

THE SMITHS.
 In the east,
 The stars were grey below,
 Spectral in the river mist,
 The ship's white timbers show,
 Then let the sound of measured stroke
 And grating saw begin;
 The broad axe to the gnarled oak,
 The mallet to the pin!

Hark! roars the bellows, blast on blast,
 The sooty smithy jars,
 And fire-sparks rising far and fast,
 Are fading with the stars.
 All day for us the smith shall stand
 Beside that flashing forge;
 All day for us his heavy hand
 The graining anvil scourge.

From far-off hills the panting team
 For us is toiling near;
 For us the raftman down the stream
 Their island barges steer;
 Rings out for us the axeman's-stroke
 In forests old and still;
 For us the century-circled oak
 Falls crashing down his hill.

Up! up! in nobler toils than our
 No craftsmen bear a part:
 We make of nature's giant powers
 The slaves of human art.
 Lay rib to rib and beam to beam,
 And drive the trenails free;
 Nor faithless joint, nor yawning seam,
 Shall tempt the searching sea.

Where'er the keel of our good ship
 The sea's rough field shall plough,
 Where'er her tossing spars shall drip
 With salt spray caught below,
 The ship must heed her master's beck
 Her helm obey his hand,
 And seamen tread her reeling deck
 As if they trod the land.

Her oaken ribs the vulture-beak
 Of northern ice may peel;
 The sunken rock and coral peak
 May grate along her keel;
 And know we well the painted shell
 We give to wind and wave
 Must float, the sailor's citadel,
 Or sink, the sailor's grave!

Ho! strike away the bars and blocks,
 And set the good ship free!
 Why lingers on these dusky rocks
 The young bride of the sea?
 Look! how she moves down the grooves,
 In graceful beauty now!
 How lowly on the breast she loves
 Sinks down her virgin prow!

Speed on the ship! but let her bear
 No merchandise of sin,
 No groaning cargo of despair
 Her roomy hold within.
 No Lethian drug for eastern lands,
 Nor poison-draught for ours;
 But honest fruits of toiling hands,
 And nature's sun and showers!

Be hers the prairie's golden grain,
 The desert's golden sand,
 The clustered fruits of sunny Spain,
 The spice of morning-land!
 Her pathway on the open main
 May blessings follow free,
 And glad hearts welcome back again
 Her white sails from the sea!

Tales and Sketches.

THE FAVORITE.

"I am heartily tired of the life I lead," continued the princess, with recovered animation; "I am tired of this objectless activity in an everlasting sameness that can offer me nothing new, nothing interesting. And I also hate the constantly conflicting plans of those who incessantly beset me for the possession of myself, or rather of my wealth and titles, for the promotion of their own interested and ambitious views. Thus stands it with me within the circle of my own family; without that circle the daily solicitations for my hands become insupportably wearisome. I already stand too high to need the aid of a foreign prince to raise me still higher. What can be offered me that I do not already possess? What can the first throne in Europe offer to compensate me for the desertion of my own fair native land, which insures to me all that a mortal can desire—power, rank, respect, and wealth?" The princess paused to give the count an opportunity to answer; but as the latter continued silent, she again resumed, "I am firmly resolved to be happy, if possible, in my native land, by blessing a being who loves me, and whose love I may return. I will marry, Count Lauzun, and will choose my husband among the exalted noblemen of my country—among the true servants of my loyal relative and master.

Lauzun felt the imperative necessity of replying to the princess; yet, deserted by his usual presence of mind, he could scarcely stammer out a few unconnected and almost unintelligible words. Happily the princess was, herself, too much agitated to notice his embarrassment; she was visibly struggling for the attainment of sufficient self-possession to continue her remarks.

"I am satisfied," she at length continued,

"that I cannot have done amiss in consulting upon this most important affair of my whole life, with the king and advisor of him who is also my nearest and dearest friend."

"And the king?" at length ejaculated Lauzun, with a painful look.

"He knows and approves of my resolution, as well as of the reasons which have induced it," was the answer; "but he declines guiding my choice; and how hard it is, alone, to select the worthiest among so many who are worthy! Yet why should I desire to deceive you?" she added with downcast eyes, at a momentary silence.

"My choice, count, I believe, is made, and yet I trust my heart—I could say my penetration—too little—I desire the confirmation—I wish—it is you, Lauzun, you, whom I have chosen—to counsel and guide me; to you I breathe the name, never yet uttered even to the king."

She ceased speaking, her face suffused with blushes, while that of Lauzun was deadly pale. "Oh, no, no!" he cried, sinking upon his knees in the humblest posture; "in mercy do not tell me the name of the fortunate one. How is it possible for me to decide?" he continued, with difficulty commanding himself. "Should I venture so far, and my decision should have the misfortune to displease your royal highness—"

"This want of courage does not become you, Count Lauzun, and you are not as frank towards me as my full reliance on you deserves," replied the princess, with some haughtiness.

"Who can feel more deeply than myself the honor of this gracious confidence?" answered Lauzun; "still not the less deeply do I feel how difficult it is to prove myself worthy of it."

"You know not how much you lose by this evasion," said the princess, as, turning from him, she arose from her seat, and approached the open door of her room in which her ladies were whiling away the hours in sparkling conversation with some of the lords of the court. Lauzun followed her, scarcely knowing what he did; his visible agitation did not fail to increase the universal attention which his long *te-te-te* with the princess had already excited; but he was too much occupied with his own feelings to observe it, and as soon as possible withdrew from the brilliant circle, that he might, in solitude, meditate over what had passed.

For a long time he vainly endeavored to control the wishes, hopes, and fears which arose in his bosom. He was at first alarmed by the thought that he might, perhaps, through his own fault, become an object of scorn to the noble lady; but this idea was soon rejected as unworthy of himself and her; this was succeeded by the fear that by his weakness and timidity he had trifled with her confidence; and thus he hovered long between happiness and misery, until, at last, he resolved to free himself from such tormenting uncertainty at any price, and to obtain, by entreaties and promises of perfect sincerity, an explanation from the princess.

He was not able to approach her until late in the evening. It was at a fancy ball at which the king, with some of his officers, appeared as Arcadian shepherds. In their stiff garments of gold brocade, embroidered with precious stones, with crooks of gold in their hands, their long flowing hair well covered with powder and pomatum, they would have made rather a ridiculous figure in our day, but seemed appropriate enough to the perverted taste of that age. Anna de Montpensier, in the costume of the country, not less richly but more tastefully arrayed than the ideal shepherds, excited universal admiration. The provincial dress gave an unusually charming softness to her appearance, which somewhat encouraged the count as he approached her.

"May a penitent dare hope to obtain what a few hours ago he blindly cast from him!" he whispered to her.

"Beware of the wolves, my gentle shepherd; do not forget your usual watchfulness and caution," was the half-earnest, half-playful reply.

"I fear nothing," answered Lauzun, "for, thanks to myself, I have nothing more to lose; but, oh, my princess!" he added, in a sad, beseeching tone, "permit me now to drop this assumed character—I do not feel able to sustain it. Did you but know what I have suffered since this morning! did you but know my repentance, my ardent desire to devote my whole life to your service? The confidence you reposed in me to-day, now that I have recovered from the surprise it gave me, has raised me above myself; I feel courage to serve you at any price. Restore to me your confidence, and, at every hazard, I swear to deserve it by frankness and sincerity."

Lauzun's voice trembled, and the princess was not less agitated. For a long time she silently and hesitatingly gazed upon him. "I no longer feel as I did this morning," she said, at length, "I was then frank;—your reserve, Count Lauzun, has made me also reserved." She was again silent; her beautiful blue eyes were for a moment, dimmed, a gentle sad smile played upon her lips; at that moment was heard the dull sound of the clock striking twelve, and he princess shuddered. "It is midnight, and Friday begins," she said, growing paler; "it is an unfortunate day, in which no good thing should be undertaken. I dare not tell you the name now. I feel as if half of my happiness was already taken away, because I only thought of it at this unlucky moment, and mournful forebodings fill my breast. Go now to the king; count, good night; on

Saturday, at the queen's," she hurriedly whispered, as she beckoned to the ladies, who were in attendance.

Lauzun gazed thoughtfully after her retreating form, but he ventured to struggle against the almost universal superstition with which this day was regarded, and from which, perhaps, he himself was not wholly free. Slowly crept the hours until the evening, in which all his hopes and fears should end. Already hundreds of wax tapers, in the apartments of the queen, changed night into the most brilliant day; their rays were reflected in a thousand forms from the gilded walls and the dazzling lustre of the jewels, the glittering embroidery, the numberless girandoles of rock-crystal, shed a peculiar rainbow-colored light through the perfumed air. The duchesses, seated upon their rather uncomfortable tabourets near the queen, formed an enviable circle, and looked proudly down upon the groups of countesses, marchionesses, and viscountesses, whom court etiquette required to remain standing, and who were almost too weary to sustain themselves in an erect position. Gallantry, intrigue, unmeaning court flattery, circulated through the saloon. Near the queen the conversation, as customary in such places, was quiet, gentle, and subdued; but more lively and interesting in proportion to the distance from her.

A little apart from the rest, near a large mirror, Anna de Montpensier sat thoughtfully upon the seat to which, as a French princess, she was entitled. Although the evening was already far advanced, she had not yet mentioned the name. Count Lauzun had not yet found a favorable opportunity to join her, notwithstanding she had placed herself, perhaps unconsciously, in a position best calculated to favor that object. Timidly glancing her eyes over the brilliant crowd, she saw him for whom she alone looked, intensely gazing upon her from a corner of the saloon not far distant. It seemed to her at this moment that friendly whispering spirits were advising her to conquer her maiden shyness; a deep blush, a slight hesitation, and quickly, as if to leave no time for reflection, she turned to the mirror, apparently to adjust the magnificent ornament on her breast; once more she looked in the glass towards the corner he occupied. There still stood Lauzun, watching her slightest movement. Gently like an angel kissing a sleeping child, she breathed on the mirror, and upon the surface, dimmed by her breath, with light fingers wrote, *It is you*. She then sank back upon her seat, while the writing disappeared as rapidly as it was formed.

The queen now rose to depart, and the consequent movement in the room happily gave the princess time to recover herself. She also was obliged to leave, with her ladies, for the Luxembourg palace. On departing, her eyes once more sought the happy Lauzun. Pale with joy, he still remained motionless in the same attitude; she saw that he had read and understood; she felt that his eye was upon her, but she could not meet his glance. Without approaching her he followed to the carriage in a delirium of happiness. "It is you" was written wherever he looked; "It is you" was engraved upon his heart; "It is you" was seen in the starry heavens. He thought of nothing—could think of nothing, but these three words; he fell asleep while murmuring them, and saw them in letters of light in all his dreams that happy night.

On awaking the next morning, he could not believe the events of the preceding evening to anything but an illusive vision. Again the old struggle returned. Now he blamed himself for his foolish presumptions—now he regarded himself as the happiest being on earth. "I will see her," he said, at last; "she will tell me if I have dreamed."

He found her attending high mass with the queen, at the chapel royal. Absorbed in her devotions, she did not appear to notice him; but never did a purer or more fervent prayer ascend to Heaven, than that of Anna de Montpensier in this important crisis of her life.

When the service was concluded, the princess rose to follow the queen to the royal nursery. For the first time Lauzun rejoiced in his situation at court, which gave him the privilege of attending them. With timid pleasure Anna de Montpensier listened, without looking up, to the sound of his footsteps; she scarcely knew herself, so changed did she feel, so deserted by her usual self-possession, and her embarrassment became even painful when the queen passed with the governess to another room, leaving her alone with the count.

Scarcely knowing what she did, she sank upon a couch which had been placed for the children near the fire, while the count, improving the opportunity, approached her. "I am frozen almost to death," she remarked, for the sake of saying something, fixing her eyes steadily upon the fire, and appearing to be warming her beautiful hands.

"And I! my gracious princess—and I! I have hardly deserved this punishment," said Lauzun, in great agitation. The princess looked inquiringly at him. "This mockery," continued he, almost inaudibly.

"And can you really believe that I would trifle with you?" asked the princess, rising and gazing at him with love, hope, and trustful confidence beaming in her face.

Their eyes met, and there was no longer need of words. Ecstasied, delighted, forgetting everything, Lauzun was on the point

of falling at her feet, when she warned him by a look that the queen was returning.

On the next Sunday evening the princess seized a favorable moment to reveal to the king the name of him she had chosen. "That he is your favorite," she said; "made me first prefer him, that he is your subject, a French nobleman, and one of your personal guards, has pleased him in my eyes, on a level with any prince. In future it will be my pride, the joy of my life, for which I daily thank Heaven that I am in a condition to elevate this distinguished and most noble man to such rank and wealth as will enable him to surpass in outward splendor, as far as he already does in inward excellency, those who, from selfish motives, have heretofore sought my hand."

The king listened to the outpouring of his cousin's feelings with attention and sympathy. "Heaven forbid that I should wish to deny so happy a destiny to any man who deserves it," he said; "but I would rather sacrifice all than give reason for a suspicion that I desired to advance a favorite at the expense of the happiness of a near and beloved relative! So, dear Anna, I will give no opinion as to your choice, but leave you to follow the dictates of your true heart and pure mind. I shall always remain your friend, dear cousin. May you find happiness for yourself in imparting it to others; but I advise you to be cautious, for Lauzun has powerful enemies."

"Whom can we fear if you be for us," said the delighted Anna, stooping to kiss his hand; but raising and affectionately embracing her, he withdrew.

Who can describe the wonder, the surprise, the amazement with which the whole of Paris heard the intelligence, that, on the approaching Sunday, the already settled marriage of the princess would take place? "If you are confounded," wrote Madame de Sevigne to her daughter in the country, while announcing to her Lauzun's surprising good fortune, "if you are overcome, if you declare that we are trying to make you believe something utterly improbable, in short, if you abuse us, and say everything against us, it is all right, for we have all done the same to each other here in Paris."

The whole nobility of France felt themselves honored by the distinction the princess had conferred on the by choosing one of their number. Crowds of congratulations from the first families poured into the Luxembourg palace; and some of the nobility, with the Duke de Richelieu at their head, even thanked her on their knees for the high honor shown to them in her choice of a husband. Lauzun's relatives and nearest friends of both sexes pressed around, full of joy and gratitude. They clasped her knees, kissed her hands—even the hem of her robe. Anna de Montpensier was full of love and happiness: "Love him," she said, "yes, love him sincerely, earnestly—the whole world has not love enough to reward him as he deserves."

(To be Continued.)

MY WIDOW.

Jones advised me not to marry her—he said she was too young and pretty.

Farnum advised me to be an old bachelor—told me a man past forty just made a fool of himself by matrimony.

Tewksbury, a man who is notorious for never minding his own business, told me she had had a love affair with Harry Birmingham before he went South.

Allen shook his head, and said Clara Meyers might be pretty, but he liked somebody maturer and more settled. (N.B.—He married his housekeeper the next week, and she is mature enough for Methuselah himself.)

Everybody thought I was trying a dangerous experiment; but I didn't pretend to suit everybody, so I simply suited myself. I went quietly to church with Clara Meyers, and married her one glorious January morning, when the old St. Paul's was fringed with glittering icicles, and the brisk wind was freighted with the particles of flying snow, like a battalion of diamonds on the double quick.

She was about nineteen and I about nine and thirty. She was as beautiful as a rosebud, with a shy, pretty way, like a timid child, and I am a rough old codger, sound enough at heart, but like a winter apple, unpromising on the exterior.

In short, we were unlike as May and November, and the good-natured world shook its head and said: No good could come of such an unequal match. But she said she loved me, and I believed her. Nobody could look into Clara's eyes and not believe her, you see.

And the next day I made a will and bequeathed all my property, unconditionally, to my wife.

"Are you sure you are doing a wise thing thing, Mr. Folliott?" said Mardyn, the lawyer, pushing his blue spectacles upon his forehead, until he looked like a bald old gnome, with a double pair of eyes. "You see she is very much younger than you are, and—"

"Please to be so kind as to mind your own business," said I, brusquely. "Don't be offended Mardyn, but really people seem to suppose I am not able to attend to my own affairs."

"Just as you please," said Mardyn, in a rage. "I am a tool at your hands."

"That's it exactly." So I signed the will and went home to Clara.

"Oh, Paul, you must not die!" said Clara, with a look, when I told her, what I had done. "Nobody has loved me as truly and generously as you have done, and I don't know what I should do if you were taken away."

"There was young Birmingham, if all reports were true," I mischievously began, but the curl on Clara's lip stopped me.

"A mere butterfly," she added, haughtily, "without brains or principle. Paul, Paul, I have found a shelter in your true, loving heart, and I mean to nestle there always."

And then she cried, this foolish, soft-hearted little wife of mine.

Jones and Tewksbury might have called this policy. Farnum would have said it was acting. But it was very pleasant, and I felt more than ever like a man who has found some precious jewel, and wears it like an amulet on his breast.

So things went on until the firm of which I was managing partner, needed to send some one to Calcutta to see after a turbaned scoundrel of an agent, who had absconded with more money than we could well afford to lose. Morrison was old and feeble, Hewett's wife lay very ill, so I was the one to go. I kissed Clara good-bye as cheerfully as I could, fully expecting to be back in three months or so.

I had to follow the agent up into the country mountains of India, and fell ill of one of those burning climate fevers in the bungalow of an old native priest, and the months flew by until it was more than a year before I found myself on the deck of the Blue Eyed Mary, steaming into New York harbor.

And all this time Clara had never heard a word from me.

I had written to her to prepare herself for what seemed almost like my rising from the dead, but I had afterwards found my letters in the pockets of the neglectful native servant who had undertaken to deliver the mails to the Calcutta office.

But it don't matter now so much, I thought, she will be the more delighted, poor girl!

And then a cold chill seemed to creep through my veins, like November's wind suddenly beating across a bed of flowers.

Clara had heard nothing of me for nearly fifteen months. What might not have happened in that time? What Tewksbury, and Jones, and Allen, and all the other prophetic ravens of my acquaintances had said, returned to my mind like the burden of an uneasy dream. I had been counting the days, the very minutes until we should touch port; but now that my feet rang once more upon the pavement of my native city, I actually dared not go home.

I turned into a down-town restaurant, where I had been wont to go in the days of my bachelorhood, and slunk in the dark corner—the twilight was just falling and I was sheltered by the partition.

Hush! That was Tewksbury's voice, harsh and jarring as of old.

"Just what I might have expected," said Tewksbury, "pretty and young widows don't go begging in this market."

"Folliott might have known it," growled old Farnum; "poor Folliott, there were some good points about him, too. Sad thing that—very sad thing!"

"We must all die," said Tewksbury, gravely.

"Yes, but a fellow would naturally prefer dying in his bed, to being carried off by an East Indian fever, and buried in the jungles."

I shuddered. Had I then come home to my own funeral as it were?

"And she is going to marry young Birmingham, after all," added Farnum.

The paper dropped from my hand.

"I could have told Folliott so when I found out what a confounded idiot he was," said Tewksbury. "So gold has fallen again; just my luck; I sold out to-night."

I stayed to hear no more, but staggered out into the darkness, with the idea whirling through my dizzy brain, that my Clara was mine no longer.

It was unquestionably what Tewksbury had said; I might have anticipated some such end. She was too young, too lovely for such a rough old fellow as I was. My widow—what a curious sensation the words gave me as I mentally pronounced them.

Under my own windows, with the ruby-red light shining through wine-colored damask curtains, I stood, feeling as Rip Van Winkle must have felt in the play—like a dead man walking on the earth once more. Voices and lights were within. I opened the door softly and crept into the hall.

The drawing-room door was ajar. Clara here, if seated before the fire, in deep black robes, with a frill of black crape on her auburn gold tresses—the awful sign and symbol of her widowhood. Directly opposite stood Harry Birmingham, looking diabolically young and handsome in the soft light.

"Clara, Clara," he cried, "you surely are not in earnest. You will reconsider."

"My answer is final," she responded. "The time might have been once when I fancied I had a childish liking for you, Harry Birmingham, but that time has long since passed away. I gave my heart to the noblest man that ever breathed—Paul Folliott—and in his grave it is forever buried. I loved him once; I shall love him on into eternity. I never was half worthy of him, but—"

And Clara's voice was choked with sobs. My love, my darling—my own precious wife!