

# "BEACON LIGHTS."

BY EMILIE SEARCHFIELD.

## FRANZ BREDT'S OATH; OR, A TALE OF THE OLD WELL AT NONNENWERTH.

"Evil beginnings have had endings."

IT was towards evening, in the year A.D. 1830, that a man, broad, stalwart, and bronzed, stood waiting 'neath the balcony of a house which has, perhaps, undergone more complete changes than any other in the whole wide world. I mean the Convent of Nonnenwerth. Not that it was at all a convent in the days whereof I am speaking. No, for a new era had dawned upon it eight years before, and it had become at that time an hotel, which was well filled during all the summer months, and thus the chambers in which so many lives had been dedicated to heaven were now filled with worldlings and their vanities — vanities which somehow will cling if possible to the human race, in some one shape or other, so long as life lasts.

He looked upward, this man who waited, and just when daylight grew crimson, and the Rhine gorgeous to behold, just when, as it were, the glories of heaven and earth intermingled together, a maiden appeared, timid and bashful as a maiden need be, and you, when you gazed into the rough, untutored face of the man, saw that Love dwelt within him, the deep, all-absorbing love of a passionate soul, whose al-  
 We'd be staked on this one venture, no matter whether he lost or no. "Marie!" he breathed, and then the girl came and leaned low over the trellised railing, so low in fact that the man easily brought his own head almost on a level with hers.

Her long light hair streamed down upon his shoulder, and the sunlight lent it a beauty and colouring it lacked in the daytime — lent, too, a glow to her fair cheek. (Ay, but perhaps I am wrong there. It might have been the presence of her companion which effected this latter, only looking upon her it seemed to be the sun's glow, nothing more.) "Marie! and thou wilt not forget to love me—I mean, thou dost love me for certain, and—and, Jakob shall be sent away with his paltry gold?"

"Yes, yes, Franz!" and then her hand, brown and stained with toil, yet small and shapely withal, stole down softly into his. "Yes, Franz, I love not gold, nor Jakob neither."

"And thou dost love me?"

"Nay, I said not that, only thy music is sweet, and it pleaseth me to hear it." She gave her head a pretty toss, blushing more deeply than ever the while, as though in a certain measure she meant the words she spoke, and yet she did not withdraw her hand from his; then when Franz pressed it to his lips in a transport of joy at its possession, something very like a tear stole into her soft, blue eye.

"Say thou lovest me—just once—only whisper it, my own; and then I will be content and proud as well, and Marie," his voice was growing even more passionate than before, "I will soon have a home for thee, a sweet nest for my little dove, and thou shalt have music whenever thou listest then, my precious birdie."

"And I shall love it better than the chinking of Jakob's gold."

Oh, it was pleasant to watch and listen to them — all seemed quite in keeping with the store of romance, which seemed there as though gathered into one—early days, love dreams, the full strength of manhood, and, last and most tender of all, the old age of the grand, sweet river. Nature mellowed there the grey, torpid moments flowing into the sea of eternity: it brings back by magic touches the varied beauties of past scenes: it gives, as I have before said, mellow richness and warmth even to old age and decay. Just beyond, old Father Rhine ceases to be; his waters mingle with that of the mighty



"An oath which, alas! he lived to fulfil."

ocean, and he is no more. A grove of trees hard by whispered and sighed to the lovers, their bright, green foliage appearing alternately red and gold in the evening glow. Then in a little while all paled to what it was before, the glory died out, and the shadows of evening crept on apace. Franz and Marie then separated, he going on his way out into the beaten road, while another figure, also that of a man, whom the luxuriant undergrowth of the grove had partly hidden from view, came forward, and shook his fist threateningly, first at Franz, and then at the girl who was gliding softly back to the work-a-day world to which she belonged. Sitting by the way-side was a small boy, a strap across his shoulder, and a violin in his hand, while by his side lay another and larger instrument, a sort of rude guitar, of which he was apparently taking care.