MY SWEETHEART.

Her eyes are lovely. I won't tell
What hue their loveliness may show;
Her braided hair becomes her well,
In color like—but ah, no! no!
That is my secret, red or brown.
It is the prettiest hair in town.

She walks with such a dainty charm,
But whether she be short or tall,
Of rounded limb or sylph-like form,
Her figure suits me—that is all!
Nor do I choose the world to know
If silk her dress, or calico.

My precious girl is worth her weight,
Not in rough gold, but diamonds fine,
And whether that be small or great
I leave the reader to divine.
Ask me to guage her solid worth—
She would outweigh the whole round earth!

To rhyme her praise is such delight
That I must keep it to myself,
Lest one should better verses write
And lay me gently on the shelf.
I am not jealous, but you see,
This charming girl—belongs to me.

A FAR-AWAY MELODY.

The clothes-line was wound securely around the trunks of four gnarled, crooked old apple-trees which stood promiscuously about the yard back of the cottage. It was tree blossoming time, but these were too aged and sapless to blossom freely, and there was only a white bough here and there shaking itself triumphantly from amongst the rest, which had only their new green leaves. There was a branch occasionally which had not even these, but pierced the tender green and the flossy white in hard gray nakedness. All over the yard the grass was young and green and short, and had not yet gotten any feathery heads. Once in a while there was a dandelion set closely down amongst it.

The cottage was low, of a dark red color, with white facings around the windows, which had no blinds, only green paper curtains.

The back door was in the center of the house, and opened directly into the green yard, with hardly a pretense of a step, only a flat oval stone before it.

Through this door, stepping cautiously on the stone, came presently two tall lank women in chocolate-colored calico gowns, with a basket of clothes between them. They set the basket underneath the line on the grass, with a little clothes-pin bag beside it, and then proceeded methodically to hang out the clothes. Everything of a kind went together, and the best things on the outside line, which could be seen from the street in front of the cottage.

The two women were curiously alike. They were about the same height, and moved in the same way. Even their faces wore so similar in feature and expression that it might have been a difficult matter to distinguish between them. All the difference, and that would have been scarcely apparent to an ordinary observer, was a difference of degree, if it might be so expressed. In one face the features were both bolder and sharper in outline, the eyes were a trifle larger and brighter, and the whole expression more animated and decided than in the other.

One woman's scanty drab hair was a shade darker than the other's, and the negative fairness of complexion, which generally accompanies drab hair, was in one relieved by a slight tinge of warm red on the cheeks.

This slightly intensified woman had been commonly considered the more attractive of the two, although in reality there was very little to choose between the personal appearance of these twin sisters, Priscilla and Mary Brown. They moved about the clothes line, pinning the sweet linen on securely, their thick, white stockinged ankles showing beneath their limp calicoes as they stepped, and their large feet in cloth slippers flattening down the short green grass. Their sleeves were rolled up, displaying their long, thin muscular arms, which were sharply pointed at the elbows.

They were homely women; they were fifty and over now, but they never could have been pretty in their teens, their features were too irredeemably irregular for that. No youthful freshness of complexion or expression could ever have possibly done away with the impression that they gave. Their plainness had probably only been enhanced by the contrast, and these women to people generally seemed better looking than when they were young. There was an honesty and patience in both faces that showed all the plainer for their homeliness.

One, the sister with the darker hair, moved a little quicker than the other, and lifted the wet clothes from the baskets to the line more frequently. She was the first to speak, too, after they had been hanging out the clothes for some little time in silence. She stopped as she did so, with a wet pillow-case in her hand, and looked up reflectively at the flowering apple boughs overhead, and the blue sky showing between, while the sweet spring wind ruffled her scanty hair a little.

"I wonder, Mary," said she, "if it would seem so very queer to die a mornin' like this, say. Don't you believe there's apple branches a-hangin' over them walls made out of precious stones, like these, only there ain't any dead limbs among 'em, an' they're all covered thick with flowers? An' I wonder if it would seem such an awful big change to go from this air into the air of the New Jerusalem." Just then a robbin hidden somewhere in the trees began to sing. "I s'pose," she went on, "that there's angels instead of robbins, and they don't roost up in trees to sing, but stand on the ground, with lilies growin' round their feet, may be, up to their knees, or on the gold stones in the street, an' play on their harps to go with the singin'."

The other sister gave a scared, awed look at her. "Lor, don't talk that way, sister," said she. "What has got into you lately? You make me crawl all over, talkin' so much about dyin'. You feel well, don't you?"

"Lor, yes," replied the other, laughing, and picking up a clothes-pin for her pillow-case; "I feel well enough, an' I don't know what has got me to talkin' so much about dyin' lately, or thinkin about it. I guess it's the spring weather. P'raps flowers growin' make anybody think of wings sproutin' kinder nateraly. I won't talk so much about it if it bothers you, an' I don't know but its sorter nateral it should. Did you get the potatoes before we came out, sister?"—with an awkward and kindly effort to change the subject.

"No," replied the other, stooping over the clothes-basket. There was such a film of tears in her dull blue eyes that she could not distinguish one article from another.

"Well, I guess you had better go in an' get 'em, then; they ain't worth anything, this time of year, unless they soak awhile, an' I'll finish hangin' out the clothes while you do it."

"Well, p'r'aps I'd better," the other woman replied, straightening herself up from the clothes-basket. Then she went into the house without another word; but down in the deep cellar, a minute later, she sobbed over the potato barrel as if her heart would break. Her sister's remarks had filled her with a vague apprehension and grief which she could not throw off. And there was something a little singular about it. Both these women had always been of a deeply religious cast of mind. They had studied the Bible faithfully, if not understandingly, and their religion had strongly tinctured their daily life. They knew almost as much about the Old Testament prophets as they did about their neighbors; and that was saying a good deal of two single women in a New England country town. Still this religious element in their natures could hardly have been termed spirituality. It deviated from that as much as anything of religion—which is in one way spirituality itself—could.

Both sisters were eminently practical in all affairs of life, down to their very dreams, and Priscilla especially so. She had dealt in religion with the bare facts of sin and repentance, future punishment and reward. She had dwelt very little, probably, upon the poetic splendor of the Eternal City and talked about them still less. Indeed, she had always been reticent about her religious convictions, and had said very little about them even to her sister.

The two women, with God in their thoughts every moment, seldom had spoken His name to each other. For Priscilla to talk in the strain that she had to-day, and for a week or two previous, off and on, was, from its extreme deviation from her usual custom, certainly startling.

Poor Mary, sobbing over the potato barrel, thought it was a sign of approaching death. She had a few superstitious-like grafts upon her practical, common-place character.

She wiped her eyes finally, and went up-stairs with her tin basin of potatoes, which were carefully washed and put to soak by the time her sister came in with the empty basket.

At twelve exactly the two sat down to dinner in the clean kitchen, which was one of the two rooms the cottage boasted. The narrow entry ran from the front door to the back. On one side was the kitchen and living room; on the other, the room where the sisters slept. There were two small unfinished lofts overhead, reached by a step-ladder through a little scuttle in the entry ceiling, and that was all besides. The sisters had earned the cottage and paid for it years before, by working as tailoresses. They had quite a snug sum in the bank besides, which they had saved out of their hard earnings. There was no need for Priscilla and Mary to work so hard, people said, but work hard they did, and work hard they would as long as they lived. The mere habit of work had become as necessary to them as breathing.

Just as soon as they had finished their meal and cleared away the dishes they put on some clean starched purple prints, which were their afternoon dresses, and seated themselves at the two front windows with their work; the house faced southwest, so the sunlight streamed through both. It was a very warm day for the season, and the windows were open. In the yard outside great clumps of lilac stood close to both. They grew on the other side of the front door, too; a little later the low cottage would look half buried in them. The shadows of their leaves made a dancing net-work over the freshly yellow floor.

The two sisters sat there and sewed on some coarse vests all the afternoon. Neither made a remark often. The room, with its glossy little cooking-stove, its eight-day clock on the mantel, its chintz-cushioned rocking-chairs, and the dancing shadows of the lilac leaves on its yellow floor, looked pleasant and peaceful.

Just before six o'clock a neighbor dropped in with her cream pitcher to borrow some milk for tea, and she sat down for a minute's chat after she had got filled. They had been talking a few moments on neighborhood topics, when all of a sudden Priscilla let her work fall and raised her hand. "Hush!" whispered she.

The other two stopped talking, and listened, staring at her wonderingly, but they could hear nothing.

"What is it, Miss Priscilla?" asked the neighbor, with round, blue eyes. She was a pretty young thing, who had not been married long.

"Hush! Don't speak. Don't you hear that beautiful music?" Her ear was inclined toward the open window, her hand still raised warningly, and her eyes fixed on the opposite wall between them.

Mary turned visibly paler than her usual dull paleness, and shuddered. "I don't hear any music, she said. "Do you, Miss Moore?"

"No-o," replied the caller, her simple little face beginning to put on a scared look, from a vague sense of a mystery she could not fathom.

Mary Brown rose and went to the door, and looked eagerly up and down the street. "There ain't no organ-man in sight anywhere," said she returning, "an' I can't hear any music, an' Miss Moore can't, an' we're both sharp enough o' hearin'. You're jist imaginin' it, sister."

"I never imagined anything in my life," returned the other, "an' it ain't likely I'm goin' to begin now. It's the beautifulest music. It comes from over the orchard there. Can't you hear it? But it seems to me it's growin' a little fainter like now. I guess it's movin' off, perhaps."

Mary Brown set her lips hard. The grief and anxiety she had felt lately turned suddenly to unreasoning anger against the cause of it; through her very love she fired with quick wrath at the beloved object. Still she did not say much, only: "I guess it must be movin' off," with a laugh, which had an unpleasant ring in it.

After the neighbor had gone, however, she said more, standing before her sister with her arms folded squarely across her bosom. "Now, Priscilla Brown," she exclaimed, "I think it's about time to put a stop to this. I've heard about enough of it. What do you s'pose Miss Moore thought of you? Next thing it'll be all over town that you're gettin' spiritual notions. To-day it's music that nobody else can hear, an' yesterday you smelled roses, and there ain't one in blossom this time o' year, and all the time you're talkin' about dyin'. For my part, I don't see why you ain't as likely to live as I am. You're uncommon hearty on vittles. You ate a pretty good dinner to-day for a dyin' person."

"I didn'tsay I was goin' to die," replied Priscilla, meekly; the two sisters seemed suddenly to have changed natures. "An' I'll try not to talk so, if it plagues you. I told you I wouldn't this mornin', but the music kinder took me by surprise like, an' I thought may be you an' Miss Moore could here it. I can just hear it a little bit now, like the dyin' away of a bell."

"There you go agin!" cried the other sharply. "Do for mercy's sake, stop, Priscilla. There ain't no music."

"Well, I won't talk any more about it," she answered patiently; and she rose and began setting the table for tea, while Mary sat down and resumed her sewing, drawing the thread through the cloth with quick, uneven jerks.

That night the pretty girl neighbor was aroused from her first sleep by a distressed voice at her bed-room window, crying "Miss Moore? Miss Moore!"

She spoke to her husband, who opened the window. "What's wanted?" he asked, peering out into the darkness.

"Priscilla's sick," moaned the distressed voice; "awful sick. She's fainted, an' I can't bring her to. Go for the doctor—quick! quick! quick." The voice ended in a shriek on the last word, and the speaker turned and ran back to the cottage, where, on the bed, lay a pale, gaunt woman, who had not stirred since she left it. Immovable through all her sister's agony, she lay there, her features shaping themselves out more and more from the shadows, the bed clothes that covered her limbs taking on an awful rigidity.

"She must have died in her sleep," the doctor said, when he came, "without a struggle."

When Mary Brown really understood that her sister was dead, she left her to the kindly ministrations of the good women who are always ready in such times in a country place, and went and sat by the kitchen window in the chair which her sister had occupied that afternoon.

There the women found her when the last offices had been done for the dead.

"Come home with me to-night," one said; "Miss Green will stay with her," with a turn of her head toward the opposite room, and an emphasis on the pronoun which distinguished it at once from one applied to a living person.

"No," said Mary Brown; "I'm a-goin to set here an' listen." She had the window wide open, leaning her head out into the chilly night air.

The women looked at each other; one tapped her head, another nodded hers. "Poor thing!" said a third.

"You see," went on Mary Brown, still speaking with her head leaned out of the window, "I was cross with her this afternoon because she talked about hearin' music. I was cross, an' spoke up sharp to her, because I loved her, but I don't think she knew. I didn't want to think she was goin to die, but she was. An' she heard the music. It was true. An' now I'm a-goin' to set here an' listen till I hear it too, an' then I'll know she ain't laid up what I said agin me, an' that I'm a-goin to die, too."

They found it impossible to reason with her; there she sat till morning, with a pitying woman beside her, listening all in vain for unearthly melody.

Next day they sent for a widowed niece of the sisters, who came at once, bringing her little boy with her. She was a kindly young woman, and took up her abode in the little cottage, and did the best she could for her poor aunt, who, it soon became evident, would never be quite herself again. There she would sit at the kitchen window and listen day after day. She took a great fancy to her niece's little boy, and used often to hold him in her lap as she sat there. Once in a while she would ask him if he heard any music. "An innocent little thing like him hears quicker than a hard unbelievin' old woman like me," she told his mother once.

She lived so for nearly a year after her sister died. It was evident that she had failed gradually and surely, though there was no apparent disease. It seemed to trouble her exceedingly that she never heard the music she listened for. She had an idea that she could not die unless she did, and her whole soul seemed filled with longing to join her beloved twin sister, and be assured of her forgiveness. This sister-love was all she had ever felt, besides her love of God, in any strong degree; all the passion of devotion of which this homely, common-place woman was capable was centered in that, and the unsatisfied strength of it was killing her. The weaker she grew the more earnestly she listened. She was too feeble to sit up, but she would not consent to lie in bed, and made them bolster her up with pillows in a rocking chair by the window. At last she died, in the spring, a week or two before her sister had the year before. The season was a little more advanced this year, and the apple trees were blossomed out further than they were then. She died about 10 o'clock in the morning. The day before her niece had been called into the room by a shrill cry of rapture from her: "I've heard it! I've heard it!" she cried: "A faint sound o' music, like the dyin' away of a bell!"

"Big Game" in India.

Chicago Times.

Hunters who wish to bag "big game" should lose no time in visiting the unhappy hunting grounds that are situated among the jungles of the Madras Presidency, India. Hunting, which is a pastime in most countries, is a necessary occupation, if not a duty, in this "neck of woods." If the human inhabitants should not keep up an active war against the ferocious animals, the latter would soon extirminate the former. A constant warfare for the supremacy is going on. The official reports show that during last year wild beasts killed 1,195 persons, while human beings killed 2,055 dangerous wild beasts. Among the dangerous wild beasts killed were five ferocious elephants. This was not a large number, but it must be kept in mind that one elephant can do a great amount of damage. He goes through a country spreading desolation like a tornado, uproots trees, overturns houses, demolishes carriages, and kills domesticated animals and human beings. Each of the elephants slain last season had "killed his man." Among the animals killed were 278 tigers, 1,300 panthers and leopards, 213 bears and 24 wolves. No less than 920 huge serpents were also slain. These monsters had killed 206 human beings. Bears are credited with killing 11, and panthers 26. The tiger is held in the greatest terror. It is far more dangerous than the lion. It is the impersonation of hunger, cruelty and cunning. Its appetite appears never to be fully satisfied. In early life it devours the helpless young of other wild animals. As it becomes larger and stronger it attacks full-grown domesticated animals. Finally it gets sufficiently bold to pursue men. It lurks by the wayside or adar wells and springs, ready to leap upon the traveler or the water-seeker. Leopards and panthers are dangerous enough, but are less destructive of human life than tigers.

The character of the wild animals of a country exerts a most powerful influence on the settlement and the prosperity of its inhabitants. In this respect the territory occupied by the United States was most remarkable. In the opinion of an eminent naturalist, it contained no wild animal that was not of more benefit than disadvantage to the settlers. It abounded in fur-bearing animals, whose skins were in demand in all the great centers of wealth and civilization. These skins constituted a source of wealth to the early settlers. Hunting and trapping were profitable employments when people could not engage in farming. Some of the skins were converted into garments and others into money. The skins of buffalos were made into garments, employed as coverings for beds, or used as protection in sleighs. Moose, deer, antelope and bears furnished meat until domesticated animals could be introduced and raised in sufficient numbers to supply the people with food. Their fat and hides were useful for a great variety of purposes. Rabbits, squirrels, ground-hogs, opossums and 'coons also furnished valuable meat and skins. Foxes and bears did some damage, but were useful in keeping in check many of the small animals that rank as vermin. They were easily caught in traps or killed by the use of fire-arms, and their skins were very valuable and brought a high price at a time when agricultural products raised at a distance from water communication could not be sold for money or exchanged for articles of food and clothing. All the native animals of this country are of easy extermination. Most of them disappear before the march of civilization, and only stay as long as they are wanted by the inhabitants. The Hindoos might lead happier and less exciting lives if their game were as valuable and as little troublesome.

How many creditors miss their dues when nature's debt is paid?

The Italian Soldier.

London Daily News.

The Italian soldier, as a rule, is short and spare built, and his general appearance conveys the impression of a not over robust physique. But see him marching, and it soon becomes apparent that he possesses more stamina than one would give him credit for. How unmurmuringly he trudges for hours at a time along a dusty road under a hot sun with his heavy knapsack on his back and his rifle slung across his shoulder. And our surprise is increased when we examine what meagre rations he has to sustain him under all his toil.

His chief meal consists of soup made with lard, meat and macaroni or some other kind of paste. His mess is prepared in large caldrons, round which at a given signal the men gather, each with a tin can, into which is poured a not very abundant supply of soup and an almost invisible lump of meat. In setting out on a long march the soldier drinks the soup and keeps the meat to eat on the road. Besides this he gets coffee without milk in the morning and about two pounds of bread to last him throughout the day. A tumbler of wine is served out to him on an average every third or fourth day in the year.

If his food is Spartan in its simplicity his dress is equally exempted from the charge of luxury. A loose coat of coarse grayish blue cloth covers the infantry soldier from neck to knee. His trousers are of the same material, but when marching the latter are exchanged for canvas trousers, and when working in camp a canvas tunic is donned instead of the coat. His headgear is a kepi, very like that in use in the French army.

The uniform of the Bersaglieri is somewhat more "expressed in fancy." This arm consists of picked men; indeed, only strong fellows could march at the rapid pace they are trained to. Otherwise their drill is much the same as that of the ordinary infantry regiments. They wear a black tunic with red facings, and black, broad-brimmed hat, with a bunch of green feathers stuck at one side. They are armed like the infantry, with Wetterly rifles. The cavalry and artillery are comparatively weaker arms than the infantry. The former poorly mounted, and the guns and train of the latter are below par.

The cavalry are divided into heavy cavalry or dragoons, lancers and light cavalry. The dragoons are easily distinguished by their helmets. Both they and the lancers are armed with lance and (Wetterly) musket. The light cavalry, or Cavalleggieri, have revolvers instead of lances. Singularly enough, the cavalry have their swords and muskets fastened to the saddles, so that if unhorsed they are defenseless. I have already remarked that the physique of the men is better than outward appearances would denote.

As regards their general disposition, I may remark that they are docile, obedient to their superiors, well behaved, cheerful and laborious. In times of danger and disaster, as during the cholera of 1867, the inundations of last year, and on the occasion of the recent earthquake at Ischia, they work with an ardor and self-devotion which is gratefully recognized by their fellow-citizens.

They lack, however, the smartness both in dress and drill, and the martial bearing of English or German soldiers. The former and less important deficiency is the natural outcome of Italy's endeavors to maintain a larger army than she can afford properly to equip. The inferiority of the drill is doubtless chiefly due to the shortness of the time of service (thirty months) an the scarcity of sergeants in the army.

Entertaining a Guest.

Philadelphia Call.

"I can't altogether like this young man Miliken who comes to see you so often. I hear that he is nothing but a poor dry goods clerk," was what the head of the family said to his daughter one day at the dinner-table.

"He is a very nice young gentleman," replied the daughter, "besides, he is something more than a 'poor dry goods clerk.' He gets a large salary and is manager of one of the departments, and expects some day to have an interest in the business."

"I hope he may," responded the old man, "but he strikes me as a very flippant, impertinent young person, and in my opinion he should be sat down upon."

"Well, I have invited him to take tea with us this evening," said the daughter, "and I hope you will treat him politely at least. You will find him a very different person from what you suppose him to be."

"Oh, I'll treat him politely enough," he said.

That evening Mr. Milliken appeared at supper and made a most favorable impression upon the old gentleman. "He is a clever young fellow, after all," he thought. "I have done him an injustice."

It was just here that Bobby spoke out. Bobby was a well-meaning little boy, but too talkative.

"Papa," he ventured, "you know what you said to-day at dinner about Mr. Milliken; that he was an impertinent young man and ought to be sat down upon—"

"Silence, sir!" shouted the father, swallowing a mouthful of hot potato.

But the little boy wouldn't silence. "It's all right," he continued, confidentially, but in a whisper to be heard loud enough to be heard out of doors, "he has been sat down upon. Sister sat down on him last night for two hours."

After this the dinner went on more quietly, owing to Bobby's sudden and very jerky departure.

The farmer's best friend—Eliza. Eliza who? Fertilizer.