

THE LAST WISH.

BY ALMA M'KEE.

Spring had come and left buds tender,
Earth with her golden tresses
Had gone, with rose-wreathed bough.
Harvest came with ripe grain waving
In the gentle breeze,
Telling man that he is fleeting,
Even as the sheaves.

Near an open vine-wreathed window,
In their chairs of state,
Gazing out on glorious profits
An old man sat.
Stifled-dimmed eyes and locks of silver
Spoke of old lang syne;
Cobweb lines about their features,
Traced by Father Time.

Mollie, darling, such a harvest
Sediment have I seen;
Yet the Lord has blessed us alway,
Undeserved, I ween.
We have climbed life's hill together,
Mollie, you and I,
Shared its joys and sorrows ever,
In the years gone by.

The birds have flown that once we cherished,
Far west the children went,
With us we are left alone together,
To live as the Lord thinks best.
As we down life's hill now wander,
Side by side we roam,
May we in the valley nestled
Close in that promised home.

May we like the harvest ready
For the reaper be, and rest,
All work finished, tired hands folded,
Crossed npon our pulsing breast.
(Best your dear head here, my wife!)
I would meet our children, loved one,
In that holy, better life.

Now the gleaming softy steel theft
O'er the distant, purple hills,
And the night-bird's gentle vesper
Mingle with the rippling rills.
Hear t' home! it is whispered softly—
Gently, on the sunset air.
Peaceful in a hallowed radiance
They are resting over there.

BARBARA'S BURGLAR.

BY M. C. FARLEY.

The day was oppressively warm. The sun shone down on the little vine-covered villa with such a scorching glare that even the great red roses on the lattice drooped and hung their heads with fatigue. Bees droned lazily among the honey-suckle cups, and Dick, the pet canary, had long since ceased trilling his shrill notes, and with panting breath and distended wings sought the shadiest corner of his gilded cage. Overcome by the stillness and the extreme heat, old Miss Pennyfeather sat out on the back piazza under cover of the vines, the ruffles of her muslin cap hanging limply about her face, and her two mittened hands hanging idly in her lap, fast asleep.

Barbara, her pretty niece, was shelling peas on the door-step. As a prolonged and startling snore betrayed the old lady's somnolent condition? Barbara picked up a handful of pea-pods and, taking deliberate aim at her aunt's open mouth, threw them with such skill that Miss Pennyfeather suddenly bounced from her seat, and being very near the edge of the piazza, lost her balance and went rolling down the steps upon the green sward.

This being rather more than Miss Barbara had bargained for, she hastened to Aunt Pennyfeather's assistance. "Oh, Aunt Pennyfeather," cried Barbara penitently, "do forgive me. I had no idea that you would attempt to get up."

"Go away, you bad Bab," retorted the spinster, testily. "What with your perverseness and your practical jokes you'll be the death of me yet. Get away with you, I say! I can help myself, and not thanks to you."

"If madam will allow me," said a deep and solemn voice behind them, "I shall be only too glad to render my assistance."

Bab got up. A tall and elegant stranger stood there, holding his hat in his kindly hands.

"Thank you," said Aunt Pennyfeather, "you may give me your arm if you please. My niece here has no respect for age and I am not unfrequently the victim of her pranks."

The stranger helped Aunt Pennyfeather to rise and conducted her to the sitting-room door.

In a minute more Aunt Pen had invited him in, and capped it all by asking him to stop with her for tea.

"Rather pretty girl," muttered St. John, just loud enough for her to hear.

"But without a particle of taste for art," said she, saucily. "I am persuaded I could shoot off a gun or cook a dinner or lock up a burglar for that matter; but all in good shape, too. But esthetic longings, and stately attitudes, and bric-a-brac are beyond my understanding and desires."

"Then you really don't care for old things?" laughed St. John.

"You are too sweepingly," said Bab, carelessly, "unless you confine your meaning to inanimate things. In that case my answer is easy enough. But if you mean to include Aunt Pen here in your category of aged articles, why, then I can assure you that there a few antiquated specimens that I am fond of," and with that Bab bounded up from her chair—they were at tea now—and marching around the table suddenly dropped a respectful kiss on the bald spot on the top of Aunt Pen's head.

"Did I ever!" ejaculated the scandalized spinster.

"I really don't think you ever did," retorted the unconscionable Bab, sitting down again; "and what's more, I don't believe you ever will."

"Really, Mr. St. John, nice Barbara isn't always like this," began Miss Pennyfeather, apologetically.

"No, indeed," serenely added Barbara. "Mr. St. John, I am commonly much worse than I am to-day. You can believe me."

"I hope Miss Pennyfeather will give me permission to make an elaborate study of her sprightly niece during my stay in this neighborhood," said St. John, politely.

"Miss Pennyfeather is charmed," said the terrible Barbara, in exact imitation of her aunt's stately manner.

"Where is Jack?" asked Aunt Pen, changing the subject.

"He went down the river for a swim, and he said not to look for him until he came, for a party of gentlemen were intending to camp on the banks and he meant to stop all night with them, and go fishing by torch-light."

"You're awfully hard on poor Jack, aunty," said Bab, suddenly from the porch, where she was shelling the peas. "Don't you remember how he swam the river and saved four lives last summer, when they would surely have been lost but for him?"

Aunt Pen looked at the strange gentleman as much as to say, "This is all I can expect." In return she received a

glance full of commiseration and sympathy from that elegant individual, who had, by this time, seated himself comfortably in a big easy chair, and was apparently very much at home.

"There is no accounting for tastes, my dear madam," said St. John, for this was the name inscribed on the pasteboard he had given Aunt Pennyfeather. "Indeed, I have a brother who is only in his natural element when engaged in out-of-door sports."

"Shall we have chicken for supper?" asked Barbara, irrelevantly.

"To be sure," returned Aunt Pen, "and as the weather is so very warm we will have the table set in the arbor."

"You have some elegant old silver," said St. John, presently, inspecting with a critical air an old tankard that stood on the sideboard. This tankard was Aunt Pen's particular favorite. It was an heirloom, and had been brought to America fully two hundred years before by Aunt Pen's ancestors. And there was still a lingering tradition that the old tankard had been given to a brave soldier of her house by no less a personage than the great Charlemagne himself. Any way she prized it above all her other earthly possessions.

She lifted it reverently and showed its battered sides. "Being made of pure silver it is very heavy and very valuable on that account. However, to me it is worth more than twice its weight in gold, as a genuine antique and a family heirloom."

St. John looked at the tankard with glistening eyes.

"I had no idea, madam, when I stopped in my desultory walk this afternoon to beg of you a few of those exquisite roses hanging over the piazza there, that I should be so fortunate as to see so priceless and rare a specimen as this," said he, with unfeigned enthusiasm. "Have you anything else in your collection that will all compare with it?"

Miss Pennyfeather had other valuable articles of virtue. Here was a man who had cultivated taste, who not only admired bric-a-brac but who appreciated it as much as she did herself.

She hastened to throw open her treasure house.

"I call this my cabinet of curiosities," said she, going to a deep recess in the wall, before which hung a heavily embroidered portiere. The curtain swung back on the gilded pole, disclosing a bronze door in lattice work, behind which was ranged such a display of rare old china, and glass and silver, that St. John could not repress an exclamation of delighted surprise.

"This is a dress that came over in the Mayflower, and belonged to Mary Alden," she said, showing a garment of creamy cloth, yellow with age, that hung in a narrow glass show-case.

"This," picking up a golden circlet of peculiar shape, "is a ring brought from Germany more than two centuries ago. Notice the peculiar text inscribed upon its face. Among all the collections I have seen in America, I have found none like it. Those cups and saucers there on that shelf are from Japan. Think of drinking tea with the Japs in such frail little things as they are. One can almost imagine them dissolving in one's hand. Here below are some specimens of Wedgwood ware. This little morsel of a cup, that looks as if covered with fish-scales, is one of a set from which Washington drank chocolate after he became President. The stone lying there at your left hand is from his tomb at Mount Vernon. Here is a tete-a-tete set of Irish china sent me forty years ago from Kilmarnock Castle. Odd, is it not? And the bronze clock—"

At this moment Barbara put her head at the sitting-room door.

"Tea is ready, Aunt Pennyfeather," said she, "so come out at once. The chicken is done to a turn, and must not be kept waiting, and besides—Jack's come."

Mr. St. John stared admiringly at the pretty Barbara, who calmly looked him over, without any visible sign of embarrassment.

"Rather pretty girl," muttered St. John, just loud enough for her to hear.

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"She has made a discovery in nature's philosophy. She guesses the dies always turn their faces to the wall because they are ashamed of themselves for being such horrid nuisances to everybody."

"See here," he said to his clerk, "I don't mind letting you off for a day or two, now and then, to attend your grandfather's funeral; but I think you ought to have the courtesy to send a few of the fish around to my house."

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