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This is true Liberty, when Free-born Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free.—EURIPIDES.

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Literature.

DIFFERENCES.

BY CHARLES MACKAY.

The King can drink the best of wine—
So can I;
And has enough when he would dine—
So have I;
And cannot order Rain or Shine—
Nor can I.
Then where's the difference—let me see—
Betwixt my Lord the King and me?

Do trusty friends surround his throne
Night and day?
Or make his interest their own?
No not they.
Mine love me for myself alone—
Bless'd be they!
And that's one difference which I see
Betwixt my Lord the King and me.

Do knaves around me lie in wait
To deceive?
Or fawn and flatter when they hate,
And would grieve?
Or cruel pomps oppress my state,
By my leave?
No! Heaven be thanked! And here you see
More difference 'twixt the King and me!

He has his foils, with jests and quibs,
When he'd play;
He has his armies and his ships—
Great are they;
But not a child to kiss his lips,
Well-a-day!
And that's a difference sad to see
Betwixt my Lord the King and me.

I wear the cap and he the crown—
What of that?
I sleep on straw and he on down—
What of that?
And he's the King and I'm the clown—
What of that?
If happy I, and wretched he,
Perhaps the King would change with me.

ONLY BELLA; OR, THE MINIATURE.

BY BESSIE BECHWOOD.

It was a bright summer afternoon, and the long French windows of Mrs. Reade's beautiful marine villa were thrown open to invite the free entrance of the pure air of the sea into the large, shaded drawing-room. Readily the zephyr accepted the hospitality—who could have refused it to such an aristocratic mansion?—and set the snowy drapery coquetting gracefully with the green vines without as it swept mischievously through.

On the verandah sat a young girl, leaning her bright brown head against the fresh green leaves that twined the tall column, while a book engaged her attention. The soft breeze fanned her cheek; and her calm, thoughtful face seemed to indicate that the quiet beauty of the landscape had stolen into her heart, and that she felt its gentle charm, though her eyes drank not in the rich coloring of the scene.

She was not beautiful; that is—smile not, gentle reader, at the qualification of a heroine's homeliness—she was not one whose beauty would attract a second glance. No exquisite regularity of feature or delicately tinted complexion, suggested her as the artist's or the poet's ideal. But could even painter catch the shifting tints of that rich hair, or paint the expression of that calm, blue eye? He might not draw inspiration from its glance, but he would feel the happier that its kindness had, for a moment, rested on him! No, hers was not the style to attract the eye of the connoisseur, or win the admiration of the crowd, but one to take up its silent abode in one heart, and brighten one life for ever after. We can scarcely wonder, then, to see this young girl, in her simple white dress and plainly banded hair, sitting apart, best pleased when by herself, even though music and merry voices float to her through the open windows.

The sun is setting behind the hills, and in his dying moments has no longer power to mar with his warm kiss the snowy brows of those who have remained within, fearful of his power, and they are coming forth to look upon him now that he is no longer dangerous. A young girl, attired in all the rich and exquisitely tasteful appurtenances of a French toilet, whose sparkling beauty bears the gay costume with a striking grace; an older lady, whose dress bespeaks the dowager, and two gentlemen, compose the group.

As they approach the steps, the present occupant rises quickly, and draws more into the shadow of the vines; the gentlemen pause, but the ladies proceed, and the younger one carelessly exclaims, "Oh! never mind, it's only Bella!"

A faint flush rises to Bella's cheeks; she returns the gentleman's ceremonious bow with quiet grace, and they pass on.

"And who is Bella, may I ask?" inquired one of the gentlemen, evidently somewhat of a stranger, as he and the younger lady strolled in advance of the others.

"Why, Bella Reade, my sister!" replied she, laughing at his surprise.

"Pardon me, Miss Reade, I thought you were the only jewel this charming casket enshrined. I had never heard of a sister."

"It was a very natural mistake, Sir Percy Marston," replied the lady, good humoredly. "Bella is odd; she feels that she is not pretty, and cares little for society; so she rarely accompanies us. I should die of *ennui* were I to mope at home as she does! What a pretty picture that little fishing boat makes as the sunbeam rests upon its sail!"

Her evident wish to dismiss the subject vexed Sir Percy Marston for a moment; but she looked so charming in the graceful attitude she had assumed to designate the picture, that he could but admire, and in a little while Bella was forgotten in the sprightliness of her more beautiful sister.

Yes, Bella Reade, you were "odd," and no one knew it better than yourself, for no one heard it oftener! Her tastes had ever been at variance with all those whom her father's wealth surrounded her; and she grieved for her mother's disappointment, when she became assured that her own juvenile triumphs would never be reproduced by her eldest daughter. Her own beauty was on the wane, and Mrs. Reade knew that the strongest additional passport to brilliant society beside her wealth, would be a handsome daughter, to give *clat* to her entertainments, and secure a young and brilliant company. Therefore she was not measured in her regrets; and Bella, whose early youth gave no promise of

even her more subdued charms, came to think more lightly of herself than the truth warranted; and it was with interest, seldom mingled with envy or regret, that she watched the growing loveliness of the black-eyed gipsy, her youngest sister, Jessie. How often she rejoiced that she would realize their mother's hopes, and be spared the mortification of neglect, or that still more galling patronage in the gay world where her lot was cast.

Thus, then, she had reached the age of twenty, with a heart overflowing with kindness, which the diffidence arising from the humble opinion she entertained of herself held under continual restraint, earning for her the name of being cold and even proud, shrinking from attention which her sensitiveness construed into mercenariness, or worse, compassion. Misunderstood by all around her, and met at every turn by that many meaning monosyllable "odd," is it strange she should "care little for society," and find her greatest pleasure in being alone?

With all this, Bella was not unhappy; the calm, domestic duties that fell so naturally and so readily to her charge gave her healthful occupation; and these, with many a self-imposed task of kindness or benevolence, and an earnest love of books, afforded her ample amusement. With a quiet self-possession arising from her very humility, she glided through the house, and duty and order breathed around her; till her family scarcely suspected how much comfort they owed her noiseless presence, for it was "only Bella," and all she did was so kindly and willingly done, that they had come to expect, but completely lost sight of the cause.

As the dusk deepened, the party who had strolled out upon the terrace returned to tea; and Sir Percy Marston was struck with the pleasing gentleness and all-pervading grace of Miss Reade, till with some embarrassment, but so covered by her reserve as to give a haughty expression to her calm face, Bella once or twice encountered his dark eyes fixed upon her.

Sir Percy Marston's character might be read in his countenance. He was an intelligent, honorable, high-minded young man, and frank and open as the day. He could ill comprehend the heart that folded its true life with its secret care, while that written on the features gave no indication of the current that flowed with ceaseless tide beneath.

He could see no evidence of "oddity" in Bella; and he felt as if there were some mystery about her which awakened his interest. That she was plain he could not admit, for as he turned from the vivacious Jessie, now in full tide of sparkling *badinage* with Gerald Ashton, the other visitor, to the perfect repose of manner, and calm, good sense of Bella's occasional remarks, he could but feel it a refreshing relief.

"He's comparing us," thought Bella, catching his glance as it wandered from her sister to her. "Happy Jessie, she need not fear the result! And why should I? Pie! Bella, envious again! What is it to you that he should admire her most?"

But Bella could not so easily banish the anxiety, and a feeling of uneasiness almost amounting to unhappiness, for the first time in years, took possession of her. Little did she dream the result could be favorable to her, so accustomed had she been to see physical beauty carry all before it.

After tea a moonlight ride was proposed, and Mrs. Reade's phaeton was ordered to the door.

"Will not Miss Reade accompany us?" asked Marston, turning towards her.

"Bella does not care about it," replied her mother, without giving her time to answer; "she prefers remaining as company to her father. Do you not, Bella?"

"Yes, mamma," replied Bella, quietly, though for once her heart rebelled against the falsehood. Many, many times it would have been true, for Bella loved her father best upon earth; but to-night the words were strongly rebellious, and sounded false to her own ear as she uttered them.

As she sat in the pure moonlight, when they had driven away, she felt ashamed of her discontent, and endeavored to quell the sad thoughts that rose tumultuously within her breast, but the struggle was harder than ever before. After awhile Mr. Reade, who had been engaged in his library since tea, came out on the terrace; but the change from the bright light prevented his seeing who was there.

"Is any one here?" he asked.

"Only Bella, papa," replied she, in the accepted phraseology.

"Only Bella? It is always *only* Bella! and what more could any reasonable person want than such a Bella?" said Mr. Reade, affectionately laying his hand on her head. It was seldom the kind, but pre-occupied statesman exhibited so much warmth, and coming at such a moment, Bella felt it almost as a reproach.

"Don't say so, papa," she exclaimed, half frightened, yet longing to throw herself into his arms and confess her weakness; but diffidence restrained her, and she added playfully, "Don't spoil me by flattery, then. Come, shall I sing for you?" and wishing to change the topic and divert his attention from herself, she drew him into the drawing-room, lighted only by the moon, and seated herself at the instrument.

An accidental witness of this scene leaned against the pillar, that had served her as a support at sunset, sorely puzzled with the new interest that was springing up within him. Marston had left the party, paying a visit in the neighborhood, and had walked back alone to the house, which now had a new charm for him, and stood listening to the low, sweet voice that floated into the soft light as pure and melancholy as the moonbeam itself. Sir Percy Marston could have wished his lady hostess and her merry companions at any distance from their home, as the carriage came crashing over the gravel, and the light laugh rose above the clatter of the wheels, for at their approach Bella ceased and disappeared from the drawing-room, little dreaming she had had any more attentive listener than her father, who was now dozing in his arm-chair, dreaming of his constituents and the next general election, for he was a country member.

"I thought I heard singing!" said Ashton, looking round as they entered.

"Yes, it was only Bella," replied Jessie, taking her sister's vacant seat.

French *chansonnets*, polkas, waltzes now sparkled from Jessie's fingers; but unable to endure the contrast, Marston excused himself and retired; but Ashton, to whom Bella was a nonentity when Jessie was present, spent another delightful hour with her and her elegant mamma, and then they dispersed for the night to dream of new pleasures on the morrow.

Many a bright summer afternoon saw Sir Percy Marston a welcome visitor to Hazelwood, for he was an unexceptionable *parti*, and such were ever sure of welcome from the gracious hostess, whose lead Mr. Reade ever god naturely seconded. To Jessie he was a pleasant companion, some one to flirt with, and that was all-sufficient for the present; for a permanent companion, she preferred a very different person. Any one

who swelled the list of her admirers, and so added to her *clat*, was sure of a favorable reception from the thoughtless beauty.

But how was it with Bella? That was the question Marston would fain have solved; but calm and impenetrable as ever, her face betrayed no more than quiet indifference, meeting his attentions with a reserve graceful and amiable, but utterly insurmountable. He was in despair. Her retiring manners gave him no opportunity of "drawing her out;" and he was often obliged to play the agreeable to his other fair entertainers, when a powerful effort alone enabled him to pay proper attention to their charming conversation, so engrossed was he with the study of the graceful enigma who had so strongly interested him.

Could he have read her heart as it is our magic privilege to do, he would have known that when coldest her "outward seeming," the fire burned hottest within—that when the prisoner gave symptoms of increasing strength, the fortress was reinforced and new guards set. Could he have seen the wild throbs that sent the blood tingling to her cheek, and the fire flashing to her eye, as the firm step she had soon learned to know was heard approaching, he might have learned her well-watched secret; but when the step reached the drawing-room, all was cold and calm again.

Sometimes he would grow angry with himself for feeling an interest in one who cared not for him, and whose coldness no attentions would melt. Then for a week or so he would omit his visits; but an undefined longing sent him back, to find no change in Bella.

The winter season came. The Reades returned to their town mansion in Grosvenor Square. Sir Percy Marston (also a member of Parliament) returned likewise to the metropolis; and the more he saw of Bella, the deeper became the fascination; he could not free himself from the enthrallment, though the result seemed to promise nothing but disappointment.

Once, as he caught her glance fixed full upon him, the truant blood rushed to her cheek and brow, and her voice faltered for a moment, making his heart beat wildly with hope; but an instant and all was calm again, the broken sentence completed with easy grace, and disappointment took again her place in her old throne.

Driven to desperation, he determined to learn his fate at once; but he could not endure that mild, blue eye to look upon the tumult he felt throbbing within him should the answer be adverse, as he believed it would. So to Mr. Reade alone could he apply to aid him.

One morning Mr. Reade returned to his dwelling before the usual hour, and entering his wife's boudoir, found the three ladies variously employed; Mrs. Reade and Bella were working, and Jessie negligently reclining upon an ottoman, reading the last new novel.

They all looked up in some surprise at Mr. Reade's unexpected entrance, and the peculiar expression of his face prepared them for some news.

"Why, Charles, what has recalled you at this hour?" asked the mother.

"Why, my dears, I have a little piece of information to impart, that I found it impossible to retain until this evening," replied he.

Jessie's curiosity thoroughly aroused, she laid down her book, and coming forward, took a seat by his side.

"Well, papa, what is it?" asked she, impatient of his pause.

"Well, little curiosity! a gentleman has asked the hand of one of my daughters."

"Is that all?" exclaimed Mrs. Reade, with well-bred *nonchalance*.

Jessie cast down her eyes with a charmingly conscious expression, as she asked, with affected innocence, a question both Bella and her mother thought quite superfluous.

"Which, papa?"

"Only Bella!" replied he, demurely, while the merry, mischievous twinkle in his eye betrayed his amusement.

"Bella!" cried both the ladies at once, while the blushing subject of their surprise sat gazing at her father with a troubled face, endeavoring to detect the joke.

"Certainly," replied he warmly. "Do you think because we cannot see Bella's merits every one else is blind too?"

When Bella knew that her father was not jesting, her troubled look gave place to one of astonishment, and she cast down her eyes in painful embarrassment.

"Bella, my child," said Mr. Reade, approaching, and taking her hand affectionately in his, "Sir Percy Marston has offered you, through me, his hand and fortune; his heart I believe you have already. He is all I could wish for you;—will you accept him?"

"Yes, father," replied the bewildered girl, in a low voice, "if you wish it, and he will take me."

"Take you!" exclaimed Mr. Reade, kissing her proudly, "trust him for that! There, my dears," continued he, turning to the others, not yet recovered from their astonishment, "I have transacted that little piece of business greatly to my satisfaction; now I will return to the Club, where, ere this, an anxious heart is waiting to know its doom."

"But what are we to do without her?" said Mrs. Reade, fretfully, as if she felt it downright ungrateful in Bella to consent to such an arrangement.

"Well, my dear, it's 'only Bella,' that is a comfort; think if it had been Jessie!" replied he, pressing the hand of his eldest daughter; and with a mischievous laugh, that made his lady toss her head and the beauty pout a little, Mr. Reade returned to make Sir Percy Marston happy.

With an outward calm as unbroken as ever, though every fibre of her living being was trembling with great happiness, Bella resumed her work, while the comments and wonderment of her mother and sister rang in her ears without sense or meaning to her bewildered senses.

That evening the hand that Sir Percy Marston took for the first time in his, was cold as ice; and he started at the contact; but the faint flush and "moonlight smile" that met his anxious glance re-assured him, and he pressed it to his lips, half awed by her strange composure, yet not less happy. Could he have known the thrill of ecstasy, the tumult of emotion that was imprisoned in her heart, he would have wondered still more at the strange power of that timid girl.

Though it was "only Bella," the gay mamma could not be induced to forego the pleasure of a brilliant wedding; and ill suited as it was to Bella's feelings, she yielded, all unused to choose for herself. Pure and lovely she looked in her rich bridal attire, and the lustre of true feeling penetrated the quietude of her pale features, relieving their usual coldness.

With a heart beating high with confident hope, Marston enshrined her in her charming home, trusting that time would remove her reserve and disclose her true character. But in vain; for diffidence had become part of her nature, and she could not throw it off at will. Often when her heart sprang

to her lips, would she turn the prompted endearment to some indifferent remark.

Warm and impulsive, Marston grew anxious and sad at the strange disposition of his wife. True, she was ever kind, gentle and thoughtful for his comfort and welfare; but he missed the return for his expressions of affection, and felt repelled by her perfect impassibility when his heart yearned most towards her.

At length a terrible idea took possession of him; Bella had never loved him, she had wedded him to please her father, and he had deceived himself by her ready acquiescence! Day and night the thought haunted him, and he became more sad and unhappy as he became more strongly convinced of it.

Bella discovered that he was sad and pre-occupied, that he no longer caressed her as at first, and dark foreboding rose like thunder clouds to shut out the sun of her existence. She believed that he was ceasing to love her; and grief so preyed upon her that day by day her cheek grew paler, and her unhappy husband read in its pinings for lost liberty—or, still worse, some dearer object from which he had separated her for ever.

While the impulse of every hour was to throw herself upon his bosom and implore him not to withdraw his affection, she received him with the same calm smile that would have lighted her face had her heart been breaking.

A warm debate at the House of Commons had detained Marston late one evening, and Bella sat in her boudoir awaiting him. Sad fancies clustered thickly about, as she sat alone listening for the step of him she prized above life itself, and between whom and herself the gulf seemed slowly widening.

With a heavier heart than ever, the unhappy husband entered his dwelling, and mechanically turned his steps to his wife's room. The door was ajar, and he pushed it open without rousing her attention from a miniature she was pressing to her lips.

Bella in tears! For the first time in his life he saw her thus moved. Though of late tears were no strangers to her lonely hours, she had ever summoned a smile for him. The sight affected him strangely, and even strengthened his unhappy conviction; for it proved that she had deep feelings under the ice of her calmness, though he had failed to awaken them. Then the object of her unwonted caresses! not for a moment did he dream it could be his gift; in fact, he had forgotten that his likeness had been among her bridal ornaments. He could bear it no longer; frankness prompted him to tell her of his discovery, and then relieve her for ever of his unwished for presence.

A moment sufficed for all these thoughts to rush through his brain, for almost immediately feeling his presence, Bella looked up, frightened, confused, and more agitated than any one had ever seen her before.

Hastily slipping the miniature in to her bosom, and trembling like a culprit, she yet called up a smile, and greeted her husband with her usual kindly salutation. Sir Percy Marston's grave face oppressed her with a nameless foreboding, as pale and determined he advanced towards her.

"Bella,"—the mournful tone almost stopped the pulsations of her heart,—"my wife, forgive me that I have been unwittingly and unconsciously, till now, the cause of so much unhappiness to you."

Surprise and diffidence held her silent.

"When from your father I received your hand," he continued, "I believed it willingly given; pardon me, then, the vanity of dreaming I could make you happy; for six months in vain I have striven to do so! Think not I reproach you; you have ever been kind and gentle to me, and my misfortune alone was it that I could not awaken in your heart a love responsive to the deep affection of mine? You have been to me all I could ask, though I rashly hoped for more. I have deceived myself, and must suffer for my presumption."

Why could not Bella speak the words that were burning on her lips, to tell the feeling that convulsed her very being? But no, she was spell-bound, and Marston resumed,—

"The only comfort that cheers me in this hour of trial is that I shall suffer alone; and though I cannot restore your liberty, and him whose cold image lies where I have vainly hoped to rest, I can, at least, relieve you of my presence, which ever reminds you of your bondage, and bid you farewell for ever. Forgive me if I have pained you; it was meant in kindness and for your happiness!"

He turned to leave the room, moved almost to tears by the agitation of the hard trial. The tumult in Bella's heart was agonizing, and like one in a nightmare who dreams he is drowning, she saw the last plank float slowly past her without the power to grasp it. Her husband's hand was on the door—a moment more, and he would be gone for ever. She could not bear it.

"Percy!" she gasped.

His Christian name, for the first time from her lips, arrested his steps, and he turned with a beating heart to hear her words. A glance at her face showed the anguish there; and when, still like one in a dream, she removed the ribbon from her neck and placed the locket in his hand, he felt constrained to take it, and involuntarily glanced at the picture. It was his own.

Bewildered, he looked at Bella; and as if a veil had been lifted, he saw her soul shining through the soft eyes fixed with anxious expectation upon his face. Past, present and future stood revealed in that lightning flash of mutual understanding. Happiness, too exquisite for words, dawned in the throbbing hearts of those so nearly lost to each other; and Marston folded his new-found wife in a silent embrace, feeling he had never known till now how much he loved her.

With Bella the ice was broken never to re-unite; the pent up tenderness of a lifetime rushed in a boundless torrent over the barriers now too weak longer to control it; and that moment was like the beginning of a new life to her.

Mutual explanations threw light on much that had before been dark to both; and the present seemed a blaze of sunlight from the cloud that had rested on the past.

"Were the whole world offered for my choice, what think you, dearest, I would take?" asked Marston, one evening, encircling his sweet wife with his protecting arm.

"Only Bella!" replied she, laying her head upon his shoulder in all the confidence of perfect love.

"How old are you, Bridget?" said a gentleman to his servant girl.

"About fifty, sir," replied Bridget.

"You are mistaken, Bridget, you are not over twenty."

"Yes, sir, that is it. I'm about twenty or fifty, somewhere along there."

This answer indicates about the same degree of intelligence as that of an old gray-headed negro in South Carolina: "How old are you Pete?" said a gentleman to him one day.

"I dunno Massa, I feels berry old; 'spect I've about five or six hundred."