

BEFORE AND AFTER MARRIAGE.

BEFORE.

She waits and listens. Footsteps fall;
She knows they are not his.
She waits and listens for a sound
That sweetest music is.
He comes, and with a sudden thrill
And heart-beat loud and clear,
She does not hear, she does not see,
She feels that he is near.
And only lifting to his face
Her eyes of heavenly blue,
Her marriage, in love's softest tones,
"My darling, is it you?"

AFTER.

Again she listens. Footsteps reach
And footsteps pass her door.
She listens, but her needle flies
More swiftly than before.
She hears at length the tread that time
And cares are making slow,
And with a start that sends her chair
Hard rocking to and fro,
Springs to the landing, and with voice
More shrill than any lute's,
She screams, above the salutors,
"Augustus, wipe your boots!"

—Philadelphia Times.

THE STORY WRITER.

I am an editor; and one bitter cold morning, a few days before Christmas, in the year 18—, I sat as usual at my desk. Among the heap of manuscripts I was daily compelled to examine, many of them desultory, untidy and unstitched, defiant of spelling, subversive of grammar, and with neither beginning, middle nor end, was one written on the softest cream-laid French white paper, in a childish lady's hand, on lines which had been carefully erased afterwards. It was a little story of no great literary merit, but there was an aroma of youth and sweetness in every line. There was a promise in it. It was like the light in the sky before the sun had risen on a fine day, an omen, a portend of sunshine and warmth, but no more. I put it down as if I had touched the petal of a rose. There was a tiny scented note beside it, of course, full of its own:

"Dear Mr. Editor: I send you a little story. I am only 18, and papa and mamma do not know anything about it, but please tell me if it be worth anything. I want it to be printed; I want to be paid for it. It is not for myself, though, but I want the money to give my dear little brother a nice little birthday present. I am, dear Mr. Editor, yours, etc. ———"

Then came the address and signature. The writing of the note was less neat and regular than the manuscript. But there was the same fragrance of dainty youth about it.

I held it a long time in my hand. I am an old man; at all events middle-aged, perhaps something more; but my heart is younger than my appearance. Little distillations came, or seemed to come, from the paper I held. It was with no common feeling of interest that I sat down and wrote my answer to the note. I returned the manuscript, but I wrote gently and tenderly. I gave it as my hope and my opinion that, with a little more care and study the youthful writer would achieve a success. I even promised to print that identical manuscript if it were a little revised or corrected, and I pointed out how it might be made available. I opened the window of my den after I had written my note. The weeds piercing through the flag below had a less dreary look than they had ever had before; a gleam of sunshine shone on them, and their frosty verdure borrowed something of Pisciola brightness from it. I posted my letter and the manuscript to the address named, and went home, wondering if ever I should hear from the writer again. With that, however, all thoughts of the manuscript passed away. The author was too timid to reply.

"On Christmas eve I was asked as usual to dine with an old friend of mine at St. John's Wood. He was a married man, with a pleasant comely wife, and several small children, male and female.

"The children are not coming down to dinner," said my hostess, "for they are going to give us a surprise afterwards."

I bowed and was delighted, both at the anticipation of pleasure to come, and of privation for the first time of considerable present annoyance. I need not say I was then a bachelor. When we went up stairs after dinner, we found the folding-doors which divided the front from the back room closed.

They were opened after awhile. The Christmas hymns were sung, and a tree of the most brilliant splendor was revealed; on its branches were hung gifts, worked and embroidered by the children for their parents. The three little girls and their governess had done it all.

While my friend and his wife were embracing and thanking the children, I had time to notice the governess. She was very young, almost a child herself. A mass of bright hair was gathered up in great waves at each side of her head, and fastened in a loose thick loop behind. The bright curls were so arranged as to reveal the ear. The ear and cheek were, I should rather say they are, like those painted by Leighton in his "Painter's Honeymoon." Need I say more of their ravishing loveliness? But the pretty blue eyes looked as if they cried a great deal, and there had been recent tears, for the eyelids were somewhat swollen. She was not sad, however, for she played on the piano for the children and for me, their old godfather, to dance to, and she joined with us in a game of blind man's buff. When the children retired, she retired also.

"What a charming person," I said.

"She is most excellent," said my friend.

"Although she is so young, Miss— is the bread provider of her family. Her father and mother have, according to the cant phrase, seen better days; in fact, they are people of good birth, and once had a good fortune. They have a son and daughter; the son is a fine fellow also. Both the son and daughter give the greater part of their earnings to their parents; but the son has not been very fortunate. My little governess, she is only 17 (my children are so young they do not require a prim regular governess), does more with her salary mediocre as it is, than her brother can do with his hard work. He is a clerk in a bank."

"And she helps him also, I suppose."

"I dare say she does, but I have never inquired, for she is full of reticence and reserve on these points. I only know she would set up all night, and work like a horse all day, to help both her parents and her brother. She is going home to-morrow; and he, I fear, cannot afford the expense of the journey. The parents live now in Scotland."

"Could we not help him?" I said bashfully. My friend smiled. Both brother and sister spent Christmas at home.

My good fortune threw me a good deal after this with my friend's governess. Must I say from that Christmas eve I was never heart whole?

The following Easter we were engaged, and before the Christmas eve which followed we were married. What an aim and a hope my life has now acquired!

We have a little suburban home, and I leave my wife every morning to pursue my editorial labors, and return every evening, forgetting my work and my worries, knowing that the sweetest heart and the fairest face I have ever known await me in my modest but happy home. I never heard again from the author of the manuscript which had so much interested me; and, truth to tell, had never thought of her since that Christmas eve. Two or three years have passed since then, and we have two babies.

Their mother is always playing with them. She often puts her delicate, slender white hands under my baby girl's foot, and the baby makes believe to stand on it. What a picture it is: it is like a rose-bud laid on a white camellia.

As I walked up and down the room, reading a scratchy, scrawly manuscript, and fumbling over it in desperation—for the tiresome person who had sent it had, by some ingenious carelessness, munched it of its last page—my thoughts flew far and wide, and, by some association I cannot attempt to explain, the pretty manu-

script from the youthful writer who had sent me no more, was recalled to me.

Unconsciously the manuscript I held faded from my mind, and the other was present with me. Wondered what had become of her; had she written any more, where and how was she?

Every moment I became more and more possessed with the memory. I was so happy myself that I felt for all who seemed to have care and struggle in their lives, I looked out the address to which I had written before, and wrote to the unknown a few lines. I said that time had passed, that the youthful inexperience which had prevented the paper she had sent from being accepted, must now be corrected, and that I should be glad and willing to see anything else she had written, if she had written anything since then.

Within a few days I had an answer. The writing was in a feigned hand, quite unlike the round, hesitating, girlish hand I remembered. The words were, however, as sweet and innocent as the first had been. The note ran as follows:

"It is good of you to remember me, but I do not write any more. I am so happy. I have a good, noble husband. [Oh, these womanly exaggerations, I thought, as I sat in my editorial chair.] And such darling babies! I wrote, for I wanted to help my dear ones, but they have been better helped by others than I could ever have hoped to help them. God has given them a better friend than I could be. If you seek to know me, you shall do so. If when you go home you see a woman with a rose in her hand, hold out yours. You will know me."

I smiled at the romantic fervor of this reply, and a faint desire arose that my wife and the writer of the letters should know each other, and then I went on with my stupefying avocations.

As I went home, I confess I looked about for a woman with a rose in her hand, but, as might naturally be supposed, neither in cabs nor omnibuses did such an apparition manifest itself.

As I entered my own door I gave an impatient shrug at the idea of having been the subject of a foolish jest. But whom did I see standing within the threshold of my home? My darling, with her fair, child-like face and bright hair; love, and joy, and youth crowning her with a triple crown, and in her hand was a rose!

"Dear husband," she said, as I kissed her, "I think I loved you from the moment I had your kind, indulgent, thoughtful note. I had written that absurd little story for I sadly wanted a little money to pay for Gerald's return home at Christmas, to be with papa and mamma, and I had a foolish notion I could write."

"And you were disappointed my pet. What a savage I must have seemed?"

"No; I felt how foolish I had been, and I cried heartily, but I thought you good and kind all the same. And Gerald got home, too, and we had a happy Christmas after all."

I kissed her.

"But are you never going to write a story for my magazine again?"

"I do not know," she said archly. "Meanwhile, you can write ours, if you like."—*English Paper.*

An obliging gentleman, who thinks that personal favors do not cost much, while they make friends, was applied to by a negro for a certificate of character, by which he might get a situation. The testimonial proving to be more complimentary than Scipio himself expected, that worthy, on recovering from his astonishment, exclaimed: "Say, Mr. —, won't you gib me something to do yourself on 'dat recommendation?"

A girl in Paris has lately been hugged to death—24 fractures in the upper part of her body. She died happy—if she loved him.