

## VALENTINE IN FORME OF BALLADE.

THE soft wind from the south land sped,  
He set his strength to blow,  
From forests where Adonis bled,  
And lily flowers a-row :  
He crossed the straits like streams that flow,  
The ocean dark as wine,  
To my true love to whisper low,  
To be your Valentine.

The spring half-raised her drowsy head,  
Besprent with drifted snow,  
"I'll send an April day," she said,  
"To lands of wintry woe."  
He came,—the winter's overthrow,  
With showers that sing and shine,  
Pied daisies round your path to strow,  
To be your Valentine.

Where sands of Egypt, swart and red,  
'Neath suns Egyptian glow,  
In places of the princely dead,  
By the Nile's overflow,  
The swallow plumed her wings to go,  
And for the north did pine,  
And fain would brave the frost, her foe,  
To be your Valentine.

## ENVOI.

Spring, swallow, south-wind, even so,  
Their various voice combine ;  
But that they crave on *me* bestow,  
To be your Valentine.

## THE ADVENTURES OF A WIDOW.

By EDGAR FAWCETT, author of "A Gentleman of Leisure," "A Hopeless Case,"  
"An Ambitious Woman," "Tinkling Cymbals," etc.

## VI.

BEFORE Pauline had been an hour longer in the Dares's drawing-room she had become acquainted with many new people. She could not count them all when she afterward tried to do so; the introductions had been very rapid for some little time; one, so to speak had trodden upon the heel of another. Her meditated project had transpired, and not a few of her recent acquaintances eyed her with a critical estimate of her capability to become their future leader.

She soon found herself an object of such general scrutiny that she was in danger of growing embarrassed to the verge of actual bewilderment. She was now the centre of a little group, and every member of it regarded her with more or less marked attentiveness.

"I've a tragic soul in a comic body, Mrs. Varick," said a fat little spinster, with a round moon of a face and a high colour, whose name was Miss Upton. "That is the way I announce myself to all strangers. I should have gone on the stage and played *Juliet* if it hadn't been for my unpoetic person. But imagine a bouncing, obese *Juliet*! No; I realized that it would never do. I shall have to die with all my music in me, as it were."

"A great many poets have done that," said a pale young gentleman with very black hair and eyes, and an expression of ironical fatigue which seldom varied. He was Mr. Leander Prawle, and he was known to have written verses for which he himself had unbounded admiration. "Indeed," the young poet continued, lifting one thin white hand where his moustache was yet to be, "it is hard to sing a pure and noble song with the discords of daily life about one."

"Not if you can make the world stop its discords and listen to you, Mr. Prawle," said Pauline.

"Oh, Prawle can never do that," said a broad-shouldered young blond, with a face full of dreaming reverie and hair rolled back from it in a sort of yellow mane. "He's always writing transcendental verses about Man with a capital M and the grand amelioration of Humanity with a capital H. Prawle has no colour. He hates an adjective as if it were a viper. He should have lived with me in the *Quartier Latin*; he should have read, studied and loved the divine Théophile Gautier—most perfect of all French poets!"

The speaker fixed his drowsy blue eyes upon Leander Prawle while he thus spoke. A slight smile touched his lips, leaving a faint dimple in either smooth, oval cheek. He was certainly very handsome, in an unconventional, audacious way. His collar gave a lower glimpse of his firm yet soft throat than usage ordinarily sanctions; the backward wave of his hair

was certainly against any conceded form. He had been made known to Pauline as Mr. Arthur Trevor, and she had felt surprised at his name being so English; she had expected to find it French; Mr. Trevor had appeared to her extremely French.

"When you speak of Paris and of Gautier," she now said to him, "you really relieve me, Mr. Trevor. I was so prepared, on first meeting you, to find that you were not an American."

"Oh, Trevor is very French," said Leander Prawle, coldly.

Trevor laughed, lifting one hand on the middle finger of which was the tawny tell-tale mark of the confirmed cigarette-smoker.

"And my friend, Prawle," he said, "is enormously English."

"Not English—American," slowly corrected Leander Prawle.

"It is the same thing!" cried Arthur Trevor. "He is cold-blooded, Mrs. Varick," the young gentleman continued, with emphasis and a certain excitement. "We are always fighting, Prawle and I. I tell Prawle that in his own beloved literature, he should have but one model outside of Shakspeare. That is Keats—the sweet, sensuous, adorable Keats."

"I loathe Keats," said Leander Prawle, as if he were repeating some fragment of a litany. "I think him a word-monger."

"Aha?" laughed Arthur Trevor, showing his white, sound teeth. "Keats was an immense genius. He knew the art of expression."

"And he expressed nothing," said Leander Prawle.

"He expressed beauty," declared Trevor. "Poetry is that. There is nothing else. Even the great master, Hugo, would tell you so."

"Hugo is a mere rhapsodist," said Leander Prawle.

Trevor laughed again. He gave a comic, exaggerated shudder while he did so. He now exclusively addressed Pauline. "My dear Mrs. Varick," he said, "are you not horrified?"

Before Pauline could answer, the fat little Miss Upton spoke. "Oh, Mr. Trevor," she said, "you know that though you and Mr. Prawle are always quarrelling about poetry, and belong to two different schools, still, each of you, in his way, is admirable. You are the North and South poles."

"No," said Arthur Trevor, "for the North and South poles never come together, while Prawle and I are continually clashing."

"It looks very much as if chaos were the result," said Pauline.

Arthur Trevor gazed at her reproachfully. "I hope you don't mean that," he said. He put his arm while he spoke, about the neck of a short and fleshy man, with a bald, pink scalp and a pair of dull, uneasy eyes. "Here is our friend, Rufus Corson," he continued. "Rufus has not spoken a word to you since he was presented, Mrs. Varick. But he's a tremendously important fellow. He doesn't look it, but he is the poet of death, decay, and horror."

"Good Heavens!" murmured Pauline, playfully.

"It is true," pursued Arthur Trevor. "Rufus, here, is a wonderful fellow, and he has written some verses that will one day make him famous as the American Baudelaire."

"I have not read Baudelaire," said Pauline.

Mr. Corson at once answered her. He spoke in a forced, loitering way. He wore the dress of a man who scorns all edicts of mode, and yet he was very commonplace in appearance.

"The literature of the present age is in a state of decadence," he said. Mr. Corson, himself, looked to be in a state of plump prosperity; even his rosy baldness had a vivid suggestion of youth and of the enjoyments which youth bestows. "I write hopelessly," he continued, "because I live in a hopeless time. My 'Sonnet to a Skull' has been praised, because—"

"It has *not* been praised," said Leander Prawle, firmly and severely.

Mr. Corson regarded Prawle with an amused pity. "It has been praised by people whom you don't know," he said, "and who don't want to know you."

"It is horrible," enunciated Leander Prawle, while he appealingly rolled his dark eyes toward Pauline, which the confirmed pallor of his face made still darker. "Mrs. Varick," he went on, "I am sure that you will agree with me in asserting that skulls and skeletons and disease are not fit subjects for poetical treatment."

"Yes," answered Pauline, "I think that they are not beautiful—and for this reason I should condemn them."

"Then you would make a grave mistake, Mrs. Varick," now quickly interposed Arthur Trevor. He passed one hand backward along the yellow mane of his hair while he thus spoke. But he still kept an arm about the neck of his friend, Corson. "I maintain," he continued, "that Corson has a perfect right to sing of autumnal things. A corpse is as legitimate a subject as a sunset. They are both morbid; they both mean what is moribund."

"Oh, but they are so different!" exclaimed the fat Miss Upton.