

13 THE CONFESSION

I am glad that you have come,
Arthur, from the dusty town;
You must throw aside your cares,
And relax your legal frown.
Coke and Littleton, avaunt!
You have ruled him through the day;
In this quiet, sylvan haunt,
Be content to yield your sway.

It is pleasant, is it not,
Sitting here beneath the trees,
While the restless wind above
Ripples over leafy seas?
Often, when the twilight falls,
In the shadow, quite alone,
I have sat till starlight came,
Listening to its monotone.
Yet not always quite alone, --
Brother, let me take the place
Just behind you; now the moon
Shines no longer in my face.

It is near two months ago
Since I met him, as I think,
By God's mercy, when my horse
Trembled on the river's brink.
I had fallen, but his arm
Firmly seized the bridle-rein,
And, with one decided grasp,
Drew me back to life again.
I was grateful, and essayed
Fitting words my thanks to speak.
Arthur, when the heart feels most,
Words, I think, are oftenest weak.

So I stammered and I fear,
What I said had little grace
But I knew he understood,
By the smile upon his face.
There are faces -- his was such --
That are sealed when in repose,
Only when a smile floods out,
All the soul in beauty glows.
With that smile I grew content,
An my heart grew strangely calm,
As with trustful step I walked,
My arm resting on his arm.

Brother, turn your face away,
So dear, I can tell you best
All that followed; but be sure
You are looking to the west.
Arthur, I have seen him since,
Nearly every day, until
If I lose him, all my life
Would grow wan, and dark, and chill.
Brother, this my love impute
Not to me for maiden-shame;
He has sought me for his wife,
He would crown me with his name.
Only yesterday he said
That my love his life would bless;
Would I grant it? Arthur, dear,
Was I wrong in saying "Yes"?

Sources:

Harper's Weekly, May 1, 1851.

Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving, 1875.

Alger Street, 1964.