The Friend of Ages Ago.

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot?"
—Yes, if you'd just as lief as not.
—*John Paul.*

There are several things that trouble one's age,
And work for a man much woe,
Such as gout—and doubt—debts that *will* run,
And rhyme that will *not* flow.
But when all has been said, do we not most dread,
Of the many bores that we know,
That ubiquitous ban, the woman or man,
That knew one "ages ago?"

In youth—you were young; and foolish perhaps;
You flirted with high and with low,
Had one love on the hill, and one down by the mill—
Yet never were wicked, ah, no!
And this friend knew you in a far-away way,
In a way that was only so, so—
Just enough to give hue to the cry about you
"Oh, I knew him ages ago!"

You are married now and quite circumspect,
Your pace, like your speech, is slow,
You tell in a bank, keep silent in church—
Are one it is proper to know;
But this vigilant friend will never consent
That your virtues unchallenged shall go—
Though she never demurs, but only avers
That she knew you "ages ago."

And sure I am that if ever I win
To the place where I hope to go—
To sit among saints—perhaps the chief—
In raiment as white as snow,
Before me and busy among the blest—
Perhaps in the self-same row—
I shall find my ban, this woman or man,
Who knew me "ages ago."

And shall hear the voice I so oft have heard—
Do you think it is sweet and low?—
As it whispers still with accent shrill
The refrain that so well I know;
"Oh, you needn't be setting much store by *him*,
This new angel's not much of a show,
He may fool some saint who isn't acquaint—
But *I* knew him 'ages ago!'"

Whatever is—is Best.

I know as my life grows older,
And mine eyes have clearer sight,
That under each rank wrong somewhere
There lies the root of right;
That each sorrow has its purpose,
By the sorrowing oft unguessed;
But as sure as the sun brings morning,
Whatever is—is best.

I know that each sinful action,
As sure as night brings shade,
Is somewhere, some time punished
Though the hour be long delayed.
I know that the soul is aided
Sometimes by the heart's unrest,
And to grow means often to suffer,
But whatever is—is best.

I know there is no error
In the great supernal plan,
And all things work together
For the final good of man.
And I know when my soul speeds onward
In its grand eternal quest,
I shall cry as I look backearthward,
"Whatever is—is best."

SHIRLEY ROSS:

A Story of Woman's Faithfulness.

It was a weary time for all, this long struggle between life and death. Sir Hugh's constitution was naturally a strong one, or he would have succumbed long before, and his frame offered a desperate resistance to the inroads of disease. Neither Mr. Litton nor the prison surgeon gave any hope, or had any fear—since by far the greatest mercy to him would be death—that he would recover; but there was an acknowledged dread in their minds that he might linger on until the sessions, and so stand his trial. Shirley had no such dread; she seemed certain that he would die before the time appointed for the next sessions, and that he would pass on to that higher judgment which can never err.

Sir Hugh Glynn's arrest and imprisonment caused a great excitement in the fashionable world—a far greater excitement indeed than his supposed murder had caused. The whole story was so romantic and mysterious, so many rumors were afloat about the strange circumstances of his marriage and the reason of the unfortunate valet's power over him, that the sensational papers reaped a splendid harvest and their contributors were at no loss for matter. Hardly a day passed but some new and startling facts, facts which had but very slight foundation, were brought to light, and Lady Gynn's beauty and grace and strange disappearance and stranger reappearance were widely commented upon. It might have troubled Shirley had she read all these thrilling paragraphs; but she never glanced at a newspaper during these sad days. Her whole thoughts were given to the dying man dying with such a stain upon a name which had been honored; dying, the last representative of an ancient and noble family, in a prison-cell!

But, great as the excitement was in the great world, it was hardly greater than Lady Eastwell's sorrow at the thought that she had been indirectly the means of Sir Hugh's arrest. At first her knowledge of the circumstances of Shirley's marriage and of Latreille's part therein had made her suspect that the latter knew more of the murder than had transpired. There had been no mention of his name at Guy's trial; but, after Major Stuart's acquittal, which had incensed Alice, who firmly believed him guilty, she had set the cleverest detectives to work to discover Latreille's whereabouts. That he was an accomplice was not impossible, she thought; she knew him as a daring and unscrupulous man, and she felt sure that if he could be found he would throw some light upon the subject. How the detectives succeeded she now knew; they had thought to find Latreille when Sir Hugh gave himself up as the murderer, and Guy's innocence was clearly proved.

Alice was almost despairing when the tidings reached her. She had loved Sir Hugh Glynn as well as it was possible for her to love any one, and she had hated Guy as his murderer with a bitter, vindictive hatred. That Shirley—who, after all, had done her cousin no wrong—should suffer, troubled her little; and even at the time of the murder her sorrow at Sir Hugh's fate had been greatly lessened by the thought that the death should be atoned for. But now, when all had come to light, the wretched woman saw how greatly mistaken she had been, and how cruelly she had wronged Major Stuart and Shirley, and she saw in the full light of day into what a fatal abyss her jealousy of Shirley had plunged her, and her grief was very profound.

The thought of Sir Hugh dying n a prison haunted her day and night; and even a letter which, at her husband's request, Shirley wrote to her gave her but little consolation. In a few gently worded earnest lines Lady Glynn begged her, in her husband's name and her own, not to regret what she had done, for it had been Sir Hugh's fixed intention to give himself up to justice. She was in no way to blame, and she must not blame herself for a moment. Sir Hugh was quite at peace, the note said, and they sometimes talked of the old days at Fairholme Court. And the letter closed with an earnest entreaty for forgiveness for the shame which he brought upon all those in any way connected with him, and with every kind wish for her happiness and her husband's.

Alice read it with floods of bitter repentant tears, and her agitation and excitement were such that they brought on an attack of low fever. As soon as she was convalescent Lord Eastwell took her abroad, and the illness was the beginning of a happier life for him, for his imperious wife grew gentler and humbler and her suffering did not bear only bitter fruit, but the flowers of charity and gentleness and patience bloomed in her heart.

At Easton the strange revelation was read with mingled feelings, and Lucie Grey—now the happy wife of her father's curate, an earnest single-minded young clergyman of good means who worked as a labor of love—hastened to Erindale to Shirley. Ada was abroad with her husband; but it was very pleasant to Shirley to renew her old friendship with those who had been so good to her in her misery, who had seemed then to be her only friends.

So the days became weeks, and February set in, cold and snowy. In March the sessions would come round; but before March another visitant came to the quiet cell, a visitant the shadow of whose wings had hovered long above it.

It was drawing near the hour for Shirley's daily visit, and the fire was burning cheerily in the grate. Guy Stuart was sitting by the bed on which Hugh lay dressed—he always insisted on being dressed, although the process was a slow and exhausting one. He was raised upon pillows, and breahting with great difficulty, and the dews of a great agony were upon his brow; but he was easier now, although the last paroxysms of coughing had been terrible, and had shaken him with horrible violence, and he was but half conscious for a time.

Presently he turned his languid eyes upon Guy, and a little gleam like smile lighted them for a moment—lighted them, then faded.

"It is almost her time, is it not?" he said feebly.

"Yes, dear old fellow, only a few moments more."

"It will be the last time, Guy. Nay, don't look so grieved, old friend. Why should you? It is better as it is. Lift me a little—I can talk more easily so; I have something to say to you before she comes."

Guy raised him gently, with all a woman's tenderness in his strong hands, and as he did so Hugh's blue eyes went to his face with a look of grateful affection.

"Dear Guy," he said unsteadily, "how good you have been to me all my life long! I won't say anything more about forgiveness, old friend, because you have proved how completely you have forgiven. Let me tell you rather what visions I have seen; what dreams I have dreamed, while I have been lying sleepless here.'

His weak hands clasped the strong fingers more closely, his eyes, with the same fond gratitude, rested still upon his friend's face; but Guy's own eyes grew very dim and his lips quivered as he listened.

"I have seen in the future, Guy," he said softly, "a happy home brightened by mutual love and joy and peace, a home which I am not forgotten, but where I am remembered sometimes with compassion and pity—ah, don't interrupt me, Guy! Is it not better to be remembered thus than to be recalled with execration, which I merited? I see in this home, old friend, two persons whom I have wronged, oh, so cruelly, but whom through all my madness I have loved and honored, and I see them perfectly happy in their mutual love and perfect trust! I see the husband—he has your face, Guy—strong, brave and true, loving and protecting, striving, by a tenderness which never swerves or falters, to make his wife forget the misery she has suffered through me. I see the wife—she has a face whose loveliness made me mad once, old fellow—loving and honoring, trusting and looking up to a man worthy of all her tenderness, and making the sunshine of his home and of his life. It is such a pleasant picture that I should like to linger over it, Guy; but—I dare not!"

"Hugh, dear old friend, cease," Guy said gently, the tears standing in his gray eyes, his lips quivering almost beyond the power of speech.

"Is not the picture pleasant in your eyes, Guy?" asked the dying man, conquering his difficulty of breathing and of utterance in his desire to continue. "Or are your eyes so dim with watching in this little room that they cannot see it? Let me go on, Guy; and do not grieve so bitterly. Can't you guess the pleasure these dreams have given me? I see, too, in that happy home, a pale young mother lying with a child in her arms, who is your son, Guy," he resumed after a moment's pause. "I see the stately old house bright with restless little children, whose swift feet scamper down the galleries, and whose sweet gay voices echo through the old rooms, filling them with mirth and laughter. Guy, sometimes in the old days, before this heavy trouble came upon us, I used to think that if Heaven had given us a little child things might have been different; but, oh, how thankful I am now that—"

His voice failed him, and he sunk back upon the pillows. There was a long silence, broken only by his struggling breathing, before he spoke again.

"Will my dreams be realized, Guy?" he said wistfully.

"Hugh, dear old fellow!" was all Guy could say, as he lifted his head for a moment and looked at him.

"You love her still, old friend?"

"As I have always loved her."

"That is well. And she loves you; you will be very happy."

"I will do my best," Guy said tremulously; and a faint glad smile parted the pale lips.

There was something inexpressibly pathetic and touching in the thought of the dying man thus planning a life of happiness for those whom he had so cruelly wronged. Strong man as he was, Guy Stuart had some difficulty in restraining his tears.

"It is almost time now?" murmured Sir Hugh, restlessly, after a few moments. "She is not late, Guy?"

"No—oh, no! She is never late. Hugh."

"Never late!" he repeated softly. "No, Heaven bless her."

Almost as the words passed his lips the door opened softly, and Shirley entered. She was very pale, paler even than her wont, Mr. Litton had told her how near the end was; but there was a steady brightness in the eyes which went so earnestly to the pale face on the pillows, and which saw the sudden wonderful brightness which came over it as Sir Hugh's dying gaze dwelt upon her.

"Dear Hugh"—there was an infinite tenderness in the sweet voice as she bent over him—"how is it with you?"

"It is well, my darling," he answered, softly, weakly lifting her hand to his lips in his usual caress of tender greeting, while his wife touched his brow with her lips, and felt, with a quick pang, how icy cold it was already.

"See what I have brought you!" she said cheerfully. "Are not these lovely, Hugh?"

They were some fragrant hot-house flowers, and they seemed to Hugh Glynn to bring some of the freshness and beauty of the earth which he would never see again. His eyes rested on them with a great sadness and an intense longing.

"They are lovely," he said, "and so sweet!"

She held them up to him, and he inhaled their fragrance and touched them with his languid fingers tenderly, almost as if they had been living and could feel his touch. Shirley watched him with quivering lips.

"Madgie sent them, Hugh, with her love," she said.

"Did she? That was good of her, the pretty child! She is like a flower herself, a bonny English rose. The time has seemed long, Shirley," he went on wistfully, looking at her.

"Have you been waiting, Hugh?" she said sorrowfully.

"I am always waiting for you, Shirley."

She bent over him tenderly, putting back with gentle hand his hair from his damp brow.

"I will not leave you again, Hugh," she whispered; and a wonderful brightness came over his face.

"Is it indeed so?" he said eagerly. "You may stay with me?"

"Yes; they have given me leave."

"Ah!" There was a slight pause; then he added softly, "I understand!"

She smoothed his pillows, making him easier in his rest, and, having given him something to moisten the parched lips, she sat down by him where his eyes could rest upon her.

"Do not go, Guy," he whispered presently, when Major Stuart made a movement to depart. "Stay with us—we need you."

And Guy stayed.

The minutes went by and grew into hours in the little white-washed room, where it grew dark so early, and the dying eyes rarely left Shirley's face, except to rest for a moment upon the flowers.

"I am glad I saw her once," he said, struggling against the increasing weakness. "She will make Jack happy."

"Yes, dear Hugh."

"I am glad I had an opportunity of thanking her for her goodness to you, Shirley," he murmured. "Heaven bless her for it—Jack's pretty little sweetheart!"

After that there was a long silence, during which Hugh lay back with closed eyes, the ashy-gray pallor deepening, and the shadows darkening round his lips.

"You are not suffering, Hugh?" Shirley whispered once.

"No, darling," he answered, opening his eyes and letting them rest upon her with ineffable love. "I am past all suffering now."

"And—and you are not afraid?"

"Afraid? No, my dearest. I am so tired; and the thought of rest is so grateful to me. I feel as if I were travelling to meet a friend, Shirley, and as if I were footsore and weary after the long and dreary road; but the end is so near now—the journey is almost done."

He slept for a little, and, when he next spoke, the short rest seemed to have refreshed him, for his voice was a trifle stronger, and not so husky.

"There is one thing, Gu , I want to say to you," he said earnestly—so earnestly that Shirley's eyes filled. "It has been on my lips so often; but somehow things seem to drift away from me, and I forget. Guy, will you—I am leaving all my cares to you, dear fellow—will you see if there is any one belonging to that poor fellow to whom you can make any poor atonement?"

"I will make every possible search, Hugh. Trust me."

"Thank you, old friend. I do not think there is anything else," he said wearily. "And nothing troubles me now," he added, in a moment, "but the remembrance of the pain I have given you, my darling."

"Do not let that trouble you, Hugh; forget it now, even as I have," she said earnestly.

"I cannot forget it, dear," he murmured, with the same weariness. "It is always present with me—present with me oftener than the look on that poor fellow's dead face which haunted me so terribly at first."

"Hugh, will you not try to think of other things now?" she whispered tremulously.

"I will think—as I have thought so often of late, my dearest—of the visions I have seen—the visions of which I have told Guy, and of which he will speak to you some day."

He looked at his friend for a moment with a grateful smiling regard; then he turned his face toward Shirley, and she rested her head on the pillow beside his.

The end was drawing near now. Presently the doctor came. He stayed a few moments, and administered a restorative which lessened the dfficulty of breathing; and Sir Hugh thanked him faintly for all his kindness and patience ere he went away again.

In the stone passage without he met Captain Graham coming toward him.

"It is a question of minutes now," said the surgeon, in answer to the questioning look. "He has not half an hour to live."

"How does she bear it?"

"Bravely. I think her face looks the face of an angel just now."

His face touched with a deep compassion, the governor passed on, and entered the cell. Hugh glanced at him with startled eyes; he was lying now with his head supported on Shirley's arm, and his hand closed unconsciously over her fingers as Captain Graham entered.

"You will not take her away?" he said, with pale lips.

"No—oh, no!" was the immediate answer.

"Thank you. You have been very good to me. Will you take my hand?"

Instantly Captain Graham took the proffered fingers in a friendly clasp. Sir Hugh smiled faintly, thanked him again, and then turned once more to his wife.

The Governor of Adinbrooke Castle had seen and would probably see many sad sights in the years he had spent or would spend within the walls of the old prison. He had seen agony and woe and defiance and terror, but he had seen no sight which had touched him so deeply as this; no scene had ever passed before his eyes so full of sad significance and pathos, and a mist came between him and the group by the bed on which the firelight fell, touching Sir Hugh's face as he lay back upon the pillows, and lingering on the soft folds of Shirley's velvet dress and on her bent, uncovered head, while Guy knelt in the shadow, and the fragrance from the bright-hued flowers rose sweetly upon the air. Captain Graham was not an impressionable man, but to him in after-years as well as to Guy the scent of stephanotis or a glimpse of its white starry blossoms always brought back that scene.

Presently, when the governor had left them, the chaplain of the prison entered, a gentle white-haired clergyman, a fitting bearer of the Master's message to the sin-sick souls among whom he labored so patiently and untiringly. As he stood by Shirley's side, he put his hand upon her head with a murmured blesssing. He knew all her story; for he had been constantly with Hugh during the past three weeks, and the latter had received his ministrations with gratitude and earnest penitence. He greeted him now with a smile and a few murmured words of thanks; then his eyes came back to rest once more on Shirley's beloved face, never to leave it again.

It was an evidence of Sir Hugh's deep penitence and humiliation that all this time he had never called Shirley by the name of wife; nor had he kissed the sweet tender lips which had spoken only words of gentleness to him since that Christmas night. He was not worthy, he felt with bitter pain; and sometimes, when she bent over him to put her lips to his brow, he shrunk from her as if the touch brought pain. But now, as his weakness increased he moved his head feebly, so that it should rest upon her breast; and she supported him with unfailing gentleness.

"Do you suffer, Hugh?"

"No, my dearest."

His voice was so low and faint now that only she, quite close to him as she was, could hear the words, and, as she bent over him again, the clear silvery tones of her voice reached his failing senses, and the peaceful expression grew upon his face. She was repeating to him softly the words of Him who was giving her comfort now in this dread hour, the words of the Great Physician who came not to those who were whole, but the ailing and sick-laden and weary, whose hands were waiting even then to open the prison doors that were never to be barred again, whose death had paid all ransom due. No sweeter, truer death-bed message was ever given; and even the old clergyman felt his eyes fill with tears at the perfect faith and trust and love which the words evinced.

And the shadow of the hovering wings drew nearer and nearer as each minute went by.

"Shirley!"

The heavy head resting upon her bosom lay still and helpless now; only the great eyes raised to his face, and never moving thence, gave token that he lived.

"Yes, dear Hugh."

"The end is drawing nearer; it is very dark, is it not?"

"Evening is coming on, dear."

"I can hardly see your dear face, Shirley. My darling, I never dared to hope that such happiness as this should be mine—that I should die in your arms."

"You are happy, Hugh?"

"Quite happy."

The words parted the pale lips, but were uttered with difficulty; the failing eyes never moved from her face, so full of compassion and tenderest pity.

"Is Guy there?" he murmured, after a minute's silence.

"Yes, Hugh—yes, dear fellow! What can I do for you?"

"Do you remember some lines we read together long ago and liked—some lines from Sintram about death? You will not have forgotten; Guy, let me hear them new."

There was a momentary pause as Guy recalled the words, and with them the place where he had read them first—Hugh Glynn's luxurious college rooms, with their books and flowers and the open piano at which Hugh had been sitting when Guy first read the words.

"Have—you—forgotten, Guy?"

"No, dear Hugh." And softly and clearly Guy repeated the lines:

"When death is coming near,
And thy heart shrinks with fear,
And thy limbs fail,
Then raise thy hands and pray
To Him who smooths the way
Through the dark vale.

Seest thou the eastern 'dawn,
Hear'st thou in the red morn
The angel's song?
Oh, lift thy drooping head,
Thou who in gloom and dread,
Hast lain so long!

"Death comes to set thee free,
Oh, meet him cheerily
As thy true friend.
And all thy fears shall cease
And in eternal peace
Thy penance end!"

The death-dews were gathering upon Hugh Glynn's forehead; the dying eyes, almost blind, almost unseeing now, still looked upward at Shirley's face.

"Shirley, my friend—has come; will you—this once, my darling? It will be the first—and the last—time."

She understood him, and, stooping instantly, put her lips to his in one long last kiss. When she raised her head there was a smile upon his face which lingered there.

"Hugh—oh, Hugh!"

But even her voice had no power to call him back from the goal which he had reached. As their lips had met the overshadowing wings had touched him, his head fell back, his eyes closed. He had come to the end of the journey.

In the whitewashed prison cell, with flowers on his breast, and a faint smile upon his lips, the erring, sinful wanderer lay at rest.

* * * *

So it happened that the sensational newspapers never reported the trial to which they had looked forward so eagerly, and only a quiet little paragraph appeared announcing Sir Hugh Glynn's death in Adinbrooke Castle, and making public his confession of the crime which he had committed, and for which his suffering must have atoned in the eyes of his fellow-men. He had stood at no earthly tribunal, no earthly judge had summed up the particulars of his crime; but to the Judge who is all-merciful, all-loving, those who mourned him most deeply left him, with contrite and grateful hearts.

* * * *

The June roses had bloomed and faded and summer had twice succeeded summer before Guy Stuart came back from a tour abroad, the beginning of which had been taken up with researches for any kindred or relatives of the unfortunate man who had met his death on the rocks at Easton. Every effort had failed, and therefore even the poor atonement of gifts and money was impossible; so Guy, having discharged his duty, pushed onward in his travels, biding his time as patiently as he might until he could return to England and ask the woman he loved so dearly to crown his life with the light and glory of her love.

(To be continued.)

DANGER IN EATING BERRIES.

Seeds and Pits Which Often Produce Physical Ailments.

Can people swallow the seeds and pits of fruit with impunity? It is a topic that may be more important than others of more apparant weight. The slightest amount of physiological knowledge might be supposed to bar the swallowing of cherry stones, yet a young woman died in this neighborhood the other day from peritonitis caused by such indulgence. This violent form of seed swallowing, however, may be considered as a little apart from the real inquiry, since it is not exactly common, though doubtless much sickness and not a few casualties are caused by it. But what of smaller seed-swallowing? The country has been startled by the prostration of Congressman Randall, and it seems to be proved that the disaster was, at least in part, occasioned by Mr. Randall's over-indulgence in berries in his particular body condition. Doctors tell us that the common physical trouble under which Mr. Randall labors is always more noticeable in berry season than at other times of the year, the seeds being the aggravating influence. It is not the size of these foreign substances that is the consideration, but their bulk when swallowed in quantity. One would hesitate about swallowing the small handful of pits contained in a moderate bunch of grapes (they make quite a formidable showing), yet they are, all the same, swallowed in eating the grapes, and possibly pack in the stomach or bowels, an entirely indigestible mass of woody fibre. As to yet smaller seeds the process is precisely similar, depending only on the quantity of such food eaten. The seeds of blackberries are enormous in size and quantity compared with the pulp, and in eating a comfortably large saucerful of this fruit one swallows the equivalent in seeds of those of a large portion of grapes, or of a number of cherry stones. But are we then to bar small fruit as a diet? Scarcely, but more prudence can be exercised. They should be eaten in moderation, early in the day rather than at night, and with the greatest caution, if at all, by persons in the physical condition of Mr. Randall. The rejoinder may be made that this stony dissipation has been going on for ages; so it has, and much mischief must have marched hand in hand with it. It is clear, at least, that persons with impaired alimentary organs should make the works of those parts as easy as possible, and not load them with quantities of foreign indigestible matter.—*New York Evening Telegram.*

He Was Unacquainted With History.

A good many years ago a Scotchman and an Englishman fell into a warm dispute about the privileges resulting to each country from the Union, each of them divesting his own country entirely of any share of them. At length the Scot safely observed that if the English had no advantage by the Union why were they so forward in promoting it, and why were the Scots so backward to agree to it? "Why, sir, as to the former, because it freed them from the devastations committed by their plundering parties; and, as to the latter, because it deprived them of the rich booties which they received from England at the expiration of every temporary truce." "Ay, ay, was that the way? I did not know—I'm unacquainted with history; but what the d——l had the English ado but to wear them back?" "Why, sir, at a fair engagement, in open war, they never could stand us; but, having their own mountains and forests so near for a safe retreat, it was impossible to prevent their plundering parties from committing frequent depredations." "Ay, ay, I did not know these things," said the Scot, "and were the English too hard for them at a fair engagement?" "Indeed, sir, they were. The best and bravest of the Scots allowed of that." "Ay, ay, I'm unacquainted with history, but it is believed to have been otherwise where I live." "Where," said the Englishman, "do you live?" "At Bannockburn!" "Hem—" Not another word ensued. The subject entirely dropped, and the shrewd Caledonian sat squirting in the fire as if he meant nothing by the answer.

A Nursery Yarn Refuted.

A little girl came to her grandfather the other day with a trouble weighing on her mind. "Auntie says the moon's made of green cheese, and I don't believe it." "Don't you believe it? Why not?" "Because I've been looking in the Bible, and found out that the moon is not made of green cheese, for the moon was made before the cows."

Wife—John, I had a fearful fall this morning.

Husband—How was that?

"I was going down the cellar stairway"—

"And I s'pose you slipped and fell?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'll have to be more careful I just paid $12 to have the stairway painted and if you keep on you'll have it al scratched and dinged."