

04 BARBARA'S COURTSHIP

Anonymous

'Tis just three months and eke a day,
Since in the meadows, raking hay,
On looking up I chanced to see
The manor's Lord, young Arnold Lee.
With a loose hand on the rein,
Riding slowly down the lane.
As I gazed with earnest look
On his face as on a book,
As if conscious of the gaze,
Suddenly he turned the rays
Of his brilliant eyes on me.
Then I looked down hastily,
While my heart, like caged bird,
Fluttered till it might be heard.
Foolish, foolish Barbara!

We had never met before,
He had been so long away,
Visiting some foreign shore,
I have heard my father say.
What in truth was he to me,
Rich and handsome Arnold Lee?
Fate had placed us far apart;
Why, then, did my restless heart
Flutter when his careless glance
Fell on me by merest chance?
Foolish, foolish Barbara!

There are faces -- are there not? --
That can never be forgot.
Looks that seen but once impress
With peculiar vividness.
So it was with Arnold Lee.
Why it was I cannot say
That, through all the livelong day,
He seemed ever near to me.
While I raked, as in a dream,
Now the same place o'er and o'er,
Till my little sister child,

And with full eyes opened wide,
Much in wonder, gently cried,
"Why what ails thee, Barbara?"

I am in the fields again;
"Tis a pleasant day in June,
All the songsters are in tune,
Pouring out their matin hymn.
All at once a conscious thrill
Led me, half against my will,
To look up, Abashed I see
His dark eyes full fixed on me.
What he said I do not know,
But his voice was soft and low,
As he spoke in careless chat,
Now of this and now of that,
While the murmurous waves of sound
Wafted me a bliss profound.
Foolish, foolish Barbara!

Am I waking? Scarce I know
If I wake or if I dream,
So unreal all things seem;
Yet I could not well forego
This sweet dream, if dream it be,
That has brought such joy to me.
He has told me that he loves me --
He in rank so far above me;
And when I, with cheeks aglow,
Told him that it was not meet
He should wed with one so low,
Then he said, in accents sweet,
"Far be thoughts of rank or pelf;
Dear, I love thee for thyself!"
Happy, happy Barbara!

Sources:

Harper's New Monthly Magazine, April 1857.
Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving, 1875.
Alger Street, 1964.