

THE CHAMBER OVER THE GATE.

BY HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

Is it so far from these
Thine cannot no longer see
In the world?—the gate
That old man desolate,
Weeping and wailing sore,
For his son, his son, his son!

Oh, Absalom, my son!

Is it so long ago
That cry of human woe
From the walled city came,
Calling for Absalom, Absalom,
That it has died away
In the distance of to-day?

Oh, Absalom, my son!

There is no far to see,
There is neither sun nor sea,
There is neither sun nor late,
Nor the shadow over the gate,
Nor any long ago
To the cry of human woe,
Oh, Absalom, my son!

Somewhere at every hour
The watchman on the tower
Looks out, and sees the feet
Approach of the hurrying host
Of messengers, that bear
The tidings of the war.

Oh, Absalom, my son!

He goes forth from the door,
Who shall return no more,
With his joyous joy departs;
The world is left to me,
In the chamber over the gate
We sit disconsolate.

Oh, Absalom, my son!

That you come here,
Brings but slight relief;
Ours is the bitterest loss—
Our hearts are the heaviest load,
And from us all will be
Would I had died for thee,
Oh, Absalom, my son!

Atlantic Monthly, Jan. 1865.

THE YOUNG WIDOW.

"Is there any danger?"

"Any danger?—danger of death?"

Mahlon is conscious of a breath of politeness in repeating her words rather sharply. This dainty little lady in silk and fur-buckles irritated him. To most men she would be a sunbeam, but he has an odd feeling that he may hold it or drop it as he pleases.

He blushes a little at the conceit, and lets her go.

"Good night!" he says.

"Good-by!"

Delphine turns away, busying herself in rearranging the flowers on the mantel.

Not until Mahlon shuts himself out of the drawing-room does he remember his hat is within there. These small absurdities will thrust themselves on us when we are acting the heroines. There is no help for it; he must go back.

Delphine no longer stands before the mantel. Greatly relieved that she is gone, Mahlon steps softly to the table. Then he stops; there is a suspicious heap of silk and lace on the sofa.

Mahlon shakes hands, thanking her for her offer, but purposely saying nothing of his intention. Which she has no idea of accepting. He does not watch her down the alley, but goes to his patient, thinking hardly of life—for Delphine shows she gives merely of her superiority.

Delphine has her thoughts, also, as she slowly picks her way through the mud.

"Will he come? It was an inspiration, that offer of wine. Will it bring him?" He certainly does not know how to succeed in his favor, and really I don't care for his coming. Let me be well hinted, when I said I intended to have the new doctor at my house, that there were things even a pretty woman could not do. Yet I could. If I put on an ugly Sister-of-Charity dress, and nursed patients, he would follow me like a dog. But then, I have no desire to catch a fever for a mere caprice."

Many Thursday evenings pass.

"Where is the new doctor?" asked Louis de Lille. Delphine only smiles.

"He has not needed my wine; when he does, he will come," she tells herself.

She is right; just then she sees Mahlon in the doorway. A faint flush overspreads her face.

She advances to welcome her guest.

"Have you come for the wine?"

The sight of Delphine's drawing-room makes him loth to ask for it. Could he require her to sell all and give to the poor? But the few bottles of wine, precious a while ago, seem now the mockery of an offering.

"You must tell me of your patients," says Delphine, promptly. "But first let me introduce our friends."

Mahlon would have been surprised had he been told he could talk so much common sense amidst the laughter and music at Mrs. Eliot's, and even find opportunity to give his views on hospital wards.

"Then you put no faith in the beautiful, Dr. Kerr?" says Mrs. Gordon, who is interested in the hospital just being built. "Now, if you had Delphine's taste to help you—"

Mahlon glances coldly where she stands, the center of a gay young group.

"Delphine is liberal, and holds her own purse-strings. If there is one point perfect in this faulty life, it is here."

"Yet, to bring about this perfect state, there was a desire to be wretched," he says, gravely.

"And afterwards enjoy his money."

"We wished it for he left her all about one irritating or insulting 'noisy'."

"If you allude to a second marriage, I should think common prudence would have made him provide against it. Unless he wished another man to have his fortune," added Mahlon, with a shrug.

"But he knew Delphine was not a fool."

"You said she was not in love with her husband."

Mahlon avoids discussing Delphine's intellectual status.

"A man's fallacy, that need we women have of being in love. Empty-headed girls agree with you. But Delphine's head is well filled, after her own fashion."

"After rather a frivolous fashion, Mahlon might have said, but for Delphine's approach."

Mahlon is soon among Delphine's company, constant Thursday evening guests; running headlong into danger, every one finds him. Yet nothing could be less like his ideal of Adam's helpmeet than this gay little woman.

Mahlon has interested her in the hospital, however, the burden of which chiefly falls on him, no one else giving much concern to its completion. Delphine is liberal, and his poor parents, also; but for Mahlon, there is an anxious. A grave, literal man like Dr. Kerr is not one to intrap a bright, imaginative person like Delphine, who laughs at the idea of his being attentive, declaring that a woman must be ill unto death for that.

A chance word overheard at her house reveals to Mahlon that people are coupling their names. Men less fastidious than he would have called it nonsense; he considers it wrong for a woman to have her name so mentioned, when he does not intend to marry her. He must silence the gossip by avoiding Delphine. Even trifles wear to him the serious

aspect of right and wrong; so, though he is sorry, he will make his good-by to-night final, and part without any explanation.

"It is later; every one is leaving."

"Wait a moment," Delphine says. "I have news for your hospital."

But he looks grave.

"Old Mr. Gale promises £200 for his subscription. I did my best to be charming, and he valued my effort at just as much."

Another way for gossip to link their names!

"I am sorry—" begins Mahlon at last.

"Oh, very well! If you dislike her."

"It is not that," he answered, confused.

"Only you dislike my help?"

"For your sake. May I be frank? I found it pleasant here; I never thought of doing you a wrong."

Delphine looks bewildered; then the blood rushes into her face.

"Will you please explain what wrong you could possibly do me?"

"It is certainly a wrong to allow any one to suppose I do not consider you in some measure sacred, set apart from other women."

"I understand," she interrupted, her eyes bright.

"Yes; and I blame myself that our friendship was misunderstood. I can only promise not to intrude again."

Delphine gives a shrug of assumed indifference.

"Of course, the less is all mine," he says.

"Of course. Very well. But, if we cannot be friends, at least your poor need not suffer."

"Thank you," he says, "in the name of my sick. You will shake hands with me."

"Why should I? It is a mere form."

Yet she does not refuse when Mahlon holds out his hand; and, for an instant, while hers lies so passive in his grasp, he has an odd feeling that he may hold it or drop it as he pleases.

He blushes a little at the conceit, and lets her go.

"Good night!" he says.

Delphine turns away, busying herself in rearranging the flowers on the mantel.

Not until Mahlon shuts himself out of the drawing-room does he remember his hat is within there. These small absurdities will thrust themselves on us when we are acting the heroines. There is no help for it; he must go back.

Delphine no longer stands before the mantel. Greatly relieved that she is gone, Mahlon steps softly to the table. Then he stops; there is a suspicious heap of silk and lace on the sofa.

Poor little Delphine laughs, but she does not refuse when Mahlon holds out his hand; and, for an instant, while hers lies so passive in his grasp, he has an odd feeling that he may hold it or drop it as he pleases.

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