

#### THE LAST PIPE.

When head is sick, and brain doth swim,  
And heavy hangs each unstrung limb,  
The firelight fills the smoke-puff wreathing slow,  
To watch the firelight quench and glow.  
As each soft cloud floats up on high,  
Some worry takes its wings to fly;  
And Fancy dances with the flame,  
Who lay so labor-cramped and lame;  
While the spent Will, the slack Desire,  
Rekindle at the dying fire,  
And burn to meet the morrow's sun,  
With all its day's work to do.

The tedious tangle of the Law—  
Your work never done without some flaw;  
These ghastly streets that drive one mad,  
With children joyless, elders sad,  
Young men unmannerly, girls going by  
Bold-faced, with eyes unmeaningly;  
Christ died two thousand years ago;  
And kingdom come still all unwon;  
Your own slack self, that will not rise  
Whole-hearted, for the great enterprise—  
Well, all these dark thoughts of the day,  
As thin smoke's shadow, drift away.

And see, those magic mists unclose,  
And a girl's face amid them grows—  
The very look she's wont to wear;  
The wondrous depths of her pure eyes;  
The maiden soul that 'neath them lies—  
Fear that meets, yet will not fly  
Your stranger spirit drawing nigh.  
What if our times seem sliding down?  
She lives, creation's flower and crown.  
What if your way seems dull and long?  
Each tiny triumph over wrong,  
Each effort up through sloth and fear,  
And she and you are brought more near.

So, rapping out those ashes light,  
"My pipe, you've served me well to-night."

#### EDITH'S PUNISHMENT.

BY HELEN E. STANDIFORD.

Rodbrook Farm, extending over many hundred acres of rich prairie land, and embracing within its limits a forest of valuable timber, was indeed a property of which its possessor might be proud.

So thought Edith Norton, as she paused for a moment in her walk through the grove of magnificent oak trees, on whose edge the farm house was located. No wonder that a smile of triumph overspread her face, and her eyes sparkled, as she thought how excellent were her prospects for becoming mistress of this vast estate. She was fairly amazed at her own success, for in two short months she had succeeded in fascinating young Albert Rodbrook, shy country lad, who had nevertheless grown bold enough to declare his love for this bewitching, graceful girl, with her city manners and dainty clothes.

She was a visitor at the house of her aunt, whose sign in front of a very modest dwelling in the adjoining village read:

MRS. HARGRAVE,  
DRESSMAKER AND MILLINER.

This lady and Miss Peeriam, housekeeper at the Farm, were cronies of many years standing. Thus it happened that not long after Edith's arrival she met young Rodbrook, not at a church social or other gathering, where his timidity would probably have prevented him from addressing her, but in this identical grove of oak trees, through which she was passing to deliver some message from her aunt.

A huge mastiff, usually chained in his kennel near the stable, had broken loose and sprang upon her as she neared the house. Her cries attracted the attention of Albert, at that moment coming from a rear door. Advancing to the rescue, like some knight of old, he silenced the animal, thereby earning a look of gratitude that set his heart to beating far more rapidly than was its wont.

He was dazzled from the first, and Edith, with her natural graces and superior knowledge of the world, took care that the spell should not be broken.

She had resumed her walk, and presently the old house came in sight. A careless observer could hardly have failed to be impressed with the charming surroundings and attractive appearance of the place, despite its evident age and old-fashioned adornments. True, the bricks had crumbled in some of the more exposed portions, and the roof of one of the wings was in evident need of repair, but most of the ravages of time were hidden by masses of ivy and Virginia creeper. The porch at the side of the house was fairly covered with the latter, while immense bushes of lilacs and snow-balls grew in close proximity to the front windows. The flower garden bore marks of having at some time received careful attention. Beds were artistically arranged, walks laid out, and numerous supports erected for the vines and larger plants. But it was further evident that, for the past year at least, the vegetation had been allowed to grow without human aid or interference.

Some of those flowers, self-sown in a previous season, which had the hardihood to confront a mass of weeds, showed glimpses of bright color here and there, but many of their associates, whose duty it was to bloom at this time of the year, were sickly, spindly stalks, bearing a few leaves and no blossoms whatever. The shrubbery needed trimming; the ornamental railing was broken down, and the whole was characterized by that air of neglect which frequently visits a garden when the owner dies or removes to foreign parts.

Jacob Rodbrook, grandfather of Albert, had been a famous horticulturist, and had taken an immense amount of pride and pleasure in the cultivation of these plots. Since his death the entire place had been left chiefly to the care of servants.

Of his two sons, the elder had married early, and died a few years afterward, leaving a widow and one child, the hero of our story. The other was a wanderer in strange lands. His love of adventure had led him from country to country, from one continent to another, until he was now believed to have visited nearly every part of the globe. Nor had his father disapproved of this mode of life. After spending a few hundreds in the purchase of a suitable outfit for his son, no further outlay on the old gentleman's part was required, James being able to maintain his independence in whatever part of the world he found himself.

Upon receiving the intelligence of his father's demise, he had written to inform his nephew that his return might be expected during the following winter.

Albert's mother had soon followed her husband to the grave, leaving their little boy to the care of his grandparent and Miss Peeriam.

As Edith gazed upon the varied beauties of the homestead, bathed in a flood of morning sunshine, to her ambitious mind several improvements had already suggested themselves.

"I should have that wing torn down and a new porch built, running the whole length of the house," she was thinking, when Albert Rodbrook emerged from a side-path and stood before her.

His beaming face showed sufficiently the pleasure that the meeting afforded him, and her greeting was as affectionate as his own.

"I have some news to tell you," he said, as they stood for a few moments in the shade of a gigantic oak. "My Uncle James is coming home, and may be here this week."

"Your Uncle James?" she said, in some surprise.

Until this moment she had never even heard of the existence of this member of the Rodbrook family. His long absence had done much toward effacing his memory from the minds of Elmdale's residents, and it chanced that during Edith's short visit no one had mentioned his name to her.

"Yes," replied Albert. "Have I never told you about him? I was a child when he started on his travels, and scarcely remember how he looked. He wrote last winter that he might be at home next Christmas, but it seems he has altered his plans, and is coming sooner."

"Is he married?" asked Edith.

"No, he is an old bachelor."

During the remainder of the walk up to the house, in which Albert accompanied her, Edith was silent and thoughtful, so much so that Albert inquired if she were not feeling well.

"Perfectly," she answered. "I am only a little tired from the long walk I have taken."

"We will have Miss Peeriam give us a lunch, and, after you are rested, will you play one of those new pieces for me?"

Edith assented, and they went into the house. At the foot of the great staircase they met a young girl, perhaps a few years Edith's junior, who blushed deeply as she saw them. This was Agnes Draper, who had once been Albert's playmate, and, until Miss Norton's arrival, the only young woman with whom he was ever known to stop and converse. He now greeted her rather indifferently, while his companion beamed upon her with the utmost cordiality.

Her appearance formed a striking contrast to that of the city girl. She was plainly dressed in a dark print, with coarse shoes and a brown straw hat. Edith wore a dainty lawn, edged with lace and looped up with ribbon bows. Yet Mr. Draper was a wealthy farmer who could well afford to deck his daughter with "gew-gaws" as he called them, while Mr. Norton struggled hard to maintain a large family on his clerk's salary of five hundred a year.

Agnes had also come on some errand connected with Miss Peeriam's department, and remained but a few moments.

Albert and Edith were soon seated before the ancient pianoforte, where she was playfully instructing him in the first principles of music, a course of study which he occasionally varied by discussing his plans for the future.

They had already decided that their marriage should take place as soon as possible after he had attained his twenty-first birthday. For the present, the whole matter was to be kept a secret. His guardian, Lawyer Holden, had arranged for him to spend the next six months at a business college, there to supplement what knowledge he had acquired under the tuition of the schoolmaster.

"After that," he said to Edith, "I shall be my own master, and can manage affairs to suit myself."

"And the first use you will make of your freedom will be to leave home and see something of the world."

"Not unless you are with me," said Albert, putting his arm around her waist.

She smiled, a self-satisfied smile, and, she confessed, her intention of departing for the village. He accompanied her, and so busily were they engaged in conversation that they had neared her aunt's house and were observed by that lady herself before he turned to retrace his footsteps.

Edith was scarcely seated in the little room which served as shop and parlor when her aunt began. "Seems to me young Rodbrook is getting wonderfully attentive to you. What does it all mean?"

Edith considered a moment, then thought best to make a confidante of her aunt.

"He has asked me to marry him," she replied, somewhat proudly.

"Well, well," said her relative, evidently surprised, "you are both rather young to think of getting married, but he may be a rich man some day."

"May be!" repeated Edith, with heightened color. "Doesn't the farm, or part of it, belong to him?"

"Bless your heart, no. His grandfather made will leaving it all to Albert's uncle, that's traveling in some heathenish country, and if he dies without any children, it goes to the grandson."

"How unjust," said Edith, "to cut his oldest son's child off in that way."

"I suppose he didn't want the farm divided, and it's pretty certain James will never marry. Besides, he always said that he believed in a young man's starting out for himself. Albert gets an allowance of three hundred every year until he's twenty-one. Then I hear he is going to study for a book-keeper or cashier."

Three hundred a year, and that to cease at the end of six months. How suddenly had all of Edith's air-castles fallen to the ground. Instead of owning this vast estate, her lover was a poor boy, hardly better off in this world's goods than herself.

She was too proud, however, to allow Mrs. Hargrave to witness her chagrin, and merely requesting the latter not to mention her engagement, she went to her room.

Then she thought over the matter long and earnestly. It had been a great disappointment to learn how Albert's pecuniary affairs stood; but, then, there was a possibility of his some day being a wealthy man, that is, if another plan which had half shaped itself in her mind, while she frequently glanced in the mirror opposite, did not succeed.

Her recent conquest had increased the vanity natural to her disposition, and she scarcely doubted her ability to charm any lord of creation she might encounter.

She wound up her meditations by resolving to treat Albert, for the present at least, as if these disagreeable tidings had never reached her ears.

There was only one more meeting of the youthful lovers before Albert was obliged to depart for a distant city. Then he informed Edith that his uncle had arrived, and so far had been very generous to him.

"I should like to have you see him," he whispered, as they stood on the little porch in front of Mrs. Hargrave's residence, bidding each other farewell; "but you leave for home so soon I suppose it will be impossible this summer. He has a great many legal matters to look after, and spends nearly every day in the city."

Edith thought differently, but she changed the subject, and inquired if he would not spend Christmas at Elmdale.

"I hardly think so. Mr. Holden is anxious for me to devote every minute to my studies, and I should lose nearly a week by

coming home; but I will write often, and you know how eagerly I shall look for your letters."

There was much more said in a tender, confidential undertone, many vows of constancy exchanged, and then Albert went on his way, cheered by the thought that the girl he loved was interested in his welfare and cared for his success in the new path he was about to pursue.

Mrs. Hargrave was not a little surprised when Edith announced her intention of spending another fortnight in Elmdale; but the girl was lively and companionable, besides affording her considerable assistance in the dressmaking line; so she raised no objection.

One day, when the elder lady was employed elsewhere, Edith donned her freshest muslin, and slipping a roll of music under her arm, set out for the Rodbrook mansion. Miss Peeriam readily gave her permission to practice the songs she had brought, and presently Edith's fingers were wandering over the keys. She played on, apparently unconscious that there was a listener in the next room, though she had caught a glimpse of him as she passed the half-opened door. A tall, grave man of forty-five or thereabout, deeply engaged in the perusal of a volume before him, he did not observe her light footsteps in the hall.

Not until the sound of music fell upon his ears did he glance toward the parlor in some bewilderment. It was years since he had heard the old instrument, a gift of his mother, when she came a bride to the farmhouse, and he wondered now who could have the audacity to open it.

He arose and went into the hallway. Edith's back was toward him; but presently she turned to reach for some music, and he beheld, with a thrill of admiration, the delicate profile, surmounted by masses of rippling hair. She had finished the accompaniment to the song she was practicing, and commenced an old Scotch air, which he remembered having heard his mother play in years gone by.

He stood for a moment as if rooted to the spot, and before he could make up his mind to retreat she had left off playing and turned to encounter his gaze.

She started slightly, and James Rodbrook advanced into the room.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but your playing charmed me so that I came nearer to listen."

She smiled reassuringly. "It is I who ought to apologize for taking possession of the room, but Miss Peeriam said I might use the piano, and I thought we were the only persons in the house. Mr. Rodbrook, I presume."

He bowed and considered what next to say. For several years he had been unusually varied by discussing his plans for the future.

They had already decided that their marriage should take place as soon as possible after he had attained his twenty-first birthday. For the present, the whole matter was to be kept a secret. His guardian, Lawyer Holden, had arranged for him to spend the next six months at a business college, there to supplement what knowledge he had acquired under the tuition of the schoolmaster.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing one of my neighbors?" he inquired at length.

"My aunt, Mrs. Hargrave, lives in Elmdale, but I am only a visitor at her house. My name is Noitton."

"But she is not the Millie Norton who married Sam Hargrave?"

"Yes, that was my uncle's name."

"Poor Sam. I heard of his death when I was in South Africa. We were boys together, and often played truant from school to go hickory-nutting."

"He was always ready for any expedition of that kind," responded Edith. "His nephews and nieces generally had a good time when they came to visit Uncle Sam."

There was another pause, then Edith said:

"I wish I could find the words of that old song. There are only a few lines that I can remember."

"The one you were playing as I came in?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I believe that I have them stored away in an old trunk upstairs. At least I packed up a great many of those Scotch pieces, and, if I remember rightly, that was among them. I will look for it this afternoon."

"I couldn't think for a moment of putting you to so much trouble."

"It will be a pleasure, and if I succeed in finding it, and you will allow me, I will take it around to your aunt's house this evening."

There was a little flash of triumph in Edith's eyes, but she cast them down modestly, and he did not perceive it.

"Auntie will be very glad to see you, I am sure," she said demurely.

Thus it was settled that he should call at Mrs. Hargrave's, and so pleasantly was he entertained that the visit was repeated several times during the ensuing fortnight.

Many and varied were the comments which this proceeding elicited from the village gossips. Some of them were of the opinion that his attentions were bestowed upon Mrs. Hargrave, who was his junior by several years, but it soon became apparent that her beautiful niece was the attraction.

So rapidly had their acquaintanceship progressed that when Edith left for her home he had obtained permission to call there on the occasion of his next trip to the city.

To her mother and sisters she gave a glowing account of his evident devotion, and they were not surprised when the brief courtship resulted in an engagement shortly after his arrival.

It was decided that the marriage should take place on New Year's Eve, and preparations were forthwith commenced.

To Albert, working hard over books and bills in the distant metropolis, no tidings of the approaching nuptials were sent. It did not occur to James Rodbrook that there was any necessity of informing his nephew of the step he was about to take, and since the latter part of October Albert had not heard from Edith.

He attributed her silence to pique, caused by a correspondence he had been obliged to carry on with Agnes Draper, in regard to her brother, a student at the same college, who had fallen in with bad companions and narrowly escaped expulsion.

Albert wrote several times, endeavoring to explain the matter, and receiving no response, determined at Christmas time to go himself.

What was his surprise, upon reaching Edith's residence, to be told that she was to be married a few days later and did not receive callers.

"But I must see her," he said, turning pale, and some desperate resolve to carry her off in spite of her relatives and betrothed husband flashing through his mind.

"What name shall I give?" asked the girl.

"Albert Rodbrook."

She ascended the stairway to an apartment on the upper floor, and presently returned to admit him to the family sitting-

room, which chanced at that time to be vacant.

When Edith appeared, he burst into a storm of apology and entreaty, which could hardly have failed to move the heart of a less worldly minded person.

She had not previously heard of his letter to Agnes, but she was a quick-witted girl, and his words decided her as to how she should act in this emergency. She was cool and disdainful, refusing to accept his apology, and it was not until he had exhausted every species of pleading he could command that he asked the name of her intended.

Consternation was visible upon every feature when he received her reply.

"But my uncle James is twice your age," he exclaimed; "he cannot love you as I do."