

GEMS OF SONG.

The following pretty morceaux were sung at a late concert which formed a part of a grand entertainment given by the charming Lady Dudley.

LES MOISSONEUSES.

Passes passes joyeuses,
Cueillez des branches aux buissons,
Passez, passez sonneuses,
Semez vos fleurs et vos chansons.
Passez, les monts, la plaine
S'éveillent aux premiers rayons,
Le vent de son haleine.
Etend les blés sur les sillons.
Ainsi s'en vont,
Passant sans cesse,
Par les sentiers,
Semés de fleurs,
Les belles heures,
De la jeunesse,
Chantant la vie
Et les splendeurs.
Passez, nous reverrons encore
L'hiver muet et sombre
Jeter son voile d'ombre
Sur vos nuages d'or,
Adieu parfums, chants, et folie
Adieu de cette vie
Beaux rêves enchantés.

The above was sung by Mlle. Marimon; the following by Zaré Thalberg.

BARCAROL.

O, me beata!
Ritorna in ciel l'albore;
Vo pormi un flore in seno.
Vo in cerca del mio amor.
O giorno sospirato
Più d'ogni bel tesoro!
Il giovinetto amato
Vedro fra poco ancor.
La bruna gondolella
Appresta, o barcarol!
Olt' il canal m'è petta
Colui che ben mi vuol.
Se cosa è amor tu sai,
Deh! vienmi non tardar,
E quel che tu vorrai
Prometto a te donar.
Tra, la, la, la, ah!

THE FIRST OFFER.

"Agatha, you sly girl, I wonder you never confess to your myriads of lovers," said the gay young Sophie Harcourt to her cousin—a handsome girl some ten years the senior of the youthful speaker. "I am certain you must have had a dozen offers at least."

Agatha Somers gave a half-amused, half-annoyed smile at her relative, who was just about to make her seventeen years' old *début*, and to whom the world was all smiles and roses.

"Pray, Sophie, are you able to keep a secret?" she asked, in a demure, questioning tone.

The young girl eagerly pushed her chair close to her calm cousin's sofa.

"Oh, yes, indeed—indeed, I will; only do tell me! I am dying to know!" she said, with a glad impatience in her whole face and tone.

"Well under that solemn promise, I may perhaps venture to confide in you," returned Agatha, with mock solemnity. "You give me your word not to betray me?"

"Yes, yes, on my honour—my very honour!" exclaimed Sophie, quickly.

Agatha paused a moment, as if to raise the girl's curiosity to the very uttermost.

"Then I suppose I must confide the great secret to you, *petite*? The number of my offers is easily reckoned—at least so far as a cypher can be brought into numbers. You will, perhaps, be astonished to hear that I have had"—and she made a tantalizing pause—"no offers at all."

Sophie literally gasped.

"Agatha, you are jesting,—you who have been so admired, who are so handsome and clever, and can do no end of things, and who are—that is, I mean—"

"I am twenty-seven, and near on twenty-eight," replied Agatha, calmly. "And I don't mean to deny that I am tolerably good-looking, and not exactly a fool. Nor do I say that I have not had about as much attention as most girls; but of proposals of real, sober 'Will-you-marry-me?' suitors, I am utterly guiltless."

"Oh, Agatha, how can it be?—that is, if you are serious?" said Sophie with some compassion.

"Nay; that is only for the gentlemen in question to decide," returned Agatha, coolly. "I can blame no one in the matter. Poor mamma has done her very best. I have been in 'Society' since I was your age, Sophie. The amount of balls I have swallowed would puzzle the calculating boy himself to reckon. The private theatricals, dinners, garden parties, champêtre breakfasts, and croquet teas, have been so mingled up indistinguishably that I should be rash to hazard a guess as to their proper quantities; and yet I am here, at twenty-seven, and have never been asked to say yes or no to any but a partner for a quadrille!"

Perhaps Sophie was rather daunted at the prospect.

"Oh, Agatha, how strange—how amazing! I am not half so good-looking or attractive as you are, and yet I—well, yes—I do think Frank Conyers does—like me—a little."

"Very probably, my dear; and you will, I hope, end by being Mrs. Frank Conyers, and ignore all others till death do you part. But it's not my style. I don't go in for boy and girl love, nor a cottage in a garden; and, to tell the truth, I do get awfully tired of anyone who plagues me too much, Sophie, and my punishment will be that I shall die an old maid."

"Oh, Agatha, how dreadful!"

"Very likely, my love; but I am fast schooling myself to the prospect, and, as a preliminary, I am going down to Aunt Betsy for the next week, though Lady Suffield offered me a place in her

phaeton, and her brother and half-a-dozen Hussar officers will be in her train."

"Agatha, you are mad! Do go! How can you throw away such a delicious jaunt, and all for a stupid prosy old widow!"

Miss Somers, shook her head. "I have promised, Sophie, and besides, it is just as well to be conspicuous for one's absence. I am tired of it all," she went on, more seriously. "Not that I am mean and vain enough to wish to be married for the sake of it. But it is almost degrading to be exhibited as on the market year after year, and calmly rejected, even when fairly tested. There, don't laugh—nor cry, either, Sophie; and keep my secret. It is as well for the world to know that the beautiful Miss Somers is very hard to please, and has refused no end of offers!" And Agatha hastily rang the bell, and announced a needful packing, with the assistance of her youthful maid, while Sophie retired, and in no ordinary bewilderment and anxious alarm on her own account.

"Well, my dear, it is very good of you to come. I have really nothing to amuse you, only the gardens, and just a few very good friends, who drop in to make a rubber. You may amuse yourself with the books and piano. I hear you are a first rate musician."

And Mrs. Betsy Cole settled herself in her easy chair, and recommenced her knitting, which she rarely suspended, except to play whist or go to church.

"Are you expecting anyone to-night, aunt?" asked Agatha, as she prepared to go and dress for dinner.

"Well, no one particularly—only three widowers," replied Mrs. Betsy. "No one could interest you, of course. But then, they are men of sense and standing, and one of them the heir presumptive to a peerage; but still, you need not trouble at all about them, my dear."

Agatha did not trouble herself.

Her dinner dress was scarcely looked at before it was donned.

It was a black lace, and she had a rich sprig of geranium in her dark hair as her only ornament, save a chain and cross of Indian gold that hung round her white throat.

She descended, with a weary sigh at the idea of the evening before her.

And her first impression of the trio of "bereaved husbands" was anything but reassuring.

Two bald heads, suspicious whiskers and moustache, and decidedly military air and dress, prepared her for the announcement of "General Forbes" and "Colonel Rivers," as they bowed stiffly to the young lady.

The third was certainly of a different type; fair almost as a woman, with a fine tall figure, and brown hair, that was certainly streaked with gray, but still abundant and well arranged, "Mr. Annerly" was certainly some few years younger, and, on the whole, decidedly better looking than his compeers.

But Agatha had scarcely time to speculate on his peculiarities ere she was consigned to the tender mercies of General Forbes during dinner, while the more interesting of the guests conducted Mrs. Betsy to the dining-room.

But the party was so small, consisting only of the three gentlemen, Mrs. Betsy's companion, and Agatha, that the conversation was tolerably general, and not only so, but it would be difficult not to overhear what each of the other couples were saying.

Agatha did her devoir; indeed, it was an instinct with her to be agreeable and sparkling in manner; but she was somewhat disturbed by meeting the glance of the fair-haired widower fixed on her, albeit quickly removed on encounter with her own.

She sat down to the piano in the music-room, at her aunt's request, when they began a hand at whist; and, supposing herself utterly unnoticed, she gave herself up to the full fancy of the moment.

Song after song was poured out in succession, till at last she began

"The day is done, and the darkness."

It suited her voice well; and a certain amount of pathos that she threw into it swelled and fell with a touching sweetness on the ear. A deep sigh succeeded the close.

She looked round in some surprise to see Mr. Annerly at her side.

"I thought you were at whist," she said, in a slight confusion at his look of sadness and emotion.

"I persuaded Miss Drow to take my place. I wanted to hear you sing," he said.

"How did you know I could repay such a sacrifice?" she replied, playfully.

"I was certain of it. I heard you talking of music at dinner; and you are too like one who was a true, heartfelt musician for me to doubt," he replied. "It is a sad luxury to look at and listen to you, Miss Somers."

She did not ask why. She grasped too well his meaning.

But she quickly led the conversation to more indifferent subjects; and by her playful vivacity and softened wit, she contrived to brighten his evident melancholy, and even rouse him to a genuine smile at some of her quaint fancies on ordinary topics.

"That is a true mourner," she thought, as she retired to rest. "He must have been a lover and husband worth having—very different to the flippant butterflies who pester me to death with compliments, and puns, and jokes. Why is he so old and gray? I wonder whether he has any children."

No doubt Mrs. Betsy could have enlightened

her; but from some unexplained reason, Agatha never mentioned his name to her aunt.

Of course, the gentlemen called, and Mr. Annerly so immediately before luncheon, that he was asked to stay; and the afternoon was far advanced when he took his leave.

And Agatha was conscious of a feeling of regret when he left, so rich and varied was his conversation, and so quietly did he contrive to draw out her sentiments, while confessing his own, on different subjects.

But any idea of his dreaming of love, or of her yielding to a tender passion for a mature widower, was carefully banished, if it even entered her mind.

And the same remarkable accident seemed to govern Mr. Annerly's movements as had induced him to arrive at Mrs. Cole's at so unusual an hour that morning.

He was extremely solicitous about Mrs. Betsy's health; and, luckily for him, the excellent lady fell ill of a bad cold, which confined her to her private sitting-room, and gave an excellent reason for kind and frequent inquiries.

Still, Agatha gave half-smile, half-sigh at the grave respect of his manner, considering his privileged seniority in age.

"He is terribly afraid I should mistake him. He need not alarm himself. I am a tolerable Salamander in such attentions from his sex," she said to herself, bitterly, as she returned from ushering him to her aunt's boudoir, and settled herself in the drawing-room.

She had scarcely taken up her netting, and made some exceedingly awkward long stitches, when the door re-opened, and the object of her animadversions appeared.

He walked straight up to her, with a peculiarly resolute step and rigid features.

"Miss Somers—Agatha," he said rapidly, "I cannot go round about when my whole peace is in question. I have, without my will, against my resolves, learned to love you with my whole heart. You won on me first by your resemblance to a most dear and honoured wife, and you have completed the charm by your intellect and playful wit, your womanly grace, and reticence. I am a vain fool, perhaps, to think of your accepting a gray-haired widower; but your aunt has given me leave to try my fate, and I have too much at stake not to risk the hazard. At least, you will be kind in your refusal, if you cannot love or accept me as your husband."

Agatha had listened in breathless astonishment to the frank, trembling, earnest words. She longed to put him out of suspense. She felt in her mind and heart that she could be happy, could be proud of such a man as her lover—her husband, and that her love was gradually deepening at every fresh insight into the character of this noble, high-bred, and intellectual man. But she literally was too much petrified to speak. She held out her hand to him with a look that was certainly by no means discouraging.

And when he clasped it in his, and whispered, "Agatha, it is mine!" her lips did frame the "Yes" that completed his happiness. A few days afterwards, she returned to town, and Mr. Annerly followed, to ask her mother's permission to claim her promise. And ere the summer had deepened into autumn the day was fixed for their wedding, though once again postponed by the sudden death of his cousin Lord Fernley, to whose title and estates he was heir. There was no surprise now among the gay world that the beautiful Miss Somers had accepted a gray-haired widower for her husband, since he was able to place a coronet on her own raven locks; and only Lord Fernley himself and the delighted Sophie Harcourt ever were aware of the remarkable fact that the admired belle, the brilliant star of ball-rooms, and "toast" of many a regimental mess and college table, had accepted her first offer.

POINTS OF PALMISTRY.

In his volume on the *Mysteries of the Hand*, M. Desbarrolles divides hands into three sorts—the first sort having fingers with pointed tops; the second, fingers with square tops; the third, fingers with spade-shaped tops—by "spade-shape" is meant fingers that are thick at the end, having a little pad of flesh at each side of the nail. The first type of fingers belongs to characters possessed of rapid insight into things; to extra-sensitive people; to pious people, whose piety is of the contemplative kind; to the impulsive; and to all poets and artists in whom ideality is a prominent trait. The second type belongs to scientific people; to sensible, self-contained characters; to most of our professional men, who steer between the wholly practical course that they of the spade-shaped fingers take and the too visionary bent of the people with pointed fingers. The third type pertains to those whose instincts are material; to the people who have a genius for commerce, and a high appreciation of everything that tends to bodily ease and comfort; also to people of great activity. Each finger, no matter what the kind of hand, has one joint representing each of these. Thus, the division of the finger which is nearest the palm stands for the body (and corresponds with the spade-shaped type), the middle division represents mind (the square-topped), the top, soul (the pointed). If the top joint of the finger be long, it denotes a character with much imagination or ideality, and a leaning towards the theoretical rather than the practical. The middle part of the finger, if large, promises a logical, calculating mind—a common-sense person. The remaining joint, if long and thick, denotes a nature that clings more to the luxuries than to the refinements of life.

VARIETIES.

A MUMMY belonging to the Duke of Sutherland has been unrolled by Dr. Birch, the Egyptian scholar. The inscriptions will be published.

THE famous monastery of St. Rufina at Rome has been converted into an educational institute for girls under the auspices of Crown Princess Margherita.

FRANCE keeps a ship of war at Ajaccio constantly at the order of the Pope, in case he should desire to leave Rome.

THERE are 709,000 paupers in England, and this notwithstanding a decrease of 4½ per cent. in the number since May, 1874.

MEMBERS of the Royal Academy think that English owners will refuse to send their paintings to the Philadelphia Centennial unless they can have them insured.

THE American Centennial Committee has resolved to refuse space to the private exhibitors whose Governments, like those of Russia and Italy, have declined to take official recognition of the international exhibition.

It is understood that as soon as the session closes Mr. Disraeli will leave England for the Continent. His health throughout the session has been feeble, and absolute rest from the cares of office is pronounced indispensable.

It is said that a Dane connected with the Observatory at Copenhagen has discovered a mode of sending any number of telegraphic messages over the same wire, by the simple method of pitching each message in a different key with the aid of tuning forks. The next thing we shall hear of will be that somebody else has discovered the means of sending twenty messages from each end of a wire at the same time. We seem to be coming back very fast to another form of the Tower of Babel.

PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON, who is one of the best officers attached to Major Ward Ashton's battery at Aldershot, paid his respects to the Commander-in-Chief on Friday, and on taking leave said laughingly, "Your Royal Highness, I must go back to my cookery." Prince Louis, who is a great favourite with the men, is instructing them how to cook dinners after the French fashion. There is no service in the camp for which he is not ready and willing. The other day three troop horses ran away on Aldershot Common. With some other cadets, the Prince Imperial went in chase of them, and seizing one, jumped upon its back and rode it into the camp without saddle, bridle, or halter.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

MR. G. A. SALA is said to be engaged on a drama.

NILSSON is to make a professional tour in Scandinavia, assisted by Trebelli-Bettini.

Mlle. TALLANDIERA, the Parisian actress, has wonderful dark eyes, and is a strange wild creature, half Arab by blood.

THE French Assembly has appropriated 3,000,000 francs additional for expenditure upon the Grand Opera House at Paris.

SALVINI was presented recently in London with a handsome silver snuff-box that had been subscribed for by the members of the orchestra.

Mlle. Albani, Mlle. d'Angeri, Signori Marini, Maurel, and Bagagiolo will give a series of operatic performances this autumn in Venice, at the Theatre la Fenice.

ENGLISH versions of Herold's "Zampa" and Cherubini's "Les Deux Journées" are to be brought out by the Carl Rosa company during the coming season.

MISS MONTAGUE, a young Baltimore singer of whom glorious accounts have come from Paris, is to sing in the Kellogg Company next season. Her *début* will be made at Booth's in October.

MISS KATIE PUTNAM, a Western and Southern actress, has been playing *Little Nell* and the *Marchioness* in Boston, and her performance is pronounced a clever imitation of Miss Lotta—banjo and all.

A movement is on foot in London having for its object to secure by means of a company, a theatre for the permanent representation of French plays, and to organise regular and adequate performances.

A London critic says, in speaking of a performance of "Don Giovanni," "That Mme. Nilsson has 'created' *Donna Elvira*, and made the betrayed woman equal in importance to the *Donna Anna*, is well known."

MARRYAT's daughter Florence, now Mrs. Ross Church, editor of *London Society*, is about to make her *début* on the stage. She will appear, with some other ladies, at a theatrical performance in aid of the Toulouse fund.

THE *Athenæum* in a review of the London operatic season says: "Two more thoroughly trained and well-prepared aspirants for lyric honours than Mlle. Varesi and Chapuy have not been heard since the *débuts* of Mesdames Patti, Lucca, and Nilsson."

IN Paris at the present day the most important and paying literary work is done in behalf of the theatres and also in theatrical criticism. That's what makes the Parisians so eminently a theatrical race. Nobody ever gets weary of theatres and of actors and actresses in that capital.

Mlle. AIMEE is not to sing at the Gaité Theatre, Paris, after all, having, it is reported, refused very wisely to lend the manager 50,000 francs, which he desired for the production of the new piece in which she was to appear. Mlle. Aimee, it is to be hoped may return to this country.

MISS NEILSON, in consequence of indisposition has been compelled to decline the liberal offer made by Mr. Max Strakosch, of New York—viz., £10,000 for one hundred nights, the terms of her last engagement, in order to tempt her to return to the United States. Miss Neilson is now in Paris.

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, the new London singer, appears to have something besides his name to bring him into prominence. A critic writes of him: "To say that he will take a high place among our English vocalists would give but an insufficient idea of his gifts and acquisitions. He is an artist of the very highest merit."

THE season of English opera under Carl Rosa's direction will begin early in September at the Princess's Theatre, London, with Mr. Sautley as baritone and Mlle. Rose Hersee, Torriani, and Julia Gaylard as *prime donne*. The first opera will probably be Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro," in which the three *sopranos* will, of course, be heard.