

patted him fondly once more, but now only by the light of the dying embers.

It is very little pleasure one takes in fondling brute favorites; but it is a pleasure that when it passes leaves no void. It is only a little alleviating redundancy in your solitary heart-life, which, if lost, another can be supplied.

But if your heart—not solitary, not quieting its humors with mere love of chase or dog, not repressing year after year its earnest yearnings after something better and more spiritual—has fairly linked itself by bonds strong as life to another heart, is the casting off easy, then?

Is it then only a little heart-redundancy cut off, which the next bright sunset will fill up?

And my fancy, as it had painted doubt under the smoke, and cheer under warmth of the blaze, so now it began, under the faint light of the smoldering embers, to picture heart-desolation.

—What kind, congratulatory letters, hosts of them, coming from old and half-forgotten friends, now that your happiness is a year or two years old!

“Beautiful.”

—Aye, to be sure beautiful!

“Rich.”

—Pho, the dawdler! how little he knows of heart treasure who speaks of wealth to a man who loves his wife as a wife only should be loved!

“Young.”

—Young indeed; guileless as infancy; charming as the morning.

Ah, these letters bear a sting; they bring to mind, with new and newer freshness, if it be possible, the value of that which you tremble lest you lose.

How anxiously you watch that step, if it lose not its buoyancy; how you study the color on that cheek, if it grow not fainter; how you tremble at the lustre in those eyes, if it be not the lustre of Death; how you totter under the weight of that muslin sleeve—a phantom weight! How you fear to do it, and yet press forward, to note if that breathing be quickened, as you ascend the home heights, to look off on sunset lighting the plain.

Is your sleep quiet sleep after that she has whispered to you her fears, and in the same breath—soft as a sigh, sharp as an arrow—bid you bear it bravely?

Perhaps—the embers were now glowing fresher, a little kindling, before the ashes—she triumphs over disease.

But Poverty, the world's almoner, has come to you with ready, spare hand.

Alone, with your dog living on bones, and you on hope—kindling each morning, dying slowly each night—this could be borne. Philosophy would bring home its stores to the lone man. Money is not in his hand, but Knowledge is in his brain! and from that brain he draws out faster, as he draws slower from his pocket. He remembers; and on remembrance he can live for days and weeks. The garret, if a garret covers him, is rich in fancies. The rain, if it pelts, pelts only him used to rain peltings. And his dog crouches not in dread, but in companionship. His crust he divides with him and laughs. He crowns himself with glorious memories of Cervantes,

though he begs; if he nights it under the stars, he dreams heaven-sent dreams of the prisoned and homeless Galileo.

He hums old sonnets and snatches of poor Jonson's plays. He chants Dryden's odes and dwells on Otway's rhyme. He reasons with Bolingbroke or Diogenes, as the humor takes him, and laughs at the world, for the world, thank Heaven, has left him alone!

Keep your money, old misers, and your palaces, old princes—the world is mine!

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny.

You cannot rob me of free nature's grace,

You cannot shut the windows of the sky,

Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;

You cannot bar my constant feet to trace

The woods and lawns, by living streams, at eve.

Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,

And I their toys to the great children leave:

Of Fancy, Reason, Virtue, naught can me bereave!

But—if not alone?

If *she* is clinging to you for support, for consolation, for home, for life; she, reared in luxury perhaps, is faint for bread?

Then the iron enters the soul; then the nights darken under any skylight. Then the days grow long, even in the solstice of winter.

She may not complain; what then?

Will your heart grow strong, if the strength of her love can dam up the fountains of tears and the tied tongue not tell of bereavement? Will it solace you to find her parting the poor treasure of food you have stolen for her with begging, foodless children?

But this ill, strong hands and Heaven's help will put down. Wealth again; flowers again; patrimonial acres again; brightness again. But your little Bessy, your favorite child, is pining.

Would to God! you say in agony, that wealth could bring fullness again into that blanched cheek or round those little thin lips once more; but it cannot. Thinner and thinner they grow; plaintive and more plaintive her sweet voice.

“Dear Bessy”—and your tones tremble; you feel that she is on the edge of the grave? Can you pluck her back? Can endearments stay her? Business is heavy away from the loved child; home you go, to fondle while yet time is left; but *this* time you are too late. She is gone. She cannot hear you; she cannot thank you for the violets you put within her stiff white hand.

And then—the grassy mound—the cold shadow of the headstone!

The wind, growing with the night, is rattling at the window panes and whistles dismally. I wipe a tear and, in the interval of my Reverie, thank God that I am no such mourner.

But gayety, snail-footed, creeps back to the household. All is bright again—

*the violet had's not sweeter*

*Than the delicious breath marriage sends forth.*

Her lip is rich and full; her cheek delicate as a flower. Her frailty doubles your love.

And the little one she clasps—frail too—too frail; the boy you had set your hopes and heart on. You have watched him growing, ever prettier, ever winning more