What I Know.

I know the summer's day is sweet,
I know that Love is sweeter still,
know that bliss is ne'er complete,
I know of no perpetual ill.
I know that life has many sides—
That some things here seem hardly meet;
I know that baseness often rides
While Virtue walks with wearied feet.
Yet often want and wealth, I know,
But for each other's mask have stood,
And men, I know, where'er we go,
Are mostly happy when they're good.
I know that Life, upon the whole,
Is well worth all we have to give,
And that the grander is the goal
So much the grander 'tis to live.
I know that Death is very nigh—
That evil shrinks before his breath;
That only goodness gives "good-bye"
A rain-bow in the cloud of Death.

Chicks and Children.

"Don't count your chickens before they are hatched,"
Is a maxim that's ancient and hoary,
To which there's a deal of importance attached
Which may not be seen in my story.
For chickens sometimes will come out of their shells
And start independently crowing,
And when prematurely a chicken's head swells
You may guess 'tis presumptuous growing.

But our children at present resemble the chicks,
From the cradle they get prematurely,
And urchins of seven with grown-up men mix
And puff cigarettes quite demurely.
While girls in short dresses, of tenderest years,
An old-fashioned parent would sicken,
For the womanish manner they put on appears
Like the hen's place assumed by the chicken.

SHIRLEY ROSS:

A Story of Woman's Faithfulness.

The day wore on slowly; the snow fell heavily at intervals in great soft white flakes which covered the ground and lay there, blotting out all paths, and making the face of the surrounding country a pure white waste, over which it would be soon difficult to find one's way. The stillness in the little sitting-room grew intense and almost oppressive; the fire blazed up brightly, and Shirley lifted Jip on to her lap; it was pleasant to feel the warmth and life of the little animal in this complete stillness. Her thoughts had wandered away back to the past, to that happy Christmas-day at Fairholme Court when she was engaged to Guy, and all her life lay before her, cloudless and serene, lighted by the sunshine of the love she had won. Hugh had been there also—poor, hapless Hugh, who had loved her with that love which had been so fatal to them all, that love which had blighted her life and Guy's and his own.

Then she recalled other Christmas-days spent at Glynn and in London, stately ceremonious feasts which had wearied her excessively; and the day of the preceding year—that awful Christmas-day which she had spent alone in London, fearing discovery and detention, an unhappy fugitive from love and peace and rest.

Well, if it were to be done again, she would do it; it had been for the best. What did her sufferings matter if he were happy with the sweet young girl who loved him and whom he loved? She could go away and drift out of Madge's life as she had drifted out of Lucie's and Ruby's, and out of the lives of all who loved her. As soon as the fine spring days came she would go away and seek another shelter.

Sitting before her cheerful fire, leaning back in the low-cushioned chair, a thought struck her: she would write to Jack—she would tell him all, everything, without reserve, and ask him to advise her what to do. Perhaps he might even come home and fetch her. Dear Jack! He was well off now; his sojourn in India and the industry and steadiness he had displayed had won him a junior partnership in the firm; and when she had last heard from him, just before Sir Hugh's death—she could not call it murder, even to herself—he was a wealthy man, and he had spoken of coming home soon. Had he returned? she wondered. Perhaps not. Perhaps, if she addressed a letter to him at Calcutta, it would reach him; for she could not recall his address. Dear Jack, who had never known the truth about her marriage! There had been no necessity to burden him with the knowledge that it was through him that such misery had fallen upon her: but he should know all now, and he would take her away somewhere perhaps where she could be quiet and at peace until the end came.

She put the little dog gently from her lap and rose from her seat; the afternoon was wearing on, but the dazzling whiteness of the snow prevented it from being dark as it generally was at that hour. Besides, the cheerful blaze of the fire lit up the little room, playing odd tricks with the shadows on the walls, and peering into far corners, as if to discover any lurking intruder. Opening a little escritoire on the right-hand side of the fire, Shirley took out writing-materials and placed them on the table; then she trimmed and lighted the lamp, and moved over to the window to draw the curtain.

As she did so, she drew back, with a little stifled cry of terror, and covered her face with her hands, for, pressed against the pane of glass, a face had looked in upon her—a face with wild haggard eyes—a face which had disappeared immediately when the eyes met hers.

For a few minutes Shirley stood with her eyes covered, physically unable to move in her terror, her heart beating furiously, her breath coming in quick gasps; then, when she mastered courage to remove her hands, there was nothing visible but the window and the white road and the fields beyond.

Had she been deceived? Was it but the force of her imagination, excited by her loneliness and the excessive stillness, which worked upon her nerves? Had she really seen a face—that face—looking at her through the shielding glass, or was it there only a vision that she had conjured out of her excited fancy? Were her nerves giving way? Was her brain getting confused? Was she going mad?

She staggered toward the window and forced herself to look out; but there was nothing in sight, save the snow which had fallen previously and a few slow heavy flakes which were beginning to fall; the little dog, however, was running about restlessly and barking excitedly, as if he too had seen something which had aroused his suspicion or his alarm. In an agony of terror Shirley dragged the curtains over the window—she dared not open it to close the shutters which were outside—and crept back to her chair, trembling with a terror which had taken all color from her face and lips and strength from her limbs.

"Jip, come here!" she whispered, as she cowered over the fire, feeling an icy thrill of horror which made her shiver from head to foot, but Jip, although he paused for a moment in his restless running to and fro, resumed it almost immediately, his uneasiness adding greatly to the terror the poor woman was enduring. "Jip—oh, Jip!" she said pitifully, in a voice hardly above a whisper, for her lips were shaking with terror. "Come here, Jip!"

But Jip, for once, was deaf to his mistress' voice; he was flying about the room, scratching impatiently at the door, barking furiously and sniffing vigorously, and showing other signs of discomposure and perturbation of spirit. Something forced Shirley to open the door into the little passage for him; he flew out, barking furiously and excitedly at the outer door—the door which Shirley had bolted so securely.

Was it again the force of her imagination acting upon her senses, or did she really hear a sound, as if some one were stealthily trying the door from the outside? Surely the handle moved! And, in an agony of mortal terror, Shirley fled back into the sitting-room, covering her face with her hands to shut out sight and sound.

How long she knelt there with her head buried in her hands she never knew; but an hour at least must have passed, for the fire which had been just built up before the alarm came was a glowing red mass. For some time Jip had continued his barking; but when she lifted her head he was no longer in the room. Trembling still she rose to her feet. All was quiet; there was not a sound to break the stillness, the silence which seemed so awful now to the terrified woman in her loneliness. She went to the window and drew back the curtains; but the snow was falling heavily, and she could see nothing. She closed the curtains and came back shivering, when a little moaning sound from Jip startled her; he was lying just beside the outer door, and, as he saw Shirley, he looked up at her appealingly with a pitiful little whine, turning his eyes to the door the next minute, as if entreating her to open it.

Srirley hesitated and shrunk back. Was any one there? she wondered fearfully. Was it some one who needed help? Ought she to open it? Or was it all the effect of her excited imagination, her fancy which had seemed to look at her through the window? Since that was of necessity—for the dead do not come back—a delusion of her senses, the noise outside must have been also. Who would want to rob her? she thought, with a little smile. What a silly, fearful coward she was growing! Nerving herself for a desperate effort, she opened the door, and Jip sprang out joyfully.

The snow was falling heavily, and some great, heavy flakes were carried into the little passage. Shirley shrunk back a little, then went forward bravely. As she crossed the threshold of the door, her foot struck against something lying there, and she bent down anxiously.

The snow, falling so heavily over the road and hedges, had fallen also on the prostrate figure stretched senseless outside her door, and Jip was scratching vigorously at the snow trying to disinter it. With an exclamation of pity and compassion and dread, Shirley tried to distinguish who it was; but it was too dark. She guessed that it was a man who lay there, and that he was sorely in need of her assistance. Bending down, she spoke to him and tried to rouse him; but it was in vain. He lay like a log, senseless and stupified; and it was only with the greatest difficulty and with an immense exertion of strength that she succeeded in dragging him into the passage, Jip following with little, satisfied demonstrations of joy. Then, having laid him down, she turned and once more bolted the door behind her, leaning against it, panting and breathless from her exertion.

After a minute or two, she recovered sufficiently to bend over the man whom she had succored. There was not light enough in the passage to distinguish his features, but she felt that his heart beat, feebly indeed, but perceptibly; and she took courage. Once more she lifted him by the shoulders and dragged him into the sitting-room, leaving him there for a moment while she ran for pillows, on which she raised his head. As she did so his hair fell back from his forehead, disclosing the face upturned and senseless.

Merciful Heaven, whose face was that? Was it another delusion, or was it— The next moment a shrill cry of terror rang through the quiet house.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Christmas holidays were over, and the village school had begun again. Mrs. Grant was looking rather worn and haggard; but the cold weather tried her, she said; and she was even more patient than was her wont with the girls, who were not improved by their holidays or rendered more willing to work. It was a very weary face which bent over the desk when the children had departed one afternoon and Shirley was alone. She was busy counting up the marks, for Lady Oliphant was to give some prizes, the distribution of which had been postponed on account of the absence of the squire and his daughter.

Some singular change had taken place in Shirley during the past few days. It was not merely that she was paler and sadder even than usual, but there was a strange nervousness about her manner, an uncertainty, an indecision, a shrinking, which were very different from her former quiet ease of manner, which had always been so remarkable. Any sudddn noise seemed to startle her. She rarely left the house, except during the time she was teaching; and she had dismissed the little maid who had attended upon her, employing her only for an hour or two in the morning to go down to the village to get the necessary supplies.

These changes had not failed to strike the inhabitants of Erindale, and much curiosity had been felt about the dismissal of little Jane Austen, whose bright, helpful way had always made her a favorite with Shirley. That she had no fault to find with the child was evident from the kindness of her manner toward her; and Mrs. Austen, on paying the school-mistress a visit, had received an assurance that Jane was a very good girl and a useful little maid; and Shirley had no better reason to give for her dismissal than that she was going to try to do without any help for a little time. Mrs. Austen had gone away shaking her head and prophesying that Mrs. Grant would make herself ill with the work.

The school closed at 3 o'clock during the winter months, so that it was still daylight when the children trooped away, shouting and laughing, delighted to leave off lessons and to take to sliding and snow-balling—for the snow was still resting on the hills and the weather was bitterly cold.

They were in the very thick of a snow-balling match, flushed and excited, when Madge Oliphant appeared coming up the hill, and the snow-balling ceased, while the rosy faces were turned toward Madge with a smile of welcome.

"Well, girls, are you having a good time of it?" she said, in her bright sweet voice, "You are making plenty of noise; and I am sure it is not fair that poor Mrs. Grant should have your noise out of school-hours as well as in! Suppose you go down to the next field and continue operations there; and, if any one tries to stop you, you can say that I gave you leave."

They trooped off, carrying their shouts and laughter into a field on the right-hand side of the hollow, and Madge walked on and entered the school-house, the bright eyes softening into tenderness and compassion as she saw the slender bowed figure leaning over the desk. As she entered, Shirley looked up with a start, and into the beautiful hazel eyes came a startled look of fear, which faded as she saw who the intruder was; and Madge came toward her, looking so bright and sweet in her sealskin and furs that the bare, empty-looking room was brightened by her presence.

"Miss Oliphant, I did not know you had returned," Shirley said as she rose to meet her; and Madge took her hands, and looked wistfully into her face.

"We came home last night," she said gently, as she lifted her sweet lips to meet Shirley's kiss. "And how have you been? How pale you are!"

"Am I? But I am always pale, you know. Have you enjoyed yourself, my child? Have you had a pleasant visit?"

"Very pleasant," said Madge, gayly, the color deepening a little in her face. "I will tell you all about it presently. I am going to have tea with you. Why," she added suddenly, as Shirley began hurriedly to gather her papers together, stooping over them to hide her expression from Madge, "are you not pleased to see me? You naughty girl! I have been looking forward so ardently to a chat with you."

"I am pleased to see you, of course," Shirley said hurriedly. "What could make you suppose otherwise?"

"Your face," said Madge quietly. "You look as if my proposal had startled you. Have you not enough tea in the house?" she added laughingly.

"I dare say there is enough to make you a cup," Shirley answered, forcing a smile. "Shall we go in, Miss Oliphant? It is cold here; the fire has gone out."

"And your poor little hands are frozen," said Miss Oliphant, chafing them tenderly between her own; then, putting her arm round Shirley, with a caressing gesture, she added softly, "have you had any fresh trouble during my absence, dear?"

Shirley started.

"No, no," she answered hurriedly. "What makes you think so?"

"Your face again," Madge said, smiling. "It is a very tell-tale one, and it was not so pale as this when I saw it last, and there were not those heavy marks under your eyes which are there now."

"You have been seeing such rosy faces during your absence," Mrs. Grant answered, forcing a little laugh, "that it is no wonder you think mine pale. *En revanche*," she added, "I have never seen you looking so well and bright, dear."

Madge laughed, colored, and put up both hands to her face with a charming gesture of shyness and hesitation; then she slipped her gloved hand through Shirley's arm, and they went into the cottage together. The fire was burning cheerily in the little sitting-room, but the room did not look so pleasant and home-like as usual; it had a strange, unfamiliar look to Madge Oliphant's eyes as she glanced round her. None of the books were out of their places, the piano was closed, the pile of music all in order; there was no work on the table, no pretty, picturesque litter anywhere.

"Won't you take off your coat?" Shirley said nervously. "You had better do so, or you will not feel the good of it when you go out again."

Madge acquiesced; and then Shirley talked loud and fast and nervously, and moved restlessly about the room in a purposeless kind of way which Madge could not help observing.

"Papa is coming for me on his way from Adinbrock," she said, trying to assume her usual cheerful manner. "I had such a lot to say to you that I did not want to be hurried away before it was dusk. Why, Jip, old man, where have you been—upstairs? Are you glad to see me?" she added, smiling—"gladder than that naughty mistress of yours is?"

"He could not be that," Shirley put in, in a low voice of pain; and Madge, with a quick repentance, put her arms round her.

"Forgive me," she said coaxingly. "That was a naughty speech; but I am so glad to see you, dear Mrs. Grant, that it hurt me to think you are not equally pleased to see me."

"You know that I am glad," Shirley answered, gently disengaging herself. "Sit down by the fire, Miss Oliphant, while I see about tea."

"'Miss Oliphant' again," Madge said, pettishly; "and I have so often begged you to call me Madge!"

"I am afraid I cannot please you to-day," Shirley said, with a smile, as she glanced over at the pretty dissatisfied face on which the firelight fell.

"You always please me," Madge said quickly. "But why are you so very dignified to-day?" she added, with a little laugh. "I am almost afraid of you—you keep me at such a distance."

"You fancy I do; but, dear, between the village school-mistress and Sir Frederic Oliphant's daughter there is a wide difference."

Shirley passed into the little kitchen, beyond, coming back presently with the tea-kettle, which she placed on the fire; then she began to prepare the table for tea, going about it with a quiet grace which made the homely occupation a very pretty sight in Madge's eyes.

"Where is Janie?" she asked presently; and Shirley's face was turned away, or Madge would have seen how the color rose to it at the question.

"I have sent her home. I prefer being without her," she answered.

"Without her!" echoed Madge. "But you surely do not intend to remain here alone all night?"

"Do you think that Jane would be a great protection?" Shirley asked smiling slightly.

"No; but it would not be so lonely for you, and she was very useful. Did she displease you?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then why did you send her away?"

"Because I preferred to be alone."

Her tone was very gentle, but very firm, and there was a short silence, during which Shirley busied herself making the tea and Miss Oliphant sat looking into the fire, with a puzzled wistful expression in her blue eyes.

When the tea was made and covered with the pretty cozy, Shirley begged to be excused for a moment; and Madge heard her run lightly up the stairs, although she closed the door carefully after her when she went out. She was not absent many minutes; but, when she returned, it seemed to Madge that there was an added shade of sadness on her face.

"Where is Jip?" Madge asked lightly.

"He stayed upstairs," was the quiet answer. "No, don't call him, dear; he—he—he is so restless, he makes me nervous."

She went to the table as she spoke and began to pour out the tea; and, as she handed Madge a cup, she forced a smile to her lips.

"And now tell me all about this delightful visit," she said cheerfully, "I am on tenter-hooks of curiosity, Madge, to know what made it so very pleasant."

"Have you caught cold?" Madge asked, looking at her keenly.

"Caught cold? No. Why?"

"Because your voice sounded rather husky, and when you were upstairs you had a terrific fit of coughing."

All the color died out of Shirley's face; and she rose hastily, going to the fire to put some more water in the little teapot.

"Did you hear me?" she said unsteadily; "I had no idea I could cough so loud,"

"You coughed dreadfully. I wish you would see Dr. Lloyd. You look anything but well. Will you let me send him up on my way home?"

There was a slight hesitation; and then Shirley said lightly:

"I will think about it. Come, Madge, tell me about your gayeties. Is Cotsford a nice place?"

"Yes, the house is very quaint and old and charming—not quite so large as Stuartleigh, but quite as ancient."

"Stuartleigh?" Shirley repeated mechanically.

"Yes," Madge said quietly, sipping her tea—"Major Stuart's place. We drove over there; it is only a few miles from Cotsford—three or four."

"But I thought—I thought—Major Stuart was abroad!"

"You thought wrong," Madge said, with a bright laugh and a hot blush. "He came back a fortnight ago, and he and a friend are at Stuartleigh. Poor Guy!" she added sorrowfully, a sudden shadow falling upon the brightness of her face.

"Why—is he ill?"

"Ill? Oh, no! He is much stronger than he was last winter; but—Ah, well, some day I will tell you all his story; and you will see whether there is not some excuse for the depression under which he labors sometimes."

All his story! Did any one in all the wide world—did Madge herself—know that story as Shirley knew it? she wondered.

"And we coaxed Guy and his friend Mr. Ross over to Cotsford," Madge continued, looking at the fire, her cheeks flushing a little as she spoke. "And I'm sure it did them—What is the matter? Are you faint?"

She put down her cup hastily and went to Shirley's side, for she was drooping over the table in a helpless manner which alarmed her guest.

"It is nothing," she said. "I am very sorry I startled you, Madge; but it is nothing indeed. You were saying you induced Major Stuart and—"

"Are you really better? Mrs. Grant, I shall insist on your seeing Dr. Lloyd," Madge said, as she went back to her seat.

"Dr. Lloyd cannot do anything for that sudden faintness, dear; it is an old enemy. Well, Madge, are you not going to tell me all your doings?"

"I am so afraid of tiring you."

"Tiring me! I am longing to hear," And the pale face wore an expression of eagerness add anxiety which made Madge smile.

"You are a regular daughter of Eve!" she cried delightedly. "I am charmed to have discovered a failing at last in this little perfect woman about whom all Erindale is raving. Our dear model school-mistress is curious."

"Very curious," Shirley acknowledged, with a forced smile. "Gratify my curiosity, Madgie."

"Madgie!" How pleasant it is to hear you call me that!" the girl said, smiling, as she drew up a stool to Shirley and sat down at her feet. "Well, *revenons a nos moutons—nos moutons* being Major Stuart and Mr. Ross.

"Mr. Ross!" Shirley repeated, her heart beating wildly.

"Yes, a friend of Guy's from India," Madge said, a little shyly. "How hot the fire is!" she added. "It is scorching my face."

Shirley put both hands gently on the flushed cheeks; Madge pulled them down to her lips and kissed them softly.

"Did you like Mr. Ross, Madgie?"

"He was very nice."

"Is he handsome?"

"Yes, very handsome."

"And did you like him, Madgie?" Shirley persisted gently.

"I—I do not know."

The words were very shyly and sweetly spoken; and Shirley wondered a little at the tremor in the girl's voice.

"Is Mr. Ross going to remain in England?" she said persistently.

"For the present—yes; he and Guy are coming to Erindale next week for a few days."

Coming to Erindale! It seemed as if Shirley's heart stood still with terror at the very thought. Coming to Erindale! It was well that Madge Oliphant was too much occupied with her own thoughts to look up at the white stricken face leaning back against the chair.

"Papa took such a fancy to Mr. Ross," went on Madge's sweet, unconscious voice—"he liked him so much that he is quite pleased at the thought of a visit from him; and you will see him too," she continued softly, "for we have talked about our model 'school-marm' until they are both quite anxious to see her."

To see her! What new, terrible complication was this. Shirley felt faint and dazed and giddy.

"They are coming in a few days," Miss Oliphant went on. "And I shall bring them to see Mrs. Grant, of course. But I should like her to be looking somewhat—" She broke off suddenly and lifted her head with a little gesture which commanded attention. "Why," she exclaimed excitedly, "surely there is some one upstairs! I am certain I heard some one cough."

"It must be Jip, then," Mrs. Grant said, sitting up in her chair, quite composed now. "You forget that he is upstairs."

"Jip could not cough," Madge said dubiously—"and it was a cough I heard, I am sure."

"Jip often makes a growling noise which might easily be taken for a cough. Who else could be up there, Madge?"

"No one, of course, without you knowing it—unless some one might have concealed themselves there to startle you or even do you an injury."

"You absurd child! It would have to be a very small individual who could conceal himself or herself in either of those little attics. Why, I am up and down there constantly, and I could not fail to see any one who was there! Besides," she added earnestly, anxious to remove the idea from the young girl's mind, "Jip is such a good watch-dog, you know, that if any one were there who did not belong to the house, he would never cease barking until he had the matter seen into."

"I don't think it is right for you to be here alone at night," said Madge, decidedly. "You might be ill. No one knows what might happen."

"I am afraid Jane would not have been of much assistance if I had been taken ill, for it required all my strength to wake her up in the morning," said Mrs. Grant, with an attempt at laughter.

"Then you must have some one more efficient. I will speak to mamma about it."

There was a moment's silence; then Shirley said gently—

"I am sure you do not want to pain me, Madge. I prefer being here alone. I do not want any assistance. Should I need it, dear, I will promise you to obtain it if you, in your turn, will promise me to say no more about it. And also I entreat of you not to mention it to Lady Oliphant at all."

"Why not?"

"Because—because—well, call it a whim if you like, and gratify it."

"I suppose I must when you ask it with that look in your eyes. Ah, there is papa," she added, as Sir Frederic's knock sounded at the door.

They went together to the door, where Sir Frederic was waiting for his daughter. He lifted his hat courteously to Shirley, but did not offer her his hand.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Grant. Fine, seasonable weather, is it not? Well, Madcap, are you ready?"

"Yes, papa," Madge answered, fastening her sealskin coat. "I am coming. Where have you left the trap?"

"At the foot of the hill," he answered. "I have one or two places to go to yet; but I thought Mrs. Grant would have enough of your chatter by this time. Have I come too soon?"

"I was in no hurry," said Madge lightly; but she parted with Shirley with less reluctance than usual, and she was very silent as she went down the hill with her father, who fancied that her attention was occupied in picking her steps over the road, and thought no more of her unusual silence and abstraction.

They did not start homeward for fully half an hour, for the squire had two or three people to see in the village; and it was quite evening when they turned toward home. They had to drive through the village, and, to Madge Oliphant's surprise, as they passed the Oliphant Arms, a slim figure in black closely veiled, issued from the public-house and walked rapidly away up the hill toward the school-house. Madge uttered a half stifled exclamation as she turned her head to look after her—something in the graceful walk and rather haughty carriage had reminded her of Mrs. Grant; but the next moment she laughed the idea to scorn. Was it likely that Mrs. Grant would be at the Oliphant Arms at that time, or at any other? And yet the thought that it was she haunted her, although they were almost home before she put it into words.

"Papa," she said, trying to speak carelessly, "did you see a woman dressed in black come out of the Oliphant Arms?"

"Yes, my dear."

"You saw her? I wonder if the same thought struck you which struck me. I thought her something like Mrs. Grant."

"It was Mrs. Grant, Madge," said Sir Frederic quietly.

(To be continued.)

When They were Famous.

When George Eliot began her career as a novelist she was 37 years old.

Thackeray achieved eminence by writing the novel, "Vanity Fair," at the age of 35.

Trollope and Charles Reade, both now recognized writers, didn't attain note till almost in the noon-day of life.

The beautiful writer, Hawthorne, was 46 years old when he became famous as the author of the novel "Scarlet Letter."

Dickens, an exception to the rule, was a noted novelist at the age of 22, but he was reared in the heart of London's poverty and bitterness, and he wrote from real life.

He Has More Time for It.

"Henry, dear," said a fond wife, "I am afraid your brother Daniel plays the fool more than he used to." "Well, yes," replied her husband, "I guess he does. You see the days are growing longer."—*Burdette.*

A Percentage Off.

Horace—I say, David, how old do you suppose Miss Jones is? Her aunt says she is only 21.

David (who knows a little of business)—Aw, yes, Horace, marked down from 33⅓ to be disposed of at a bargain, don't you see?—*Life.*