

BLUE BELLS.

Nymph, hast thou e'er heard a ring  
ing,  
Silvery, mystic as thy singing,  
In thy hidden dells  
When thy zephyrs, gently playing,  
With their unseen hands were swaying  
Thine own soft blue bells?  
Came not dainty notes forth straying  
Of carols light or knells?  
Yet why ask if thou canst hear  
Straits that ne'er to mortal ear  
Shall, alas, be known?  
Well I know that mortal eye  
Rends 'neath each flower a lullaby,  
Sweet and all its own.  
Shall I count that naught and sigh  
And brood uncheered, alone?  
—Eugene Bonwick in Latin Quarter.

SIBIL LOVIBOND.

Sibil Lovibond stood before the long mirror in the drawing room and pressed a hand on either rounded hip, with an habitual gesture designed less to smooth away the wrinkles in her faultless gray cloth gown than to express a satisfaction in a perfect fit that left no wrinkles to be smoothed. She was tall and blond and delicately modeled and slim, and the hands were very slender and fine and white, and her eyes were full of a grave sweetness and purity and innocent as twin blue flowers.

Three years before, when Cecil Lovibond died, it had been to Sibil, his daughter, self evident that the Lovibond estate belonged in part to Bertie, her brother, and in part to herself, and she had felt that a present possession of their respective shares might in a measure console them for their father's decease. To Mrs. Lovibond, Sibil's mamma, upon whom the whole estate had been settled by will, that point of view seemed not to have occurred and not to be likely to occur, and after much hesitation and patience Sibil had determined at last to come to her mamma's assistance and at the moment was reporting to Bertie, who shared her ideas, so far at least as they promised to benefit himself, the somewhat indecorous interview which had been the result.

"Of course," Sibil said in conclusion, speaking always without rancor, in her silver tones, "she was in a passion. She may at any moment in an access of caprice disinherit one or both of us. It might have been you that at least managed the estate if papa had not known always that you are not wise."

Bertie Lovibond sat a cheval on a fragile chair behind his fair sister, looking up at her and at her image in the glass, and it was quite true that there was nothing in his pink face and slow gray eyes to suggest that apart from a certain skill at polo and at billiards he possessed the wealth of an idea beyond those which Sibil imparted to him. "Naturally we're all of us out of our wits except you," he retorted without resentment (he had never been allowed to cherish an illusion in regard to his abilities) and went away to his club, leaving Sibil to reflect upon what right things he sometimes said when he was not meant them.

She thought with a kind of impetuous rage as she stood looking after him on the chance she might have had if she were a man—on the one hundred and one ways of independence and distinction that to her at least would have stood open. She thought with a rage quite impetuous that as a girl she could count on nothing except on inheritance and marriage, and that the inheritance might well come too late, or come diminished by mismanagement, or come not at all, and that upon the amount of the inheritance the quality of the marriage was dependent. She thought finally that reflection of such fecidity and force as that is had for the complexion and for the modeling of the face about the lips and eyes, but more temperately behind the mask of her untroubled, fresh, pure face she pursued for many minutes her line of meditation. She had pursued it many times before.

Later in the morning Mrs. Lovibond was occupied with a visitor when Sibil, daintily bonneted and gloved, swept into the room and rustled affectionately about her mamma, to whom she was in public entirely devoted, and asked how long she might keep the carriage, and what commissions she might execute, and whether she might not be kissed goodly.

Mrs. Lovibond was tall, like her daughter, and slim, and her hair, once blond, like her daughter's, was gray, and her face was gray and full of the fine lines and distinction that come of a thousand exquisite scruples for half a century constantly possessed. Mrs. Lovibond had been the cause all her life of other people's telling in her behalf, to spare her sensibilities, countless fibs, but she had never herself told a fib and had never learned to forgive fibs in others nor to recognize with equanimity their presence in others.

She had been greatly agitated by what was to her the monstrous departure from any becoming or even possible attitude of a girl toward her mother that in their talk after breakfast Sibil had manifested, and she had not seen Sibil since. Her nerves were still vibrating from the excitement which she had undergone, and she was revolted simply by Sibil's caressing intonations and looks. When Sibil offered to kiss her, she could endure no more. She rose hastily from her chair and without apology left the room.

Sibil instantly, in the manner the most unassuming in the world, sank into a chair and covered her face and shook with weeping imperfectly held in check.

"Dear Mrs. Naunton," she said as soon as she could bring herself to speak, "don't ask me what I fear is the matter. It is too dreadful simply. We have seen it coming ever since papa died."

And she removed her bonnet and gloves and dismissed the carriage.

Not so many weeks subsequent to Mrs. Naunton's morning visit it began not uncommonly among the acquaintance of the Lovibonds to be remarked that dear Mrs. Lovibond had for a long time been strange.

At first this remark was made in isolation, parenthetically almost, and emphasized, if at all, by nothing more than an exchange of glances or a decorous pause or a word of sympathy. "Have you seen Mrs. Lovibond of late? How unlike herself she seems! She appears to have sunk into an utter melancholy." Then came a rumor of her being denied regularly at the door to visitors, and of an inexplicable

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aversion on her part to Sibil, a daughter of whom anybody might be proud, and of orders to the servants and of messages to her friends which, to say the least, were very odd, and which indeed seemed often to strike the poor lady herself with astonishment when they were brought to her notice.

Sometimes she indignantly denied ever having authorized them, and always Sibil, when present, agreed with her that there must be some mistake, and by a beseeching glance toward her mother's interloper silenced protest and explanation. Even Bertie came in time to declare abruptly to Sibil that, "Begad, you know,

this is serious," and he added that a lot of the Bontflowers (Mrs. Lovibond's maiden name was Bontflower) had been "queer."

About the time of Bertie's declaration in regard to the queerness of the Bontflowers Mrs. Lovibond's man of business received from Sibil in Mrs. Bontflower's name (he had been accustomed to deal with Mrs. Bontflower through Sibil) an order for the disposition of some bonds which he thought it out of the question to execute. For a long while past he had been made uneasy by the instructions which had been given him for the reinvestment of the money accruing from such of the Lovibond securities as from time to time had fallen due, and when at length he became sharply alarmed he went at once to Holles Naunton, who had been Cecil Lovibond's most intimate friend and the executor of his will, and communicated to him his surmises and doubts. His surmises and doubts were so well supported by the evidence in his hands and were of a nature so grave that Holles Naunton called together the eldest of Cecil Lovibond's relatives, and after a consultation with them spoke in the name of a formidable consensus of uncles and aunts to Bertie and Sibil.

Bertie, who was never at his ease when it was not possible to be jocular, contented himself with repeating lugubriously that a lot of the Bontflowers, you know, had been queer. Sibil would at first listen to nothing, not even to the suggestion of enlisting the services of a celebrated specialist. Her opposition was so determined that she obtained at last a promise that nothing should be undertaken or done against her mother's consent. On that condition Sibil, with becoming reluctance, consented that the difficult business should be opened to Mrs. Lovibond, stipulating for all possible tentativeness and delicacy. Nothing, she said, could to Bertie and herself be at all worth while in comparison with that, and Bertie said of course it couldn't.

Holles Naunton, in company with Sibil, who insisted that she should be present, undertook the little embassy. He had long hoped that Sibil would consent to marry Horace, his second son, and had learned to regard her as little less than a daughter and to regard her interests as a daughter's interests.

The tact and gentleness of his address in the actual interview left Sibil nothing to wish unsaid, nothing to wish undone. It was a matter of business simply, he explained, growing out of a scruple on the part, in the first instance, of a man of business, and except that her naturally pale face became perceptibly a little more pale Mrs. Lovibond bore herself as in the presence of a matter of business simply and offered neither protest nor opposition. She felt, poor lady, that she stood very much alone. Her husband's relatives, when all was said, were just her husband's relatives, and relatives of her own, except some distant cousins, she had none. She had been an only child and had brought, truth to tell, much of the estate which it appeared that she was mismanaging to Cecil Lovibond on her marriage. Even if she disavowed all of the strange things that Sibil had done in her name, it was possible she would not be believed. Her little public was prejudiced against her, and even to an unprejudiced public it must be easier to believe that an old woman was out of her wits than to believe that a girl like Sibil had conceived so safe and so audacious a conspiracy. Also to make a disavowal would be to accuse her daughter, and simply she could not bring herself to accuse even a daughter like that. "It is too plain," she said, "I may well be mad, having, as I have, such children." And she undertook to make over what Holles Naunton would to any proper trustees.

When the necessary papers and proceedings were nearing completion, Bertie, who was slow always to take things in, showed at last symptoms of revolt and declared to Sibil, with his customary indifference to contest, that it was all a bloody shame. "If I were you," Sibil said with a menace in her downcast eyes and even voice that made him most uncomfortable, he hardly knew why, "I should keep wholly quiet. You are half Bontflower at best, and nobody, to start with, has ever thought you wise."

The more Bertie turned over that speech in his dim little mind the more uneasy he became and the more firmly he resolved to follow the advice which it contained, and to keep wholly quiet, or, as he would even mentally have phrased it, to lie low. By Jove, and as an indispensable preliminary he drove to his club and ordered a brandy

and soda. Whenever the thought that he is half Bontflower has recurred to him since he has ordered always another brandy and soda, and he has ordered a great many.

Holles Naunton was and is the only active member of the little board of trustees in whose charge the Lovibond estate was placed. When Horace Naunton had demonstrated the likelihood of his proving to be in society and in politics really a personage, Sibil consented to marry him. There was for a time among a portion of the Nauntons some thought of opposition to the match, on the ground that Sibil was half Bontflower, and that sort of thing, you know, runs in families, and it is right to take no risks, but the Lovibond connections were excellent, and Sibil herself was a charming, clever girl, and indeed her money and her connections and loveliness and wit have been already to her husband of inestimable aid.

She has still the same blue, innocent eyes, and the same look in them of grave sweetness, and is still to her mother, near whom at Sibil's instance Horace Naunton has taken a house, the same irreproachable daughter. The task of remaining so is recognized by all of Sibil's acquaintances as the more difficult because Mrs. Lovibond is much broken in spirit and health and her aversion to her daughter seems rather to increase with time.

Bertie, who seems to feel in a vague way that there is something very like impiety in not appreciating one's perils, has suggested to Sibil that she also is half Bontflower, but she has never shown herself alarmed. She has never shown herself alarmed indeed, even for her little boy, of whom she is devotedly fond, though in him, to be sure, the Bontflower strain has run thin.—New York Advertiser.

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