

A WELCOME HOME.

BY EURN E. BEXFORD.

A bright face at the window, A glad laugh in the hall, A cry, "Oh, papa's coming," Again I hear it all.

When I go home to Heaven, I know that I shall see, The dear face of my darling, As she looks out for me.

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THE LOVERS.

Jessie Rue was twenty-three. The sun of that birthday had just risen, and she stood before her looking glass, fastening in her dainty wrists the pearls that had been her uncle's gift the night before.

"Jessie, you are twenty-three. You are young and pretty still, but youth and woman's beauty are fleeting things. I cannot live long, and I do not want you to be left alone, an unprotected spinster, when I die.

"Poor uncle!" sighed Jessie, brushing away a tear. "He's worth twenty lovers to me, dear old man! Why does he want me to marry? Ashley Honeywell—certainly the handsomest man in our set? He admires me. It would be worth the trouble to make him love me.

"And the doctor?" she laughed. "Oh, how much he is in love with me! A smile makes him happy; neglect breaks his heart. Oh, no! You are too plain, too small, and bald as an egg. I shan't choose you, Doctor Manly."

"Pinning a coquettish little bow in her hair as she said these words, Jessie left the glass, and ran down stairs and out into the garden, where she always spend an hour before breakfast. A gentleman was there already—a pleasant looking man who wore a large hat of Panama straw, and a collar that exposed his handsome throat.

"Good morning, Miss Rue!" Dr. Manly cried, taking off his big hat. "I have come to beg some flowers for a patient."

"You must always help yourself to flowers for your sick folks, and I shall be prouder of my garden than before," said Jessie. "Lead me your knife."

And when he had opened it for her she cut him a bouquet, fragrant and beautiful, and arranged it with unerring taste, and made him hold it while she bound it together with some silk from a reel she had in her embroidered apron pocket, he looked at her with admiration all the while. When at last he thanked her and went away, Jessie laughed.

"I don't believe in your patient, Doctor Manly," she said to herself. "It was only an excuse to see me."

And she thought so every morning when he came for his flowers. She saw him oftenest in the morning. Ashley Honeywell she met where she visited at teas and dancing parties. How often Jessie wished the two men could be changed in some way. Ashley was the man she intended to choose; but sometimes that light in the dark grey eyes under the Doctor's great straw hat made her wished that he were Ashley and Ashley he.

Time passed. Some little things happened. Ashley had openly declared his admiration. They were on the very point of being engaged, and the Doctor ceased to be lover-like. He came for the flowers still, but she knew now that he did not do it to meet her. He took them to a patient. Once, taking a long walk, she had passed at a little cottage on the roadside to ask for a drink of cool well water, and had seen in a great chair near the door, a girl as lovely as an angel, though she was very evidently quite ill.

Near her, in a great glass pitcher, stood a bouquet of flowers that Jessie thought she recognized as those she plucked that morning in her own garden.

"Those flowers are beautiful, are they not?" the sick girl asked of Jessie, while the little boy ran for fresh water. "A dear friend brings them to me every day. He says a lady told him I may have all I want. He brings them a long way. The lady must be very rich, I think. I fancy her old, white haired—something like my grandmother in her pretty lace cap. I have all sorts of fancies in this invalid chair."

Then the nurse came in, and Jessie said good bye.

"He has not even described me," she thought, "and oh, how lovely the girl is! And then she found herself crying. That evening she engaged herself to Ashley Honeywell.

The doctor came for his flowers, and she picked them for him, but she did not smile as she used to, nor did he look into her eyes. With every motion of the hand that held the flowers she cut he saw the flash of Ashley Honeywell's engagement ring.

One morning as she sat at work upon her porch, a boy hurried up the path. She remembered him as the boy who had brought the water in that pretty cottage parlor where she had seen the beautiful invalid to whom Dr. Manly took her flowers.

"Is the doctor here—Dr. Manly?" he asked. "I was told he might be. Miss Gwendoline is dying, Aunt Jane says. Oh, Miss! if you can only tell me where to find him. He'll save her if anyone can."

The child was crying. Jessie felt troubled and agitated.

"The doctor must be on his round of visits," she said. "I'll send Jack to look for him."

She called to the lad who helped the gardener, and bade him go with the little fellow and search for the doctor. And then she hastily donned her riding habit and rode away toward the cottage—why, she did not know, or whether she could do any good; but her heart bade her to go.

She alighted at the door and entered in haste. The girl sat in her chair, the old nurse stood behind her. She made a little sign to Jessie, and the girl went into the kitchen with her.

"She is sinking fast," she said. "I sent for the doctor an hour ago."

"I know," said Jessie, "that is why I came."

"The boy is searching for him. Say nothing to frighten her," said the woman. Jessie gave her a look.

"I quite understand," she said. Then she sat down by Gwendoline's chair.

"You may come," said the girl. "I am so glad—so glad. They came this morning. I saw both of them. You don't know, perhaps. Mother smiled, father looked stern; but they will forgive me after awhile. They are both dead. But they came. I saw them."

"In a dream?" asked Jessie.

"No," said Gwendoline. "Their spirits came. Think how strange that was. You know I was engaged to my cousin, Dr. Manly?"

"No," said Jessie, "I did not know."

"I was," said Gwendoline, "but I jilted him. He was not handsome. He was grave, and older than I, and I liked Ashley—Ashley Honeywell—and one night I ran away. Oh, it was years ago. I am five and twenty now. I was seventeen then. And my father died of it, and my mother. Oh, I was a wicked girl. We went to Italy. He married me with a ring. He said it was a true marriage. I believed it. But one day he told me it was no marriage at all. He was in love with an Italian woman, a singer. I spoke of it, and of myself as a wife, to whom he should be true. Then he said I was not his wife. He said I was a fool to believe that a ring and a vow between us two could make us one—and I ran away.

"I hid on a steamer coming to America. I was starved and frozen when they found me. I had this cold. They were good to me and brought me here. But my parents were dead, and the only one who knew me was the man I had jilted—my cousin, Dr. Oliver Manly?"

"Oh, how strange it was! What a heart he has! He brought me here to old Hannah, a servant of ours once. What is your name?"

"Jessie," replied the other girl, softly.

"You don't know Ashley Honeywell?" asked the other girl. "You do not know him. He is far away, I suppose—far over the sea. You never knew him?"

"I know him now," said Jessie, softly.

"Yes, because I have told you," said Gwendoline. "I left him, but I never forgot him. So beautiful! Such eyes! All women love him!"

Jessie bent her head upon the pale hand she held and tears fell.

"Don't cry for me," said Gwendoline. I am going very soon to heaven—to my mother. I shall pray there that some good girl will love cousin Oliver—some beautiful woman—like—yourself."

She ceased speaking, and a soft smile crept over her face.

"Mother," she sighed, "mother."

The sounds of wheels filled the cottage

room. The Doctor's gig was coming. He was there.

That evening Jessie stood alone with Ashley Honeywell, and drew his engagement ring from her finger and gave it to him.

"Why?" he asked.

"I have met Gwendoline," she said. "To-day I saw her die. Do I need to say more, Mr. Honeywell?"

"You believe her story?" he asked. "I do, indeed," she answered.

"And you intend to look for a man who shall have no little follies to regret before you make your choice?" said he. "You will search long."

She turned from him with contempt, and he left her.

Down in the garden someone moved to and fro. It was Dr. Manly. He was gathering white chrysanthemums—the last flowers he would ever gather for Gwendoline's sake. They were strewn in her coffin and she slept in their midst with that soft smile in her face, and Jessie seemed to hear again those words: "I will pray that some good woman may love cousin Oliver and make him happy."

And she seemed to hear them years afterwards, when she had long been Dr. Manly's wife.

SUNDAY SELECTIONS.

The sinner who helps the devil most, is the one who is most respectable.

Everything we do for Christ has something to do with making us like him.

A man is always wrong with God when he is not right with his brother.

Popularity is not a proof of excellence, though permanent popularity indicates some genuine merit.

It is stated by Dr. Joseph Simms, who has lately returned from China, that at least 200,000 girl babies are brutally killed in various ways every year in that empire, to get them out of the way.

"To know the Lord." That is a bold aim for my infinite soul, and yet my soul will be satisfied with nothing less. It is not by searching thou canst find out God; it is by following Him.

Let youth, the morning of your days, be cheered with the light and joy of religion; and though life may be somewhat like a cloudy day, its progress will be pleasant, and its close delightful as a summer evening.

Each one is bound to make the circle in which he lives better and happier; to see that out of that small circle the widest good may flow. Out of a single household may flow influences that shall stimulate the commonwealth and the civilized world.

The helmsman does not steer for the sunshine. If the sun shines on him during the voyage, well and good; but, if not, he keeps the vessel's head pointing towards his destination just the same. We must keep on our course steadily through darkness and storm and clouds just as through the fair weather and pleasant circumstances.

The man who tries to break away gradually from his evil habit will surely fail, for the reason that he begins by yielding in a measure to his enemy. Any compromise with evil, however slight, is wrong; and one's only safety is in forsaking utterly the wrong.

The way to keep the Sabbath is not to sit around with a long face, trying to see how dismal you can make it for children and others who are naturally joyous, but make it the brightest and happiest day in all the week. No matter how thick and black the clouds are over head, make Sunday bright and cheerful in the home. Determine that you will rejoice in the Lord, though the heavens fall. Say with the psalmist, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth." If the devil can tempt you to make the Sabbath a cold, miserable, bleak and cheerless day at home, he won't care how happy you get at class meeting. It is the religion that shines at home that makes the devil gnash his teeth. If you haven't got that kind seek it till you find it.

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