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WHAT THE ROSES SAID.

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.

A WAN little maiden lay with closed eyes upon her pillows in the sick-room; all was very still, and the roses in the vase by the bedside had it quite to themselves.

"You are crowding me very uncomfortably," said a great, glowing red rose, spreading out its rich petals with a gush of impatient fragrance. "You are rubbing all the velvet off my dress!"

"Oh, please pardon me," begged the little pale rose, that had pressed so near, shrinking humbly back as it spoke amid its leaves. "I only put up my lips to kiss that pretty sunbeam. I love sunbeams."

"It is not worth while blooming to kiss such a pallid little beam as that!" returned the red rose, contemptuously. "I wouldn't so much as turn my cheek to meet it. Ah, there is no sun here like one that I have known! Such a fiery, glorious sun, shining hour after hour up there in the empty blue sky all for my sake, and throwing down passionate golden kisses to me that set the green leaves of the trees all a-tremble with envy as they fell athwart the branches! Never had rose such a lover before."

"Oh, tell me, tell me!" cried the little pale rose, lifting its sweet head, eagerly. "I never had a lover yet, tho many a zephyr has told me that I am fair, and a great butterfly once brushed me caressingly with its wing."

"Butterflies and zephyrs. Inconstancy and deceit," answered the red rose, crushingly.

"Do not say that!" pleaded a fair white rose, turning up its passionless holy face. "All zephyrs do not deceive."

"You do well to say so indeed!" exclaimed the red rose. "Pray was it not a zephyr who stole your perfume from you one fine day, and has he ever brought it back?"

"Ah nay, nay," said the white rose, meekly. "He did not steal it. I gave it him. It is his therefore to do with it what he will. He did but ask me for a breath of my fragrance that he might bear it with him to gladden a far-off flowerless spot, and I opened my heart frankly and poured out its whole treasure unstinted into his hand."

"And you have been scentless ever

since—a fine reward that," commented the red rose, exasperatingly.

"Does that matter?" asked the white rose, gently. "That which one gives without reward is the only true gift. To give with hope of return is not to give, but to lend."

"But the love story—tell us the love-story!" cried the little pale rose, drawing a deep breath of expectation.

"Pshaw, I have had a lover too," interposed a brilliant yellow rose. "And not one, but many—oh, more than ever rose had before! Why they would sit in the tree above, and sing and sing and sing all day long just for love of me, till it seemed as if they would deafen the world with their melody."

"Oh, how beautiful!" sighed the little pale rose. "And I never had a lover! But what could you say to so many?"

"Oh, I cared nothing for them!" said the yellow rose, with a pert toss of its head. "I just turned a deaf ear to their sweetest songs, and never said ay or nay."

"And they?" inquired the little pale rose, anxiously, "Oh, did grief kill them? Did they fall dead at your feet, and was there silence in the world?"

"Oh, as to that," answered the yellow rose, rather stiffly, "they—they flew away."

"Ah, ha! *My* love was truer, then!" cried a pink rose, exultingly, "tho he was dumb and said never a word to woo; but he hung all day overhead, pale and wan and sad, all for love of me! Yes, never a word he said, but he drew nearer and nearer to the earth and I saw him well; for had not all my heart gone out to him where he sailed so grand and stately and slow above my head, and did not I love my beautiful cloud-lover with all my soul? But I pretended not to see—I hung my head, I would not look—and it grieved him. He wept. I felt his warm tears falling wet upon my brow, and yet still I would not look—still I drew my petals close and bent my head aside; and he wept and wept all the long day for love of me. And when toward night, relenting, at last I looked, lo, it was too late; he had wept all his soul away. My lover was no more; he died for love of me—for love of me!"

"But the sun—you have not yet told," persisted the little pale rose, turning imploringly to her ruby sister. "Oh, tell

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us of the sun! You who are queen of us all should surely have had the kingliest lover."

"Mine was indeed a right royal lover!" replied the red rose, with a proud crimson flush. "A right royal lover, indeed." And she sighed a long, deep sigh, that flooded the room with perfume. "All the day he shone and burned and glowed with love for me. He filled the whole air with the radiance and the immensity of his passion; the very atmosphere about me thrilled and sparkled with his breath. It frightened me. I could not breathe. I could not move. I could only open and open and watch. And deeper and stronger grew his passion, till at last he sank down exhausted upon the earth. I saw him lying there—the whole world aglow—the whole heavens afire with the flaming of his vast love for me. And as I watched, lo, consumed by the very intensity of that love, his great golden heart throbbed itself to death before my sight, and broke into a thousand glittering pieces that scattered themselves in stars over the broad face of the darkness, and trembled and gleamed there the livelong night, all for sorrowful love of me!"

"Alas, alas!" sighed the little pale rose. "And to think I have never had a lover!"

"Better no lover at all than one that will not die for you!" said the red rose, with a spicy whiff toward the yellow rose.

"Better a thousand living lovers than but one and he dead!" retorted the yellow rose, with an ugly curl of its handsome lip.

"Better yet to love than to be loved," said the white rose, softly.

"And best, oh, best of all, to love and to be loved again," whispered a low, tuneful voice; and suddenly the room was filled with a delicious fragrance, faint and sweet and heavenly. Zephyr had returned.

"Come, mine own!" he said.

And the white rose raised her meek head and saw and knew him; and she reached toward him and opened all her fair petals out in gladdest welcome, and he bore her pure soul away.

"Have I been asleep," thought the little maiden, opening her eyes and lifting her weary head from the pillows. "Surely I dreamed that my roses were talking."

And she looked at them; but they were very still and wholly dumb. Only the little pale rose seemed paler than before, and the red rose was heavy with richness, and the yellow rose had already begun to wither; and upon the table, like feathers from an angel's wing, lay the fallen petals of the fair white rose; and all the room was full of a delicious fragrance, faint and sweet and heavenly.

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FLOWERTIME WEATHER.

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.

WHEN you and I are together,
That makes my flowertime weather,
Albeit the rain
Beats harsh on the pane,
And November lies brown on the lea.

But alas for my flowertime weather
When we are no longer together!
Tho June hold the land
In the palm of her hand,
It is everywhere winter to me!