



adelma von vay



Caroline Corner

A MEMORY

Author of "Twixt Will and Fate," "The Slinkenemirk Family," ...
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Prispevki k odkrivanju zgodovine ezoteričnih tradicij - v izvirniku

Yes, I must have been a weird child — strangely unlike the rest of the village youngsters. *They* were all frolicsome, careless, and free; *I* was silent, sad, and reserved. *Their* faces were sunny, their countenances joyous and frank; *mine* was shaded with impenetrable shade, grave and incomprehensible. In *their* laughing eyes beamed forth the hey-day of youth; in mine — ah! to reveal the secrets prophetically enshrined therein would be to thrust aside the portals of memory, and, after resuscitating one uninterrupted succession of pangs, lay bare the wounds which alone remain to tell of a ruthless past.

The frames that for my companions possessed such unspeakable delight, for *me* were expressionless, blank, and devoid of interest. Whilst *they* pursued their gambols with kitten-like love of sport, *I* was invariably to be found in the dear old haunt — the low-lying village graveyard. There I enjoyed most to linger, away from the busy world, and exchange the burden of my life for one of the rarest of heaven-born gifts.

It was as though my soul was disentombed, and in spirit I beheld the glories of a brighter, a *truer* existence. The mortal was forgotten, the immortal reigned supreme, and the things of earth held little charm for me; the village green no spell like unto this.

So people wondered, shrugged their shoulders, and frowning, said: — "She is indeed a weird child." Alas! they could not understand. -

One day — a bright May-day it was — I had stolen away to seek my favoured retreat, and, seated upon one of the many mounds of earth, the coarse grass well nigh enshrouding in its tangled growth, I courted that place that the world knows not of. My thoughts uplifted, the binding chains of materiality unlinked, my spirit seemed to become light and soar away, leaving behind the cares incumbent on the flesh. The spheres which opened to my view were infinite and vast, peopled with souls all radiant with the reflex of a Great and Divine Love, and I gained from them that sympathy that was withheld from me elsewhere. I joined in harmony with their glad intents, and would fain have stayed, and working, rested evermore.

But even as I rejoiced, another passed that way. It was Effie, the pride, the pet of the village folk. On she came gaily, her wavy hair streaming in the fresh spring breeze, a song upon her lips rosy and full; life for *her* was one pleasant dream: little recked *she* of pain, and woe, and doubt. Blithely she sped along, *her* only heed the hour, *her* only burden the satchel slung at her side — a thing too beautiful for decay! Yet stay. From amongst the throng with whom I late did mingle, there stepped forth one, than all others more sublimely fair, and, bending her looks with sorrow towards this plane, she sighed and inwardly did grieve. —

“So young, so full of joy, yet — so must it be.” She stood on the golden staircase of the rays of the setting sun, and cast one long, pitiful gaze upon that child of earth. Then, chasing the shade away, a smile came there in its stead, and, softly winging her downward flight, she no longer hesitated to fulfil His will.

I watched that angel-form, and hoped she had come for me. No, alas, no! ’twas to Effie that she was drawn; ’twas upon Effie’s snowy brow that angel-kiss was bestowed. And the child passed on unaware, with light and careless step; and my heart sank, with a dull, leaden throb: “Would to heaven that kiss were mine.”

Spring fled, and summer-time too, and autumn came, with its keen, cutting blast; still I haunted that fanciful spot, and dreamed there my happiest dreams.

Once more it was eventide, and I was there, wrapt in oblivion of all around, so absorbed I had become within my inner self, amongst those grass-grown graves. The daylight waned: shadow upon shadow crept o’er all, and stillness was abroad; solemn stillness, as of the tomb; lonely stillness, as of death. I awakened from that curious trance, and the sound that lulled me back to earth was the sound of the passing-bell.

I turned and looked around. Solitude — solitude undisturbed, surrounded by the dead; and the song of the psalmist came back to my mind — “In the midst of life we are in death.”

Then I arose, and journeyed on. At the turnstile, wayfarers stood to chat, so I drew myself aside, and stealthily kept from view. And well it would have been. They pursued their discourse — these strangers — when one did interrupt to remark the cadence of that sweet and soothing knell. “Who has passed away?”

That query caught mine ear; nay, it penetrated to my very soul, and struck a chord till then voiceless, unheard. Ere resistance was possible, I had merged from my safe retreat, and, with boldness inspired, spoke words that wore not my own:

“’Tis Effie, our Effie, is gone: not *dead*, but gone to the better land. A long life of happiness awaits our loved one *there*.”

But the people drew back; they were amazed; and one, the least timorous, alone remained to respond: “A weird child; how strangely she talks.” Alas! they could not understand.

And yet ’twas true enough. Effie, our pride, our pet — rosy-cheeked Effie — was gone. The cottage home was closed and drear, *so dark, so drear*; its inmates lone and weeping. That eve, a white-robed angel had knocked at the door, and, entering, bent tenderly beside the tiny cot to press one loving kiss

upon lips once rosy red. That angel was Death, and in her flight, clasped fondly and close to her breast, she bore away a favourite child of earth.

The gay, the beautiful, the best beloved was chosen by that messenger from the blue sky, and the weary, the “weird” one must wait — wait, and trust, and pray, — pray, and trust, and wait, — for joy cometh unto all alike in due time, our Saviour hath said.