

# The Family Circle

## TO A GIRL IN WHITE

There is nothing in all the world more fair  
Than you in your gown of white.  
You look like a flower that might have strayed  
From some distant land of light.

With a smile on your face and your eyes aglow  
You seem like a sunbeam fair,  
And I know as I gaze on your charming face  
'Tis your soul that is shining there.

Though your face be fair, and your eyes aglow,  
O girl, in your simple gown,  
Do you stop to think of that other dress  
That is fairer than robe of down?

'Tis the mantle of that which adorns your soul,  
And shields you from aught defiled—  
Oh! love it and keep it as white as snow  
As it was when you were a child.

And e'en though the years will dim your eyes,  
And your face will have older grown,  
In your gown of white you shall still be young  
If you've guarded your altar throne.

So then prize that mantle of spotless snow  
And treasure its beauty rare—  
For in all the world you will never find  
A dress so wondrous fair?

## A SECOND TRIAL

It was commencement at D— College. The people were pouring into the auditorium as I entered. Finding the choice seats already taken, I passed onward, looking to the right and to the left for a vacancy, and on the very front row I found one.

Here a little girl moved along to make room for me, looking into my face with large, grey eyes, whose brightness was softened by very long lashes. Her face was open and fresh as a newly-blown rose. Again and again I found my eyes turning to the rose-like face, and each time the grey eyes moved, half-smiling, to meet mine. And when, with a bright smile, she returned my dropped handkerchief, we seemed fairly introduced.

'There is going to be a great crowd,' she said to me.

'Yes,' I replied; 'people always like to see how schoolboys are made into men.'

Her face beamed with pleasure and pride as she said:

'My brother is going to graduate; he is going to speak; I have brought these flowers to throw to him.'

They were not greenhouse favorites; but just old-fashioned, domestic flowers, such as we associate with the dear grandmothers; 'but,' I thought, 'they will seem sweet and beautiful to him for his little sister's sake.'

'That is my brother,' she went on, pointing with her fan.

'The one with the light hair?' I said.

'Oh, no,' she said, smiling and shaking her head in innocent reproof; 'not that homely one with red hair; that handsome one with brown, wavy hair. His eyes look brown, too, but they are not—they are dark blue. There! he has his hand up to his head now. You see him, do you not?'

In an eager way she looked from me to him, as if some important fate depended upon my identifying her brother.

'I see him,' I said; 'he is a very good-looking brother.'

'Yes, he is beautiful,' she said, with artless delight, 'and he is good, and he studies so hard. He has taken care of me ever since mamma died. Here is

his name on the programme. He is not the valedictorian, but he has an honor for all that.'

I saw in the little creature's familiarity with these technical college terms that she had closely identified herself with her brother's studies, hopes, and successes.

'He thought at first,' she continued, 'that he would write on "The Romance of Monastic Life."'

What a strange sound these long words had, whispered from her childish lips! Her interest in her brother's work had stamped them on the child's memory, and to her they were ordinary things.

'But then,' she went on, 'he decided that he would rather write on "Historical Parallels," and he has a real good oration, and he says it beautifully. He has said it to me a great many times. I almost know it by heart. O! it begins so pretty and so grand. This is the way it begins,' she added, encouraged by the interest she must have seen in my face: "'Amid the combinations of actors and forces which make up the great kaleidoscope of history, we often find a turn of Destiny's hand.'"

'Why, bless the baby!' I thought, looking down into her proud face. I cannot describe how very odd and elfish it did seem to have those sonorous words rolling out of the smiling mouth.

The band, striking up, put an end to the quotation and to the confidences.

As the exercises progressed, and approached nearer and nearer the effort on which all her interests were concentrated, my little friend became excited and restless. Her eyes grew larger and brighter; two deep red spots glowed on her cheeks.

'Now it is his turn,' she said, turning to me a face in which pride, and delight, and anxiety, seemed equally mingled. But when the overture was played through, and his name was called, the child seemed, in her eagerness, to forget me and all the earth beside him. She rose to her feet and leaned forward for a better view of her beloved as he mounted to the speaker's stand. I knew by her deep breathing that her heart was throbbing in her throat. I knew, too, by the way her brother came to the front, that he was trembling. The hands hung limp; his face was pallid, and the lips blue, as with cold. I felt anxious. The child, too, seemed to discern that things were not well with him. Something like fear showed in her face.

He made an automatic bow. Then a bewildered, struggling look came into his face, then a helpless look, and then he stood staring vacantly, like a somnambulist, at the waiting audience. The moments of painful suspense went by, and still he stood as if struck dumb. I saw how it was; he had been seized with stage fright.

Alas! little sister! She turned her large, dismayed eyes upon me. 'He has forgotten it,' she said. Then a swift change came into her face; a strong, determined look; and on the funeral-like silence of the room broke the sweet, childish voice:

"'Amid the combinations of actors and forces that make up the great kaleidoscope of history, we often find that a turn of Destiny's hand'—"

Everybody about us turned and looked. The breathless silence; the sweet, childish face; the long, unchildlike words, produced a weird effect.

But the help had come too late; the unhappy brother was already staggering in humiliation from the stage. The band quickly struck up, and waves of lively music were rolled out to cover the defeat.

I gave the sister a glance in which I meant to show the intense sympathy which I felt, but she did not see. Her eyes, swimming with tears, were on her brother's face. I put my arms around her. She was too absorbed to feel the caress, and before I could appreciate her purpose, she was on her way to the shame-stricken young man, sitting with a face like a statue's.

When he saw her by his side, the set face relaxed, and a quick mist came into his eyes. The young men got closer together to make room for her. She sat down beside him, laid her flowers on his knee, and slipped her hand in his.

I could not keep my eyes from her sweet, pitying face. I saw her whisper to him, he bending to catch her words. Later, I found out that she was asking