

“GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART!”

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“GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART!”

“Being so very wilful, you must go!”

MORNING.

“The sleepless Hours, who watch me as I lie,
 Curtained with star-enwoven canopies
 From the broad moonlight of the sky,
 Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,
 Waken me when their mother, the grey Dawn,
 Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.”

CHAPTER I.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.

A KINGLY June day: the hay-smell drowning all other smells in every land of Christendom: battling even with the ingeniously ill odours of this little drainless Breton town. People who suffer from hay-fever are sneezing and blowing their noses; all the world else is opening its nostrils wide. The small *salon* of a small French boarding-house: a narrow room with a window at each end; and in this room we two sisters, the two Misses Herrick.

Five minutes ago, the mistress of the establishment entered and closed the *persiennes* of one of our windows, to hinder the sun from *abîmer*-ing the *cretonne* curtains, as

“Good-bye, Sweetheart!” I.

she said. She was about to follow suit with the other, and only desisted on our eager and impassioned representations that not even a Breton sun can shine from all points of the compass at once. Through the one casement thus left us, Lenore is leaning out; Lenore, our youngest-born, the show one of our family. On her elbows she is leaning, looking idly into the little grass-grown *place*, on which Mdlle. Leroux's *pension* gives, Jemima—I am Jemima—is making a listless reconnoitre of the furniture. The little cheap prints on the walls, 'La Religieuse défendue,' 'Le Guerrier pansé,' 'Napoleon I., Empereur des Français;' one long fern frond, and a single foxglove in a wineglass on the mantelshelf; bare cold parquet to the feet. Jemima is twenty-eight years of age, and very good-natured; at least, so people say. I have often noticed that the eldest of many families are, physically speaking, failures. Jemima is, physically speaking, a failure.

"How one misses one's five-o'clock tea," says Lenore, looking back half over her shoulder to throw this and the succeeding remarks at me; "from ten-o'clock breakfast till six-o'clock dinner, what a dreary waste! How do you suppose the aborigines stave off the pangs of hunger, Jemima? Do they chew a quid of tobacco, or a piece of chalk, or what?"

I reply, laconically, "Biscuits."

"Does not your soul yearn for one of those open tarts with fresh strawberries we saw yesterday at the *patissier's* in the Rue de St. Malo? Mine does. I wish I had asked Frederic to bring me one."

"And do you imagine," ask I, sardonically, "that you have reduced that poor man to such a pitch of imbecility as to induce him to carry about jam-tarts in his coat-pocket for you?"

Lenore smiles: she has that very sweet smile which is, they say, the peculiar attribute of ill-tempered people. "I think," she answers, "that he is not far from being on a level with Miss Armstrong's lover, who allowed her to dress him up as a sheep, and lead him by a blue ribbon into a room full of company."

Lenore's face is more round than oval; it is fresh as a bunch of roses gathered at sunrise—fresh, but not ruddy; her nose, though not in the least *retroussé*, belongs rather to the family of upward than that of downward tending noses; her eyes are grey, as are the eyes of nine-tenths of the Anglo-Saxon race; large, though not with the *owlified* largeness of a 'Book of Beauty', wherein each eye is double the size of the prim purse mouth; in her two cheeks are two dimples that, when she is grave, one only suspects, but that, when she laughs or smiles, deepen into two little delicious pitfalls, to catch men's souls at unawares in.

"If Frederic were anybody but Frederic," say I, sinking into an armchair, and pulling out my knitting—like most failures I'm fond of work—"it would be considered rather *risqué* of us two innocents travelling about the Continent with a young man in our train, even though he is a clergyman."

"If Frederic," replies Lenore, contemptuously turning back to her contemplation of the *place*, and replacing her grey gingham elbows on the sill, "were to be caught in the

most flagitious situation one can imagine, that Simon Pure face of his would carry him triumphantly through. Who can connect the idea of immorality and spectacles? Talk of an angel, and you hear the rustle of wings; I hear Frederic's wings rustling through the Porte Saint Louis, and—oh! Jemima—Jemima, quick! come here!—who is it he has with him?"

I jump up, as bidden—I always do what Lenore bids me, though I have the advantage, or rather disadvantage, of her by ten years—and look out. "An Englishman, evidently," I say, sagaciously, "by his beard; nobody but Englishmen and oysters wear beards nowadays."

"Is he going to bring him up here?" asks Lenore, craning her neck out to look round the balcony of the café next door, where, as usual, two fat men are smoking and drinking coffee. "No; I see him nodding; he is saying good-bye; how tiresome!" (with an accent of disappointment).

"You are as bad as the young lady in Nixon's 'Cheshire Prophecy,'" say I, laughing: "'Mother, mother, I have seen a man!'"

Frederic enters, alone, looking very hot in the rigorous black of a priestly coat that grazes his heel, and the rigorous black of a priestly waistcoat that almost salutes his chin.

"Enter a pretty cockatoo!" cries my sister, with an insolent laugh, pointing the insult by indicating with her forefinger the curly flourish of fine fair hair that surmounts the young man's forehead and blue spectacles. "Pretty cockatoo!"