

SIR DINADAN'S DEATH.

When leaves lie under the chestnut tree.
And across under the oak.
When thickets ring to bucks belling
And crossing antlers stroke.
The hunters feast and the raven's fee
Stilleth the hungry croak.

The raven perched on the blasted tree.
And over the raven cried:
The hunter watched by wood and lea,
And loosened the knife by his side:
While all in greenwood, carelessly,
Strayed Dinadan with his bride.

Full little he recked of the careless jape
That turned their blood to gall.
Who longed for his as for juice of grape.
Nor felt the chilly pall.
The evening spread, nor marked that shape
Slip under the elms so tall.

For he, who had never breathed a word
Of love to lady yet,
Was caught at last, and the Table stirred.
With laughter and light regret.
The mirth of the feast and the swing of the sword
Their mate should awhile forget.

There were three brothers of evil mood.
Though come of a kingly strain,
Gaheris lacked them, and Gareth good,
But Mordred and Acravaine
Hated who ever for Lancelot stood.
And they won the light Gawaine.

But ever Gawaine was a gentle knight:
Quoth he, "It were full ill
That one unarmed to death were dight.
And so our fame must spill:
Then watch we Dinadan in fair fight,
What harm, though two he kill?"

Then Mordred spoke, with his viper eyes.
And Acravaine thereto,
"Good sooth, fair brother, ladies' sighs
Have loose I thine every tree?
Thy very heart, seek, womanwise,
As hazard to its mew!"

"But knowest how at vesper-hour,
In forest-paths hard by,
He meets his dame in secret bower.
That none their sport spy?
And what more meet for a woman's dower
Than in her sight to die?"

"Whilst one of us shall soothe the bride!"
Gawaine he swore and passed.
E'en Acravaine his brow must hide,
But Mordred laughed, and last,
"Alone I wait this lover," he cried,
"My heart ne'er stood aghast!"

Sir Dinadan leet, Sir Dinadan sang.
As they went by the allers green,
As Camelot bells far off they rang
The greeting of heaven's queen.
The while on his arm his love did hang,
And neither recked of teen.

Nor recked I of that low-crouching form,
His dancier, or sight of ill:
The greatest bush is before the storm,
And who should seek to spill
Their cup of joy? Could life so warm
Know aught of deathly chill?

A spring, and a stab, and a gasping groan,
And a six-foot fall on ground.
A body that lies on the moss alone,
Another with false arms wound
About her waist for a bridal zone.
God help her in that stound!

Now God thee rest, Sir Dinadan,
That wast full leal and true,
And therewithal the merriest man,
That Arthur's court e'er knew,
And kindest—and high Heaven ban
Who made thy lady rue!

A MATRIMONIAL ADVENTURE.

BY NED F. MAH.

When the wicked man—i.e., the bachelor, for in the eyes of all marriageable ladies, the bachelor is wicked, since he will not propose; and in the eyes of the mothers of blooming daughters, he is wicked since he will not rid them of those charming but expensive incumbences—turning away from the conventionalities that Mrs. Grundy has enforced during the day—loath that which is lawful and right in the privacy of his own den, viz., wear the starched collar from his neck, doff the tight coat and straight waistcoat of genteel life, kicketh off the boots which pinched where only the wearer knows, putteth on the delightful, well worn, down-at-heel slippers, ensconced himself in a dressing-gown of flannel texture, and, lifting his favourite meerschaum, setteth himself in the recesses of his easiest chair—then he is wont to review in reverie the sweets of a past life, and to moralise thereon.

There is an episode in my past life, I, who am not a bachelor although generally supposed to be so, but a widower—often muse over at such times. It was my first and only matrimonial experiment. There was a time when I found myself almost alone in the world. My chums had married, or were dead, or in far lands, and I conceived that the most expedient thing to be done was to take unto my a wife. But how to obtain that desirable article? Should I advertise that "being desirous of entering the married state, through lack of female acquaintance I took this means, etc., etc.," and fall a victim to some designing adventuress, or one who jumped at an opportunity to patch a not too creditable past? Should I apply to a matrimonial agency? Or should I, taking a perfectly independent course of action, boldly address the first maiden who was not only good-looking but *good* looking, and humbly petition that she would suffer me to introduce myself as a suitor upon trial?

I was revolving these things one day while wandering in a public park, when a young lady came within my range of vision who at once attracted my attention. Her walk was free, dignified and stag-like; her figure well rounded, neither plump nor slender; her height what a woman's height should be; her complexion a clear, healthy pallor—good bilious temperament, I made a mental note—her eyes so dark a blue that they looked black in some lights; her hair clustering in thick natural curls upon her brow.

Summoning all my courage—and it required a good deal to speak to such a girl—I approached, raised my hat, and said—

"I beg your pardon. You are not a married lady?"

She was about to pass on, but I added—

"I assure you I am not asking out of idle curiosity!"

She paused and looked me down. She was wondering, she afterwards told me, whether I were a loafer, lunatic, or detective. The last possibility saved me. She thought an accidental likeness to someone "wanted" might have moved me to address her.

"I am not married," she said.

"Nor engaged? I beg you to forgive me, and I implore you to answer me."

She half turned as though to go on without replying—looked at me again—if my questions were impertinent my manner was respectful enough—and said, in a vexed and impatient tone.

"Neither am I married."

In what words I pleaded my cause when I found there was no impediment to my pleading it, I do not know. I know that I found plenty to say and I believe I said it earnestly and well. At any rate she did not refuse to listen, and before we parted it was agreed that we should be on the footing of friends, with the acknowledged design, if we found all things suitable, of becoming man and wife.

Of course I explained my circumstances, and she, in return, told me her own position. She was an orphan—had a tiny income of £50 a year—taught music for the rest—had only one relative as far as she knew—a cousin in the army—was twenty-two years of age—had been brought up in France.

Within a month we were married—had a quiet wedding in a quiet church, she and her cousin—who gave her away—riding there in a closed carriage—went to Wales for our wedding trip—and settled in a pretty cottage, in a prettier garden, in the suburbs.

Our life was happy enough—very quiet and happy. We would often go to town, to the opera or one of the theatres, and my wife's cousin came frequently to dine, or to spend the evening. Rose's temper was certainly angelic, her manner very sweet and tranquil—so tranquil in fact, that it sometimes almost verged on the lethargic; of course, I adored her, and she appeared to be devoted to me, never having any will of her own, and agreeing to everything I proposed as a matter of course, which, perhaps, was only natural, since I was studious to propose only such things as I judged would be most agreeable to herself.

After some months, the regiment in which Rose's cousin held the rank of captain, was ordered to India. I was sorry to lose him, for I had become much attached to him—an attachment which my wife seemed warmly to share. I was indeed so sorry to part with him that I earnestly entreated him to exchange into another regiment, or to sell out altogether. But he steadily refused. He was ambitious, and promotion, he said, was quicker in India, and all I could do was to induce him to accept a considerable sum, as a loan, towards outfit and incidental expenses.

Rose, as was perfectly natural, was very much moved at the departure of her only relative. It was the only incident since our marriage which had appeared thoroughly to rouse her. Her emotion was extreme, and she wept for several days, in a quiet, but almost heart-broken manner. Then her calm returned to her. Her tranquillity of demeanour was even greater than before. She was, if possible, more meek, more amiable than ever, till, at length, her quietness was so intense that I began to fear that she could not be well, that our life was too uneventful and that change was necessary for the preservation of her health. She slept much, her breath was sometimes slightly stertorous towards morning, and she would appear flushed and feverish. Her hands, too, would tremble nervously, and was often dry and hot to the touch. I proposed to travel—urged her to visit all amusements which might offer—but she expressed herself as perfectly contented and quite happy.

I was strolling one evening in the garden, meditating sadly, wondering whether there was really anything the matter with Rose, or whether such extreme quietude was natural to some women, and that she was happier thus than a life of more active pleasure could have made her—Rose herself being curled up, kittenlike, on a couch with a sweet peaceful smile on her lips—when my attention was attracted by a kind of path that had been made across the flower beds from a point among the bushes just below my dressing-room window to the fence, in which a pale or two was loose just at this spot. The other side of the fence was a field lying at the back of the cottage. The earth was quite dry, and the track beaten flat, so that no footprints could be discerned to betray what species of animal had made them. "Some dog, I suppose," I muttered to myself, "is in the habit of burying his bones here," and I took a rake and erased all evidence of his trespasses.

A morning or two after, rain having fallen in the night, I had the curiosity to revisit the spot when to my surprise, the track of small, human, bare feet were plainly visible.

I called to Rose and made her a witness of my discovery. She appeared much interested, and wondered who the little trespasser could possibly have been, saying—

"What a very odd thing, indeed!"

After that, the footprints, as such, disappeared, though occasionally there were shapeless blurs on the mould of the beds. We concluded that the run was frequented by some dog or cat, and that its small owner had entered on the night in question, in pursuit.

It was at this juncture that Harry Bannister, an old chum of mine, who was surgeon on an ocean steamer came to town, having got a friend to take a trip for him, the said friend complaining that his town practice was too heavy and he required a rest. Harry consented to look after it during his absence, and resolved on taking the opportunity to visit his friends.

To Harry I opened my heart about Rose—told him all her symptoms, and my own great anxiety, her content and apparent belief that she was in perfect health—and entreated him to give me honestly his opinion in the matter. He spent the evening with us, spoke and joked with Rose, who made herself very agreeable, seemed, I thought, a little excited, had a bright flush on her cheeks, brilliant eyes, and certainly laughed more than I had heard her during all our acquaintance. I went with him to the door when he left about eleven, walked with him to the garden gate and a little way up the lane, earnestly entreating him to tell me what he thought.

"Your visit," I said, "has certainly cheered her. I have not seen her so excited and lively for a long while. It is surely that we are so quiet here—the needs society—should see more people."

He looked at me curiously, and a little searchingly. Then he said—

"Is your wife fond of stimulants? Does she drink much wine?"

"On the contrary," said I, "one scarcely meets any woman, now-a-days, so remarkably abstemious."

He looked at me again for a moment. Then he said, laying his hand upon my shoulder—

"You have asked me for my candid opinion, and you must not be angry when I give it to you. My opinion is—she drinks."

"Impossible!" I cried.

"Of course I do not know when, where, or how she obtains her liquor, but—she drinks."

"I cannot believe it."

"Watch her," he said.

And, wringing my hand, he was gone.

The front door had banged to after me, so I went round the garden the back way to the house, and I had to pass the spot where the footprints had crossed the path. I leaned my back upon the fence where the palings had been loosened, and looked across the field. My eyes rested with a curious kind of fascination on the little inn called the White Horse, whose sign was flapping lazily in the night breeze. That house, the footprints, and my friend's words, suddenly connected themselves in my mind.

My wife was already in bed, and sleeping peacefully as a child. I scarcely slept at all—but Rose slept very soundly all the night through. In the morning she seemed unusually dull and heavy. The reaction, I thought, after last night's unusual excitement.

Next night I could not sleep, I lay awake thinking. Towards morning I fell into a light slumber, however, from which I was awakened by a cold breeze which seemed to come from the dressing-room door. I felt if Rose were at my side. She was not there. I sprang out of bed and hurried to the dressing-room. The window was open, and Rose was leaning out her shoulders heaving alternately, as though dragging at some object. I came softly behind her just in time to take from her a black bottle attached to a string. Another black bottle, empty, stood upon the windowsill, which would, doubtless, have been lowered in another second.

My wife did not cry out. She made no noise. She sank cowering at my feet. I took her up and carried her back to bed, and covered her up tenderly.

"When you need stimulants," I said, "why don't you let me know? You know you always refuse when I press you to take anything."

Rose did not answer me. She lay quite still, quietly crying.

I went to see Harry in the morning, to consult him on what was best to be done. When I came home Rose was gone.

We traced her to Paris, and we found her—in the morgue.

She lies buried in a French cemetery, with a little headstone marked "To Rose."

ENGLISH LIONS AND AMERICAN LIONISERS.

The reception given to Mrs. Langtry in New York is thoroughly creditable to the American public from every point of view. It has been at once enthusiastic and discriminating. The woman has been applauded chivalrously and to the echo; the actress has been closely but not ungenerously criticised. She has been judged upon her own merits, and has been exposed to as little of detraction as of undue panegyric. The harmony of common-sense comment has been broken only by the critique which Mr. Oscar Wilde is reported to have penned, and

which is described as being a dreamy rhapsody about beauty in the abstract and the concrete. It is the old story *colum non animus*, &c., and Mr. Wilde's outburst apparently are the sole exceptions to the sobriety of utterance which the New York press has exhibited. There is probably no public in the world so grossly and systematically misrepresented as that of the United States. It is, Englishmen are requested to understand, wholly given to the idolatry of monstrosities; it prefers eccentricity to excellence, and asks not for what is good, but for what is *bizarre*. So long as the new-comer has the reputation of being a British lion, it will, we are told, flock to see him, although the only thing genuinely lionine about him is the skin. Such is the conventional idea; and it is impossible to imagine anything that is more wide of the mark. The distinctive qualities of the American people are really their intelligence and perception, and they show, in regard to artists of every description, the mingled shrewdness and refinement of taste in which they are supposed to be wanting. Mere names are not enough for them. They will take nothing for granted. They give every candidate for their favour a fair chance; but they are not content merely to register the judgment of others. Mr. Froude crossed the Atlantic heralded by a reputation which had few European superiors. His works were as deeply and as deservedly admired in Baltimore and in Boston as in London. Every thing was in his favour, and it was predicted that his visit would prove an unprecedented success. And so it would have proved if the citizens and citizenesses of the great Republic had no other wish but to gaze upon the presence of a distinguished man. They were, however, impelled by a sentiment of something more than mere idle curiosity. They wished not to look at Mr. Froude, but to hear him lecture; as lecturer Mr. Froude failed; and, therefore, his expedition failed too. The truth is that the Americans are as keen and as correct judges as modern civilisation knows of the genuine and the spurious, of the true and of the false. The decisions of their tribunal may not be absolutely final, but they are denounced only by those who have failed to satisfy its requirements.

Another British star besides Mrs. Langtry and Mr. Oscar Wilde has lately shot athwart the Transatlantic movement. Mr. Herbert Spencer only recently left the United States. It cannot, perhaps, quite be said of Mr. Spencer that he is a prophet without honour in his own country; he is certainly a philosopher more deeply worshipped and better known in the land where he has been a guest. The truth is that the American public, which sometimes confirms the verdict of the English, often equitably redresses the unjust balance; and while it is more critical, is frequently more appreciative. The welcome which Mr. Spencer has enjoyed on the other side of the Atlantic must be a new experience to him. In England he is the author only of a limited class. For every one reader he has here, he has probably not less than half a score in America. Nor, so far as the public taste of his native land is concerned, can he be considered a personage. His appearance is as little familiar as his fame. If the ordinary wayfarer between St. James' street and Charing Cross were to meet Mr. Spencer on his way to the Athenæum Club, and were to be informed of his identity, he would probably receive the information for the first time, and would be unconscious of any special emotion excited by it. In England Mr. Spencer has been, at the most, the hero of a clique and the idol of a coterie. Occasionally an impulsive young lady, with a pretty turn for philosophy, has been carried away in an ecstasy of admiration, and has inhabited for weeks the boarding house where the sage has been temporarily located. A few matrons of mature years have been known to encourage him to address the company assembled in their drawing-rooms from the hearthrug, as from a pulpit, and have taken notes of his discourse, which the great man has obligingly corrected the next morning at breakfast. But Mr. Spencer's distinction in the land of his birth has always been, and is, sectarian, and not national. He has not been quite understood by the community at large, any more than his habits have been appreciated by all the gentlemen and ladies whose society he has affected. As a thinker he is great, as a man he is eccentric; and probably there was never yet united in the same individual such a mixture of the cool scientific vision and morbid nervous excitability. Mr. Spencer's visit to America has been regarded by his hosts as a graceful recognition of the esteem in which they have long since held him. As has returned the compliment by studying their institutions with much closeness, and detecting their weak points with extraordinary rapidity. No more instructive "interview" has ever taken place than that which the correspondent of the *Standard* recently held with the philosopher. The true significance of the latter's remarks was the practical failure of Republicanism. Mr. Spencer still thinks it theoretically the most perfect form of government; but then it presupposes for its success the highest type of human character.

Curiously enough, Mr. Spencer, who was exceptionally explicit in his confessions, and who, as the New York correspondent of the *Daily News* informed us a week or two ago, voluntarily favoured the friends who bade him adieu with his views on the future of the United States, bitterly complained of the irresistible ubiquity of the interviewer. His feelings on the point are intelligible; but on the whole the interviewer is a most unjustly abused personage.