

THE MAIL

A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

GUILD'S SIGNAL.

BY BRET HARTE.

Two low whistles, quaint and clear,
That was the signal that Guild, "he said—
Gave to his wife at Providence,
As through the sleeping town, and thence,
Out in the night,
On the light,
Down past the farms, lying white, he sped!

As a husband's greeting, meant no doubt,
Yet to the woman looking out,
Watching and waiting noiserously,
Love song or midnight roundelay
Said what that whistle seemed to say:

"To my true trust

So love to you!

Working or waiting, Good night!" it said.

Bright young bairns, tourists fine,
Old communities along the line,
Brakemen and porters glanced ahead,
Smiled at the signal, sharp, intense

Pierced through the shadows of Prov-

idence.

"Nothing amiss

Nothing!—it is

Only Guild calling his wife," they said.

Summer and Winter, the old refrain
Bang o'er the billows of ripening grain,
Pierced through the budding boughs o'er
head

Flew down the track when the red leaves
burned

Like living coals from the engine spurned;

Sang as it flew:

"To our true trust

First of all duty—Good night!" it said.

And then, one night, it was heard no more
From Stonington over Rhode Island
shore.

And the folks in Providence smiled and
said,

As they turned in their beds, "The En-

gineer!"

Has once forgotten his midnight cheer."

One only knew

To his true trust

Guild lay under his engine dead.

DID SHE DIE?

CHAPTER IX.

HEIR TO BARONETCY.

When Sir Marcus reappeared at Leabanks, bringing with him his half-reluctant nephew, a disappointment awaited him; for instead of the gay party he expected to find, Rupert was out of spirits, attributing as he did in some measure the accident of the morning to his own heedlessness. An uneasy expression sat on Mr. Errington's brow; and the young lady the baronet had brought Wilfred, who had been advised by Miss Raymond to remain in her own room till the morning.

Though Katie declared that she felt almost recovered, she was too delicate not to yield to the wishes of her friend. It was only Maude who rebelled at the idea of going alone, and who, when they were left together, indulged in a little grumbling about it.

"I don't like this arrangement at all," she declared. "If you stay up-stairs to-night, I think I ought to do so too."

"Indeed, I will not let you," said Katie, gratefully. "You need not fear that I shall be dull; for Rupert has sent up a new book that I much wish to read."

"Oh! I did not mean to infer that my companionship would be any advantage to an invalid," Maude explained. "I should either talk you into a fever, or fidget you into nervous mania. It's the *injustice* of the thing I'm considering."

"The what? I really do not understand!"

"Goose! Do you forget that we are to be honored this evening with the presence of Mr. Wilfred Hayle?—that remarkable youth, whose praises poor dear Sir Marcus and Rupert Errington are never tired of sounding."

"Well?" queried Katie. "Are you afraid to encounter such a learned gentleman, that you talk of secluding yourself with me?"

"Afraid! Why should I be?" and Maude smiled saucily at herself in the glass before which she was standing. "He is only a man; one of those weak and irresolute creatures, as Mr. Pope calls them, who were born to—well to be made fools of by pretty women. I am pretty, Kittens, and I may speak the truth and say so, as there is no one here to be shocked but you."

Katie laughed.

"Vain thing that you are! Don't you think that amongst so many other accomplishments, Mr. Hayle has learned how to avoid the wiles of a coquette?"

"I wish you would not call me by that odious name," pouted Maude. "It's a very ungrateful return for my sisterly affection. Have I not just declared that I would not do you the injustice of dazzling him with my charms till you are well enough to go down too, and enable me to decide between brown eyes and blue ones?"

"Is that your meaning? Pooh! I have no desire to make conquests; the field is all your own," and Katie settled herself in a more comfortable position, and opened her book.

"Thinking twice, rash girl, before you speak so positively," retorted Maude, with mock solemnity. "With your literary and artistic tastes, how can you be insensitive to the fascinations of a man who has Greek and Latin, mathematics and algebra, oozing from his finger-ends, and all the ologies compactly crammed away in the caverns of his brains. Aren't you all eagerness to behold him?"

"No, indeed; nor am I charmed by the picture you are drawing. I am afraid I should feel smothered in the society of such a living dictionary of the arts and sciences."

"So should I, if I had not assured myself that there are retrieving points about our clever friend. Rupert says he is very good-looking; and when Sir Marcus dies—long may he live! the dear, funny, little man—one can't forget that he will be a wealthy baronet."

"Is Rupert a good judge of the human face?" queried Katie, carelessly, as she turned over a leaf.

"Hem! Yes; he admires mine."

"Cannot you be content with his admiration, that you are so eager to win Mr. Hayle?" Oh, Maude!"

The young lady addressed gave herself a little peccish shake.

"My dear child, you ought to return thanks to my godfathers and godmothers every time you utter my name; for there isn't one in the vocabulary that would answer so well for the solemn, mouthful you have just made of it. Oh, Maude! indeed! Who says I am eager for Mr. Hayle's good opinion?"

"You are putting on one of your prettiest dresses; you have taken more pains than usual with your hair."

"To do honor to my guardian's visitors—that's all. Would you have had me make a guy of myself? or go down-stairs in a pelisse and papillotes?"

"Certainly not! But if I thought I had won the love of such a young man as Robert Errington."

"Hah! ha!" exclaimed Maude, with a military gesture. "Did I ever confess to thinking any such thing?"

"I said it," Katie reminded her.

"Ah! then you may go on. I like to be quite clear on such subjects; and with such a little stickler for the precise truth as you, one mustn't admit too much. If, then, I have designs you

don't spare one's blushing a bit!) on the heart—you are sure he has one at my disposal!—of the said Rupert Errington, you may proceed, Miss Lecturer."

And Katie did so, as steadily and gravely as if she had not heard her sister's frolicsome interruption.

"Why, then I would not trick myself out for the eyes of his friend."

"Then you would be more silly than I thought you, wouldn't you? Do you think I would submit to look like a dowdy while I have half-a-dozen pretty toilettes to choose from? And for what?"

"For fear Wilfred Hayle should admire me. I like to be admired; it's the great end and aim of my life, just at present, to be regarded by every one as *une demoiselle très charmante*. Now don't shake your head, and try to look shocked. I told Miss Raymond the same thing, and she only laughed. She knows, and you know, that every young and pretty woman wishes it in

your heart; and why should I not say candidly what the rest of my sex are not honest enough to confess?"

"Don't talk so absurdly, Maude. Just as if you cared for nothing but your good looks!"

"And don't you talk absurdly, and draw false conclusions. If I called admiration my great passion, I did not say that I have not plenty of other aspirations of one sort and another. Every now and then I'm seized with strong desire to be a saint, and some day it may be lasting."

Maude threw up her hands.

"Don't go into such extremes, pray!"

"My dear Kittens, whatever that learned gentleman may have studied, he never took any lessons in the art of making himself agreeable. Conversation, indeed! For one half-hour he talked to Mr. Errington quite animatedly; but it was on politics—notting better; and I think he said as many as half-a-dozen words to Miss Raymond; but I fully believe that he has gone away as incapable of telling any one the color of my eyes and hair as if I hadn't been in the room at all. I hate such blocks of men! What are they fit for but to give work to the tailors and shoemakers?"

"Perhaps he is unused to feminine society," Katie observed. "He has no lady relatives at The Beeches."

"Don't put that forward as a plea in his defense. No man need be a bear unless he chooses. If he hasn't any sisters or cousins of his own to whom he could be attentive, his friends have plenty."

"Did he not chat with you at all?"

Poor Maude! After taking so much pains with your toilette, it must have been dreadfully aggravating to find yourself so neglected," cried Katie, with a mischievous laugh.

"And if you see that you are paining me?"

But Maude laughed the suggestion to scorn.

"Would any one be weak enough to be troubled by the caprices of such a butterfly as I?" Rupert knows, or ought to know, that the civil little speeches and smiles with which I repay his attentions are only *pour passer la temps*. He cares no more for me than I care for him. We are capital playmates; but if he grew serious, I should make him a curtesy and say, "No—no, monsieur, no chains for me! I was born to flutter from flower to flower and enjoy myself, not to be the slave of a husband's caprices."

"I have done," said Katie, lying down again, and looking as pale as the minute she had been flushed.

And then there was silence till Maude had fastened some flowers in her bosom, found her fan and gloves, and taken a satisfied survey of herself in her mirror.

But ere she left the room she tripped to Katie's couch and kissed her affectionately.

"Take care of yourself, little brown eyes, and don't worry about me or my admirers. Folks don't die for love now-a-days; and if it's my vocation to flirt, console yourself with the trite but true saying that 'nature will be nature,' and let me sang my ain gait."

Katie smiled, and reminded her that butterflies had their wings scorched when they played too readily with a flame; but Maude waltzed away, laughing at the warning, and her sister was left at last to a quiet enjoyment of her book.

Sometimes her attention was distract-

ed by the opening and closing of Mr. Durrant's door, which was at no great distance from her own; and Wilson was up and down stairs all the evening on one errand and another for the master who, fastidious and exacting in health, was fifty degrees worse in sickness. Sometimes Katie could hear the invalid's voice frantically anathematizing the man, on whom he laid all the blame of his own weakness and consequent irritability; and once the weary Wilson muttered, as he passed along the corridor, a resolve to give warning on the following day.

But presently Mr. Durrant exhausted himself, and then all was so still that Katie was meditating whether she should not take Miss Raymond's advice and go to bed early, when Maude came softly into the room.

"Not asleep—not even dozing?

"Not sleep! Are they going too?"

Then I must beg leave to defer my visit to the Abbey till you are more at leisure."

"Don't be absurd, Will. Are you always going to eschew the sex in this fashion?"

"That's not the question. I like con-

versing with a sensible, unprejudiced woman as well as you do."

"Then don't avoid Maude and Katie."

"I haven't the honor of knowing Miss Katie Lesden," said Will stiffly.

"But her sister is very charming.

Even you—grave old anchorite that you are!—must acknowledge it. Do you hear?"

"I do; but I'd rather not be brought to confession to-night. You might think me too severe in my strictures."

"Nonsense! Say on, Maude! Tell me honestly what you think of our pretty Maude."

"Then, honestly, I am disappointed.

I expected to be introduced to a merry, unaffected girl."

"And by implication you found her what?"

"Precisely like all other young women who stow themselves up for display—a compound of finery and frivolity."

"Now, now you are too harsh," Rupert began saying, warmly; but the mortified listener stayed to hear no more. She went to Katie's chamber, swelling with ire against the baronet's nephew, and vowed in her heart to avenge herself upon him for his keen and impudent remarks.

"How insuring!" cried Katie, indignantly.

"Poor child! how tired you must be!"

Haven't a little mercy on her, Mr. Hayle. She has a tolerably strong head, but I never think it will stand too strong a dose of antiquarian lore."

"But Maude, dear!" remonstrated Katie, who was vexed at her manner.

"You are quite mistaken. Mr. Hayle has been there, and we were comparing our recollections of the island."

"Very kind of Mr. Hayle, I am sure,

to choose such a nice, simple subject,

and let himself down to the level of the feminine intellect," said Maude in a half-whisper, which, however, she took care that Wilfred should hear.

But it was Rupert who commented upon what she had said.

"What has made you suddenly take such a modest estimate of your sex's endowments, ma'am'selle?"

"Be silent, sir! Am I not always no-

torious for my humility?" You will not let me thank your friend for his polite consideration. But do you not find it very fatiguing, Mr. Hayle, adapting your conversation, I mean, to such topics as my sister and I are able to comprehend?"

"I am content," said Maude, demurely, though with mischief in her downcast eyes. "I like Sir Marcus so very well, that, if my friends advised the step, I'm not sure that I should refuse an offer from him. He would make a most devoted husband."

"Is she in earnest?" asked Rupert in dismay, as she rode on, leaving with Katie. If his uncle married again, Will's prospects would be ruined!



MAUDE HAD FASTENED SOME FLOWERS IN HER BOSOM.

CHAPTER X.

TRAILS OF PATIENCE.

Contrary to every one's expectations, Mr. Durrant rallied, and in the course of a few days declared that he should soon be well enough to join the family in the drawing-room for an hour or two after dinner.

During those days of gradual improvement he had not become less peevish or exacting, as every one who came in contact with him had reason to know.

Wilson gave warning more than once, and had to be bribed into staying; only by the strongest representations could Milly prevent Mr. Errington's insulted cook from throwing up her situation; and Milly herself was obliged to exert all her tact, and treat the ill-tempered guest with a chilling politeness that kept in check in spite of himself, or her own sweet temper would have given way; so hard to endure were the unfeeling sarcasms he leveled at every one and everything at Leabanks.

Mr. Errington's position was still more intolerable, for both humanity and courtesy led him to pay every attention to his guest that he could devise; and yet he could not perform the simplest act of kindness without enduring the mortification of hearing his motives questioned.

"I should feel quite grieved to be such a trouble to you," Mr. Durrant would observe, "if I did not know that you have your reasons for being so good-natured to me. Don't be angry, my dear Errington; you are naturally anxious that your son should be my heir. Even you excuse men, who set yourselves up to them? Aren't we both very well aware that if I were a poor relation, you would not have been so eager to bring me to Leabanks?"