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A VISION.

BY MISS C.M. SEDGWICK.

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I WALKED out on a bright morning early in May, when nature was unsealing her fountains of life and beauty. The rivers, brooks, all the water-courses down to the tiniest rill were filled to the brim by the flowing Spring rains. Their voices, from the gushing torrent to the little silver thread of a stream that softly stole through the meadow, sung their release from their winter prison. The violet was opening its blue eye, the anemone starring the fresh herbage, and all the early flowers, like chary maidens, were timidly unfolding their beauties. The willows along the river side were already in full leaf and tasseled, and the shrubs were fragrant with out-budding life. On the hill side the young leaves of the beech and maple, mingling with the dark foliage of the firs which had braved and outlasted winter, looked like youth gracefully sporting about maturity. And in beautiful harmony with this was the bright green of the winter grain contrasted with the sombre brown of the newly ploughed earth dotted with the potato crops, and just perforated by the sun-loving Indian corn. Cattle were keenly feeding on the fresh grass of the lowlands, and sheep nibbling on the hill side. The birds had come to their summer home, and pleasant tasks. The males were singing, wooing, and roving at their own wild will, while the females, good wives and household dames, were providing for the future lords of their aerial creation. The air was filled with the sound of young life: with the dissonant cries of the domestic birds, and the flutter and hum of millions of insects. The sky was bright and clear save where a breezy cloud sailed over it, so light that it dissolved while my eye followed it.

I sat down on a fallen trunk of a tree under a curtain of budding grape-leaves. I felt satisfied with the mere pleasure of existence. I wondered at those who staid at home, and drudged over household tasks when nature was proclaiming a holiday that might waken to joyous life and call forth the dullest human snail housed in its winter's shell.

By degrees the monotonous music of the brook lulled me into forgetfulness. I fell into a drowsy reverie and from reverie to sleep; but not sleep of an ordinary kind. My senses preserved their power unshackled by gross mortal elements and unlimited in their action by time or space. I seemed suddenly endowed with the *clairvoyance* of the Mesmerites, but with this remarkable advantage over them, that I am permitted to show to those who will but open their eyes what was revealed to my closed senses; and that while they ask faith in startling novelties I only impart self-evident truths. I was not conscious of any change in the vividness of my sensations. The scene was as distinctly before me as while I was awake; the only difference was an indefinite extension of power. As I gazed two lovely forms appeared before me, as if the air had become incorporate; and so fresh with youth and beauty that they seemed like an impersonation

of the spring time. The one was a Hebe in form and expression; her garments were light and flowing in no sort constraining, impeding, or encumbering her. She gathered the sweet violets at her feet, and the anemones from the moist margin of the brook, and wove them together in a circlet for her brow which no care had ever touched, Her companion wore an amaranth wreath as a symbol of immortality. She had not quite the plumpness and freshness of her sister; for sisters they were; but there was a spirituality in her expression that indicated a celestial destiny. Her's was the beauty of reflection; something that welled up from a living fountain in the soul, the result of a felicitous animal condition. I asked their names. "Our names," replied the elder, "are implied in our offices. Observe the one, and you will know the other."

I did observe them, and as I said before, without limit of time or space; and I soon learned that their mission was to bless the human race, but that powerful as they were, nothing could be effected without the co-operation of those to whom they were sent.

Strange to say, they were most praised when absent. Every one theoretically acknowledged their worth, and agreed in admiring their beauty, but few cherished them; some seemed stupidly unconscious of their presence, and many grossly abused them to their faces, but the moment their backs were turned they were regretted and praised. Nothing was enjoyed without them; they were sought by sacrifice and pilgrimage, and if their favour was irrecoverable, life was one long complaint, made up of suffering days and sleepless nights.

She of the amaranth wreath did sometimes linger with those her sister had abandoned. She could not remove but she sanctified their sufferings and shed an attractive light over them, that drew their friends around them even more than while they were the favourites of her beautiful sister. This I marked, *she only staid at the bidding of Religion*. No inferior power could detain her after her sister was gone.

There was no habitable place on the globe which the sisters did not visit, but as I naturally felt most interested in their movements in my own country, I here most narrowly observed them. One sad con-

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fession truth compels me to make. I saw fewer signs of their friendship among my own country-people than elsewhere. Their intimates could never be mistaken; there was a certain clearness in their eyes, brightness on their cheeks, elasticity in their movements and animation in their voices that infallibly betokened the proximity and favour of the sisters.

"Why," I asked with some impatience, "why this partiality? why do you so soon forsake my people, when I see you abroad with English men and women in parks, gardens, and pleasure grounds, maintaining with them a hearty friendship through the seven stages of life; you follow too, the poor Swiss mountaineers and dwell with them under the shadow of their icy mountains, faring hard and working hard for a hundred

years: and you sit down on the sunny side of a street with the lean and hungry Italian beggar, who shouts and laughs cheerily at your side, till the old pilgrim drops from your bosom into the grave."

"We are not capricious," they replied, with dignity; "we are the ordained companions of your race, and by a law superior to us we cling to them till driven away by ignorance, neglect, or misuse. Listen, and learn some of the reasons that weaken our friendship with your people, and so often expel us from their society; for it is they, and not we, that break the compact nature has made between us.

"We love their children and bid them forth into the open air where the sun can send its vital heat through their expanding frames, and where the fresh breath of Heaven may light their eyes, and colour their cheeks. You will hear our voices merrily ringing wherever they are found coursing down the icy hills in winter, and loudest and blithest are we among the skaters on the moonlit lake. When the ball-playing time comes we are on the village green with the first, and we linger with the last. They must follow us to the woodlands, brush off the dew with their early footsteps, welcome abroad the bright frosty morning, and bravely face the winter's wind. Nor do we desert the city if rightly welcomed there, if treated to early hours and temperate meals. But the children must trundle their hoops through the parks with us. We are stifled in close nurseries. We cannot sit by them while their heads are drooping over lessons in unventilated school-rooms for six consecutive hours. We cannot breathe in dormitories with forty pairs of lungs inhaling over and over again an exhausted atmosphere. Our hearts would die within us if condemned to walk in the funereal processions of boarding-school girls. Our lives are in the open air. Those who would have our constant presence, our heartiest love, must follow us a-field. One of your poets has said,

'God made the country, and man made the town;'

and we say, God ordained the out-door life, and man the in-door.

"We pity those who are condemned by conventional life, or the artificial condition of society, to violate some of our laws; but while they respect and cherish us we do not utterly desert them. We have been driven away from the hard-tasked and ill-fed operatives in the old world, but we are on very good terms with the buxom, light-hearted (because lightly-tasked) girls in your manufactories. Tell them a secret for us; if they will come oftener abroad to meet us, we will send them back to their labour with fresher spirits and prettier looks. Beauty cannot endure without us, after youth. Your very young women are beautiful, but with their youth and freshness their beauty vanishes. Virtuous, through all the stages of life, we acknowledge them to be, but without us their very goodness is often a toil and weariness. Were they but true to us their smiles would be spontaneous, and their well-doings an enjoyment.

You see we never desert those who live in the open air, whether they browse on coarse edibles, or fare sumptuously every day; whether they be clothed in fine linen or in rags; and yet you expect us to house ourselves with you in rooms heated to a degree that

sears your skins, inflames your eyes, and dries away the very fountains of life. Pardon our frankness," they continued, pointing to some shallow vessels for personal purification; "look at the broad reservoirs of water, and deep fonts in our temples; we cannot abide these things. You reproach us, but our alienation from your people is not our fault. All classes and conditions among you reject us. We offer to give gladness to the days of your students, and refreshment to their nights, but they refuse the conditions of our friendship, and languish and stupify over their books. Your sedentary men are deaf to our warnings and invitations, and before half the term of life is spent they are weary and wasted, and disappear, leaving half their tasks undone. Your merchants, knowing we hate the whole brood of care, heap anxiety on anxiety, and toil on toil, till, bending under an accumulation of riches or poverty, it matters little which, they turn to seek our favour, and find an impassable gulf between us. We never return to those who gray their hair and furrow their cheeks with sordid care.

"We seek rural life, and trudge a-field with your farmer; but alas! we have complaints to make of him. We have again and again declared our antipathy to fresh bread and hot cakes, and yet he asks us to breakfast on them. We repair to his meridian meal, and he offers us hard salted meat and fried messes; and when we join the pleasant gathering round the tea-table we are compelled to fly for our lives from poisonous sweetcakes and sweetmeats."

"But surely," said I, "you have devoted friends among our people. There are colleges endowed to train your ministers, and every paper we read is filled with promises to restore to your society and friendship all who, by any accident, misfortune, or fault, have lost them. Every town has innumerable arsenals. Every village has its store-

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house, filled with philtres and charms which these, your ministers, profess so to compound and administer as to restore your gladdening presence to every mortal that seeks you."

A sad smile passed over the sisters' faces, and the elder, drawing near to me, said in a subdued voice, "Save us from our friends; wisdom, skill, and virtue some of them possess; but they work in the dark, and though they now and then make some fortunate guesses, they have made few discoveries. They have been well compared to a watchmaker who should attempt to repair a watch of which he could not see the machinery. Besides, among these our professed friends are a mass of ignorant pretenders, and in their hands these charms and philtres are deadly poisons, and those to whom they are given stumble and blunder on after us with stiffened joints, weak and withering limbs, sunken cheeks, loosened teeth, aching jaws, and all the pains and aches which flesh is heir to.

"But," she concluded, the light shadow that had fallen on her joyous face passing from it, "the condition of your race here and elsewhere is improving, and these evils will vanish before the progress of experience, knowledge, and virtue. The time is coming

when we shall have a league of friendship with you from the breezy hills of the north, to the orange groves of the south; then will we give life to life, and make it the happy and profitable service God intended it to be."

Who were these sisters? All ye of the blooming cheek and strong heart answer from your own happy consciousness, "Health and Cheerfulness."