

ON ANKLES.

WHAT limitless vistas such a subject opens before one. The thought is overpowering! Grand! impressive! as at times, in the eyes of the beholder, the ankles themselves are ravishing! What numberless poets have apostrophised the eyebrows, the eyes, the taper fingers, the rounded arms, the sylphlike figure, the brow of exquisite whiteness, the rosebud lips, the pearly teeth, the shell-like ears, yes and now I think of it, some infatuated gentleman praised, in print, the left shoulder blade of his adored. The great Laurence Sterne wrote a chapter on whiskers. "You are half asleep my good lady," said the old gentleman taking hold of the old lady's hand, and giving it a gentle squeeze, as he pronounced the word whiskers, shall we change the subject?"..... But the old lady was interested. "So throwing a thin gauze handkerchief over her head and leaning it back upon the chair with her face towards him and advancing her two feet as she reclined herself,—I desire continued she, you will go on." and omitting somewhat the old gentleman continued as follows:

"—Whiskers? cried the Queen, laying a greater stress upon the word, and as if she had still distrusted her ears..... Whiskers! replied La Fossense repeating the word a third time,—there is not a cavalier Madam, of his age in Navarre, continued the maid of Honour pressing the page's interest upon the Queen, that has so gallant a pair..... Of what? cried Margaret smiling..... Of Whiskers, said La Fossense, with infinite modesty." And so on and so on, was there ever a man living who could write so charmingly. Yet he never wrote upon ankles, never a syllable, at least not that I know of. Then too there is that terrible wicked old Dean Swift who could write upon anything, who could entertain you with his reflections upon a broomstick, can you imagine a subject more barren? Yet never a word upon ankles? There also is that nasty evil-smelling old Rabelais who wrote upon subjects I should blush to mention, and no reference to ankles. Extraordinary! Plainly it is for me to cope with the subject. To begin with I will classify them. There are lean ankles, fat ankles, attenuated ankles, slatternly ankles, neat ankles, and perfect ankles.

Many a lazy happy afternoon have I spent when I ought to have been working, with my well seasoned old briar between my lips, seated in my *Wicklow*, which commands a view of a certain muddy crossing, moralising upon—ankles! gazing upon—ankles! Alternately moved to pity, anger, disgust, joy by—ankles! There is a certain Italian girl who frequents our street earning a precarious livelihood by the aid of a violin and a dirty small boy. She generally plays directly under my window, much to the annoyance of my immediate neighbours, for I am told she plays villainously, possibly she may, I know absolutely nothing about music, so cannot say. Her reason for favouring my window beyond others and exasperating my immediate neighbours beyond the other dwellers in this street, is not because I am a gay, handsome young fellow, with a roguish eye and a ready wit. Alas I am far from that, being middle aged, corpulent and decidedly bald. No my dear young man my youth has departed, and with it many illusions, you too will lose them—have patience.

What is it the divine Goethe says speaking of that delicious spring time of life.

"Naught had I yet a rich profusion,
The thirst for truth, joy in each fond illusion,
Give me unquell'd those impulses to prove:—
Rapture so deep, its ecstasy was pain,
The power of hate, the energy of love.
Give me, oh give me back my youth again!"

Alas but I am wandering back into that dim past, that looks so like fairy land now. wandering away from my little Italian girl: wandering away from my—ankles. No, her predilection for my window is simply this, in front of it her dirty little companion, presumably her brother,—gathers more pennies into his disgraceful little hat than in front of any other window.

My reasons for distributing pennies, which I cannot well afford,—living as I do upon a small natural heritage of wits, nothing else,—is not an inordinate love of music, for which I care not one brass farthing, but, because while playing she rests her right foot,—a remarkably small foot it is by the way,—upon the curbstone, and exposes in so doing a decidedly neat—ankle!

Ah how that exasperating past will rise before me as I write. I behold it, as it were in a mirror. There is a lake, ten miles wide at least, a gentle breeze rocks one among many small boats upon its surface. It is a summer night, a million of stars shine in the wonderful space above. The moon is full, no mist or cloud dims its white light. In one of the many boats reclining among the cushions in the stern, is the figure of a young woman. The moon lights up her charming face. There is a man in the boat. A young man, not good-looking but very much in earnest,—earnestness is a very fine thing except as a marketable commodity. The earnest young man is leaning upon his oars and bending towards her,—he is saying..... but I will not tell you what he said. He is thinking doubtless how good, and lovely, and true, she is. It does not occur to him that she possesses covetousness of riches, envy, vanity, hatred, ignorance, and a goodly share of stupidity,—though a remarkably fine pair of—ankles.

The scene changes. I see a handsomely furnished drawingroom. In it are two people seated, one is a florid red-complexioned man who looks as if he had lived for many years too well. He is not an earnest man, unless in the pursuit of money. He worships, earnestly, a little fetish made of gold. On sundays he goes to church to worship his creator—God Almighty. But his little golden fetish will not permit anything of the kind. It jumps up in front of him, so he worships it,—it is his God!

The other occupant of what room is a woman, she is stout. In figure she is what you would call comfortable. Strange to say she resembles the moonlight maiden. She is in fact, the moonlight maiden, or into what that pretty creature has developed. But the earnest young man has departed, he had his day—so has every dog we are told. The moonlight maiden, that was, has now what she coveted, with all her sordid worldly heart, she has a fine house, she has servants, she has money, she has POSITION!! She has nothing in common with the florid over-fed looking animal whom she has promised to love, honour and obey. They have little to say to each other. She has no children, she had two, but fortunately they died. Her life is loveless, and if she knew it, hopeless and hideous. May God have mercy on her. Besides position I forgot to add, she possesses a remarkably fat pair of—ankles! She no longer interests me, money is written upon her stout figure, upon her stupid face, she positively smells of gold, her punishment is deserved, she has fat—ankles!

Being a bachelor as I said above, middle-aged, bald and I may add good-natured, providing everything goes smoothly, I am, as is often the case with gentlemen similarly situated, the repository of numerous confidences. Now a man I know has been paying marked attention to a certain very charming girl (so he informs me she is, which information I take cum grano salis.) He is very fond of talking to me about her,—friends generally suffer under such circumstances. He assures me that she is the most fascinating creature that the sun ever had the amazing good fortune to shine upon (Ha,ha,ha.) Her manners are perfect, (?) Her face is lovely (?) Her hands are beautiful (?) Her figure is a dream (?) Her taste in dress cannot be excelled (?) But her—ankles, he has not seen them yet. (He has the same predilection for a fine pair that I have.) He has watched for them with untiring patience and ingenuity, when she is seated in the drawing-room bewitching his understanding with the subtle charm of her conversation, storming his heart with the fire of her glances. When she is in church praying to all the saints in the most becoming of attitudes. When she is going upstairs, when she is coming downstairs, when she is skating, when she is waltzing, when she is crossing muddy streets. But all to no purpose. With an ingenuity baffling his own, this modest maiden keeps these interesting accessories shrouded in a mystery of skirts. He vows he will not ask her to marry him till he sees for himself whether her ankles are in keeping with the rest. He declares, that to him it would be impossible to marry a girl with thick ankles.

—*Adolphus Tomkins.*

The weather prophet seems to be carrying water on both shoulders and shipping it all the time.