

## THE LADIES' MILE ON A JUNE MORNING.

A rare June day, a pleasant scene,  
A gracious air, a sky unclouded—  
How sweet those elms' new-budded green!  
The Ladies' Mile is crowded.

A gay kaleidoscopic show,  
In combinations all unending,  
The restless fragments come and go,  
Revolving, parting, blending.

O, there are forms of Juno-mould,  
And palfreys perfect in their paces,  
And trees black and brown and gold,  
And proud and piquant faces.

One face, amid a hundred here,  
More ripely rounded, richly tinted;  
One noble face—how soft and dear!  
Upon my heart is printed.

Sweet, in those far-off wistful eyes,  
The jangling life around unheeding,  
I think a pure heart-history lies,  
Not difficult of reading.

I think, ere London whirl and strife  
Involved you in their wildering mazes,  
You lived a simple pastoral life  
Among your birds and daisies.

I think you think you'd gladly change  
Your throne above the rival beauties  
For that old life's unfettered range,  
Its thoughts and dreams and duties.

I think 'twere sweet to lead you back,  
And watch (as London towers should dwindle)  
Your soft cheeks win the bloom they lack,  
Your great eyes flash and kindle.

I think—but, see, she rides away;  
She nears the arch in canter rapid;  
She's gone—the sunshine fills the day,  
The Mile is stale and vapid.

F. L.

## ELEANOUR: A TALE OF NON-PERFORMERS.

Eleanour had passed the first flush of rampant, boisterous youth, being very nearly twenty-eight years of age; and as she was neither a beauty nor a fortune, few people took the trouble to tell her that she did not look so much.

A thoughtful expression, an easy figure, and a pair of fine eyes, constituted her chief outward claims to notice; but then she was a widow, and one who had also been a mother—it was felt that they were quite sufficient for any purpose her life could now afford.

She had a convenient income, good health, and a tolerably whole heart; since, although her marriage had undoubtedly been one of affection, it had not perhaps yielded the entire fruition of happiness anticipated. It had been entered into after a brief acquaintanceship, and under peculiar circumstances. The single child which had been born to her died in infancy; and there had then been five years of uninterrupted companionship with an amiable, ordinary young man, who attended to his profession diligently, took his recreations punctually, loved his wife sincerely, and ate his dinner heartily. His wishes had always been moderate, and his habits respectable,—since he had a comfortable home, and an excellent business, he asked no more; his ambition did not extend beyond returning the hospitalities of his neighbours in style equal to theirs, and paying the bills afterwards without a groan.

A groove which had suited him so well was, unfortunately, scarcely that which a youthful imagination had painted for Eleanour. Her tastes were different from her mind was superior to, his; her fancy was warm; and of knowledge of the world she had none whatever.

That would have taught her to be duly content with the comfortable roof which sheltered her, with the modest luxury of her surroundings, with the dainties on her table, the carriage at her door,—to estimate these as far better things, far more solid, tangible benefits, than congeniality of taste and harmony of purpose. As it was, she had just sense enough to keep her longing for such fripperies out of sight; and to accept her lot without saying to any living creature that it had disappointed her.

Nothing had been less dreamed of, less anticipated, than the early and sudden death which had left her, at twenty-five, a widow; and astonished and astray as she had then felt, it was not all at once that she could realize the absolute termination of that episode in her history, which had seemed so fixed, so immutable, and for which she had been so manifestly unfit. It had been still more of a shock than a sorrow.

Time, however, did his work with marvellous rapidity. In spite of herself, the glow returned to Eleanour's cheek, and light to her eye, almost too soon; and in spite of the jealous guard maintained over the past, it might have been observed that, with the sense of grief and loss, other feelings had indubitably mingled.

Eleanour could not pretend a part; but, luckily for her, one was not needed.

No suspicions ever entered the breasts of the four pretty sisters over whom it was ordained that she should return to hold vice-maternal sway. Their mother had died many years before; and on the return of the widow to her early home at the expiration of her married life, she found Kate, aged twenty-one, Julia twenty, Puss and Dot respectively seventeen and fifteen, all inclined to look upon her in the light of a parent, obey her edicts without hesitation, and regard her with an affection in which respect was largely mingled.

The emancipation of the younger two from

school-room bondage, and the advancement of the elder ones to maturer years, made no difference in the position thus at first established. Eleanour was guide, guardian, counsellor,—and to their father they were not one-half so submissive.

Mr. Crichton did not, indeed, exact submission. He was an indulgent, easy-going man, who, although he had not opposed his eldest daughter's choice, had been afterwards as well pleased as decency would permit, that the union should be dissolved by death, and that he should hear no more about it. His son had made a far more suitable match,—and Alexander had two fine boys. That was of importance. He had but one son; and if Alexander had thrown himself away or had been childless, it would have been a terrible business. But Eleanour was only one of the girls; and as matters had turned out, no great harm had been done.

He had now all his family about him again, and he liked that. He could walk over to Alexander's—it was but two miles—sit for half an hour, pursue his way, and be home in time for dinner, with the agreeable feeling that he had done his duty, and that it had scarcely cost him an effort. When the boys were old enough, he would send them to school at his own expense; until then he could supply them with barley-sugar drops; and even if he were obliged to lay down his newspaper now and then of a morning to listen to some little clamourer who had toddled to his knee, he found himself able to do it with a tolerably good grace. In short, he was a mildly selfish nonentity, who, as long as nobody interfered with him, interfered with nobody, and whom only the solid annoyance of an ill-cooked dinner, or a hopelessly bad day, caused to let it be seen that he was not the entirely good-tempered man he was generally given out to be.

This happening only occasionally, however, the harmony which prevailed in the family circle was but seldom ruffled.

The younger sisters grew prettier, gayer, more blooming and buoyant, year by year; the eldest tended the flock, exulted in them, and dominated over them;—within three years of her return, and when she was, as we have said, about twenty-eight years old, her monarchy was absolute.

"What would they do without her?" cried Cecil, Alexander's blithe, busy young wife. "She is mother and more to those girls. Without Eleanour they would be lost."

It was time, however, that some of the fair maids, who were really now in the prime of their youth and beauty, should take flight from the paternal nest, and be the ornaments of other spheres.

"Dot is growing very pretty," said Cecil one day to Eleanour, apart.

"Very pretty."

"She looks nearly as old as Kate."

"Quite."

"It is rather awkward all four of them being out," very softly.

"Ye-es."

"I—I expected, Eleanour, did not you, that—all—the elder ones would not have been at home—when Puss and Dot grew up?"

On which followed a solemn maternal conclave, sacred and secret, but not without results, as we shall see. Cecil's cheeks were burning when it came to an end at last, and she could scarce forbear dancing along the road as she ran home to her chicks. Eleanour had smiled on her suggestion.

Eleanour's smile had seemed at last to stamp it with authority; for the brother's wife was to the full as much impressed with belief in the awful majesty of our dark-haired autocrat, as were any of the party; she had felt that if she could venture to whisper to Eleanour the dear delightful idea which had come into her head, and if Eleanour would only approve, it might actually come to mean something. What the idea was will soon appear. It was not many days after, ere she flew into the morning-room, where all were assembled, and panted forth, regardless of their presence—

"Oh, Nelly dear, he is really coming!"

Eleanour frowned. The young ones would be enlightened,—and this was strong meat for men, not milk for babes. Her quiet "Who is coming?" carried warning in its tone.

Nor was Cecil's "Oh, my brother," followed by "You know I told you, Nelly," without its due apology.

"Your brother Anthony. Yes, I know, of course." Circumspection being thus restored, she could now without fear, show interest and cordiality. "You must be pleased, indeed, Cecil. How long is it since you have met?"

"Since before we were married—before we were even engaged, Eleanour! Think of that! Alexander has never seen Anthony—never once."

"And he is coming home for good?"

"Yes—for good. He is on his way now, and he is to live at Blatchworth. It is Blatchworth that has brought him; we should never have seen his dear face for years and years, I daresay, if he had had no home to come to; but now that Blatchworth is his,—ah! poor John!"

But John had been only a cousin, and Anthony was a brother; it was hardly in human nature not to view John's death through some of the light of Anthony's recall. If John had lived, then might Anthony have been as good as dead, for all they ever saw of him,—and might at last have actually come to his end, in those horrid places over the seas, uncared for, cut off from all. She found it difficult even to stop and think. "Ah! poor John!"

It may be that her transports were rather too often repeated; it is possible that she did harp upon the subject somewhat; for certainly her husband, who had at first been pleased and interested even to as great an extent as she could wish, grew taciturn.

"Of course I am glad, my dear," he was at length driven to affirm with unnecessary emphasis; "but you make—hum—so very sure of it. You never let one hear of anything else. And how can you tell that a hundred things may not turn up to stop your brother?"

"Cruel man, to try to damp me!"

"I am not damping you, as you call it,—only preventing your being overmuch vexed and disappointed if anything should happen. And lots of things might happen, you know, if you would only allow yourself to take them into account. Anthony is an uncertain fellow——"

"That he is not!"

"And would never dream of putting himself about, I should say, in order to be here to a set time. Suppose the weather is disagreeable—it has been abominably squally lately—ten to one he would wait till it was more settled. Or he may take a fancy for a peep at the seat of war by the way. It is a mistake to reckon on a man who has no ties."

"Ah, but he has ties! He has me and Oliver."

"Brothers and sisters don't go for much."

"He has Blatchworth."

"That is more to the purpose; Blatchworth will draw him to Blatchworth, undoubtedly. But Blatchworth being a thing, not a person—a thing without feeling or expectation, incapable of hurling reproaches—it can very well wait. Blatchworth can hardly be called a tie."

"You want him to form a tie?" quickly.

"Ask him here."

"Form a tie! Ask him here!" He must have been marvellously obtuse, for it is certain the idea fell on him like a thunderclap.

"Of course I am thinking of your sisters, dear." She was laughing and blushing now, delighted to be able to say out at last, what had been burning in her bosom unsuspected before. "Why, Alexander, where have your wits been not to find me out till now? Listen, then: he must admire their fair hair and blue eyes, and surely one of them will be compliant enough to be fascinated by his *beauté de diable*. Don't you think so? Don't you see how likely it is! Oh," cried Cecil, clasping her hands, "indeed I have set my heart upon it!"

The ice thus broken, it was impossible for the warm-hearted creature not to recur to the matter with fervour and frequency. True, it was no longer the mere arrival of her brother which filled her imagination; it was his future, the life which lay before him. Since her husband was now in the secret, there was no further occasion for the reticence which had at first embittered her exultation; there was no need to stop short and turn away when her fancy grew too busy for prudence. Accordingly, even such brief respites were not at last accorded him; and to confess the truth, from being sick of the subject, he grew sore on it.

"We must have him here at once," she would say, a dozen times of a morning.

"That depends on whether he will come," said Alexander, at length.

"What day did he write on last? Was it the 2nd or the 3rd?"

"I don't know," shortly.

"Nor care," pouting.

"Well, no. I don't care particularly," confessed the unfortunate husband, driven to say it at last. "A fellow can't be expected to care about that sort of thing. Tell me when he is to be here, and I'll do whatever you want,—that is to say, I'll—great effort of hospitality—"I'll meet him myself with the dog-cart."

He had done his part, he thought, in coming to this conclusion. He was not, as may be seen, keen to know to an hour when his brother-in-law might be expected to land on English soil; but if Cecil managed the rest he would meet him with the dog-cart presently. He did not enjoy the idea. By this time he was haunted perpetually by the apprehension of being taken by storm some fine day, obliged to muster a brotherly welcome, and install in this guest-chamber a traveller who would be in no further hurry to move on, and who, whilst residing under his roof, would be caressed, fêted, listened to, and marvelled at all day long. It was not an agreeable picture; since, if a man likes anything, he likes to be cock of his own dunghill; and nothing is less to his mind than to see another cock—having no such agreeable and salubrious domain pertaining to him—made free to strut and bow thereon, to the extinguishment of the real sultan, and the delight of all the silly hens about the place.

Alexander was not a bad fellow by any means but he was very dry on the subject at last.

"I don't think you are quite kind to poor Anthony," said Cecil one day, and there was an ominous tremble in her voice. "To be sure, his coming cannot be the same to you that it is to me and Oliver, but still——"

Poor man, driven to bay, what could he do? Swear it was the same? Not quite; but still he had to say something; to put forth some little suitable warmth; and at the same time try to kindle a corresponding glow within his breast. The attempt was honest; he exclaimed inwardly that it was only Cecil's exaggeration of joy which had caused him to be backward,—he could not not even to himself allow that he was jealous of the impression likely to be produced; that he foresaw himself overlooked, cast into the shade, by the all-engrossing new-comer;

and that, in addition, he did not care to have the even tenor of his life broken in upon; to be forced to think about people and scenes different from those to which he was accustomed.

Since the invasion—he had now come to look upon it as an invasion—was unavoidable, and since to be behindhand in complaisance would only be adding to it a disagreeable, without any other effect, he made an effort to conquer his internal repugnance to the idea. He wrote to his brother-in-law. To show himself obliging, he had even to carry the letter to the post; and then to walk on to convey the news of Mr. Delamere's having landed, to the party at the Castle.

Cecil was satisfied, and he was praised and thanked on his return.

"And you said that we had asked them both, Alexander?"

"Both?"

"You told me to write to Oliver too."

"Did I?"

"Indeed you did; and that was why I wrote to him. You must have known that was why I wrote to him? What else did you think? Really, dear Alexander, you are very tiresome——" almost crying.

"Well, well, it is all right, my love. Ask your brothers whenever you choose. I don't believe Oliver will come; the regiment is in country quarters, and lots of fellows will want leave as well as he at this time. You could not have fixed on a worse; he will never come; he is not the least likely to think of it——"

"But it was you who told me to write!"

It was true; he had told her; goaded thereto by a yearning for some comrade in the affliction about to befall him,—some one who would be as averse as he to long-winded narratives preluded by, "When I was in such and such a place,"—some man, in short. But he had not imagined the suggestion acted upon; and on second thoughts had cancelled it in his own mind. There was nothing now for it but to acquiesce, and put up with the probable addition of another good shot on his moor, and another handsome gallant at his table. He was himself not good-looking, neither was he first-rate as a sportsman; therefore it may be imagined how he relished the prospect. Oliver Delamere he knew, and on the whole he did not dislike him,—they got on fairly well together,—and if he could have exchanged Anthony for Oliver, he would have been glad to do so; but somehow, when he came to think of it, he was not quite sure that he wished for both.

Anthony, he dreaded; Anthony, he feared, would bother him, would annoy him, overshadow him; and a third person to have shared his grievance and his ignominy, might have been a consolation. But Oliver——? He shook his head.

And then there was another walk to be taken to the Castle, to announce that the young men had been heard from; that they had severally accepted their invitations; and that they would arrive within the week.

The reception of the news was exactly what he had expected it would be. It was no vexation naturally to people who had nothing to do with it. His father thought it a proper attention to Cecil's relations that they should be asked to Crichton at the only time of year when it was a favour to be invited to a Highland moor; and the girls—who, Alexander told himself, would have disliked nothing more than to have had tiresome or uncongenial companions saddled upon them,—were well enough pleased that such a misfortune should happen to him. They plied him with gay questions.

Oliver had always been a favourite, as a lively young scamp with every attraction in the world but a full purse is sure to be with a set of girls; but though he was referred to with interest, curiosity was reserved for Anthony. They would be so glad to see Oliver again, and—was Anthony sure to come? Oliver was so nice, and so merry, and sang so well, and danced so well, and—was Anthony like him? Even the black-robed Eleanour left her book and her corner to join in the cross-questioning, put her arm round Julia's neck, and looked affectionately at Kate. It was too bad; he hoped to goodness that nothing would come of it; and felt almost savage at the extreme probability of his hopes being in vain.

There they were; four pretty, lively, well-born, and fairly well endowed damsels; and what heart not already secured, could be expected to be proof against so fair a battery; on one side the chestnut curls and chiselled brow of Kate, and on the other the sparkling smile and rose-bud bloom of Julia. Even the less remarkable younger ones were full of subtle charms and youthful vigour. He actually laughed at last, the situation grew so desperate;—then a good thought struck him.

"Eleanour," he said, aside; "you see I have got to have these fellows. It is a pity, but I cannot help it."

"Why a pity?"

"On account of the girls, I mean."

"Oh, on account of the girls?"

"These men will be over here whenever they can, and I can do nothing to prevent it. The shooting is execrable,—they will soon find that out; and then they will want 'metal more attractive.' Cecil will encourage them, naturally; but you must do what you can on the other side. Don't let the girls go anywhere without you. I hate philandering."

He did not reflect that he, as well as the sister he was speaking to, had pilandered to some purpose, but felt relieved by having said so much.