



MAY GOD BE WITH YOU!

Good-bye, good-bye! It is the sweetest blessing
That fails from mortal lips on mortal ear.
The words of our human love are passing,
The promise that a love more strong is near.—

May God be With You!

Why do we say it when the tears are starting?
Why must a word so sweet bring only pain?
Our love seems all sufficient 'till the parting,
And then we find it all impotent and vain.—

May God be With You!

Better than earthly presence—e'en the dearest—
Is the great blessing that our partings bring;
For in the loneliest moments God is nearest,
And from our sorrows heavenly comforts spring.

If God be With Us.

Good-bye, good-bye! With latest breath we say it,
A token of faith and hope and love:
Parting must come, we can not long delay it,
But, one in His we hope to meet above,

If God be With Us.

O may He guide and bless and keep you ever,
He who is strong to battle with your foes;
Whoever fail—His love can fail you never,
And all your need He in His wisdom knows.—

May God be With You!

Good-bye! 'Tis all we have for one another;
Our love more strong than death, is help less still;
For none can take the burden for his brother,
Or shield, except by prayer, from any ill;

—J. Besemer, in St. Louis Magazine.

SHE HAD HER WISH.

Little Bixby Was Allowed to Die for Her Friend.

"It's got to be done, fast as well as last, Car'line!"

Car'line, a young and not uncomely woman, despite her rags and grime, answered listlessly: "Well, Jim, I s'pose it'll hev to be as you say."

She was sitting on the decayed door-sill of an old stone house. Dirt, squalor and shiftlessness were everywhere apparent, and she and Jim fitted the environment perfectly. Down in a corner where a fence once had been was a wild rose-bush, and close beside it, with one of the clutty flowers in her hand, sat a dirty, unlovely child. Car'line turned her dull black eyes toward her, and Jim, who was a thick-set, animal-faced man, followed her glance.

"She ain't a handsome one, is she, Car'line—our little daughter? she's good fur nothin' but to eat an' git into mischief generally. Now, it's just as plain as day we've got all we can do to take care on ourselves an' old mammy. We've got to git out of this shanty—old Samm's is goin' to tear it down over our heads—old rascal he is! an' taint convenient trav'lyng with a baby without a nurseg."

He laughed at his facetiousness, but was vexed to find Car'line unresponsive.

"So I'll take her to a big boarding-house where she'll have good livin' at the expense of rich folks. Come here, I say!"

The child scrambled to her feet, fear manifested in her every motion. She stumbled over a stone, but, though hurt, picked herself up without a whimper. The man caught and held her roughly as she came near him, shrinking pitifully away from his grasp.

"See here, Car'line, they'll thnk we ar' keer ess to her. Give us a rag an' some wa'er. Now you go put her duds together."

He dabbed the little soiled face with the rag, then wiped it with her dirty dress.

"Now you are clean as a button—just fit to say good-bye to your mammy."

He lifted her to his shoulder.

"Haint got no duds, eh? Well, I didn't think she'd need a Saratoga trunk. Say good-bye to her, Car'line."

The something that served Car'line for a heart fel a strange thrill as she looked up at the frightened face saw the pleading, outstretched hands, heard the wailing "Mammy! mammy!"

"Best set her down, Jim; she seems ter feel bad 'bout it."

"No, Car'line; here goes to the boardin'-house. Save your eye-drops in a bottle, Car'line!"

The woman turned shortly and went into the house. An old crone, seeing her, looked up and quavered:

"What's goin' on?"

"Jim's took the young one to the poor-house," answered Car'line, suddenly.

"I declare, Lady, if you have not east your shoe! Whoa!" and Violet Fenn, springing from her phæton, ran back to pick it up. She returned flushed and smiling, and took the pretty bay pony by the bridle. "It's a coincidence, Lady, that there is a blacksmith just here. I might as well have it set right away; but I believe you are in collusion with the smith."

There was nothing doing in the little roadside forge; business was dull, and the smith sat on a log beside a collection of old wheels, reading a paper. He was thin and under-sized, quite unlike the brawny, trititional workman. He looked sharply up at Violet and the turn-out, briskly rising, as if work were a relaxation.

"It won't take long," he said, as he took Lady from the thills; "but you might go over to the house and set till 'ts done. Here, Pete, come work the bellows!"

A sandy-haired boy started up from cover, and Violet strolled across the road to the yard, where a limpid spring bubbled beneath a grand old oak. A dipper hung on its trunk, and taking it down, she drank th rusty. "It is the best water I ever tasted," she said, as she rehung the dipper. Then she saw near her a ragged, bare-footed girl who, leaning on a spade, was watching her in astonishment.

"What a forlorn, unlovely crea'er!" she thought; then she smiled—and Violet's smile was rarely sweet—on her. "How do you do?" she said, pleasantly.

"How do you do?" said the child, solemnly. "Air you a-visitin'?"

"Oh no; I am having a shoe put on my horse."

The red-rimmed, light-lashed eyes continued to inspect her so soberly that she smiled again.

"I should think spading was hard work; why doesn't your father do it—or somebody?"

"Why, he aint my father!" cried the child, nodding towards the shop. "He's Nate Kelley. I only live here. I haint got no folks!"

She looked as if she had no folks—poor thing!—in her tatters and grime.

"Poor child!" Violet said. Her look seemed to the child like a caress; she came a little nearer, as if moved to tell the short, barren history of her life.

"You see, I come from the poor-'uns. My folks put me there when I wer not three year old. My folks was too poor to keep me. Miss Kelley took me out'n the poor-'uns' spell ago."

"What is your name?"

"My name's Bixby—that was my folks' name. To the poor-'uns they called me little Bixby. I'm short fur age, but I'll grow."

"How old are you?"

"I don't know; Miss Kelley knows."

"Well, what can you do for Mrs. Kelley?"

The freckled face brightened.

"I kin do conside'ble jobs. I scrub, an' milks, an' churns, an' forks the manure, an' spades, an' weeds gardin', an' washes, an' tends baby, an'—"

"You poor, poor child! Violet broke in, impulsively. Vio's chief fault was her impulsive ness, her friends said.

Then she asked what was certainly a very irrelevant and odd question:

"Bixby, did anybody ever kiss you?"

"No, ma'am," shaking her head positively.

"Did anybody ever tell you they loved you?"

"Love me!" cried Bixby; her tone was a protest. Then suddenly her chin quivered and she said: "Nobody loves me; I hain't no folks!"

"Poor thing!" and Violet's soft hand smoothed the shock of closely cropped hair.

"Mrs. Fenn ain't strong enough to stand such a strain as this'll be on her," he said, forlornly. "I went for Mrs. Jasper to come an' help tend Miss Violet, but she don't care to come on account of the disease. And Miss Crupper was sick, an' the poor child needs watching and tendin' every b'e sel minute, an' Maria has to tend to the house."

Elise listened, dismayed.

"Violet down w' th' phæton! Where did she take such a d'nsense? How did she get it? Did you say she was all purple and swollen, John? Have you been by her? D'you dare come here without being disinfected? You can carry disease 'n your clothes, your hair! How dared you, John? Go right out on the stoop, and talk to me through the window!"

"I have not been near poor Miss Violet, son'am, only as I drove her home last night from the d'pot."

"Oh!" said Elise, somewhat calmed. "Poor Violet! Poor mother! How awful, how terrible!"

At the gate John met Bixby, w' th' her flock. They were in the gayest possib'le spirits, and held up for his admiration long dandelion chains, but he was in no mood for trifles. His news, abruptly told, struck Bixby like a bolt from a clear sky.

"Don't say my Miss Violet is dyin', John!"

Then, without another word, she sought Mrs. Maurice.

"You must get somebody in my place," she said. "I am going home to Miss Violet!"

"What nonsensical talk!" said Elise, who was lovely in her parlor. "Mother sent down word that you were not to come home. I need you with the children. It would be very mean for you to go away now. Besides, you'll make the diph'ria; it's a dangerous disease, and if you get sick, who is going to tend to you? Listen to reason, Bixby."

"I can't listen to such reason," said Bixby, in a choked voice. "I can't tell you how I feel, ma'am; you wouldn't understand. Miss Violet took me from hell, and gave me Heaven!" The intensity of her speech shocked Elise.

"What blasphemy! Stop talking. This is ungrateful, Bixby!"

"And I'd lay down my life fur her!" continued the girl, with flashing eyes. "I've never had no chance yet to do for them. Oh, if Jesus gave His life fur his enemies, can't I risk mine fur my friends?"

"Hush, Bixby!" said Elise, petulantly.

"You don't know what you are talking about. Go back to the children."

Another page of her life was ended.

"I never was so surprised in all my life," said Violet Fenn's mother to her pretty daughter-in-law, Elise, "as when Violet brought little Bixby home with her."

Surprised was a mild statement, for she would not have been more astounded at an irruption of Goths and Vandals on their charming lake-side village.

Her household was small, and ran as on velvet. She had two servants, John and Maria, who had been with her for years. Bixby was certainly not needed, and there would be much difficulty in adjusting her to her proper position. A great many mole-hills elevated themselves into mountains before the good lady discovered that, after all, things went about as usual, and Bixby was the most tractable and eager to serve of dependence's.

"I really can not see how you can suffer such a miserable creature about," said Elise, who, as her idol was self. "She has that miserable, low-down look I despise, and her freckles are as big as clock-wheels, and her foot is a most fearful and wonderful thing. Give her an'c' and she'll take an'ell. She has a chance, too, to make up all sorts of lies to impose on your cruelty. Mother Fenn, you are too good; that is the trouble with you! You will find her out by and for a selfish, ungrateful thing. Violet would live."

"You must go down into the garden and get some fresh air, Bixby," said Mrs. Fenn, gently. "It seems to me you have not really eaten or slept for days. I shall have to give you an opiate."

"I am not afraid of it. I only want to do fur her—to help you. Fur the dear Lord's sake, let me have my chance of doing, ma'am!"

A solemn warfare with death was waged for hours in that hushed room, without were bid and blossom and golden sunshine, the merry laugh of children and song of birds, the humming of bees, as they sipped nectar from white and pink petal d'bons. Within was ceaseless vigil and agonizing prayer, an' a'va'n, so it seemed, ho' e aga' not hope. No one knew the moment when the rear crisis came, and the dread angel sheathed the sword uplifted to smite, but slowly dawned the blessed certainty. Violet would live.

"You must go down into the garden and get some fresh air, Bixby," said Mrs. Fenn, gently. "It seems to me you have not really eaten or slept for days. I shall have to give you an opiate."

"Yes, do go down, Bixby!" pleaded Vio, from her couch. She lay there very fair and frail, so g'ad to be back from the portals of death, so thankful to God for bestowing on her her life as a gift for the second time. Her complexion was as fresh and fair as a baby's; her eyes were large and luminous.

"Really, Elise," said Mrs. Fenn, driven to speak in behalf of Violet's protégé, "she is better than she looks. She does not lie—I do not think—her stories never change; and she is the most obedient little thing, and she picks up faster than you would think; Maria has taught her to lay the cloth nicely alread, and she knows what a napkin is for; and she has learned the Lord's Prayer. Think of it, she had never prayed in her life! her religious ideas are the crudest possible. She said it seemed to her that Violet must be God's wife the day she brought her here."

"Shocking!" said Elise, crossly. "I do not see, mother, how you tolerate her for a moment."

"I ear, good Bixby! How invaluable you have been!"

Bixby obeyed without protest. Once out in the sunshine, she thought she would feel better; her head ached, and last city seemed to have left her sturdy

limbs. What a beautiful world it was! what a largess of happiness life had brought her! She was not a demonstrative child; Violet even did not know how she rejoiced and kept continual jubilee. She had fairly gasped for breath when taken to her own room. It was a small half-bedroom, with a sunny, white-enrusted window, of matting on the floor, and a pretty oak set. Was this hers—this that seemed like the palace of a king? Every thing so exquisitely fresh and neat, and a charming engraving of a cherub smiled down on her from the tinted wall. It was Heaven! She was not fit, but she would try so hard to be worthy. Years passed—one, two, three, four—years that brought little change to Mrs. Fenn and Violet, but worked wonders with Bixby. She was no longer a white infant, but was one of the most efficient aids in the domestic machinery.

One Spring Violet went to New York to visit friends, and Elise sent over during her absence to borrow Bixby. She had long ago found out that Bixby was a faithful soul, and excellent to look after children. In fact, her little ones were fond of her; they were rascallish and intractable under th'r French "pupper" rule, and now that Marguerite had g'ne off in a huff, there was no alternative but Bixby. So Mrs. Fenn, an'c' soul, seat' her over—they only lived ha' a mile apart—and Elise found, as she always did, her difficulties smoothed by others.

Bixby had been there three weeks, when John Fenn, as he was always called, his name being sunk in that of his mistress, came puffing in late one morning. His news was sad. Miss Violet had come home the preceding evening; she had been taken ill on her journey, and had gone right to bed on her arrival. Mrs. Fenn sent for the doctor, who pronounced her suffering from a virulent case of diphtheria. He told it brokenly, the tears running down his puffy cheeks.

"Mrs. Fenn ain't strong enough to stand such a strain as this'll be on her," he said, forlornly. "I went for Mrs. Jasper to come an' help tend Miss Violet."

But the girl looked up and beyond her. To human kindness she was irreversibly won over. The crumbs from the earthly table which had filled her with such fulness of content were as nothing to the feast of wh ch she shortly would partake.

"Such a beautiful face!" she whispered; "such a beautiful face!"

The rapt smile flickered, faded; the eyes that saw a glory not of earth grew dim. Little Bixby was dead. —*Maryat Hammond Eckerson, in Youth's Companion.*

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