

**HE AND SHE; OR, A
POET'S PORTFOLIO**

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He and She; Or, a Poet's Portfolio by W. W. Story

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W. W. STORY

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o Mrs Goodwin with the
kind regards of W. W. Story

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BY

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TWELFTH EDITION



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HE AND SHE;

OR, A POET'S PORTFOLIO.

HE was in the habit of wandering alone, during the summer mornings, through the forest and along the mountain side, and one of his favorite haunts was a picturesque glen, where he often sat for hours alone with nature, lost in vague contemplation: now watching the busy insect life in the grass or in the air; now listening to the chirping of birds in the woods, the murmuring of bees hovering about the flowers, or the welling of the clear mountain torrent, that told forever its endless tale as it wandered by mossy boulders and rounded stones down to the valley below; now gazing idly into the sky, against which the overhanging beeches printed their leaves in tessellated

light and dark, or vaguely watching the lazy clouds that trailed across the tender blue ; now noting in his portfolio some passing thought, or fancy, or feeling, that threw its gleam of light or shadow across his dreaming mind.

Here, leaning against one of the mossy boulders, in the shadow of the beeches, he was writing in his portfolio one summer morning, when she accidentally found him, and the following conversation took place: —

She. Ah, here you are, sitting under this old beech and scribbling verses, as usual, are you not ? Why don't you rest and lie fallow ? You are always working your brains. All work and no play — and you know the rest. Come, confess !

He. I confess, I can't help it.

She. You can if you choose.

He. But suppose I don't choose ; suppose it is my delight to do this. Nature is always teasing me to do something for her, — to dress her in verse, or in some shape or other of art ; and she has such subtle powers of persuasion that I cannot resist her. You know that in some ways

you are her child, and I doubt if I could refuse you anything.

She. Well, I take you at your word. Read me what you have written.

He. It is only rubbish; it is scarce worth your hearing.

She. Let me be the judge. You have, I see, a book full of what you call rubbish. You have promised me so often to read me some of your poems, and the time has now come to fulfill your promise. Don't be shy. You know you want to read them to me. There never was a poet who did not like to read his verses.

He. Not to everybody.

She. Ah, then, you don't think me worthy to hear them.

He. No; I don't think them worthy to be heard by you.

She. Nonsense! You like to read them; I like to hear them. Here we are in this delightful glen; there is no one near to interrupt us; we have the whole day before us; I have a piece of embroidery to occupy my hands; and I will promise to praise every poem you read.

He. Then I won't read you a word of anything I have here.

She. Oh, yes, you will. You know you wish me to praise them. What poet was ever willing to read his verses unless he expected or at least hoped to be praised? You cannot pretend you wish me to criticise them and find fault with them.

He. But I do; that is just what I should like. I should like to have an honest opinion, if I ever could get it; but that is of all things the most difficult to obtain from any one. We always have either a friend who overpraises, or a critic who undervalues, or a brother-poet whose personality interferes with his judgment, or an indifferent person who does not take interest enough to have an opinion, or some one who is kneaded up of prose, and sees no reason for singing clothes, or — a fool.

She. And in the last class are all, I suppose, who think your verses are poor stuff?

He. I dare say there is something in that, and they may be right in their opinion, but of course we don't like it.

She. Well, I don't come under any class you have mentioned, and I insist on hearing some of these verses.

He. And you will be honest with me?

She. As honest as I dare to be with a poet who reads me his poems. Now begin.

He. But really, I assure you, I have nothing here worth your listening to. This is only a book where I carelessly jot down whatever comes into my head just as it comes. It is full of first sketches, half-finished things, glimpses of thoughts or feelings or persons. They are not really poems. That is too high and honorable a name to give them.

She. Ah, but that is just what I like to hear. It will be like looking over an artist's sketch-book, where things are half done, just begun, altered, erased, outlined, unframed, and these always have a peculiar charm that finished work never has; a freshness and careless grace that elaboration tarnes and spoils. Ah! read me these. They let one into the secret laboratory of the poet's mind.

He. Or behind the scenes, where the machinery is visible, and everything is rude and rough and out of place.

She. Well, there is a fascination in that, too. There is where the friends of

the actors and authors are permitted to go. But begin : time is flying, the day is passing.

He. Ah, yes, if we only could stop Time when all is happy and bright ! But then it swiftest flees away. Here, listen, since you will hear something. This is apropos.

O beloved day,
Stay with us, oh stay !
Hurry not with cruel haste thus so swift
away.

All is now so fair;
Love is in the air;
More than this of happiness scarce the
heart could bear.

Nothing short of heaven,
That perhaps not even
Sweeter, dearer, more divine, will to us
be given.

Dearest, on my breast
Lean thy head and rest :
Nothing that this world can give is better;
this is best.