

THE NIGHTINGALE.

BY CELIA THAXTER.

There is a bird, a plain, brown bird,
Whose wild, delicious song is heard
With evening's soft, white star.

With the song of the bird, the night
Stole to the waiting world,
And the new moon glitters silver bright,
And the fluttering winds are furled;

When the balm of summer is in the air,
And the sun goes to his bed,
And there comes a waft of blossoms fair
Through the enchanted dusk;

Then breaks the heavenly strain,
And thrills the quiet night
With the music of the world and strain,
A rapture of delight.

All listeners that music hail,
All whisper softly: "Hark!
It is the matchless nightingale
Singing her sweet strain."

He has no pride of feathers fine;
Unconscious, too, is she,
That welcomes as a thing divine
His clear minstrelsy.

But from the fullness of his heart
He sings, and carol song above,
Beyond all praise above all art,
His song to heaven soars.

And through the whole wide world his fame
Is sounded far and near;
Men lowly and high, and name;
That brown bird is so dear.

RED MITTEN.

It was the afternoon of a clear, sharp January day of 1861, and the company numbered fully 200; there were men and women, boys and girls, flying and circling about, in masses, singly, by dozens and by twos and threes, over the frozen surface of the beautiful lake at Rockdale, a suburb of the flourishing city of N. New England is dotted with these small bodies of water, and it is astounding to recount what a surprising number bear the name of Silver. And so on Silver lake this goodly day was disporting itself with the glee and zest the keen, bracing air and exhilarating sport combined to produce.

Among the crowd were many lads and lasses who imagined they were fond of skating, and came to Silver lake for no other reason. It was singular, too, to note how much more gracefully the "outward roll," backward or forward, can be accomplished by joining hands, or being linked together by a walking-stick. These sticks in some instances proved to conductors to the sympathetic thrill that pervaded the mazes at either end.

The positive and negative conditions were fully in the case of brave John Horton and rosy-cheeked Abbie Latham, the daughter of the "Squire." She, with her plump, comely figure and fresh, handsome face, lit up by a pair of blushing blue eyes, could have led wily John, or off skates, anywhere, with an aprop string or a thread for a conductor. Not so with John. He could lead her nowhere; and the more the girl courted him, and the more she seemed to enjoy the skating, the more he shrank from her company. Many a ludicrous figure he cut, and many an awkward fall he endured by her sudden and unaccountable turns and shifting, and her mirth, and glee were at the highest at John's repeated failures to follow her difficult and tortuous windings. John was overgrown and massive, his twenty years of existence not having yet served to properly knit together and round out the proportions of his frame. She was lithe and quick, as graceful as she was alluring, the belle of the skating.

Apart from the throng this afternoon John espied a little red mitten lying on the ice where it had been dropped from one of the numerous children. Miss Abbie saw it, too, and as John, by one of his graceful movements, essayed to stoop and capture the article she refused to release his hand; but just as he bent forward, she gave a wicked pull, and John, unbalanced, was sent sprawling a rod or two beyond. A peal of salver laughter, with a joyful exultation, came from the lips of all the spectators, and the girl, and caught the tiny thing in her hand.

John blushed at his awkwardness, and held out his hand to receive the mitten. But the captor only held it for him, and gently moved away. "Won't you give it to me?" he asked. "I will find the owner."

"I can find the owner more easily than you. I can't trust you; you would fall and crush the poor thing in trying to deliver it." And she surely laughed again.

"You made me fall," said John in a gruff tone. "I told you always do these things. If I skated more and studied less I'd soon be as much an adept as your friend Joe Staples, whom you are always praising."

"You, ha, ha! As graceful as Joe Staples!" and the hilarity of the young maiden made John Horton's sluggish blood course through his veins, and he blushed with a scarlet kerchief that encircled his neck.

All the rest of that afternoon John was gloomy and silent. He moved around mechanically, or rather automatically, as though he were bound to serve more tasks upon him.

The sport finished the two wended their way to the house of Mr. Latham, John's fair companion failing to rally him into anything like conversation. He answered her only in monosyllables, and seemed morose and preoccupied.

As he was about to take his leave, John said seriously and a little sarcastically, "Abbie, I'm going back to college to-morrow, and I hope you will enjoy the rest of the skating season in company more graceful than mine."

"I hope I shall," replied she in the same tone. "You must feel bad about something; perhaps it's the mitten; you had better take it, no, not now—I won't give it up. If I ever think enough of you to surrender it, I'll send it to you by express."

And then she smiled on John, with rare sweetness, but John had seen that smile before, and felt she was only mocking him. So on a sombre, gloomy night he buttoned his coat to his chin and, with hands resolutely thrust into his pockets, turned homeward, resolved to waste no more time with skating girls, who judged young men by the dexterity they exhibited in handling their heels.

II.

Among the earliest volunteer regiments that left for the seat of war in the summer of 1861 was the—Massachusetts, with Lieut. John Horton as an officer of Company B. Like hundreds of others he abandoned his books for the field, and passed nights and days in study and drill to prepare for his new position. Horton had the reputation among his fellows of being rather an anchorite. He was reticent, sometimes gloomy, and, although he performed his duties acceptably, he had thus far failed to show any distinguishing qualities for a military career.

He joined in few of the camp pleasures, and when he was not on duty, reading or studying, was sure to be seen in abstract thought, walking about the streets of the camp, or in the region of country immediately around it.

John's "camp" formed one of the brightest seasons to the hard-wooded soldier in the years of the Rebellion. Though the quantity of useful and useless articles dispatched from home was at all times great, the bulk of contributions arriving at this festive season sorely tried the carrying capacity of all engaged in supplying the army at the front. And the occasions of opening the boxes and bundles among both officers and privates were most interesting and exciting. The officers of the—

had arranged to have an "opening" in the Colonel's quarters, and thither all who were not on duty repaired. The evening was of course most enjoyable, for nearly every one had received from home some gift or token to remind him of a mother, sister or sweetheart, sometimes of all three. Horton was present, cool, gloomy, and indifferent. He did not expect any present. His family was scattered, and many of those nearest to him to whose loving sympathy he would naturally turn at this time had passed away. He did not feel at home, and the meeting was of itself a sombre and formal, and John was chilled to the marrow.

In the stirring events of the next two years Horton bore his full share at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Antietam, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, down to Cold Harbor, where, at the head of his regiment, he fell, desperately wounded, in the terrible and unsuccessful assault on that stronghold.

He was conveyed to the hospital at Washington in a seemingly senseless condition, with several wounds, each of which was dangerous. The surgeon lighted the soldier's lamp, and, after examining the wounded men like angels of mercy. Some of the soldiers lay in a stupor, some were raving with delirium, and others dying in agony. For days Horton's life hung on a thread, his fevered brain mercifully rendering him unconscious of suffering. As he awoke one morning a soft and gentle hand was soothed his brow, when the dampness indicated that the fever was broken. He tried to open his eyes, but was too weak; speech he could not; and many hours passed before he could discern what was around him. Since the night of the Cold Harbor fight his life had been a blank. He remembered nothing, not even his name, with a sickly pale face, that looked familiar, but he could not recall the name of his owner. Again trying to speak, the surgeon kindly whispered, "Keep perfectly quiet and all will be well," and the female attendant, at his motion, withdrew.

For the next three evenings our hero, in his dim vision, discerned the same pale and anxious face; and a gleam of wondering inquiry passed over his countenance as he gazed upon her. At last he feebly whispered, "Where am I?"

"In the hospital, and with friends," she gently answered.

He would have spoken more, but she would not. The next day he was stronger, and he asked, "Where have I seen you?" At a sign from the physician the nurse answered:

"At your old home. Don't you know me? I am Abbie Latham. You are getting better now, and will soon be well."

Jack was strong enough to begin to collect his thoughts, which were, of course, at once concentrated on his nurse. He improved wonderfully under her care, and one bright morning occurred the last demonstration we shall record in this romantic sketch.

Miss Latham was sitting by the side of his bed, arranging a bouquet. The wounded man had begun to feel like his old self, and permission was given him to converse all he desired.

"How long have you been in the hospital, Abbie?"

"About a year," she replied in a sweet, womanly voice.

Jack thought he had never beheld a fairer creature. If she was beautiful as a girl, she was wedded and chaste, and had touched and chastened all that was lovable and womanly in her nature. She was no longer a girl—she was a tender, thoughtful woman.

"You have saved my life," said Jack, his eyes filling with tears.

"No, your strength has triumphed. Scarcely a hand disturbed the sleeping man, as the enemy across the Potomac were believed to intend no hostile demonstration, the utmost precaution had not been taken to guard against surprise. As Jack stood gazing into the darkness a succession of flashes lit up the gloom and the sharp report of small arms broke the stillness. "Hello! here's fun!" exclaimed Jack as he rushed to his inn pocket an envelope, out of which he fished a little red object, on which he gazed for a few moments as a naturalist might gaze upon a newly-discovered insect, with mingled curiosity and tenderness. The soldier sighed as he replaced the trifle, and, going to the door of his tent, gazed out into the darkness.

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for on this occasion, as he deserved to, Jack's heart throbbed a little as he met the gaze of the young lady; but if he felt any emotion it must have been for nearly every one had received from home some gift or token to remind him of a mother, sister or sweetheart, sometimes of all three. Horton was present, cool, gloomy, and indifferent. He did not expect any present. His family was scattered, and many of those nearest to him to whose loving sympathy he would naturally turn at this time had passed away. He did not feel at home, and the meeting was of itself a sombre and formal, and John was chilled to the marrow.

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