolation, she became a proud, cold, blighted woman. Her sin had found her out. That time of which she had spoken to Beatrix Wentworth and Clarice, saying that only when it came could she repent of her fault, had come, and, metaphorically speaking, she wore sack-cloth and ashes.

Death would have been welcome in that hour. She longed for it, she prayed for it. It seemed to her quite impossible that she could lose St. Leon and live. She had told herself often and often that, if he refused to forgive her when he found her out, that she should die. It had seemed to her that her heart would stop its beating, her pulses faint and fail in that terrible hour.

But the end had come, and the blood pulsed through her veins, her heart still beat, the young, strong life that thrilled her held on its steady course. A great temptation came over her as she crouched in the night and the darkness on the banks of the swirling river. It would have been so pleasant, so sweet, to have ended the short, sad story of her life, with its terrible temptation and cruel failure, then and there—to have shut out the dark, foreboding future in the merciful shadows of oblivion, but something—perhaps that tender secret she had so shyly withheld from her husband—held her back from the fatal plunge. Her own life she might have taken in the frenzy of despair, but that other tender one throbbing neath her broken heart, she could not, she dared not.

"I have no right," she said to herself. "I might be wicked and mad enough to commit suicide, but murder, never. No, no, I will be brave. I will bear my cross for the sake of what is coming to me. Who knows but it may comfort me in my lonely future! St. Leon will not want it. He would hate it and exile it from him as he did me. It will be wholly mine—something of his that will love me and cling to me although he scorns and despises me."

So she went away. She took with her none of the jewels, none of the beautiful gifts her adoring husband had lavished upon her in the happy days now for ever past. She slippped her purse into her pocket. It contained several hundred dollars. Pride would have made her leave it, but she felt that for the sake of her tender secret she had a right to take it with her. She would need it in the trial that lay before her.

So she left the veil and gloves upon the river bank where they would find them if they sought for her, and then she went to New York and hid herself and her sorrow in the obscurity of the great thronged city, bearing her burden of sorrow alone and in pitiful silence and despair.

Through the medium of the omnipresent newspaper she learned of the tragedy that had occurred at Eden. As if it had been the story of another she went over the fate of the beautiful impostor who had been detected in her sin, and whose disappearance had been followed by the finding of her drowned body. Then, indeed, she started, wondering who the unfortunate river waif could have been who had been buried with the honors pertaining to St. Leon Le Roy's young wife.

"I will not undeceive them," she said. "Now, indeed, I am dead to him forever, and that is best. Let him forget me."

CHAPTER XLV.

Alone and without references, Laurel did not find it easy to secure respectable lodgings in the city. She thought of returning to the house where she had lived with her father, but a wholesome dread of her base enemy, Ross Powell, held her back. She did not think it would be prudent to venture into that vicinity, so she went to a far-removed portion of the city, where she only secured the cheap and decent lodgings she desired by the payment of several months in advance. She was very well pleased to do this, for she had made up her mind to remain in this quiet, obscure locality until her trial was over. To her curious landlady she called herself Mrs. Vane, and said that she was a widow.

As she had left all her clothing at Eden, Laurel found herself compelled to draw again upon her small hoard of money. In accordance with her *role* of widow, she bought only black dresses, and these of a cheap and shoddy kind. She put back her rich, golden hair under an ugly widow's cap, and never ventured into the street without a thick crape veil drawn closely over her face. She did not feel that she was acting a falsehood in doing this. She said to herself that she was worse than widowed. She had been most cruelly put away from her husband's heart for a sin that he ought to have forgiven because she had loved him so dearly and had been tempted so much beyond her power of resistance.

A strange cold bitterness began to grow up in her desolate young heart toward him. She called him hard and cold and unloving in her thoughts, because measured by her own passionate love his affection fell so far below the standard where she would have placed it. Laurel was all unversed in the lore of the world. She knew nothing of the difference between male and female love. She had never heard that couplet so wonderfully true that use has worn it threadbare:

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence.

She did not know this—no one had ever told her so, and she was fated to learn it in the hardest fashion by cruel experience. She was learning, too, in all their subtle pathos the truth of those mournful lines:

Alas! the love of woman, it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing,
For all of theirs upon the die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost life has no more to bring.

These were sad and heavy days that followed on her flitting to New York. She was almost crazed with the bitterness of her despair. There were weeks that were afterward almost a blank to her because she spent them in tears that were like drops of blood wrung from her aching, bleeding heart. She lay all day on her little bed vainly dwelling on the irrevocable past, looking back on all that she had lost with incurable longing and bitter regret. When this season of lamenting had worn itself out, Laurel grew hard and proud and tried to forget—a hard task that many, stronger than our little heroine, have essayed in vain.

After awhile she found out that she would have to draw again on the contents of her alredy diminished purse. There were garments to be provided for the little stranger that was coming to brighten her darkened life. She would not choose coarse, cheap garments now, such as she had bought for herself. She selected the finest, whitest linen, the softest, warmest flannel, the daintiest muslin, and was even a little extravagant in the matter of dainty laces and Hamburg trimmings. Then, when the complete and pretty outfit was laid away, with lavender and rose-leaves between the snowy folds, Laurel counted the few dollars that were left from her expenditures, and became frightened.

"When it is all gone, what shall I do?" she asked herself, blankly. "Where is the next to come from?"

And her startled reason harshly answered her: "You will have to work for it. You will have to earn it."

Laurel did not know how to earn money. She had never been taught any available thing, and her delicate condition of health precluded the idea of going out into the busy world to toil. Besides, her morbid sensibilities shrunk from the thought of encountering strangers who would look upon her with coldness, perhaps suspicion.

She was in despair at first, but she suddenly remembered how easily and quickly her reckless, pleasure-loving father had earned the wherewithal for their support.

"The publishers were always eager for papa's MSS.," she said to herself hopefully; "and, being his daughter, I must have inherited his genius. I will write."

She was not egotistical. She was simply ignorant of the world's ways. She did not know how many failed in the world of letters where one succeeded. The idea took hold of her fancy, and without a dream of failure, she armed herself with a ream of foolscap, plenty of ink and pens, and went enthusiastically to work.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Ill news flies apace. It was not long before Beatrix Wentworth, leisurely reading her New York paper in London, came upon the story of that tragedy on the beautiful Hudson—read the ending of the strange story of love and temptation, for which she felt herself in some degree responsible, since she herself had sent Laurel Vane to Eden.

"I should feel like a murderer," he said, to Beatrix. "It would seem to me that with my own hand I had pushed the poor child into the cruel river."

"He was so proud! All my life I have heard of the Le Roy pride," said Beatrix. "I have felt frightened for Laurel, ever since I found out what she had done. I never doubted that he would put her away from him when he found her out; but I never dreamed she would be driven to suicide. I thought that after a while he would forgive her and take her back."

She could not bear to think of the gentle, beautiful, golden-haired girl, lying dead. She wept when she recalled her first meeting with her, and the temptation that had entered her mind. How sadly their girlish conspiracy had ended for the dead author's daughter.

"I was her evil genius, but I only meant to be kind to her," she repeated, remorsefully, many times.

Even Clarice, who had been very angry with Laurel, and who had judged her hardly at first, had nothing but tears and regrets for the dead girl. Her passionate love that had ended in so sad a tragedy set her apart in solemn sacredness. She had atoned for her fault with her life.

"We must write to Mr. Le Roy," said Cyril Wentworth. "We must confess all our fault in sending Laurel to Eden. We must tell him how kind and true and sweet she was until her mad love led her astray. We must beg him to forgive her now she is dead."

Beatrix wrote. It was a brave though most pathetic letter. She owned her fault in sending Laurel to Eden, she dwelt pathetically on her temptation to do so. She begged his pardon for her fault, and then she pleaded for Laurel dead as warmly and earnestly as if she had been living to profit by the prayers of her friend. The page was blistered by her tears, but no answer ever came to her earnest appeal. It seemed that Mr. Le Roy was indeed hard and unforgiving. He could not accord his pardon to any of the actors in the strange drama that had shadowed his life.

Then Beatrix wrote to her parents, humbly acknowledging her fault and praying their pardon. She loved them dearly although she had deserted them for her handsome, adoring young lover. She had a faint hope that they would forgive her and Cyril and bid them come home. She longed for her father's kiss of welcome, her mother's clasping arms.

Oh! how impatiently she waited for the answer to that letter! How eagerly she longed to be pardoned for the girlish conspiracy that had ended so diastrously to Laurel Vane! She began to see her fault in a darker light now since the tragedy at Eden. The shadow of Laurel's grave seemed te fall long and dark across her wedded happiness!

An answer came at last from her outraged father—such an answer as withered all the springing hopes in her breast. They would never forgive her her fault. They had no longer a daughter. Their Beatrix was the same as dead to them, and they wished never to hear from Cyril Wentworth's wife.

CHAPTER XLVII.

I want that rose so much,
I would take the world back there to the night
When I saw it blush in the grass, to touch
It once in that fair fall light;
And only once if I might.

Never any rose before
Was like that rose; very well I know
Never another rose any more
Will blow as that rose did blow.

St. Leon Le Roy sat alone in his handsome, spacious library. He had been reading, but the book of poems had fallen from his hand, and he was dreamily repeating some lines that had touched an aching chord in his heart:

I want that rose so much,
I would take the world back there to the night
When I saw it blush in the grass, to touch
It once in that fair fall light;
And only once if I might.

Memory was busy at his heart, for time had not healed, it had only seared, the wound of years ago.

Eight years had come and gone since that terrible night when his bitter anger and hard judgment had driven his erring childish wife out into the darkness of death. Scarcely an hour ago he had stood by the broken marble shaft that marked her grave and seen the gray moss creeping over the sweet simple, name—

LAUREL.
Beloved wife of St. Leon Le Roy.

Beloved! Yes, he had carved it on her tombstone when all too late to save the broken heart that had loved him with a madness that proved its own destruction. Beloved! ah, he never knew how well until the slow years coming and going, "barren of all joy," had shown him how empty and hollow was all the world measured with what he had lost. All his life was a long regret, an echo of the poet's plaint:

Oh, to call back the days that are not!

The years had marked his face with the story of their sadness. Handsome as Apollo still, there were lines of pain about the cold proud lips, there were silver threads clustering in the raven locks tossed carelessly back from the white brow, there were shadows always lying *perdue* in the splendid dark eyes. For years he had been a lonely wanderer by land and sea, but now that he had come home again to Eden and to his mother, and to Laurel's grave, he found that he had not forgotten—that he never could forget.

He had been standing by her grave where she had rested for eight long years, he had read her name carved on the cold, white marble, but back here in the room where he had wooed her for his wife, where she had promised to be his, it seemed to him that he could not make her dead. She haunted him—not in

The garments
Dripping like cerement,

in which she had been drawn from her watery grave; but bright blushing, beautiful, as in those days forever past when she had come to Eden first and made herself his fate.

His fate! Yes, it had come to that. The one woman who had stirred his heart to its depths, who had loved him so blindly, and deceived him so terribly, had made herself his fate. He had not forgotten her, he never would forget. He remembered the dark, wistful eyes, the trembling smile of the crimson lips, the curling golden hair, the warm, dimpled, white hands. Ah! only to clasp them again, only to kiss the lovely responsive lips, what would he not have given!

But that rose is not
Anywhere just now—God knows
Where all the old sweetness goes.

"If only I had forgiven her," he said to himself as he had said it over and over in the long, weary years. "She was only a child and the temptation was so great. I was hard and cold. I thought only of myself, my own injuries. Poor little loving Laurel, driven to her death by my hard judgment. Ah, that my sorrow, my love, my repentance could bring her back!"

He bent his head wearily down upon his folded hands heedless of the light, gliding step that came to his side, the soft touch that fell upon his hair, the voice that breathed in loving sympathy, "My son."

It was his mother. She knew where he had been, and her heart was full of grief and sorrow for his hopeless pain. Yet she knew that words were powerless to soothe the agony of remorse and pain that filled his heart. She only came with her silent sympathy to be near him because she loved him and shared his grief.

He looked up at last, trying to seem cheerful for her sake, for she, too, was sadly changed by the progress of the years. The soft wave of hair that clustered on her brow had grown snow white, the high-bred patrician face was pale and sad, her voice had always a tone of unconscious pathos in its low, clear modulations.

"I am sorry you have found me thus, mother," he said, seeing the sorrowful tears shining in her gentle eyes. "Years should have taught me to be brave and strong. But you know where I have been. It brought the past all back, and temporarily unnerved me."

"Yes, I know. But you will feel better by-and-bye," she said, simply, feeling that silence was better than words before such grief as his. It was a subject on which they never conversed. She had felt it a cruel and unkind act when she first learned of the interview that St. Leon had refused to allow between her and Laurel that tragic night. She had reproached him most bitterly for it once, but ever since she had held her peace. There was that in his face, when she looked at him, that told of a conscience never at rest, of a heart whose self-reproaches were harder to bear than words of hers could have been. She grew to be sorry for him, and never, by word or sign, added to his pain; for the proud, lonely, disappointed old woman idolized her stately son even yet, although by his hard, unforgiving course toward Laurel Vane he had shattered the dearest hope of her life.

It was too late now. St. Leon would never marry, would never forget. With a smothered sigh, she tried to put the vexing thought out of her mind, and with the same laudable intent toward St. Leon she roused herself and said, quietly:

"I do not believe I have told you yet, St. Leon, that we have new neighbors at Belle Vue?"

Belle Vue was the country house next to them, and one almost as beautiful as Eden. It was scarcely a mile away, and St. Leon looked up with some little interest, as he inquired:

"What? Have the Armisteads sold out or gone away?"

"Both. Robert Armistead failed in his banking business, and it involved the loss of his whole private fortune. He sold out everything, and went West with his family to seek his fortune again."

"I am sorry for Armistead," said St. Leon Le Roy, in that vague conventional tone, in which one is usually sorry for the misfortunes that do not touch himself. "And so there are new people at Belle Vue?"

"Yes, they have been down about a month."

"Are they new rich people?" St. Leon asked, with some little disdain.

"Indeed, I do not know. I should say not, however," said his mother. "People have taken them up very sociably. There is an old gentleman, a Mr. Ford, quite a travelled man, I am told. His niece lives with him, and her son. She is a widow, and literary.

"What has she written?" he inquires, with faint interest.

"Several novels—'Ermengarde,' 'The Curse of Gold,' 'Sacrificed,' and some others. Mr. Gordon is her New York publisher, but I think she has been in Europe lately with Mr. Ford.

Some little excitement gleams in his eyes.

"The author of 'Sacrificed' our nearest neighbor!" he exclaims. "Why, mother, did you not know that her books have made quite a stir abroad as well as at home? They are quite the fashion."

"I am sure I liked them myself—the style is very fresh and pure. Do you think we ought to call at Belle Vue, St. Leon? I have been thinking that it is my duty to do so."

"Perhaps it is. I will go with you, if you wish, some day. I am just a little curious over the blue-stocking, but I dare say she is old, and wears caps and spectacles," he answers carelessly enough.

(To be continued.)

A Richmond, Va., judge fined a refractory lawyer several times for contempt of court, and when the lawyer made a final settlement of his fines it was found that the court owed him $2.75, supposed to b the balance due on a small game of draw indulged in the night before.