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APPLICATION

A Waif from a Soldier's Diary.

Thank Heaven for dreams! I had a sweet one this morning. The bugle had sounded for "Reveille," the drums had rattled their noisy response. I had crawled from my cosy bed upon the ground to stand roll call, and as it wanted yet an hour before the daylight came, I crept between the blankets for another nap. The cold, damp rain had chilled me thoroughly, and heartily tired of a soldier's bed, I fell asleep shivering as if stricken with the ague fit. I dreamed that it was spring-time, and that I was loitering across an old bridge—a massive cordon of stone arches—the scene of many a pleasant memory. As I reached the further side there came to meet me a winsome creature, whom memory named—

"With the light locks waving o'er her brow,
An joy in her deep blue eye,
With the rainbrous kiss and the happy smile
And the dance of the lightsome foot."

It seemed that she had been waiting for me, had watched my coming, and sprung from her hiding place to witness my glad surprise. So had she done in other days. The sunshine of the spring had gilded the brown locks that curled in rich profusion about the beaming countenance. The bloom of health and youth was on lip and cheek, the sparkle of joy in the dancing eye, and "beauty everywhere." The light floating drapery of summer fell in charming grace about the petite figure. Lightly she sprang to my embrace and the fullness answered to the pressure of my own. How the soft touch thrilled me! How I wished the light form might rest upon my bosom forever. But the lips could not long be silent, nor the pretty form endure for a long time the restraint, even of a loved embrace. She bounded from my arms, shook herself like some gay bird setting its plumes after a hand has touched them, and with an arch look and merry laugh, tossed back the bright curls from her brow, then delicately putting her hand upon my arm and gaily chatting of the past, present and to come, (all strangely mingled and confused) tripped lightly beside toward an old mansion half hiding in the shadow of a mountain. Memory playing tricks with Fancy in my sleep? On we went down that old avenue of elms, its gravel walk as clear, as that which makes the trout's home in the river that flowed beside us, rustled beneath our feet. The blossoming willows which skirted the river bank sent forth their odors, freighting the air of the spring morning with fragrance almost oppressive. How the fairy touch of those fair fingers thrilled me, as we ran up the rough stone steps of the old mansion—*her home*. Do dream-spirits have homes? Had I before tripped hand in hand, up those moss grown steps with that bright impersonation of youth and beauty? Was the subtle fragrance which seemed to be an ethereal presence floating near us—was this, the characteristic, never to be forgotten and well remembered perfume of a mignonette? It was not mignonette, nor violet. It was not the sweet bouquet that lends the haunting memory to the beauty of the sweet pea, nor the gentle aroma that marks the bodily presence of Hermanna, nor the subtle perfume which proclaims the resignation in the heart of Nora. It was not the voluptuous fragrance of the rose, which added to the enchantment of the Southern syren, nor the piquante thyme which gave a befitting charm to the dashing Kentucky widow. It was the breath of Fern. How the breezy mountain-tops loom on my sight as I behold me of this odor that haunts me ever more! Can it be? Oh! memory how are the cherished reminiscences entwined with dreaming fancy! Fantastic as ever! are they equally unreal? Does the present link the past and future? Did I dream all this? I know not. It went on. The gate was opened, the soft hand was locked in mine. The breezy drapery, the lingering fragrance still beside me. Around me the Past repeated itself. The Future or is that? I would give wealth to know, no matter what. The door opens and I gaze into a familiar room. The sofa, the guitar, the glint of the river flashing through the open window.

H. A. U.

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