

THE LETTER.

[Frank L. Stanton.]

A letter, once more from the south,
my dear,
With an odor of orange blooms—
jessamine vines!
And lo! the seas where the brave
ships steer,
And the skies where the gold moon
shines!
The beautiful, magical, mystical
skies,
And your clasp, and your kiss, and
your eloquent eyes!

A letter, once more from the south,
my dear,
With the glory and grace of the
days that are gone:
And here is a sigh, love, and here is a
tear—
A gloom of the dark and a glimmer
of dawn!
But a memory sweet as the flowers at
your feet,
Of lives that have parted, and lives
that shall meet!

A letter, once more from the south,
my dear,
And the night is gone, and the glad
day beams,
And the flower that you pinned on
the nose, I wear
On my heart, and in dreams—sweet
dreams,
I drift to the one who was truest and
best
And roam with my love in the gar-
dens of rest!

THE BEST OF ALL.

It was early morning, and the great house was very still as its mistress passed, with noiseless footsteps, along the empty halls, down the back stairway, and into the kitchen. There was no parlor maid busy with broom and dust-cloth; no chambermaid with pitchers of hot water and piles of towels going about her morning duties; no sound of singing or jargon of merry voices greeted her ear as she laid her hand on the knob of the door that led into the basement kitchen; no appetizing odor of breakfast cakes, beefsteak, and hot coffee saluted her nostrils as she swung the door open and entered. She put her hand to her heart with a gesture as if it pained it, as she murmured, half aloud, "it might be Tennyson's Sleeping Palace for all the signs of life there are here." Then she stopped, just across the threshold, and made a movement indicative of surprise. In the range she had expected to find cold and black and comfortless a ruddy fire was burning. The bright copper kettle was hissing and singing, emitting a trail of steam, and its cover was bobbing up and down.

At this unexpected sight a half smile came to her lips, and again she soliloquized, "the pixie workmen have been here before me." Then she looked at her hands—the well preserved, delicate hands of a middle aged woman to whom fortune had been kind—hands that had, like the lilies they resembled in whiteness, toiled not, neither had they spun. "I am glad," thought she, "that the pixies came. I should hardly know how to make a fire—or wish to do it."

Mr. and Mrs. Bertram Wayne had married for love when they were young and poor and had been happy. But the young husband had a talent for money-making if given the opportunity, and as is not always the case the opportunity presented itself. It does not at all matter whether it was in oil or gas, or what other branch of profitable investment, his little capital was turned over and over and swelled and grew, and the income increased and multiplied itself again and again.

It is only to the purpose here to state that by strictly legitimate methods of business Mr. Bertram Wayne had, inside of 15 or 20 years, grown to be a rich man—not a multimillionaire by any means, but wealthy enough to move out of the pretty cottage in which he and his wife had begun their married life

into a spacious dwelling in a more fashionable part of town and set up an expensive establishment with a complicated system of household service. And, as is usual under such circumstances, Mr. Wayne became too busy in adding to his principal and multiplying his interest to give much attention to home affairs. He furnished the money and looked to his wife to spend it in lubricating the wheels of the ponderous domestic machinery.

Mrs. Wayne gave her time, as was necessary, to her servants' society and the onerous task of entertaining, for "when goods increase they are increased that eat them." Both she and her husband were members of their several clubs, and the wife was a directress in half a dozen institutions—missions for the promotion of various laudable objects—all of which demanded time and attention. Sometimes in the rush and whirl of it all she could not help wondering if she had had children of her own what would have become of them.

In the course of time it came about quite naturally, in order to avoid clashing with each other's hours of rest and retirement, each being busy in divers ways, that they occupied separate suits of apartments, seldom meeting save at the table, or perhaps for a little time in the early evening.

And now, by no fault of his own, with nothing to reproach himself for, but owing to the uncertain condition of the times, the fortune had collapsed, the home was gone, and the varied occupations of husband and wife had disappeared. In a few days the costly furniture would be auctioned off, the house sold, and, emptyhanded, they would begin life over again.

When Mr. Wayne came in with a bit of beefsteak he had just bought, he found his wife standing at the table stirring something with an iron spoon in a yellow bowl. She looked up and smiled at him. "I am making drop biscuit," she said. "Do you remember how fond of them you used to be when we first kept house?" Some half forgotten memory stirred in the husband's heart, and he put his arm about her neck and kissed her forehead. Her heart thrilled beneath that touch and kiss as it had not thrilled for years. No diamond necklace or other precious material gift could have brought so pretty a flush, so full of pleasure, to her cheek.

When breakfast was ready and they sat down together alone to serve themselves, she confessed that she had been doubtful about quantities used in her drop biscuit, it had been so long since she had made any. But although they were rather yellow, as if from too much soda, the husband, coming more and more under the happy spell of the olden time, honestly declared they were delicious.

He sighed when her fair hands plunged into the dishwater pan, but he, no longer the wealthy capitalist, took up the tea towel, with a certain sort of pleasure, to dry the breakfast china. "Don't you remember," and "have you forgotten," formed the staple of their convention, not, it is true, unmixed with the involuntary sigh or surreptitious tear, for the grim specter of poverty, by whatever sweetened, is something of which human creatures are sore afraid. As Dante truly says, it is—hated worse than death by just accord,
And with the loathing of all hearts
abhorred.

Still there is poverty and poverty, one form of which differs essentially from the other. And when the tea towel had been hung on the rack behind the range Bertram Wayne sat down in one of the kitchen chairs at hand and took his wife upon his knee. It did not occur to him that she was heavier than she used to be. He only thought how soft her cheek

felt as it lay against his own and wondered how it was that it had been so long since last he felt it there. Then he told her, in a reassuring way, he had found there would be a little left, as salvage from the wreck, when all was settled up, enough to rent a tiny house like that they used to live in long ago, with a maid of all work in the kitchen to do the roughest part of the household labor. He had had an offer of a situation at \$1,200 a year. Didn't that look big to her? She laughed a little hysterically. "But, darling," said he in a hoarse half whisper, "you have proved to me we shall, after all, save the most valuable of all our possessions—and I thank God for it—our love for each other."

At this Mrs. Wayne forgot all about her vanished wealth and its splendors. With a fond inarticulate cry she drew her arms more closely around her husband's neck and yielded to the straining hold in which he clasped her to his breast. —Minnie W. Baines-Miller in the Cincinnati Post.

Longfellow Cottage Burned.

Fire destroyed a large number of residences in the town of Nahant, Mass., including the historic Longfellow cottage, where the poet spent his summers for many years, and where the "Bells of Lynn" was composed and written. The cottage was owned by Miss Alice Longfellow, daughter of the poet.

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