Dusk and Dawn.

I.

Just one tinge of crimson glory
And a flitting gleam of gold
Shine across the sky an instant,
As the day is waxing old.

Then a melancholy grayness
Settles over all the scene,
And a sleepy, ashen pallor,
Blotting out each trace of green.

Sturdy youth and modest maiden
Stand a moment side by side,
While she listens to his story,
Plights herself to be his bride.

II.

One long stream of golden splendor,
Brighter glowing with the day;
Gone is the October twilight—
These are now the skies of May.

Honey fills the apple blossoms,
Bird-songs linger on the air,
Sweet with scents the fields and meadows,
Summer glory everwhere.

Where the orchard joins the woodland,
By the brooklet's rippling tide,
In the grave the two are lying—
Youth and maiden—side by side.

A GORDON'S PRIDE

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"With Sir Oscar Charlcote's compliments."

Ethel looked up, and there before her was one of the most superb bouquets ever arranged—flowers that she had admired greatly at the flower show; there were specimens of each, and as they were carried into the room their odor filled it.

Without comment she took the bouquet from the servant's hand. How beautiful they were, the sweet, fragrant blossoms, rare in color, rare in perfume! She buried her face in them—they were the first flowers she had enjoyed for so long. Some lines she had read on the previous day came back to her mind:

The smell of violets hidden in the green,
Poured back upon my empty soul and frame
The times when I remember to have been
Joyful and free from blame.

The odor of the sweet flowers brought her to that happy time before cruel revenge had awoke in her heart, and had driven her to that hurried, desperate marriage.

Still, that morning—she did not quite understand why—life seemed to have a new interest for her. Sir Oscar had mentioned a book which he recommended her to read, and she was anxious to do so. When breakfast was over she hastened to the library, and when Lady St. Norman sought her, some time afterwards, she found her reading with flushed face and brightened eyes.

"You are growing quite studious, Ethel," said Lady St. Norman.

"Sir Oscar Charlcote told me that I should like this book, and I find it most amusing."

Then she wondered why she blushed, and Lady St. Norman was too wise to make the least comment or even smile.

* * * * *

Lord St. Norman determined upon giving a dinner at Richmond, a species of entertainment in which he took great delight. It was a small, select, but very happy party, and Sir Oscar was one of the guests invited.

Ethel was pleased when she heard that Sir Oscar was going. It was the first time she had felt even the least interest in any party; but she had begun to experience some degree of pleasure in the baronet's society. She enjoyed his conversation. She felt, in some vague way, that she had found a friend—one whom she liked, upon whom she could rely. She admired his brave way of speaking, his bright, fearless thoughts, the true nobility that pervaded every word.

"I am glad that I have found a friend," the girl thought, "there is not much left to me in life, but this will be a real interest—a real pleasure."

She felt better than she had felt since that fatal day at St. Ina's, when she had exchanged her happiness, her freedom, and her name for chains and a wedding-ring. For the first time for many long months she opened her heart to the sunshine of happiness. She let her sorrow and her despair fall in the background, and the effect upon her was marvellous. She felt dazed and giddy, as one who, having been long caged in darkness and gloom, is suddenly brought into the full, clear light of day. For the first time she took an interest in the pleasures offered to her, and went so far as to ask Lady St. Norman about a dress for the *fete*.

It was a very beautiful day—the sun was shining, the air was warm, soft, and full of fragrance. Sir Oscar, according to arrangement, was to drive down to Richmond with Lord St. Norman. Ethel looked more beautiful than usual; the fresh fragrant air brought a soft flush to her face and brightened the lovely eyes. Her dress, too, was perfection—a pretty blue and white—and she wore one of the most coquettish of bonnets. The beautifully curved lips were parted with a smile, such as had not lingered there since she had been mistress of Fountayne. She did not know why she felt so happy, so light of heart, unless it was that she had made a friend. She smiled to herself as they drove along the sunny road.

"Friendship is supposed to be one of the great joys of life," she said, "and I have completely overlooked it. I can never have a lover, but I thank heaven that I have found a friend."

That evening, when dinner was over, and the elders of the party were discussing some excellent wine, Ethel went out on the balcony. The purple gloaming lay over the land, the sky was growing more darkly blue, and the stars were beginning to gleam. The river ran lightly and swiftly by—the pleasure boats were hastening down the stream—the trees were all luxuriantly green—the perfume of flowers reached her. That balcony was a favorite resort of hers.

They had been twice to Richmond, and each time she had spent the soft twilight hours in watching the beautiful panorama of earth and sky which could be so pleasantly seen from there.

A beautiful holy calm seemed to pervade the whole of Nature, and Ethel felt that she could enjoy it. Hitherto she had been a prey to her own bitter thoughts, her own despair; now she had found a friend. Heaven and earth seemed fairer for this, that she had found a friend.

Her beautiful face was softened into tenderness as she sat there in the starlight. Was there really any brightness, any music left on earth for her? Yes—for she had found a friend.

Ethel was pure of heart and guileless of soul as a little child sleeping in its mother's arms. There was not the faintest idea of wrong in her mind; and, even as once before she had mistaken fancy for love, so she now mistook the dawn of love for friendship.

It was no surprise to her when Sir Oscar, parting the heavy hangings that screened the window, came out to her. He stood in silence by her side for a few minutes, and, in some vague way that she could not understand, it seemed as though his presence made the beauty of the scene complete.

"You are looking brighter and better to-day, Miss St. Norman," he said. "I am so pleased. I think you have been following my advice."

"I have," she acknowledged freely. "I have read the book you mentioned to me, and it has done me good."

"I knew it would. I shall never be able to understand, Miss St. Norman, what it is that has given you, in the brightest part of your youth, such gloomy ideas of life."

He saw her beautiful face grow pale; he saw in the starlight how suddenly the shadow came into her beautiful eyes, and he hastened to add—

"I am so glad that you permitted me to advise you. To use a figure of speech, you seemed to be drifting down a stream. My hands are strong; let them pull you back."

"I was drifting," she confessed slowly.

"And now that is checked—you are learning to take pleasure where you can find it," he pursued.

"Yes," she assented, with a little low laugh that fell like softest music on his ear. "I find pleasure here to-night."

He watched her in silence, thinking to himself that earth had nothing one-half so fair as this beautiful, graceful girl. Rousing himself from the glamor that seemed to be falling over him, Sir Oscar began to talk to her. The poetry of the hour seemed to animate him.

"I wonder," said Sir Oscar, slowly, "how many people have sat in this balcony, happy as we are, and what has become of them."

"That is rather a wide field for speculation," she remarked.

"Yes—but I think the place is rather celebrated. "You have heard of Lord Daybrook, who murdered his wife in a fit of jealousy, and afterwards killed himself?"

"I have heard of him," replied Ethel.

"It is said that he made the unhappy lady an offer of marriage in this very balcony. Think of the tragical end of that love story! Then I have heard of two young lovers whose parents were not willing for them to marry, and they met here to bid each other farewell. Think of the hope, the despair, the love and the sorrow that have been experienced here!"

She was looking intently at the gleaming stars.

"I can imagine it all," she responded, "but it gives me strange thoughts. Those who loved each other so well are dead and gone; murder and suicide took the place of happiness. Men's lives and fortunes are full of change—Nature never changes. The lovers who sat here then are dead, but the stars are shining with the same soft light, the river is rippling with the same sweet murmur—man seems small and insignificant, after all."

"Not quite. The time will come when the stars shall fall from heaven, and the rivers, shrinking, disappear from sight; but the soul of man once created is immortal."

"I had forgotten that," she allowed, gently.

One white hand of hers lay on the stone balcony, so white in the starlight that it looked like snow. Sir Oscar laid his own upon it. She did not start nor shrink—that warm, gentle clasp seemed like a promise of protection to her.

"Miss St. Norman," he said, gently, "will you enter into a compact with me?"

"Yes," she replied, "willingly."

"Let us be friends—I mean, not mere acquaintances, but friends, in the highest, best, and noblest sense of the word."

Her face flushed with delight; he saw the beautiful color spread over it.

"Friends," he continued, "through life—never to lose sight of each other again—your pleasures, pains, hopes, joys and sorrows to be mine."

"Is that friendship?" she asked, gently.

"Yes, the noblest and the best—the friendship that strengthens all that is highest, that helps one to live and die worthily—friendship that is patient, tender and true; that stands as a shield, that is as firm as a rock, and believes no evil. Miss St. Norman, will you join in such a compact of friendship with me?"

She looked up at him half shyly

"Why do you ask me?" she inquired.

"Because I am irresistibly attracted to you," he acknowledged; "and I long with all my heart and soul to be your friend. Will you promise?"

"It is a very serious promise," she remarked.

"I know it; but it is one that will make me happy, Miss St. Norman."

"Then I give it to you," she said. "I promise to be your friend."

"Thank you," he returned, gratefully; and then silence ensued again.

He was the first to break it.

"You will think I presume upon your kindness, Miss St. Norman," he said, "if I ask something more."

"I shall not think so," confessed Ethel.

"Then, just once, on this fair summer night, let me hear you call me 'dear friend.' Say those two words to me and I shall be content."

She repeated them, and Sir Oscar Charlcote thought no utterance had ever been so sweet.

All night Ethel thought of the simple words; they seemed to rest in her heart, to give her greater peace than she had known for a long time, and she was grateful enough to kneel and thank Heaven that she had at last found a gleam of light in the darkness—that she had found such a friend.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ethel was always at her best with Sir Oscar. He had the power of bringing out all that was noblest in her. Her intellect, fancy, imagination, all seemed at the highest when she was talking to him. She never looked so beautiful or talked so well as with him. Her mind seemed to answer to his, her quick, light, vivid fancy to respond to every word of his. She began to look forward to seeing him as one of the pleasures of her existence. One of her earliest thoughts in the mornings would be, "Shall I see him to-day? Where will it be? What will he say?" And she reached this stage so unconsciously that she would have been surprised if any one had said to her, "How very much and how often you think of Sir Oscar Charlcote!" She thought, in her simplicity, that it was happiness at having found a friend—a real friend—that was making life so much more bright for her.

The Duchess of Clanbrook gave a garden party, at which Ethel was queen. Lady St. Norman smiled to see how she was beginning to take an interest in her toilet. She fancied that the dark cloud which had so long rested on the girl's life was lifted at last. Ethel chose a very beautiful dress and a most becoming bonnet. She went to the gathering, hoping she would see Sir Oscar there. It would be pleasant to while away the summer hours by his side—her friend—that dear friend whose care for her made her so happy.

She went. There was a large crowd of fashionable people present, and the scene was one of great beauty and animation. The party was held on a large and exceedingly beautiful lawn, where great cedar trees made pleasant shade, rare flowers gave out sweetest odors, and pretty fountains sent their rippling spray high in the sunlight. It was a striking scene—one not easily forgotten.

The fairest face in that brilliant throng was that of Ethel Gordon. No sooner did she appear than she was surrounded by a court of admirers. She talked for a short time with more than her usual animation, hoping and expecting every moment that Sir Oscar would appear; but time passed on and he did not come. Then her high spirits failed her. She made her escape from her admirers and wandered into one of the pretty ferneries. Here all was cool, green and pleasant. She lingered. The waters fell with a soft, rippling sound, the ferns stirred lightly in the wind. She sat down to enjoy the pretty solitude.

All at once she saw Sir Oscar. He was walking through the fernery, and had suddenly caught a glimpse of her. His face brightened, the grave, luminous smile she liked so much came over it. He advanced eagerly to her.

"I have been looking everywhere for you, Miss St. Norman," he said. "I was just thinking of going away, fearing you were not here,"

"The crowd is so great," she observed. "I have been on the lawn, but I did not see you."

He sat down by her side. If she had been wiser she would have understood herself better. Everything seemed to change when he appeared. The sunshine was brighter, a fairer green came on the grass, the flowers took rarer colors, the birds sang more sweetly, the whole aspect of heaven and earth seemed changed to her—and yet it never, even ever so faintly, dawned across her mind that this was love.

She was surprised to find that an hour had passed since he appeared—it seemed to her only a few minutes.

"I think," she said to him, with a smile, "that you have the faculty of making time fly; I had no idea that we had passed a whole hour in listening to the music of that cascade."

"I may make the same complaint," he responded—"hours in your society take unto themselves wings and fly."

She laughed, and rose from her seat, yet she did not like going away from the cool, fresh ferns.

"This seems to be the pleasantest part of the grounds," she said; "I admire ferns very much."

"So do I," he remarked, "but I have never admired them so much as to-day."

And then they walked back to the lawn together. Many admiring glances followed them; people whispered to each other that sooner or later that would be a match.

"I can understand now," said one lady to another, "why Miss St. Norman refused the Duke of Southmead."

"It was not for Sir Oscar's sake," was the rejoinder. "She had not even seen him when the Duke of Southmead left London."

The comments made did not reach her ears—and it was well for Sir Oscar that they did not. He saw that the pretty legend of friendship sufficed for her. She was unconscious of aught else. He loved her with a strong, deep earnest love. He had never been charmed by the fair face of a woman before, he had that most rare gift to offer her—the first love of his heart. He knew that by her side, no matter what troubles came, life would be one long course of happiness—one long unbroken dream of delight. He knew also that, if she refused him, all that this world could offer would not atone to him for the loss.

His great love made him cautious. If he had had less at stake, he would have been rasher and more daring; he would have told her at once that he loved her, and have asked her to be his wife. Love made him prudent. He knew that some of the most eligible men in England had tried in vain to win her favor. He could not bear thought of losing her, so he called caution to his aid. He would not startle her by speaking too soon of his love; he would give her plenty of time to grow accustomed to him.

He was not vain, but he did think she was beginning to like him. She seemed more at home, more at ease with him than with any one else. He thought to himself that, if needful, he would wait long years in silence for her—she was so dear, so precious, so well worth winning.

He said nothing to her of love. Like a cautious general, he advanced by degrees. He was content for a time with having won her liking; he wanted to accustom her to his society—to teach her to rely upon him; and he succeeded. Slowly and gradually a new life opened to her, and she was quite unconscious of it. The old interest that she felt in poetry and art, her passionate love of nature, her animation, all seemed to return to her.

"I am much happier," she would say to herself, "because I have found a friend."

She was like a child who sleeps serenely in the midst of fair and fragrant flowers, never seeing the crested head of the snake that is about to sting. She was so utterly unconscious that this vague happiness, this delicious calm came from the dawn of love, that she would say to herself:

"Now that I have found true friendship, I shall never need love. There will be no danger for me."

Her idea of love was something all tumult, all tempestuous despair. She did not imagine it to be this golden calm, this beauteous harmony which seemed to pervade heart and soul, this new light which, dawning on her life, made it inexpressibly sweet, this golden glamor which made earth and sky ten thousand times fairer. Looking at her face, she did not understand why, day by day, it grew fairer, sweeter and younger—why her eyes grew bright as stars, and her lips learned once more to smile.

"I am learning to forget my trouble," she said: "I am beginning to live it down. Ah, me! what fables poets sing! They tell us life is all barren without love. I do not find it so: love is a torment, friendship is all joy and no pain. While I can have that, 'love may linger, love may die.' I am indifferent."

She little dreamed how she was mistaking one for the other, nor how the love that she scorned and despised was silently, surely winning her, and making earth all bright for her.

Before the season was over she had many eligible offers, but to Lord St. Norman's surprise, she refused them all.

"I believe," he said to his wife, "that she likes Sir Oscar best of all, and that he is waiting to be sure before he risks asking the question."

In this opinion Lady St. Norman did not quite coincide.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The season was drawing to a close, and Lord St. Norman began to think it was high time that he and his left town. He expressed his wish to his wife, and she was anxious that it should be carried out.

When Ethel heard it her thoughts flew at once to Sir Oscar. By this time he had become so completely part of her life that she did not know what that life would be without him. It was he who directed her reading, who chose her books, who helped to complete her art education, who taught her the beauty of goodness, of courage, and of patience, who made all the brightness of her life. Now, for the first time she had begun to know the value of his friendship, she was to be separated from him, and he was to pass out of her life.

Still the pain she suffered did not open her eyes. She believed she was grieved to lose her friend, and in that friend saw no lover. Sir Oscar had long foreseen that this separation must take place, and he had made his arrangements.

"If I can but induce her to write to me," he thought to himself. "I shall have gained as great a point as when I won her promise to be my friend."

"Lord St. Norman tells me you are going away next week. How I shall miss you!" he said to her. "It will seem to me as though one-half of my life were gone."

They had met at Lady Casteldine's concert, and under cover of a grand overture Sir Oscar pleaded his cause. Ethel looked very lovely. As he glanced at her he could not help thinking how changed she was from the time when he had first seen her. The listlessness and melancholy had vanished from her face, her eyes were bright; there was a look of hope and happiness about her which had been previously wanting. Her dress, too, was, as usual, perfection—white silk, with trimmings of gold fringe; a pomegranate blossom was in the coils of her rich brown hair.

"You never carry flowers," he said to her suddenly; "every other lady in the room has a bouquet. You always prefer a fan. How is it?"

He saw a shadow fall over her face. How could she tell him that she never carried flowers in her hands without thinking of that fatal summer morning when she had gathered the passion-flowers wet with dew. He saw in a moment that his words had aroused some sad and unpleasant memory in her mind, and he hastened to make her forget them.

"How I shall miss you," he repeated. "I do not like to think of the time coming when I shall see you no longer."

"Life is all meeting and parting," she said, "even as it is all pleasure and pain."

Yet her lips quivered as she spoke, and her beautiful eyes grew dim with unshed tears. Sir Oscar looked wistfully at her. The impulse and the longing were strong upon him to take her hands in his own and tell her the story of his love—tell her how passionately he loved her; but he restrained himself.

"She is sorry to lose me," he said to himself. "I can see that; but I must not startle her. She is like a shy, bright, beautiful wild bird. I must not startle her."

So he sat and watched her with wistful, longing, loving eyes; but no word of that which filled his heart passed his lips.

"Miss St. Norman," he said suddenly, "you have been very kind to me; you have promised to be my friend—and I believe that nothing but death will ever sever the bonds of our friendship."

She raised her eyes to his.

"You are right," she assented; "nothing but death."

"I am going to ask something else from you. I have been so accustomed to discuss my opinions and to argue with you that I shall be quite lost after your departure. Will you permit me occasionally to write to you?"

The jewelled fan that she held trembled; the question startled her. Writing seemed to be something different from their easy, pleasant conversations.

"I will promise not to bore you too often," he added.

She looked up at him with a fresh, sweet smile.

"I shall be very pleased with the arrangement," she said, simply. "It will be a pleasure to receive your letters, and a pleasure to answer them; but it will not be like seeing and talking to you."

He sighed as he thought how very different it would be. He would have been better pleased if she had been less frank and more embarrassed—it did not look like love.

"Then you will write to me? Will you tell me what you think and all that you do, just as though you were speaking to me?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied; "and then, when we meet again, it will seem as though there had been no interruption to our friendship."

"Some day, when I think I shall be welcome," said Sir Oscar, "I shall hope to see Norman's Keep. They tell me it is one of the grandest old places in England."

"It is well worth a visit, if you have never seen it," she observed; and then Sir Oscar said no more.

He bade her good-bye one evening a little later on.

"My desire to see Norman's Keep is increasing," he said to her, with a smile.

"We are going to Wales for a short time," she announced.

"And I am obliged to go to Scotland on some pressing business," he returned; "but I hope, before the summer is ended, that we shall meet again."

She had not thought that she should miss him so much. There was a great blank in her life, and still her eyes were not opened to the true state of things; though his absence was like a keen, sharp pain to her, she never dreamed that she loved him.

Her heart was warm with memories of him. Nothing could have fostered and increased her love so greatly as going away from the noise of the world into solitude, where she had ample leisure to think of every word he had uttered, every expression she had seen on his face—where she had nothing to do save to indulge in romantic dreams.

Ethel did not look forward; she never thought of the time when Sir Oscar would want a wife of his own—would marry and devote himself to his own household. In her dreams they were always to be as they were then—friends, sincere, affectionate friends; they were to write to each other constantly, to meet as often as possible, yet to be friends—nothing more, nothing less.

Lord St. Norman and his family remained for some weeks in Wales, and then returned to Norman's Keep. Ethel was pleased that her father had decided upon making that their principal residence. Fountayne was full of sad memories for her—memories of the time when "she had been joyful and free from blame."

At Norman's Keep everything was new and strange; the blight of her secret had been on her when she first came thither—revisiting it brought no smart of pain.

They had been there for some few weeks; golden, glorious August was in the height of its loveliness, the corn stood ripe in the meadows, the fruit hung upon the trees, the haze of sunlight and the smile of summer lay over the land.

One morning Lord St. Norman received a letter which appeared to interest him greatly; he read it and passed it over to his wife. She also read it without comment.

"We had better not mention it to her, I think," said Lord St. Norman to his wife; "if he takes her by surprise he may win some kind word from her."

But Lady St. Norman did not agree with him.

"Ethel is proud and sensative, Leonard; she would wonder why you had not told her—and that very fact might make her angry with him."

So, after breakfast Lord St. Norman said carelessly—

"Ethel, an old friend of ours is coming to visit us."

"Who is that, papa?" she asked.

"Sir Oscar Charlcote; he will be here some time to-day, I expect."

He saw her beautiful face flush crimson, and he smiled again, for he knew that Sir Oscar was coming to ask her to be his wife.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Ethel listened to her father's announcement as to the speedy arrival of Sir Oscar Charlcote, but offered no word of reply. A deep, sudden gladness took possession of her. She could not have expressed it in speech; she could not even understand it. It was a sudden, deep, great gladness that stirred the depths of her heart, flushed her face and brightened her eyes. He was coming. He was not her lover—only her friend—yet all earth and heaven seemed the fairer for his coming. There was joy in her heart such as she had never known before.

"Ethel, will you come with me?" said Lady St. Norman. "I am going over to Denham's?"

But Ethel did not wish any one to see her face just then; there was a light upon it, which keen eyes would understand, of sudden, irrepressible gladness.

"Pry excuse me, Helen," she replied; I am going for a walk."

As she spoke she passed out on to the fragrant lawn and away into the summer woods. She wanted to be alone to think over this great sudden gleam of happiness. Nature smiled on her—the silence that was yet so full of music pleased and soothed her. He was coming, this friend of hers, who made life so much more bright; and all nature seemed to rejoice with her. No warning came to her that this keen rapture, this sweet subtle happiness, was love.

She did not look beyond that day. Before the sun had set she would have seen him again, would have heard him speak, would have listened to his voice; her happiness could go no farther. She had not the least thought of wrong; to her it was so settled a matter that she and love were to be strangers for ever that she never gave a thought to the possibility of its entering her heart. She had settled it so long since with herself that she was to fly from love, that she did not know love had already taken possession of her heart, and was not to be driven away. Her shy, startled, sweet happiness might have told her, but it did not—it might have warned her, but it did not. She went blindfolded to her fate.

The hour she spent that morning in the summer woods was perhaps one of the happiest in her life; it was full of hope and sweetness—a vague, delicious happiness that she did not understand, but which was to bring fatal knowledge to her. All day she looked so bright and blithe that Lord St. Norman smiled to himself at the expression of her face.

(To be continued.)

Hereafter, in France, when a number of stamps are to be affixed to a letter, they must not be placed close together, but with space between them. The reason of this is that if a considerable portion of the envelope is covered with stamps it is easy for a dishonest person to remove them, open the envelope under them, abstract the contents of the letter and paste them on again. Many bank notes have been stolen in this way.

As eternal vigilance is the price of liberty so also is it the price of good health to a city.

The Berlin Aquarium has at last accomplished the difficult task of showing a school of live herring in its sea-water basin. These fish are so delicate that, when caught in their native element, even a moment's exposure to the air will kill them. They had, therefore, to be caught under water and to be carefully transported from the seaboard.