

Of all mortal days be but woe,
Compared with their acme of pleasure
(Life mused as she ^{strung} hung the scale low),
Why, then, should it lessen Earth's sorrow?—
Why magnify Death's consequence
To believe in a timeless to-morrow?
And Life held the scale in suspense.

LONDON, ENGLAND.

THE CENTURY

JUNE, 1885.

HILARY'S HUSBAND.

HILARY stood leaning against a rugged old oak just outside the farm-house gate, watching her lover as he drove away from her forever. It was a lonely road ; there were neither neighbors nor passers-by to peer curiously into her face, and Aaron never once looked round as he went ; she need not have pressed back the tears so resolutely. But she stood perfectly calm and still, looking fixedly down the road after the retreating wheels, though feeling as if she were watching a hearse that bore away her heart to burial in some far-away graveyard beyond reach of tears.

When the last flutter of dust had laid itself in the road behind the gig, like a sorrow momentarily lulled to sleep, but ready to start into life at memory's first breath, the girl raised her clasped hands above her head, and closed her eyes tightly as if to shut out the vision of the long dull years to come, stretch-

ing themselves aimlessly into the distance, empty, loveless, and hard like the blank road before her. Then she turned and walked steadily into the house, and up the narrow stairs into her aunt's room, and sat down by the bed, folding her slender hands in her lap, and looking down at the invalid with tired gray eyes that seemed suddenly to have discovered the end of all things, and to know that henceforth they must always look back instead of forward.

The paralytic neither saw nor heard when Hilary came in. She lay as she had lain these many months,—past seeing, past hearing, past suffering, yet living still, though as utterly dead to her old life as had the *Requiescat in pace* already been written in letters of marble above her. For a long time Hilary sat by the bedside, absolutely motionless, save when she mechanically leaned forward to brush a fly from her aunt's brow, or

Lost Rose — Poem
Detroit, 1121/1881
Appincott's, 9/1882

Milky Way — Poem
A Hurt Child — Poem
Monthly, 8/1883

THE INDEPENDENT.

June 18, 1885.

ONLY ONE KILLED.

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.

OLD Nurse Edwards sat on the tiny porch of the gardener's lodge, tranquilly knitting, with her spectacles, as usual, pushed high up under her cap. She had been told that it was a rest to remove them from her eyes occasionally, though whether the relief were to the eyes or to the glasses she could not exactly remember; in either case, however, she felt it her manifest duty to spare them all she could.

It was a glorious Summer afternoon, and from her wicker chair she looked out over a wide expanse of velvet lawn, luxuriously shaded here and there with clumps of venerable trees, in whose branches the birds were holding high carnival. But Nurse Edwards did not hear the birds; for there was a cricket just under the ledge of the verandah, who had quite as much to say as they, and who had no one but her to say it to; nor did she need to look over the lawn for her sunlight, when a beam had come purposely to seek her out, and was lying across her lap, like a long needle, tremulously waiting to be taken up and fitted to some wonderful golden work. It is only discontented people who must search afar for their pleasures. Nurse Edwards found all that she required close to her feet.

Presently she put down her knitting, and sat stiffly upright, with a look of recognition on her placid face, that took the place of a smile, and seemed to express almost more of pleasure. She had caught the sound of coming footsteps—light, dancing, happy steps, that could only belong to a child, or to one who had not yet unlearned childish gladness; and, truly enough, the slender figure of a girl, still in her teens, soon appeared around the corner, and in a moment more had bounded breathlessly to her side.

"Eh, Miss Anna," said the old woman, fondly, taking the young girl's hand and patting it affectionately, "what brings ye here in such haste the day?"

"Oh! I couldn't come slowly," Annie replied, with that little, inconsequent laugh that indicates happiness rather than mirth. "I don't think I could walk to-day, if it were to save my life. My feet wouldn't let me if I asked it of them. Nursie—" she suddenly stooped and kissed the faded cheek—"Fred is coming to-day, and I've run down to meet him. He'll be at the gate in half an hour. The train is due at five o'clock."

The old woman took the pretty face between her hands caressingly.

"I can't think how ye've so soon grown up to have a sweetheart, my bonnie dearie, ye that I've nursed on my knees and crooned to sleep this many a time gone, till I looked for ye never to outreach the cradle. Needs was some on ye should be grown women in the end; and I didn't say nothing against it when 'twas only Miss Meg and Miss Caroline; but I did hope to keep the last born for my ain. Eh! eh! 'Tis the natural way of children. Here's my Jem turned a man of a sudden, with a home to keep me in; him as I'd held a lad till it was no that easy to put faith in his beard even with my two eyes upon it. He'll be getting him a sweetheart next, I tell him; but he says nay, he wants no sweetheart but his mother. My Jem's a good lad. God bless him! And so ye are looking for Mr. Fred, are ye, Miss Annie? And it's for him that ye're so gay in all your brave ribbons?"

"Of course it's for him," returned Annie, joyously. "And am I quite fine enough, say, Nursie, dear? Will he say he never saw me look as nice before?"

"Ay, to be sure; that will he!" replied the old woman, fervently. "Though it'll no be the ribbons he'll mark. He'll say as my Jem says when I put on my smart gown of a Sunday: 'It's the face I mind, Mother, and naught besides,' he says. 'Ye look as well in the oldest gown ye wears, Mother,' he says."

"I am afraid Jem is an arrant flatterer," laughed Annie. "You've positively grown conceited since you came to live with him. You had much better have stayed on with us at the house."

"Nay, there's nothing as could keep me from my Jem, now, Miss Annie, dear," answered the old woman, soberly. "He's the only one left me of all I had, and my heart is set on him. It's little I can do for him now I'm old, and my sight is ailing, and I'm no that quick I was on my feet; but it's all in the way of Nature, he says. Them as sows in the Spring shall reap in the Fall, and I'm to reap now, whilst he's to work at the sowing. A deal of trouble I've had in my day, but no finger's touch will he let anear me in my old age, he says. Eh, but he's a good lad. May Heaven grant ye a son like him, Miss Annie, when ye've stepped down out of the Spring-time yer-

self."

"Yes, Jem's very good," assented Annie, carelessly. "Father says there is not a place anywhere around so well kept as he keeps ours. Oh! hark! Isn't that the train?"

She sprang to her feet, throwing back her head and listening eagerly, with bated breath, raising an imperious little hand to silence all other sounds. It seemed as if, at this spoiled darling's bidding, the very birds stopped singing and the leaves forbore their rustling, all was suddenly so still. Nurse Edwards listened too, but less intently, and the chirping of the cricket beneath the piazza ledge was the only sound she caught.

"Hey, what a noise he makes?" she said, admiringly, as Annie turned back with a gesture of disappointment. "If it's them as is happiest sings loudest, you fellow has the best of us all."

"Oh! will it *never* be five o'clock?" cried Annie, mindful only of her impatience. "This day has been a hundred days long already."

"Now don't ye be in a haste with Time, my dear," said the old woman, reprovingly. "Ye'll not hurry it, though ye fret it never so. We must just bide the time, my Jem says, and all things'll come in turn—first life, then growth, then death. Things is best taken natural as they come. The rose that ye force 'll only be sooner done blowing."

"But I can't wait," the girl complained, childishly. "I always want things immediately; and I want five o'clock this minute. What time can it be, Nursie? Oh! do say it's five o'clock!"

"It'll be nigh upon it, sure, by the slant of the shadows," the old woman answered, peering out across the lawn. "Ye can look at the sun-dial yonder, if ye will."

"Nonsense," rejoined Annie, contemptuously. "As if a stupid bit of wood and a rusty shadow kept any count of the time the train goes by. I'll look at the clock inside."

"Then ye may spare yerself the trouble, my dearie; for the hands stopped at five minutes to seven this morning, exactly as my Jem started out for the city; and five minutes to seven it'll be till my Jem gets home, which may be the night or the morrow. And I've been a thinking all the day as I sat here, how it's with me and with everything about me just as it is with the old clock inside. It's him that keeps us going; and we're all run down and stopped together when he's gone, biding the time till he comes back to right us."

"Then I wish he could come back now and make it five o'clock," sighed Annie. "Surely it *must* be five o'clock, and the train has come in without my hearing the whistle. I'll run down to the gate and wait there. Fred can't be long now. Good by, Nursie. In five minutes more I

shall be the very happiest girl in all the world!"

And before she had finished speaking, she was off, disdaining the road, and making herself a pathless way across the lawn; laughing, dancing, bounding along with many a light spring and airy leap and merry twist, like a mountain brook too impetuous to run smoothly. The old nurse smiled indulgently, and, settling herself back in her chair, went contentedly on with her knitting, while the cricket again became the uppermost sound in her world, like a homely accompaniment to the ~~single~~ music of her thoughts.

Many more minutes than five went by uncounted, when, suddenly, from the direction of the gateway, Annie again came running, but not as she had run before. Very direct and straight she came. Her arms were outstretched as one who runs blindly; her face, that had been so rosy, was white as death and strangely set, and she flung herself into the old woman's arms with a great, sharp cry.

"O, Nurse! O, Nurse! The train is not in. There has been an accident. A man going by told me. And there has been one killed. Just ~~as~~light accident! But there was one killed. Only one killed, the man said. O, Nurse! it is Fred. I know it is Fred! As certainly as that I am alive now, I know that it is my darling who is dead!"

And the girl burst into a passion of stormy weeping, and would neither be comforted, nor listen to anything that her old friend said.

"I tell you I *know* it is he!" she cried, with an agony of conviction in her voice that almost carried certainty with it. "It was like a knife through my heart the moment the man spoke. At the word accident, I felt that Fred was dead, even before he said anything more. I tell you I *know* that it is he, as surely as if I saw him lying here before my eyes!"

"Nay, nay, my pet, my darling, my heart's dearie!" cried the old nurse, clasping the girl to her breast and rocking back and forth with her as if she were a babe, so quickly does grief make children of us all. "How can ye know? Why borrow so sore a trouble as this? Wait till the good Lord brings it to ye himself, and eases the weight of it by lending his own blessed hand to the burden. What should start ye beforehand to fear it?"

"Oh! don't you see?" Annie moaned. "Don't you see? It is because I am so happy that I dread it. I am too happy. I have never had a sorrow in all my life. Not one. I have everything I want. I haven't a wish left to wish. My life is as bright as the year is long. And the happiness has got to stop sometime. Aren't we always being told we must expect sorrow? That every one has to suffer? It isn't natural to be so happy as I am. Sorrow has got to

come to me, too; and I know it is coming now—in this way—this most terrible way of all. I am to lose my very dearest. I am to lose Fred forever. And we were so happy together—oh! so happy! I loved him so! O, Nurse, Nurse! I can't bear it!"

"Whist, whist, my Bairniet! Don't ye go to think the Lord begrudges ye your happiness in the blessings himself has give ye to enjoy. Don't ye go to misjudge him so."

"Oh! if he has taken Fred from me—if he has—I shall hate him, I shall hate him!" cried Annie, wildly, clenching her slender hands. "Oh! if God is so cruel, so pitiless as that, I will never love him, never pray to him again, never, while I live!"

"Annie, Annie! God help ye, ye don't know what ye are saying!" exclaimed the poor old woman, with tears dropping over her withered cheeks. "How dare ye call him cruel? If he bids ye let go your heart's dearest, what right have ye even so to set your will against him as made ye, and as works all things together for your good? My Jem says there's a reason in all the Lord's doings; it's only our eyes as is weak and don't always see plain. It's wicked of ye to talk so, Annie, and I couldn't a-bear it, only Jem says he is sure the Lord don't listen when we speak that we don't mean; and ye don't mean what ye are saying now. Why, ye've just said there's no blessing in the world as has been denied ye your life long, and yet now ye couldn't take one sorrow from him if he sent it ye!"

"Only not this one?" sobbed Annie, her face hidden in the old woman's dress. "Only not this! I could bear anything else; but only not this!"

"O, Annie! it's no for us to say what shall be of the Lord's sending. What he sends, good or bad, that must we take; and it's no for us to choose the what or the when. If one poor soul lies dead yonder, then there's sorrow come into the world somewhere by reason of it. It's so that some one must bear the grief ye say ye cannot, nor will not bear. Is others stronger than ye, then, that ye should be spared, and your pain be put on them? What right have ye, Annie, to claim to be spared, and take no part in the world's trouble? The very trees has storms sent them, and stands up against them whilst they can. So them that God sends this sorrow to the day, whoever they chance to be, must e'en submit their wills to it, and, as my Jem would say, may the gracious Lord lighten it to the heart he fixes it upon."

The old woman bowed her head reverently as she spoke, and Annie looked up at her, half awed, though with cheeks still wet with rebellious tears. And just there, some one stooped over them and lifted the young girl to her feet, softly saying her name. Ah! what voice of all living could

so say it save one? It was as if her lover had been given back to her from the very regions of the dead, and, after an almost frightened glance at him, Annie threw herself upon his breast, with an inarticulate cry of relief and rapture. Perhaps when souls first meet in Heaven they feel something as she felt in that moment.

But the young man gently unclasped her clinging arms, and, holding her hands in one of his, went nearer the old nurse, and stood looking down at her without speaking.

"O, Mr. Fred!" the old woman cried, catching his hand, while a look of such unselfish delight irradiated her wrinkled face as absolutely transfigured it. "The Lord be thanked that it is not ye who have been taken!"

"No, not I," Fred said slowly, while she, in the relief that seemed to set all her senses free again, heard the cricket chirp, and saw how the golden needle of light had slipped away from her lap, and felt it where it lay bright and warm across her foot. "Not I," he said, "but another." And there he paused again, finding speech difficult, and laid his hand on her shoulder as if to steady her; and then, in despair at his own cowardice in breaking the news to her, he turned abruptly to Annie. "Help her if you can, Annie," he said. "Tell her. Jem was on the train, too. It is her Jem who was killed."

The old nurse spoke never a word. Did she understand? She felt a trembling; but she did not weep or moan or move by a hair's breadth; only sat with her hands dropped helplessly in her lap, looking unseeingly up at him who had brought the news. It seemed as if the silence could be felt. Annie had flung herself on her knees by the old woman's side again, and was covering the poor old hands with vain kisses and vainer tears. Her heart was full of an intolerable pity, that took almost the shape of self-reproach. What words of comfort could she dare to speak to one who was old, and weak, and poor, and helpless, and who had lost, not one gift out of many, but the one only blessing she had?

For a few moments the stricken woman sat there speechless, aging visibly before their eyes in the first awful shock of the bereavement. She was as if she had gone deaf and dumb and blind in an instant, or rather, as if, with faculties all overstrained and tense, she had been suddenly plunged into a sphere with which theirs had no communication. But after a time she roused herself with an effort, drawing a long breath, and moistening her dry lips.

"Don't fret for me, children," she said, brokenly, with a wan smile, moving her hand, tremblingly, to Annie's hair. "Some one had to be taken, ye see, and some one has to suffer, and it's better I than another;

for I've not so long as some to wait. It's near the closing of the day with me; the night will be upon me soon; and I don't need the strength to bear it, as them as has but begun the day. Don't ye fret, Annie; don't ye fret, dear. The Lord has laid his burden upon me; but his hand will be under it when my old feet fail."

She got up unsteadily, still smiling that faint, wan smile, and stood a moment looking uncertainly about her, as if trying to find herself in this strange world she was lost in, and, suddenly, the chirp of the cricket smote her ear, like a familiar sound from the friendly old world of the past, linking the then and the now together. The consciousness came slowly back into her eyes as her look wandered out over the lawn and the trees beyond, and then seemed to pass on to some point further still, perhaps beyond earth altogether, beyond death, beyond space, and beyond time. She seemed quite to have forgotten the presence of the others.

"Ay, ay!" she murmured, softly. "I've not so long to wait as some. The Lord is full of love and mercy. It's better I than another. And better Jem than one, may be, less ready."

And with that she turned and went into her little, desolate home, and closed the door; and the two left outside looked at each other silently, and then went mutely away together, saddened through all the happiness of their reunion. By what inscrutable justice had this sorrow passed them by to fall on her? What is the mystic sign that so often turns aside the angel of woe from the abode of the happy, to sheathe his sword afresh in hearts that have already bled? Is it because they who have suffered most are stronger to endure again, being the quickest to discern the hidden blessing in the sting, and the surest of making it their own?

Who can tell? Life is full of problems more unanswerable than this.

SAN REMO, ITALY.

The Independent.

JULY 9, 1885.

THE SONG OF THE CRICKET.

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.

YES, the world is big; but I'll do my best,

Since I happen to find myself in it;

And I'll sing my loudest out with the rest,

Though I'm neither a lark nor a linnet,

And strain out my voice.