

"My Heart's Delight,"
When all the skies with snow were gray,
And all the earth with snow was white,
I wandered down a still wood way,
And there I met my heart's delight
Slow moving through the silent wood,
The spirit of its solitude:
The brown birds and the lichen tree
Seemed less a part of it than she.

Where Phœbus' feet and rabbit's feet
Had marked the snow with traces small,
I saw the footprints of my sweet—
The sweetest wood and thing of all.
With Christmas roses in her hand,
One heart-beat's space I saw her stand;
And then I let her pass, and stood
Lone in an empty world of wood.

And, though by that same path I've passed
Down that same woodland every day,
That meeting was the first and last,
And she is hopelessly away.
I wonder was she really there—
Her hands, and eyes, and lips, and hair?
Or was it but my dreaming sent
Her image down the way I went?

Empty the woods are, where we met—
They will be empty in the spring;
The cowslip past the violet,
Will die without her gathering.
But dare I dream one radiant day
Red rose-wreathed she will pass this way
Across the glad and honored grass:
And then—I will not let her pass.

ESTELLE'S INFATUATION: A NOVEL.

Neither regretted this slender holding on to society. Mrs. Asplene was a shrewd woman, without illusions and remarkable for common-sense. As for Anne, she was too indolent to desire even pleasure. She had that desperate lack in the young of want of earnestness. She was too dreamy to care for realities. The advent of Anthony Harford had given all things a different complexion. Specially was Mrs. Asplene put to it—she who had always held aloof from the Asplenes with rather venomous renunciation, seeing in Anne a formidable rival to Estelle—money bags beating beauty in the matrimonial market, and birth coming nowhere. But now, how gladly she would have rubbed out those past years on the slate of time, and have made friends with one who had such a friend as this fabulously wealthy Anthony Harford! But the slate of time is a stubborn record-keeper, and only itself can efface what is written there. And Mrs. Asplene had keen eyes and a good memory. Yet she, too, was sorry that she could not flourish a better social roll-call before the eyes of her guests.

And Anthony, who had been so long living out of the run of social entertainments as to have lost all taste for them and almost all remembrance, accepted with excuses as valid, and was by no means disturbed by the paucity of visitors or events.

Nevertheless something must be done for her own credit. So Mrs. Asplene took heart of grace, and a little abashed by her own boldness, issued invitations for a dinner party to meet Mr. Harford of Thirft. Her invitations were only to the Earl and Countess, Lady Elizabeth, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, and Mr. Medlicott, the curate—one of the new and to be found in drawing-rooms, with a fascinating little mustache like a dandy layman, and the bearing of a well-drilled officer, who wore no signs of his calling in his attire, but went out to dinner in the studs, tie, and swallow-tail of an ordinary gentleman in evening dress. Which did not prevent the queerest mixture of High Church doctrines with Broad Church practice to be found in any pulpit or any drawing-room. All accepted, save Lady Kingshouse.

"We shall have a charming party, Anne," Mrs. Asplene said to her daughter, as she hung her decisive notes. "I am very glad, for Anthony's sake. He will see that we are respected here when an earl can come to dinner."

"I don't think he cares much about earls or that sort of thing," said Anne, languidly. "He has been too long in America. He has come back such a dreadful republican!"

"He will get over that after he has been a short time in England," said Mrs. Asplene, sensibly enough. "Nothing cures a man of all that wicked revolutionary nonsense so much as having property of his own. When he has got used to the possession of Thirft, I don't think he will care to give up to the socialists and dynamitards, as he pretends now he would be, and he like every Englishman in the world, would be proud to dine with a live lord."

"Perhaps," said Anne. "But then, you see, Mr. Harford is scarcely an Englishman now."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Asplene, jauntily; "what's bred in the bone sticks to the flesh, and he can't help himself."

"Mamma," said Anne, with plaintive remonstrance, "how fond you are of those horrid proverbs!"

"Yes, I am, Anne, and it's a bad habit that I can't get rid of," returned her mother, penitently. "But it's only to you, dear. I don't do much of it in company."

"In society of course not," said Anne, with a slight emphasis.

And just then Anthony Harford came into the room.

"Well, Anthony, I've got my dinner party for you," said his hostess, with a beaming face.

"Why did you give yourself this trouble?" he returned. "We were very well as we were. Don't you think so, Miss Anne?"

"It will be much pleasanter for you to see our neighbors," she answered.

"Oh, as for that, yes. I don't object to my kind," said Anthony, laughing. "Count or cow-boy, it's all one to me, so long as he goes straight."

"Well, we have not got a count, but we have an earl for you," said Mrs. Asplene, always beaming.

"Lord Kingshouse and his daughter, Lady Elizabeth, are coming. So it will be quite a splash affair, I can tell you."

Anne colored, and turned her head away.

"I am sure it will," said Anthony, good-naturedly. "We shall have a high old time; shan't we, Miss Anne?"

"I hope you will enjoy yourself," said Anne, primly.

"And you?"

"I? I do not care for society," she answered, still primly.

"Not with a live old earl?" he asked.

"I like Lord Kingshouse and Lady Elizabeth," she said evasively.

And Mrs. Asplene, in a pet, cried brusquely, "Anthony Harford, if you could make my girl a little more like others—braker and with more go in her—I'd thank you."

"It's worth trying," drawled Anthony.

coldly. Then seeing her face flame with vexation, headed, with marked kindness: "But she'll do very well as she is, Mrs. Asplene. Girls are best not all alike."

"She might be more like others, and yet she'd be unlike enough," said Mrs. Asplene, as her parting shot, vexed beyond her usual placid good temper by Anne's almost wooden indifference to the party, the live earl, Anthony Harford, and "every mortal thing in the world," as she sometimes said—indifferent to such a point as if nothing but an earthquake could shake her up.

This, then, was the way in which the Asplene dinner party came about. And the Clarinardes were out of it.

CHAPTER IV.

FRESH LINKS I.

Mrs. Asplene's dinner was a success. The cuisine was perfect, and the cellar faultless, as has been said. Lord Kingshouse was a charming companion when in the vein to-night. Merely to look at Lady Elizabeth was a pleasure equal to that given by a picture by Raffaele, or a spray of apple blossom. And then their rank in lord-loving England was as the diamond in the gold setting—the social crystallization of their personal supremacy.

Mr. and Mrs. Stewart were general favorites. Born popularities, wherever they went they were liked, at Kingshouse they were loved. Mr. Medlicott was as chirpy as a bird, and more like a bridegroom in his bearing than a man consecrated to preach of sin and death. Anthony Harford was, of course, more interesting than any one else to society which knew itself a little too intimately for freshness, if it had the confidence of familiarity in its stead. Mrs. Asplene's want of thorough breeding was well concealed under her studiously quiet manner; while Anne was just what she always was—pretty, with certain defective points, languid, negative, somewhat stupid, but perfectly inoffensive if not actively charming. She was the neutral tint among the stronger colors, and as such she had her value. That, indeed, was just her place and character. She was neutral. Gently spoken of by all, she was enthusiastically loved by none; and to Mrs. Asplene alone was she, in any way, *bête noire*. But then maternal jealousy can make a *bête noire* out of a seraph or a doll indifferently.

It was, however, to Anthony Harford to whom the honor of the evening really belonged. He was a new experience to even the earl. The earl himself, by the way, took to him, as the phrase goes, quite as warmly as any one else. As, by reason of his straitened means, he had to give up much of his inherited position in the gay world—even when Parliament was sitting, generally managing to pair, that he might thus avoid the expenses of a London season—he was not *blasé* with excitement on the one hand, and he was slightly bored with his life on the other. Thus he was exactly in the frame of mind which welcomes a new-comer of interesting experiences, if that new-comer be sufficiently vouched for socially; and Anthony went in and won, as he himself would have said, "hands down."

He told his best stories in his dry America way. They were chiefly stories of his own adventures, or the adventures of others which he had witnessed. Perhaps the men a little discounted these adventures, at least in their entirety. The women were not so critical. What they did not understand they took on trust, and found the exercise of faith pleasant. A handsome man always is taken on trust by the average woman, who reserves her doubts for her pretty sisters or unpersonable brothers. And the present experience went in line with all the past. To Lady Elizabeth especially was this new-comer charming.

"You have gone through terrible dangers," she said, after his grimly quiet account of how he and a grizzly had had a hand-to-hand struggle, and how only after a fearful mauling had he been the insensate conqueror of his bleeding foe.

"Well, I have had a pretty rough time here and there," he answered; "but one gets used to it, as to all things."

"I don't think one would get used to being half killed, as you have been so often," said Anne, simply.

Mr. Medlicott laughed a little jauntily. A strange gleam shot from Anthony's eyes. Save for that sudden flash he did not appear to have heard either the girl or the curate.

"You see, in these wild places a man has to be pretty smart in all ways," he said, addressing Lady Elizabeth. "He has to know how to use his hands—on men and beast. Life out there is not as it is in England, where your most formidable game is a hare or a fox, and where no man takes up a sneer for fear of creating a scene. Out there we reckon ourselves pretty much equal to all things and each other, and whether it's a grizzly or a gentleman—we know how to meet him."

"Yes," said Lady Elizabeth, seeing nothing behind the mere words, which in themselves were inconvertible.

And yes, said the earl, with more meaning because a clearer insight, "that makes a return to the old country, in a sense, a new experience. So much has been unlearned as well as a few new phases of thought and feeling to be learned."

"As what, my lord?" asked Anthony.

"The tame acceptance of impertinence, for instance?"

"Oh," said Lord Kingshouse, with a smile, "our duelling days are over, you see. We hold it to be both more manly and more civilized to ignore small affronts, of which the disgrace recoils on the head of the offender. Civilization demands self-suppression in more ways than one, and in this among the rest."

"I do not hold with you, sir," said Anthony, hastily. "A man's self superior to all conventional rules. If his honor is touched ever so lightly, he should know how to defend it, and be ready with his tools."

"And what do you make of the sixth commandment?" put in Mr. Stewart, as a kind of protest due to his cloth.

"The Decalogue has got to take care of itself, I reckon, when men have their shooting-irons handy, and fools provoke them to draw," said Anthony, slowly.

"Ah, well, we have lived out of all that rough-and-ready method of self-defence," said the vicar, good-humoredly. "A return to it would be clearly a retrogression, an act of atavism, which in these days of belief in evolution would be sinning against light."

Anthony not only delicately flattered

"I am afraid the sin would have to be committed if the occasion came my way," returned Anthony; and then the ladies rose to leave the table, and all four were about equally shocked.

Even Anne thought her Harford really too ferocious. And this was the general thought. When the gentlemen appeared, however, all trace of that significant blush had gone. The color of the whole thing rested with the earl and Anthony, and the friendship they seemed to have struck up one with the other.

"Then I shall see you to-morrow?" said Lord Kingshouse, as they parted. "You will be interested."

"Yes, certainly, with much pleasure, sir," returned Anthony; "to-morrow, in the afternoon."

"Interested in what, father?" asked Lady Elizabeth, as they were driving home.

"In my observatory," said the earl.

"Is Mr. Harford an astronomer?" she asked again.

"As much as all educated men are," he returned. "He is an uncommonly nice fellow. A little too hasty, perhaps; but that is to be accounted for by the wild life he has led. Outside his being too free with his hands, and too apt to take offence—that fool Medlicott very nearly put his foot in it—he seems to be a first-rate fellow, and really Mrs. Asplene might do worse than nail him on the spot for that girl of hers."

"She is too dreamy and impractical for such a man; at least I should think so," said Lady Elizabeth, feeling that Anne Asplene was in no way the right wife for Anthony Harford. "He has been accustomed to so much cleverness and quickness over there in America. I should think he would find Miss Asplene rather dull if he had to live with her always. Of course I do not know. I only think so."

"Oh, you Delight!" laughed the earl. "As if men did not always like their opposites! What would become of society if two flames of fire or two bales of wool married? Why, we should run into types more marked than pointer pigeons and fancies! It is only the marriage of opposites which keeps things going at all."

Lady Elizabeth laughed too.

"That would certainly be a reason," she answered, pleasantly. "But I should pity poor Mr. Harford."

"And pray why, my dear," said her father. "I am sure the little girl is very pretty, and fairly well-mannered. If she had not one or two coarse points about her, she would be really charming. But the pip comes out here and there, though not boldly enough to spoil her."

"She is a good girl, I am sure," was his daughter's reply, "but she is rather difficult to get on with. She is what people call heavy on hand, and one can get nothing out of her."

"Love makes a capital gimlet," said the earl. "You never know what a woman is capable of till she falls in love, and then you find out."

"Yes," said his Delight, as they drove up to the door of their home.

The next day Anthony presented himself with unholy punctuality at the exact time named by Lord Kingshouse. He was ushered into the presence of my lady, busy over embroidery as usual.

For some little time he was alone with her, and, unconsciously to himself, he made good use of that time, charming the lady as he had already charmed her husband and daughter. When Anthony showed her that he knew the constellations, as well as the latest facts and theories of what is called the new astronomy, my lord was doubly gracious to a man who could at once tackle a grizzly single-handed and understand the map of the heavens.

Then said my lady: "You must come and dine with us, Mr. Harford. I will write to Mrs. Asplene, and ask her and Miss Asplene to come too. Perhaps she will be free on Tuesday next if you are?"

"Thank you, Lady Kingshouse," said Anthony, in his quiet way. "You are very kind, but I think I must be going home before then. I have already outstaid my time."

"Oh, no; you can stay over Tuesday," said Lady Kingshouse, with a friendly persistency.

And on the earl's seconding his wife, and Lady Elizabeth smiling her, "I should think so," when he turned to her and said, "What do you think, Lady Elizabeth? Do you think I may stay?"—Anthony consented for his own part, and undertook to answer for Mrs. and Miss Asplene as if he had been the son of the one and the husband of the other.

"Oh, yes, they'll come," he said. "They've got to."

So there it was; and this was how Anthony Harford was induced to remain for these five days longer—induced to remain, apparently for a trivial pleasure, in reality for his life's gravest destiny.

As for the Kingshouses, they were purely charming.

He had a strange feeling of moral elevation when he was with Lady Elizabeth, and when her father called her "Delight," he echoed the word in his own heart, and thought it exactly fitting. She was a Delight—none more so. Surely the loveliest lady of his acquaintance. Each time he saw her he thought her more supreme, and each time she fulfilled more and more perfectly his ideal of womanhood. And there was no posing for ideal womanhood with her as with some; no consciousness of sweet sainthood; no assumption of etherealized superiority. She was simple as if she had been a peasant girl, and no more knew that she was like some dear angel from heaven than the south wind knows that it brings the sweet breath of flowers. That was just the beauty of it, Anthony used to think. She did not know, but he did.

CHAPTER V.

FRESH LINKS II.

All who know the manner of American men and women know its curious mixture of familiarity and respect, and how its flirtatious admiration is without personal liberties of a doubtful kind. But though the unspoken *non d'ordre* seems to be "hands-off!" the manner is familiar in tone and flirtatious in spirit. It has also that misleading air of specialization, of individualism, which makes it appear as if each woman were the only she, and the one in present evidence the queen of the whole sex.

No one had this manner more strongly pronounced than Anthony Harford. Excepting that it was alike to all, it was love-making to each; but to Lady Elizabeth this manner of special and peculiar devotion was more marked than to any one else.

Anthony not only delicately flattered

and covertly courted Lady Elizabeth, he also made her laugh, and brightened her into a state of active enjoyment, rare indeed for her to know. He spent long hours at the Dower House, and he went there at all times in the day; but his mornings were chiefly passed in Lady Elizabeth's special little work-room, where he amused himself and her by talk, or now lectured her on her perspective, and now put in an untrained bass to her well-taught soprano.

Yet it was not all amusement, nor all dramatic interest. Underneath the pure pleasure which Anthony Harford so largely brought was the higher sense of his manly qualities, and the fine political enthusiasms which his own evoked. Essentially a liberal, he was not a faddist. He was too broad for that, and had too much knowledge of the complexity of human nature.

Broad as it was, it gained on the woman where religion made her democratic in practice for all that her abstract principles were patrician. Still, it took her some time to digest the new doctrine. How England's best glory was to come through the destruction of the House of Lords, the abolition of primogeniture, the nationalization of the land, and voluntary laying down by their wearers of all stars and garters and coronets and titles, was a puzzle she did not attempt to solve. The whole of the civilized world was pretty well up to England by now, he said, and Cousin Jonathan had forged ahead. She had made her start in former times by being the freest and most lightly held of all.

While Europe still groined under the fetters of the feudal system, she had recognized the rights of free citizenship. But she had clung too long to the rags and remnants, she did not fitly recognize tendencies. Now it was time for her to free herself from those old traditions which were fettering her so powerfully, and make herself able to grow and expand according to the law of nature.

"But the aristocracy, the landed proprietors, have done so much good! They have looked after the poor, kept society together, and been such good examples!" said Lady Elizabeth, in high-hearted but yet so sweet and gentle a way.

"They have made Lady Elizabeth Inchbold," said Anthony, quite gravely. "That is about the best thing they have done. For that we can forgive them a few slips, like—But I will not mention names. They may be friends of yours."

"You mean that for kindness; but I do not think we know any reproaches," she answered, with a smile.

"Glad of it. Such as you should not. When a system has culminated, focussed itself into its best, that best should be clear of evil contact."

Anthony spoke with a certain tender feeling underlying his artificial gravity that gave infinite charm to his words.

Lady Elizabeth laughed off the compliment with some embarrassment, and the blood came into her face.

"That is very prettily put—very charming flattery," she said, leaning over her work-table; "but I will take it seriously—I mean generally—and put myself out of the question. You mean the system—the peerage—has made a nobler race of men and women than the mere ordinary people. Can you say anything better? If our aristocracy has done this, it has done the best it could for the country."

"I did not say that it has given the world a nobler race," said Anthony, quite quietly. "I said it has made you. That is another matter altogether."

"You flatter admirably, but you slip by the question," said Lady Elizabeth, more and more embarrassed. "This is not what we were talking of."

"It is what I am thinking of," said Anthony.

"Then, between England and America, you like America best?" she asked, with a curious inconsequence and strange discomfort.

His flattery was pleasant to her—was she not a woman?—but it had its element of pain too. She did not quite know how to take it—whether as true or as a pleasant joke.

"For some things, yes. At present I like best where I am," said Anthony—"in Lady Elizabeth Inchbold's little room, talking politics which she does not agree with, and fixing her palette for her next picture of 'Saul and Samuel.'"

"Unfixing it, you mean," she said laughing. "You are making it into an awful mess."

"Satan's work, not mine. The idle hands you know!"

"Not a pleasant association," she returned.

"Oh, the old cus is not so black as he is painted," said Anthony, carelessly. "We have made far too big a scare of him. 'Cloven hoof—graminivorous,' as Cuvier said. We have no need to be so desperately afraid of him."

"Oh!" said Lady Elizabeth, a little shocked and scandalized.

Like many good people who move in the ordained groove, she considered the subject too solemn to be joked about. Satan is a Biblical character, she thought, and one doesn't make fun of the Bible.

As narrow-minded people are almost always jealous, and as Mrs. Asplene, good soul, for all her fine qualities of hospitality and sound sense, was especially narrow-minded—how should she not be?—it was but natural that she and Anne should be a little ruffled by the pronounced preference of their guest for another house than their own. During these intervening days Mrs. Asplene permitted herself to say more than once, "Well, Anthony, and how are things going on between you and Lady Elizabeth?" accompanying her query with a meaning laugh, which was as the feather to the arrow.

"They are going slick," said Anthony, with a nasal drawl; "slick as greased lightning!"

"My dear boy!" cried his hostess with a little studder. "When you put on that Yankee accent you are really dreadful!"

"I think you do it to tease us," said Anne, hitting the bull's-eye right in the centre.

Anthony lifted his eyebrows.

"What in thunder do you mean?" he asked, with perfect gravity. "What dogged accent are you raring at?"

"Oh!" said Anne, covering her ears with her hands; "you are really too dreadful, Mr. Harford!"

He laughed, and took both her hands in his. He did not like to see the vexation on her face.

"Why," he said in a perfectly pure accent, "what a dear little goose, you are!"

You never did know fun from earnest, and I suppose now you never will."

Anne pursed up her nice little mouth and withdrew her hands. Naturally a prude, by the fact that her life was passed in dreams, not realities, material contact of all kinds was intensely distasteful to her.

"And the veriest prude out!" said Anthony, with a flash that made his dark eyes glitter.

"You two are always quarreling," put in Mrs. Asplene, with a good-natured laugh. "I don't know how it is, I'm sure. Anne thinks the world of you, Anthony, as I do, but there you are, out-and-out dog—and never meet but you have a scratching match."

"Mother!" remonstrated Anne.

"Well, make Miss Anne more conformable," said Anthony. "At present she is all spikes, at least to me."

"I am sorry you do not approve of me," said Anne, coldly. "But really I cannot alter myself even to please you."

"No, I suppose not," returned Anthony, strolling out of the room. In a few minutes they saw him walking at a brisk pace down the drive.

"Off to the Dower House, I bet a pound!" said Mrs. Asplene, adding, viciously: "Well, if he's not going to marry Lady Elizabeth, he ought to; that's all I have to say!"

"Perhaps he could not," said Anne, who "jalousied" what she did not want for herself.

"Could not if he would? A beggar like Lady Elizabeth?" cried Mrs. Asplene. "Just let him ask her; that's all. If she did not jump at him, my name's not Anne, nor yours either."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Asplene, a little venomously.

(To be Continued.)

In a Dilemma.

Miss Myra is speaking to her friend, Miss Jeanne.

"You are rich, and are still young and attractive; why don't you marry?"

"Because I shall never marry a man I cannot respect."

"Well, how could I ever respect the fool who would marry me?"—*Paris Figaro.*

Water vs. Liquor.

"I trust, Robert, when you grow up you will show yourself on the side of temperance and morality by voting the Prohibition ticket."

"Oh, rats! Why, Aunt, water's killed more folks 'n liquor ever thought of doing."

"I am ashamed of you, Robert! Can you think of one instance in which water, judiciously applied, has caused death?"

"Well, what's the matter with the flood?"

Of Course Not.

"That cider is as sour as vinegar!" he said, as he stood back from the bar with deep disgust on his face.

"Yes," replied the barkeeper. "Doesn't that sign read 'Sweet cider'?"

"It does."

"Well, then?"

"That sign was put up two years ago. You don't suppose you can keep cider sweet for two years, do you?"—*Detroit Free Press.*

A Lost Opportunity.

Jiggers—"Darn an ignoramus, anyhow. Wiggers—What's the matter now?"

Jiggers—"I was calling on little Miss Pertly last night, and she asked what the phrase 'indulging in osculatory exercises' meant. Said she found it in a novel." Wiggers—"Well, did you tell her?" Jiggers—"I didn't know what it meant until I looked through the dictionary this morning."

A Simple Remedy.

"Darling," she said, weeping, "when we were married, five years ago, I never expected to see you coming home at 1 o'clock in the morning!"

"Well, you wouldn't now, m' dear," he replied, "if you'd only go to sleep earlier."

Regulated by the Grip of the Law.

Stranger in the Court Room—What time have you got, please?

Prisoner at Counsel's Table—I can tell you better after the trial.

At the Table d'Hôte.

First Epicurian—Will you kindly pass the old cheese?

Second Ditto—Just wait one moment; it is coming this way.

Quaint Conceits.

Not agricultural frands—Beets. Base proceedings—Ball playing. A beastly show—The menagerie. Regular church goers—Sextons. Done brown—Sealskin saucers.

A Competent Witness.

Wife—Mrs. Smith told me—think of the audacity of the woman—that she loved you!

Husband—She must be crazy.

Wife—Well, I should think so!

Definition of the Chappie.

The chappie of to-day is the old-fashioned dude dipped in a little depravity. He has just brains enough to be a nuisance.

Dame Fashion has decreed the downfall

of the high-crowned hat for women and the other extreme, a crown like a pancake with a rim like a saucer, now holds sway, for a season at any rate.

The famous Dufferin mine at Salmon

River, N.S., the richest in the county, was sold at auction yesterday and was bid in for \$141,000.

"Lord Chumley," in which E. H. Sothern

is starring this season, is the phonetic way of spelling Lord Cholmondeley. The name is one of the oldest in England, and is pronounced as spelled in the play.

At the marriage of Lady Idina Nevill to