A WOODLANDS TALE.

The valley is lined with woods for a long distance, but in one place, little more than two miles from the sea, there is a clear space, where the big house stands above its hanging gardens. Strangers have occupied it for so long a time that they would wonder and be indignant did you call them by that name.

For 20 years an old man dwelt there, continually divided betwixt the love of the living, his daughter and a passion for his dead wife that was forever drawing him toward the land of twilight whither he pictured her waiting for his coming. He had lived hardly in his youth, an overworked and underpaid drudge, finding the whole of his life's pleasures in the books of the great masters and in devoted care for his mother. Apart from these indeed he had no life.

A distant relative—a cousin of his mother, a mere name to him hitherto—died and left a will whereby he became master of the big house and withal a man of means. At first the change of circumstances rather detracted from his comfort than otherwise. But he was a gentleman and a person greatly loved by all who met him. He quickly adapted himself to the change and made himself a place in the hearts and homes of the neighboring gentry.

He married a young wife and lived with her in the big house for some few months beyond a year. If he had died at the end of that time, he would have thanked the gods for the best life it was ever given to man to enjoy, but that was not the thing ordained. His wife died a day or two after the birth of a daughter, the Rachel of the story you are to hear.

She was a singularly lovable child, and his continued thoughtfulness on her behalf had the effect of making a like carefulness for others more instinct in her. She was a child in virtue of her simplicity of heart, but her intercourse with others was all made up of little, kindly courtesies such as are in most of us the last refinement of art.

In due course she went away to school, and it would have been hard to decide whether the coming of holiday time, when she was at home once more, brought with it more of joy to him or to her. She grew tall and very beautiful. Her face was clear cut and of a type singularly patrician, but the whole expression was one of delicate graciousness, and her eyes looked out upon the world with the frankness of a beautiful child's.

There came in due season a lover, but this did nothing to disturb the harmony of the household. In matters of learning, it may be, Eustace was not a fit companion for the father of Rachel, but he was a gentleman, like the other, and a man so made that you would have sworn he would remain a boy at heart, no matter how long he should live.

Eustace was a soldier on leave of absence visiting the home country, and the time was one when every man of that calling knew that the morrow might see him ordered abroad. Perhaps the courtship progressed more rapidly than it would otherwise have done because Rachel was aware of the shortness of the time of freedom allowed him and how he chafed at it. Yet there was no binding speech between them until the order came that he was to return to his regiment and go to the war. He had no particular skill in the use of words, and his speech with her was straightforward and to the point.

"I am leaving in two days to join my regiment and go out in the Crimea. Since I have been in the west I have learned to love you. Will you let me go happy because you have promised to be my wife?"

Twilight was deepening, and only a few lights shone yellow in the windows of the cottages along the valley. Rachel did not answer for a moment, though he felt somehow the thrill of pain that shot through her at the thought he was going to the war. She glanced in the direction of the open window, where her father sat in the twilight. Then she made answer as direct as the speech of her love.

"If that will make you happy," she said, "I will promise gladly. But, oh, I wish you had not to go!"

The lovers lingered a long time in the cool and pleasant air, and it was not till late that Rachel told her father of the thing which had fallen out that night, and the two received the old man's blessing. Then there was a parting, and Rachel knew that, save for an hour or two on the next evening, she had seen the last of her lover for many a long day.

The gardens descend the slope of the valley and from the orchard at the bottom a pathway leads into the woods. It was this path the lovers took on the night of their farewells. The spring had come full early, and even the mulberries began to think of putting forth their leaves. In the woods the primroses shone everywhere, and many an open space was carpeted with bluebells. There were anemones and frail wood sorrel in the shadow of scattered granite rocks and the garlic flowered whitely where the soil was marshy. Innumerable birds were singing and every tangled bramble bush held a foolish blackbird that fled with a self betraying shriek as they approached, making almost unconsciously for a glade they had often visited together in the heart of the woods.

"Let us stop here," said Eustace presently. "Do you remember when we found the place?"

"I have always known it," said Rachel. "It was my playground when I was a child, and sometimes I chose to fancy myself the sleeping princess and this the palace where I waited for the prince. I did not think he would ever come."

"My princess!" cried the man, kissing her as she sat beside him in the shade of a huge tree. "Out there I shall always think of you as waiting for me here."

"Come back quickly," she said in a low voice, "but do not think of me as waiting here. The place will be too empty without you. We will visit it together when you have come back."

"But you must not leave it unvisited," he said. "It is too dear to us for that, and you will be nearer to me here than anywhere else. Look down the path."

He pointed in the direction from which they had come, and her eyes obeyed his command.

"Some day," he said, "you will hear that I am coming, and you will make ready to meet me. But I shall not find you—I shall hardly seek you—in the house or in the garden. I shall come straight down to the wood and along the old path, and you will be waiting here. The time will seem long. You will think I cannot be coming. Then suddenly a foolish blackbird will shriek away yonder, and in a moment I shall be here and you will be mine forever."

Rachel turned her eyes upon him. "I am that now," she said. "I am yours forever. But, oh, come back to me quickly. Waking or sleeping, I shall be watching that pathway until you are returned."

"And I shall be thinking of you who are waiting for me here," he said. "Remember that, and be sure that I will come back to you."

The last of the birds had ceased from singing when the lovers rose and quitted Rachel's bower among the woods. They traversed the pathway slowly and came at last to the terrace. Eustace entered and said goodby to Rachel's father, and presently the lovers parted, and the young man strode out under the trees of the highway and so home.

The time which came after this parting may be guessed at by all who know how the war went. Rachel lived in a perpetual fever of expectation, for the region wherein she dwelt was at that time isolated, and letters and newspapers alike came to hand all too slowly. She used often to visit the green glade in the woods, and, though she maintained the outward serenity of her aspect, her father was not a little troubled on her behalf, seeing, despite her efforts at concealment how love held back the pendulum of her life until this man should be returned who had gone for an indefinite period into a place where men were dying daily.

"I dreamed of you last night," said the distant lover in one of his letters. "I dreamed that the day we were hoping for had come at last and that I was coming down the pathway to meet you in the woods. I found you there, of course, and I think you had grown more beautiful than ever. Do you wait in the woods?"

Rachel's answer was this: "I am always in the woods, whether in dreams or in the body. You could not come back, though, if it were ever so secretly, and find me not waiting."

The letters came intermittently, and there was that in them—rather of things left vague than of things said—that sent Rachel often to the trysting place up the valley. The spring came very slowly, but the yellow primroses were out, and amid green leaves the young hyacinth had already a faint tinge of blue. She spent hours in the very place where she had sat with Eustace when they were together for the last time, and her heart followed her eyes down the woodland pathway and across the seas.

For at last there were no more letters, and as these failed to arrive the girl became more eager every day for the newspapers, more terribly afraid to open them because of the news they might hold. Her father watched her with a growing anxiety, and was forever seeking to allay her fears, while at the same time he was exceeding loath to give them the support that a recognition of their existence would have involved.

He himself was seriously afraid for Eustace, though there was no particular reason why he should be more unfortunate than his brothers. The old man saw anxiety and fear were telling on his daughter; that from a healthy woman she had become within a few days a mere bundle of nerves. One morning (known afterward as the day when Eustace got the wound that was to kill him) she suddenly uttered a loud cry as she sat at lunch with him, and it was long before she revived from the fainting fit which immediately ensued.

From that hour Rachel's condition became more and more a cause of solicitude. Her father was unhappy whenever she was out of his sight, and that was frequently, for something drew her to the trysting place among the woods, and early and late she would go down there and sit in the place where she had sat with Eustace and where she had promised to await him whenever he should be able to return. Some hint of the state of affairs prevailing at the big house had gone abroad among the impressionable people of the countryside, and the glade where she waited was held sacred to her and sedulously avoided.

But at last (on the third day from that of her fainting fit and toward the end of the afternoon) she went down alone, and when it was dark she had not returned. For a long time her father suppressed his natural unrest, but presently he found that the servants were oppressed, like himself, by an infinite, nervous dread. He determined to go down to the heart of the woods and bring Rachel home. One or two servants accompanied him, bearing lanterns.

A thin mist had dulled the sky and hidden the stars. They walked in absolute silence, and the night was like a huge empty house in which their footsteps echoed.

Fear was upon them, and a sense of something terrible impending made them waver betwixt eagerness to go forward and dread of what they were to come upon. At the edge of the woodlands the old man paused and cried, "Rachel, Rachel!"

A dull echo was the only answer, and they moved on in the direction of the glade. Once again the old man raised his voice and called upon his daughter, "Rachel, Rachel!"

But she answered to that call an hour earlier, when her lover came to meet her in the glade, at the moment of his death across the seas. She was sitting under the great tree where they had spent their last hours in life together. The radiant smile had not yet gone from her lips, nor was there any horror in the eyes that stared across the glade and down the woodland path by which he had sworn to come back when he was free.—London Black and White.

Financiering.

"Did any one drop a 50 cent piece?" asked the shabby man in the midst of the crowd watching the safe go up.

"No," said they. "But you are an honest man anyway."

"And now for the second proposition," said the shabby man. "I did not pick up any 50 cent piece, but will some one kindly drop a nickel in this hat as the reward of honesty?"—Indianapolis Journal.

There is generally something that requires hiding at the bottom of a mystery. —Hawthorne.

THE LONG JOURNEY.

Never were dying eyes, I ween,
But gave to a meadow a lovelier green.
Ne'er is a death of what we see
But feeds a life in the is to be.
The bee builds comb and the bird its nest
'Neath the rifted roof of a dead man's breast.

What for thee in this dusty plan?
Ye with your mighty mind of man!
What are the bee and bird to thee?
Wait, and waiting ye may see!
Well it be, an ye be not guest
'Neath the rifted roof of a dead man's breast!
—Post Wheeler in New York Press.

The French Peasants.

On Sunday morning they turn out, old and young, the strong and the halt, dressed in their best, to attend church. Only "works of necessity and mercy" keep them at home. The attendance at early morning mass during the week is limited to the elderly women—the less active members of the community. Our cure is very severe, but he has to make the spiritual side of things fit in with mundane interests, which are very strong at certain seasons of the year. For instance, he cuts the sermon and the service short during haymaking and harvest so that the people may work. Unless he were accommodating in this respect it is possible that his worshipers would diminish. On the other hand, he doesn't encourage such frivolities as dancing. If any of his enfants de Marie dance at the village fete, they can sing no longer in the choir, and their names are removed from the tableau of the congregation. He is a severe moral censor, M. le Cure. There is no record of illegitimacy at the mairie, except of one offender, who is ostracized and lives in an isolated house near a wood—looked down upon as much as scarlet woman ever was under the sternest Puritanism.—Contemporary Review.

Squeezed by Sun and Moon.

A very curious observation was made by Dr. Nansen during his adventurous journey toward the north pole concernng the effects of the tides on the floating ice. The worst pressures experienced by his ship, the Fram, when enclosed in ice (except those due to high winds) occurred regularly about the time of new and full moon, the greatest being at new moon. The reason was because the tidal currents near the margin of the polar ice fields drive the floating ice before them, and at new and full moon the tidal attraction of the sun is added to that of the moon, so that they may be said to pull together, and the effect on the sea is increased. Dr. Nansen also observed that the ice does not form by direct freezing on the Polar sea to a thickness exceeding 13 feet. That was the maximum noticed by him, but in the ice fields the thickness becomes greatly increased by the piling up of broken masses under the action of winds and waves. "The massive ice cap which many explorers have believed to cover the polar area," he said in his recent lecture in London, "has been shattered. Instead of it we have ever wandering ice fields."—Youth's Companion.

Population of Australia.

Australia could be made to support 400,000,000 inhabitants of the black or yellow races, able to endure the climate. The present population is only 5,000,000.

CONTENTED.

He cares not how the seasons go—
Providence in weather.
And if the stormy tempests blow,
Rain or sunshine, hail or snow,
Round and round the world will go,
And we'll reach home together!

He cares not how the seasons go—
Providence in weather.
And when the roses cease to grow
He's thankful we're in time for snow,
For round and round the world will go,
And we'll reach home together.
—Atlanta Constitution.

Woman suffering as well as woman sufferage has struck Colorado, an advertisement in a paper of that locality being thus worded: "Wanted by a competent woman, a place to work for her husband's board."

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