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From the Friendship's Offering.

ELIODORE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SKETCHES OF CORFU;" "EVENINGS ABROAD," ETC.

"Why don't you dance, Edmund Gray?" said a young en-ign to his friend, as they met in the ball-room of the palace of Saint Michael and Saint George.

"Because," was the answer, "there is no one here to dance with."

"Why do you not talk, Edmund Gray?"

"Because there is no one here to talk to," replied the nonchalant, with an ineffable shrug of his left shoulder, as he turned away.

"Ah!" he continued, soliloquizing as he quitted the room, "these soirees have not been worth coming to since Sir Frederick has made carriage-roads, and we are all become so fine, and so civilized, and so heartless. In the olden times, indeed, when, after ten days' incessant rain, we were obliged to draw lots for the honour of wheeling each other into a barrow to the palace doors,—then there was some excitement in the matter,—some hope and fear as to who should be master and who should be man; some fun, especially if we could manage an upset by the way: but now,—we are much too fine to be happy."

Poor Edmund was doomed to be annoyed this evening. When he reached home, he found that Johannes, the trusty Albanian who served him for valet, cook, and groom, reckoning on his longer absence, had collected a party of friends, and was entertaining them by relating some of the many wonderful sights he had met with in a visit to England lately made with his master.

Johannes described to his ragged audience how, at his first arrival in the great city of the far north-western island, he had stood on one side, humbly, for a long time, to let the crowd pass on:—he told how all the houses were palaces, and even the servants had beds to sleep on. He told how, going into a shop to buy some gloves for his master, he wandered on from one lady or gentleman to another, and could find nobody to serve him; they were all so very grand, counts and countesses at the very least; how he wondered, continually, where all the servants, and working-people, and beggars could be, since he met with none in the streets but fine folks, well, at least decently, dressed, until, at last, he came to the conclusion that they were all celebrating a festival somewhere or other,—in the moon, perhaps;—and how, at last, as night drew on, they did neither light lamps, nor carry links, but, by the mere application of a light to a small tube in the shop windows, and in the lamps, the whole street was instantly in a blaze!

Hitherto, none of the audience had spoken: they had testified their attention only by a little gesticulation, and now and then a roar of laughter, but at this point of the narration, they burst forth unanimously; white teeth gleamed around, dark eyes flashed, the words "Bugiardo! Bugiardo!" were heard, and at last one old man, whose flowing robe and long white beard testified that he was a holy padre, arose and said; "Look you, Master Johannes! we have listened to all your traveller's stories patiently enough, and laughed at them and at you; but this passes even the belief of a dog; so no more of such fooleries, if you please." "Thus it is," said Edmund, as he mounted the staircase, "truth is called falsehood, and falsehood is called truth, in this most deceptive and deceived world: thus it is!" Then, calling for a cigar and a bottle of Ithaca, he took his beloved Shakspeare from the little book-case that decorated his quarters, and sat down to enjoy his loneliness. "What is the use of intellect and knowledge," he said, pursuing his soliloquy, "when those vagabonds were so merry and happy, until—Vanity of vanities:—the world is a vanity, and they who dwell in it are vainer than vain."

II:

One fine autumnal morning, Edmund Gray, in a loose white jacket and a large straw hat, with his gun slung carelessly over his shoulder, set off; attended by Johannes, for a day's shooting. He whistled gaily as he went, for he was leaving behind him a world of nonsense and folly; and when, as they passed through the low covered gateway that terminates the Strada Reale, Johannes looked up reverently towards the old statue of St. Speri-dion, that guards the entrance to the city of Corfu, and implored his blessing on the coming day. Edmund also touched his hat, and exclaimed, "To your guardianship, my worthy fellow, I leave all the jars and annoyances that daily beset my path; keep them, I pray you, until my return,"—so on they went. They lingered long among the wooded heights that surround Potamo,

then crossed into the Alipu road, and so on up the winding ascent that leads to Verapetades. Lovely as autumn is in England it is inexpressibly more beautiful in that southern land. Not a leaf had changed its colour, not a flower had faded, not a blade of grass had withered; nothing spoke of decay or of approaching desolation. The lesser rains had fallen, and had respread the parched earth with her delicate green carpet, and had reclothed the trees with life and beauty. Flowers, too, Flora's second gift this year to the favoured island, peeped out in every direction. The air was heavy with the perfume of the myrtle and orange; the little purple anagallis spread its smiling petals to the sun, promising a fine day to all true lovers of nature; the cerinthe major hung its rich yellow bells belted with crimson, by the side of the delicate cyclamen, in fragrant heaps by the road-side; the sword-lily and verbascom stood in stately pride in the thickets; the plains were covered with orchises,—flies and bees arrested in their busy flight. Even the very underwood,—there are no hedges there,—was redolent with beauty, for from one starchy shrub to another, the clematis, or, sweeter still in its English name, "the traveller's joy," threw its perfumed trail, forming wild arbours innumerable; while occasionally might be seen the scarlet berries of the wild strawberry tree, and the fair spreading blossoms of the datura stramonium,—a fit home, indeed for a fairy, and perchance fairies to dwell therein, for, lest the night air should breathe too roughly on the snowy petals when evening draws on, the broad jagged leaves rise tenderly up, and shut in the flower.

At every opening through the dim trees, Edmund looked out and beheld in the vale below, traced in clear and distinct outline, lowly village, and orange grove and ruined convent, and sometimes, sparkling in the distance, the lake, like the sea, dotted with white sails. Edmund loved Nature in all her moods and tenses; therefore as he happened neither to be in love, nor yet particularly hungry, ever and anon he stayed his foot and looked on the surrounding scenery with a painter's eye, and with a poet's heart. All this time, however, the gun was idle, and the wallet empty; for he had set out with the intention of trusting to his own skill for a dinner. There was something so Homeric in the idea of shooting his dinner, and dressing it under a tree, at night! Edmund was a great worshipper of Homer, and, moreover, was apt to try at realizing the romances of the poets. Poor Johannes! what a pity he could not read the grandfather of all the bards. "Effendi," he said, at last, "the sun is very high, we had better look out for some shade and rest awhile, and I," he added with an arch grin, "will count the birds you have killed."

"Yea," answered the master, "we shall take truer aim, after refreshing ourselves."

So they halted, and asked of a sage looking old gentleman in blue Dutch trowsers, and red cummerbund, the way to the nearest village. "Cala," said the old man, who was lying on his back under an olive tree, shading his eyes with his hands, "Cala; when I have finished watering my tobacco I will tell you." "Tobacco!" exclaimed Johannes, staring around. The other pointed to a little plot of tobacco behind the trees, and reclosed his eyes. But Edmund chinked a few oboli. "Cala, Cala," said the old Greek, and this time he jumped up and explained the way they were to pursue.

They soon came upon a little Albanian village nestling among the trees. It consisted of ten or twelve huts, something like Hottentot kraals, built of bamboo forced together at the top, cone-like, and thatched all over with straw. At one low door-way stood a young woman, looking singularly picturesque in her yellow veil and scarlet apron; she smiled and invited them in. The whole furniture of this simple dwelling-place, consisted of a square stone tray for cookery, full of wood-ashes, a cradle, a black-eyed baby, and a few mugs and pitchers hanging to a shelf. The wayfarers seated themselves on the earthen floor; their young hostess gave them some Indian corn bread, and grapes from the aforesaid shelf; and, lamenting that she had not any crassi, bade them watch the babe till her return, and taking down a pitcher, went out for a few minutes, and presently re-appeared with water cool and sparkling, which she assured them was from a charmed well in the vicinity—the well of Santa Veronica.

"Are you happy here?" said Edmund, when he turned to depart. "Happy!" exclaimed the young mother, bending her dark loving eyes upon her baby; "Yes, yes, Effendi, almost too happy for earth. I want for nothing."

So Edmund Gray walked on marvelling as he went, in mood

most philosophical, why men should toil and fret for power and wealth, and knowledge, when a bare hut with the pure exercise of permitted affection, could light up cheek, and brow, and eye, with such vivid, such not-to-be-mistaken evidences of deep content within. And again his lip almost involuntarily murmured, "It is all vanity!"

Now the meditations of Johannes not being of so abstracted and refined a nature, did not prevent him from paying attention to the passing influences of the moment, more especially to such as were likely to affect his bodily well-doing; therefore, after casting many anxious glances to the sky, and listening with acute attention to a low rumbling sound in the atmosphere, he prophesied that a storm was gathering, and looked out for shelter.

Before he had well done speaking, flash after flash lit up the sky, and some large heavy drops of rain fell most impertinently on Mr. Johannes' nose, as he upturned his face towards the heavens. "Let us hasten thither, master," he said, pointing to a tuft of laurels, overshadowed by a tall cypress, that stood a little way out of the road,— "there are other travellers already there; let us join them."

"Join them!" responded Edmund, "let us rather warn them away from their dangerous resting place," and heedless of Johannes, who continued to asseverate that the laurel was a charmed tree against lightning, Edmund hastened on his mission of charity. A tired child was asleep under the laurel, and a girl watched by him. She had fastened her linen veil to the shrubs to shield him from the rain drops, and unheeding that they fell upon herself, she bent anxiously over him, terrified at the lightning, yet unwilling to disturb the slumberer. Edmund bent low, and touching her arm, and, speaking hurriedly, besought her to come away into the plain; but she, covering her face with one hand, and casting the other over the neck of the child, who began to wake and cry, said, "No, no, I will not go." Edmund told her of the danger of resting under trees during lightning, particularly under a cypress, which from its height would be likely to attract it; but perhaps she did not understand his imperfect Romanic, for she answered only by removing her hand from her eyes, and flinging her arm round the stem of the stately tree. Edmund saw that no time was to be lost. He forcibly raised the child, and bearing him out to a place of comparative safety, returned for the maiden. He was but just in time, for while he was yet placing his hat on the girl's head to shade her eyes, the tall tree reeled for a moment,—the lightning had passed and left its scathe— one side of the proud stem was blackened and burnt to the very root. When the girl saw this, she bent down lowly for a moment, and, joining her young brother's hands with her own, expressed by tears and broken words, her gratitude to the young Englishman who had saved her brother's life as well as her own. Then she arose, and laying down the hat, threw her apron over her head, and leading the young child tenderly by the hand, departed.

The dark clouds cleared away, the sky was again blue and serene; so Edmund, calling Johannes forth from the leafy bower whence neither threats nor entreaties had been able to withdraw him, resumed his way. But there was no luck in store for him: rambling from hill to hill, now exploring the deep ravines, now climbing the myrtle-skirted mountain, he stored his imagination and his portfolio with views of surpassing beauty; but he did not store his wallet with game.

At last twilight, of so brief duration in the south—fell rapidly, and master and man, sorely grumbling and discomposed, had lost their way. They were far, very far from any road, and the more earnestly they sought to regain it, the more entangled did they become in a thicket of wild stunted olives. "There is no help for it," said Mr. Gray, at last; "we must make the best of our mishap and turn heroes. No hope of seeing the city to-night."

"But I am hungry," remonstrated Johannes.

"So am I, but the wallet is not quite empty."

"And so tired," continued the man.

"Then look out for a lodging," said the master.

They soon came upon a little white church. Such an one as there is on almost every hill top in this sweet island. They gently pushed open the door and entered. It promised them shelter from the night-air, and nothing more. It seemed not to have been visited for many weeks, for the wreaths were withered, and there was no oil in the lamp that hung before the virgin. Johannes brought in, with much labour and more noise, some dried olive branches, and set them alight. He then examined with anxious eyes his master's wallet; one owl,—one old grey owl,—was its only tenant. The poor bird was presently condemned to