

OPPOSITES.

The young man came in out of the cold dash of rain. The negro man received his outside garments and ushered him into the drawing-room, where a bright fire welcomed him like a smiling hostess.

He sat down with a sudden relaxation of his muscles. As he waited at his ease, his senses absorbed the light and warmth and beauty of the room. It was familiar, and yet it had a new meaning to him. A bird was singing somewhere in the upper rooms, carolling with a joyous note that seemed to harmonise with the warmth and colour of the room in which the caller sat.

The young man stared at the fire, his head leaning on his hand. There were lines of gloomy thought in his face. There were marks of bitter struggle on his hands. His dress was strong and good, but not in the mode. He looked like a young lawyer with his lean, dark face, smoothly shaven save for a little tuft on either cheek. His long hands were heavy-jointed with toil.

He listened to the bird singing and to the answering chirping call of a girl's voice. His head drooped forward in deep reverie.

How beautiful her life is! his thought was. How absolutely without care or struggle! She knows no uncertainty such as I feel daily, hourly. She has never a question of daily food; the question of clothes has been a diversion for her, a worry of choice merely. Dirt, grime, she knows nothing of. Here she lives, sheltered in a glow of comfort and colour, while I hang by my finger-ends over a bottomless pit. She sleeps and dreams while I fight. She is never weary, while I sink into my bed each night as if it were my grave. Every hand held out to her is a willing hand—if it is paid for it is willing, for she has no enemies even among her servants. O God! If I could only reach such a place to rest for just a year—for just a month. But such security, such rest is out of my reach. I must toil and toil, and when at last I reach a place to pause and rest, I shall be old and brutalised and deadened, and my rest will be merely—sleep.

He looked once more about the lovely room. The ocean-wind tore at the windows with wolfish claws, savage to enter.

"The world howling out there is as impotent to do her harm as is that wind at the window," the young man added.

II.

The bird's song again joined itself to the gay voice of the girl, and then he heard quick footsteps on the stairs, and as he rose to greet her the room seemed to glow like the heart of a ruby.

They clasped hands and looked into each other's eyes a moment. He saw love and admiration in her eyes. She saw only friendliness and some dark, unsmiling mood in his.

They sat down and talked upon the fringe of personalities which he avoided. She fancied that she saw a personal sorrow in his face and she longed to comfort him. She longed to touch his vexed forehead with her fingers.

They talked on, of late books and coming music. He noticed how clear and sweet and intelligent were her eyes. Refinement was in the folds of her dress and in the faint perfume which exhaled from her drapery. The firm flesh of her arms appealed to him like the limbs of a child—beautiful!

He saw in her face something wistful, restless. He tried to ignore it, to seem unconscious of the adoration he saw there, for it pained him. It affected him as a part of the general misdirection of affection and effort in the world.

She asked him about his plans. He told her of them. He grew stern and savage as he outlined the work which he had set himself to do. His hands spread and clutched, and his teeth set together involuntarily. "It is to be a fight," he said, "but I shall win. Bribery, blackmail, the press, and all other forces are against me, but I shall win."

He rose at length to a finer mood as he sketched the plan which he hoped to set in action.

She looked at him with expanding eyes and quickened breath. A globed light each soft eye seemed to him.

He spoke more freely of the struggle

outside in order to make her feel her own sweet security—here where the grime of trade and the reek of politics never came.

At last he rose to go, smiling a little as if in apology for his dark mood. He looked down at her slender body robed so daintily in gray and white; she made him feel coarse and rough.

Her eyes appealed to him, her glance was like a detaining hand. He felt it, and yet he said abruptly,—

“Good-night.”

“You’ll come to see me again!”

“Yes,” he answered very simply and gravely.

And she, looking after him as he went down the street with head bent in thought, grew weak with a terrible weakness, a sort of hunger, and deep in her heart she cried out:

“Oh, the brave, splendid life *he* leads out there in the world! Oh, the big, brave world!”

She clenched her pink hand.

“Oh, this terrible, humdrum woman’s life! It kills me, it smothers me. I must do something. I must be something. I can’t live here in this way—useless. I must get into the world.”

And looking around the cushioned, glowing, beautiful room, she thought bitterly:

“This is being a woman. O God, I want to be free of four walls! I want to struggle like that.”

And then she sat down before the fire and whispered very softly, “I want to fight in the world with him.”

Hamlin Garland.

JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.

Peace was here yesterday,
Joy comes to-morrow;
Why wilt thou, heart of mine,
Dark bodings borrow?

Shrilly the tempest shrieks,
Fierce roar the waves,
High roll the curling crests,
Deep the black graves:

Now the cold midnight falls,
Clouds overwhelm . . .
Memory lights the seas!
Hope holds the helm!

Peace was here yesterday,
Joy comes to-morrow,
Why wilt thou, heart of mine,
Dark bodings borrow?

Charlotte W. Thurston.