

five shillings. I will pay you back regularly, all my pocket money, week by week."

"Will you, dear?"

Mrs. Wyvern spoke in a strange voice; fortunately the room was growing so dark that Gracie could not see her face, nor see the tears that rained and rained down so quickly that Mrs. Wyvern did not even attempt to dry them.

"I would have waited till I had saved all the money," said Gracie, after a pause, "but I thought it was better not to wait."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because—Well, the exhibition might shut soon, perhaps. But you will go to-morrow, mamma?"

"To-morrow?" repeated poor Mrs. Wyvern vaguely.

"You must go and arrange with the secretary, and have the bandit sent by and by to some other address, to another name, not yours, of course. We will think it all out together, won't we, dear?"

There was a long pause, and then Gracie spoke again, very softly.

"Mother!"

"Well, my child?"

"If—if—well, suppose if I were to die, Amy would be just a very little bit richer, wouldn't she?"

"Just a little, darling."

Grace answered nothing; she only raised her mother's hand to her own loving lips and kissed it, with a long, long kiss. Presently she whispered:

"That would help Amy—and Douglas." But she whispered the words so softly it is doubtful whether Mrs. Wyvern heard them; at all events, she kept silence.

It happened that one day soon after this conversation Amelia received a letter containing the announcement of the sale of her first picture. Her joy was unbounded; she jumped up, and danced, and ran about the room like a child in high delight. Douglas McHuish, who was present (he had looked in for a moment only, of course), sat open-mouthed and amazed, watching his lady-love's evident symptoms of lunacy, and wondering whether any effort on his part might ever succeed in calling forth such expressions of joy from her.

Mrs. Wyvern was somewhat silent and constrained, but Gracie, the little traitress, gave vent to many exclamations of pleasure and astonishment.

"Hurrah, Amy!" she cried; "who would have thought it? And yet did we not all of us prophesy this long ago? Why don't you come and shake hands with her, Mr. McHuish, and tell her how awfully glad you are?"

But Amelia dragged her mother into the next room.

"Shut the door," she whispered excitedly; "oh, now listen, listen, mamma. I never had so much money of my own before. It is my very own, isn't it? I earned it, you know, and now you must tell me what I can get for Gracie; I want to spend it on her. Poor little Gracie! She has so few pleasures! And she has been so good and kind, if you only knew! She has never ceased to be encouraging about my work, and I don't think she ever remembers one little bit that she—that she isn't as strong as we are."

Mrs. Wyvern, bound by her promises, could only nod her head and say constrainedly, "Yes, my dear, yes," but the next morning she accompanied Amy on a long and fatiguing quest in search of something undefined—a present for Gracie.

Up and down Piccadilly, past Regent street, beyond Oxford street, back into Bond street, walked that weary pair; then into unknown streets and places, where, finally, a tame and beautiful piping bullfinch, a marvelously trained and trilling bird, a very Mario among bullfinches, was fixed upon, housed in a new cage, and carried

home in Amelia's arms, as she and her mother jolted homewards in a four-wheeled cab.

The Professor saw nothing of his pupil that day; bullfinch-worship occupied the whole of the afternoon. And from henceforth Bully's cage was placed close beside the sick girl's couch, and Bully became her inseparable companion. She knew, though Amy did not know, whose savings had gone to purchase him; but she knew also whose affection had brought him thither. Her heart was full of love and gratitude as she lay, her blue eyes more lovely than ever in their tenderness, watching the tiny songster, who bent his shiny black head on one side, and trilled forth the melody of the sweet Thuringian folk-song, telling of "Treue Liebe":

Ach, wie ist's moeglich dann,
Dass ich dich lassen kann?
Hab' dich von Herzen lieb, das glaube mir!
Du hast die Seel' in mein
So ganz genommen ein,
Dass ich kein' andre Lieb'
Als dich allein!

But Grace herself was about to leave him. Neither "true love," nor care, nor songs of birds could keep her. She was on her way to a land of heavenly sweetness and song, beyond the light of moon and stars, beyond the rays of the Aurora Borealis, the poetry of which had taken such strong hold of her youthful imagination.

She spoke of it to Douglas McHuish once, when she happened to be alone with him.

"You and Amy must go north some day," she said, "and be happy, quite happy together, and when you journey across the moors, and you see before you, far away, those beautiful shining rays, you will think of me somehow with the Aurora, won't you, Douglas?"

"My little sister," answered Douglas tremulously, as he clasped her hand in his, and kissed it reverentially.

It was her beloved hour of twilight when she died; she passed away with scarce a sigh. There was no more sorrow nor sadness in her death than there had been in her bright and unselfish life. She bade Douglas lift her in his arms and carry her to the window. It was during a heavy snow storm; large flakes of snow were falling rapidly; the street, the passers-by, the roofs of the houses, the very world, seemed white, spite of the deepening darkness.

"Amy," called the child, "come and see the snow. It must be beautiful in the north. Mother, are you there? Ah, listen to Bully! Mother," and she drew her mother down, close to her own little chill face, "mother, remember—you will never tell."

Then she dropped back in the arms of her brother Douglas. That was the end.

By and by, after several sorrowful months had gone past, Grace's words came true. Amelia married Douglas McHuish, and traveling with him to the far north visited the home of his fathers, and wandered with him, hand in hand, across the purple moors. Later on they returned to London, to settle down, each to work and bring grist to the mill, for Amelia gradually learnt to make her bandits less fierce in aspect and less blue in complexion.

Meanwhile, during the young folks' absence, in her house in the dreary London street, Mrs. Wyvern lived her lonely life. And when her pet bullfinch piped to her his plaintive Thuringian love song—

Ach, wie ist's moeglich dann,
Dass ich dich lassen kann?

Mrs. Wyvern laid aside her knitting, and folded her hands, and listened, whilst burning tears coursed slowly down her cheeks. But never, at any time, did she reveal that tender little secret of Gracie's that she had promised not to tell.—*Temple Bar.*