

Choice Literature.

A SUNSET SAIL.

Far out upon the golden sea
Our sail goes seaward on the wave,
While aimless, only wildly free,
And lulled by the melodious lave
Of dreaming waters round our bow,
We see the land grow dim and grey,
As slumb'rous clouds that cleave and blow
In mists remote and far away.

One bird's belated wing above,
Unswerving flutters through the light
To land, and home-alluring love,
With fervour of a dawn's first flight.
With dreaming eyes we watch the swells,
And gaze through boundless depths of green,
Where mirrored stars appear like shells
Dim shadowed in deep opal-sheen.

And when the night-wind starts from sleep
And swells towards the longed-for land,
We turn our faces from the deep
And face once more the unseen strand.
Deep memoried silence dwells around
Until we see the land lights gleam
And then the first, remote, thin sound
Of voices breaks upon our dream.

Whose voices o'er the waters come
Flute-noted, faint and strangely sad;
And strange appear the lights of home,
alf-sorrowful, and yet half glad;
And from the shore wild laughter swells;
Old voices seem unknown and strange;
The tinkling of the twilight bells
Seems softened with mysterious change.

Our prow has glided on the sand,
The swinging sail has rattled down,
And welcome voices of the land
Re-echo from the sleeping town.

—Arthur J. Stringer, in The Week.

GLEAMS OF MOONLIGHT.

CHAPTER II.

Next day Mrs. Elton made Ethel lie in bed quietly till after lunch (a very wise precaution), so that she should not risk the chance of tiring herself before the artist came. However, by three o'clock she was all ready for him, seated in her low chair by the large drawing room window, with the table close beside her, on which were arranged all her artist tools.

She watched the gate for half an hour, chatting the while to her mother on the appearance of artists in general; and at the end of that time her patience was rewarded. A tall, dark individual opened it and came slowly up the path, looking around him as he did so.

"His hair isn't long," whispered Ethel, watching from behind the curtain, "but he can paint just as well, I suppose, if it isn't."

"I expect he can," answered her mother as the bell rang; "we shall soon find out."

Monsieur Noire was ushered into the room and stood just inside the door, with his hat in his hand, while Mrs. Elton went forward to meet him.

Ethel saw a tall, very dark complexioned man, with thick black hair and eyebrows meeting over the bridge of his nose, hard eyes, brilliant and black, which appeared to take in everything at a glance; a mouth hidden by a heavy black moustache, and a square chin.

And Monsieur Noire's quick gaze, while he was answering Mrs. Elton's questions, fastened itself upon Ethel, as if fascinated by her wonderful beauty. With her soft glowing eyes, a faint pink in her cheeks and her beautifully moulded features, the child was enough to delight anybody's eye, but most of all an artist's.

After a few preliminaries the lesson began. He drew a chair to the table and began to question Ethel about what she could do, and after a while he set her to work on one of two little plaster models, which he had brought with him, and while she was palmstakingly copying it, he was sketching the fair head bending over the paper with the long hair falling on the hand that held the pencil.

He did not seem to be very communicative, contenting himself with merely answering any questions addressed to him.

Major Elton came into the room, and after a few words left it again, leaving the dining room door open.

Mrs. Elton asked Ethel if she felt a draught.

"Permit me to close it for you, madame," he immediately said, rising and going towards it. They neither of them saw the quick comprehensive glance at the room, the sideboard, the glass cabinet which held the boys' athletic prizes, of which the Major was so proud, of the evil gleam in those dark eyes.

When the lesson was over he asked Mrs. Elton if he might take a sketch of the house from the south side, and on her consenting, he passed through one of the French windows opening on to the verandah and settled himself at a little distance. When they next looked for him he was gone.

"He wasn't very long over it," said Ethel.

"No, perhaps he will come and finish it to-morrow," returned her mother.

"I don't like the looks of that man," said the Major to his wife after dinner, "he isn't a gentleman."

"Well, don't disappoint the little one," pleaded Mrs. Elton, "even if he isn't."

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That night, going to bed, all Ethel's talk was of her lesson, her master and her painting.

"You know, Bessie," she chattered away to the nurse, "Mamma says that if I get on very well with Monsieur Noire, some day she will take me to Rome to study under the great masters." She waited to see what effect the announcement would have upon Bessie, but all she said was, "If you don't hold still, Miss, I can't help pulling your hair." A pause. And then: "I wonder why some people are made with black hair and some with hair that is nearly white, like mine," was the next thing, with a puzzled glance in the looking-glass.

"Don't you think Monsieur Noire would look kinder if his hair wasn't quite so black, and his eyes too? Papa says he looks wicked, but I think he only looks very unhappy; and do you know, Bessie," confidentially, "sometimes I feel he is looking at me, without looking at him. It is as if his eyes went into me somewhere up at my head, and went down, down till they stop somewhere here," putting her hand on her heart, "and then I think to myself, now they shan't go any further, and I look at him and that makes him take them away."

"Don't you like him, then, dearie?" queried Bessie, well content to hear the chatter of her little mistress.

"Oh yes, I like him, and I think he draws be-utifully, and after all, when one is entering on an artist's career, like I am, that is the principal thing," she finished loftily.

That apparently silenced Bessie, for she made no reply, and a moment later the wayward maiden seized the brush. "Don't do any more, Bessie; leave it loose. I'm tired, and Mamma will be in in a moment."

"It will be that bad in the morning," protested the woman.

"Never mind, I can bear pulling much better in the morning than I can at night." Then as Bessie was putting her in bed she added, "I don't think you need carry me any more after next week, for I walked quite 'round the room to-day, and I wasn't a bit tired."

When Mrs. Elton came into the room a few minutes later, she found that the mill excitement of the day had begun to tell on the child, who was looking pale and limp.

"I will sleep with you to-night, darling," she said.

But contrary to her usual delighted acquiescence to such a proposal, Ethel said slowly, "Oh no, Mamma, I don't want any one in my room to-night but the dear moon. Could you just push the bed a little further that way, so that she can shine on me? Yes, that's nice," and she gave a little sigh of content. "Bob told me to-day, Mamma," she continued, "that in Germany they call the dear moon 'he'. I don't think that is half as nice as thinking of her as a fair, soft, lovely lady, with long rippling golden hair."

"Just like yours," smiled the moth-

er, in whose wistful eyes one might read the thought, that nothing could be fairer than the fair form beside her.

"Oh no," exclaimed Ethel, in tones a trifle shocked, "far, far more beautiful; I will paint her to-morrow, and I will think about her now so that I can see her in my eyes when I go to sleep, for I love her so. Do you think she would sit to me, Mamma?"

Mrs. Elton laughed, glad to hear her little daughter in such good spirits. "Don't think any more now, dear, go to sleep. I will be near you and hear your softest word. Good-night, my child, God bless you."

"God bless you, Mamma dearest."

That was the customary good-night, and Mrs. Elton went to her own room comforted by the merry voice that might so soon be hushed.

"She is better, I may save her yet, she is young," said the mother's hopeful heart. "I wish the moon would stay out till she goes to sleep," she thought, moving to the window, "but it is getting cloudy."

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The moon sent pale, fitful gleams into Ethel's room, making the pattern of the curtains on the floor, and the side of the bed just came into the edge of the moonlight. Ethel put out her hand till it shone on it, and smiled when she saw how thin and white it was. She rose cautiously on her elbow, and looked out.

"Dear moon," she whispered to herself, "I would like to paint you just as you are now, with the dark clouds nearly covering you up, and yet, not liking to hide you altogether, because you are so beautiful. You lovely lady, drawing your soft, cloudy robes closer around you, with your long, silvery hair floating out across the sky, I love you so."

She lay back and fell asleep with it all plainly pictured in her mind, and presently she began to dream that she was painting it. The dark face of her master rose before her, and the sky was wild and angry. "There is no light," she cried to him, "the dear moon is gone, and I cannot paint her because all is darkness."

And he leaned forward and said to her, "No, Miss Ethel, it is no use, I will carry you up stairs, for you cannot paint the dear moon, you will never paint her, there is no more light in the world, all is darkness." And he took her up stairs in his arms, and she laid down on her bed and cried for her beautiful friend. But presently there came another gleam of moonlight.

"She has come back, I must paint her now," she joyfully thought, "but she should go away again."

And a white figure rose slowly up from the bed, slowly, because of the weakness which made itself felt even in her sleep, and crept silently, step by step, down the wide staircase, always with the thought, "I will paint her now before she goes away again," leading her on.

She reached the bottom of the stairs, but her knees shook and her feet were cold. With the suffocating beating of her heart, brought on by unwonted exertion, she began to wake up and became conscious of where she was. She crossed the dark hall and felt her way to the drawing room door, and stood leaning unsteadily against the post, when a sound made her wide awake in a second.

It was the stealthy opening of the large French window leading out on the veranda, through which her master had disappeared that afternoon.

The draught swayed the potiere beside her, and a dark figure stepped into the room.

Ethel caught the door, paralyzed with terror, the poor, over-taxed, little heart gave a quick throb, and was still.

Monsieur Noire saw a white form standing in the doorway, totter, sway forwards, and sink silently to the ground.

"Curse the luck," he muttered, and crept behind the curtain and listened.

But there was no sound. No one had heard anything, but the dear moon, who began to slowly gather her sable robes about her, to cover her face and weep, for a cold little heart.

"Dead faint," he thought, "there's time enough I guess." He crossed swiftly and noiselessly to the dining room, and after a space of about ten minutes, returned with a fairly bulky bag, which he placed near the window. Then he paused. "Shall I be sensible and go," he said to himself, "or shall I be a fool and stay?"

The sweet, bright face rose before him, and he went back and bent over her. He placed his hand on her wrist, but he could not find her pulse, then on her heart, and shook his head.

A pang shot through him as he thought of the painting lesson, and the gay voice talking to him only a few hours ago, and he raised her tenderly, and began to move towards the sofa. As he passed the window, he stopped in the band of pale moonlight, struck by her marvellous beauty, as he had been the first moment he had seen her, and the artistic side of his dark soul was deeply stirred by it.

Little, white face resting on his arm, with the wide, frightened eyes looking up at him, yet not seeing him—with the wealth of golden curls falling round it, shimmering in the moonlight.

He held her close, closer still, as if he could restore from his own strangely throbbing heart the fitful vitality of which he had unwittingly robbed hers.

Then he laid her on the sofa gently. A cloud was covering the moon and he could hardly see her. "White little soul," he whispered, "I should like to kiss you, but I dare not."

Then, sharply ringing the bell which stood at the head of the sofa, he turned away. By the time he had reached the window, the faint light had gone—gone from his dark heart as it had from the landscape outside.

He seized the bag, slipped out as silently as he had come, and was lost in the darkness.

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The next morning there was a paragraph in the paper, informing the people of Glenailton, that two detectives had arrived by the early train, on the track of three noted burglars, who had taken tickets for that town, disguised respectively as a nursemaid, a private gentleman, and — an artist.

SKYLIE.

ARKWRIGHT.

When Arkwright had almost perfected his first power loom, he found that the yarn as it was delivered through the rollers had an awkward, fatal trick of curling back. He puzzled over this serious obstacle. At last he took the local blacksmith, who made his early machines, into counsel, and the man, one Strutt, told him he thought he could cure it. Arkwright asked him his terms. Ten years' partnership, and equal profits, was the reply. This was too much for Arkwright, who, like Naaman of old, turned and went away in a rage. But the yarn still curled, and dashed his hopes. At last he reluctantly yielded to the blacksmith. Then occurred another scene. The blacksmith insisted that the deed of partnership should be executed and enrolled. Arkwright stormed. But the local Vulcan was firm. When the deed was signed, the blacksmith went behind the rollers and apparently rubbed one of them with his hand. Instantly the yarn was delivered as was wished. Arkwright found that his new partner had only rubbed one of the rollers with a piece of chalk, in other words, proved that one of them should have a different surface from the other. The execrations of the enraged manufacturer were unspeakable. But the compact held, and in the end the blacksmith became Lord Belper.

Only by the supernatural is a man strong, only by confiding in the divinity which stirs within us. Nothing is so weak as an egotist, nothing is mightier than we, when we are vehicles of a truth before which the State and the individual are alike ephemeral.—Emerson.