

Poetry.

WE'VE A HOME OF OUR OWN.

We've a comfortable home of our own, my dear,
And we're free from worry and care;
No more "house hunting," nor moving about,
And no merciless landlord comes here.

We've a beautiful house of our own, my dear,
With its parlors and chambers so nice,
Its basements and attic, and a room to spare
For grandma, God bless her, for life.

We've a nice green yard, all our own, my dear,
Where the children can romp and play,
And no "big ugly boys" can break Jessie's
doll,
Nor scare Lizzie's kitten away.

We've a garden all planted with "truck" my dear,
And a beautiful bed of flowers,
We'll have currants, gooseberries, and plums,
if they bear,
And all this nice homestead is ours.

Yes; we'll have wet days and cold, dry days
and hot,
But what care we for sun, wind or rain,
We've a roof of our own, on this bright little
spot,
Then let's banish all sorrow and pain.

We've a spare bed or two, if company comes,
And a place for Ella and Johnny all right;
Also, Anna and James, if they choose to come
home,
With their babies, to stay all night.

We've a parlor for Mattie and Jen to sit,
If a young man should happen to call,
But we'll not be in a hurry for that quite yet,
Two lessons are enough—the young rascals
—that's all.

Then let us be happy and gay, my dear,
Nor wrinkle our brows with care;
We've a place of our own, and no rent to pay,
No merciless landlord comes here.

YOUTH AND AGE.

How slow, how sure, how swift,
The sands within each glass,
The brief, illusive moments pass!
Half unawares we mark their drift
Till the awakened heart cries out—Alas!

Alas the fair occasion fled,
The precious chance to action all unved!
And murmurs in its depths the old refrain—
Had we but known betimes what now we know
in vain!

When the veil from the eye is lifted
The seer's head is gray;
When the sailor to shore has drifted
The sirens are far away.

Why must the clearer vision,
The wisdom of Life's late hour,
Come as in fates derision,
When the hand has lost its power!

Is there a rarer being,
Is there a fairer sphere
Where the strong are not unseeing,
And the harvests are not eere;

Where, ere the seasons dwindle
They yield their due return;
When the lamps of knowledge kindle
While the flames of youth still burn!

O, for the young man's chances!
O, for the old man's will!
These flee while this advances,
And the strong years cheat us still.
—Scribner's Monthly.

Tales and Sketches.

THE ROYAL SISTERS-IN-LAW.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

CHAPTER I

The human race is ever progressive. From the time of our first parents in the garden, we have been steadily advancing in knowledge and refinement; and each succeeding age, in complacent wisdom, looks back upon the ignorance of its predecessors. In the sixteenth century, France took the pre-fostering care of Louis XII. and Francis I. (who maintained, at the expense of government, "professors whose business it was to lecture to as many students as chose to hear") the ambitious youth of all countries flocked to Paris, and France became the seminary of the world. On the accession of the weak and pleasure-loving Henri, the beneficial results of the wisdom which preceded him lent a lustre to his court; and it continued to be the rallying-point of learning and the arts.

Beza, Seve, Pelletier, Bellay, Ronsard, and Idello were the sons which that age gave to science and the muses. Their lofty names, rescued from oblivion's engulfing waves, have floated down the tide to far posterity; but the legion of authors and scholars who were famous then for their bold crusade against ignorance, have been lost in intervening time; yet they have left their impress on the age in its emancipation from the thrall of that barbarity against which they battled.

The statesmen of those days have filled the world with their renown, and the names of their contemporary warriors are enshrined in immortality. The formidable brotherhood of the house of Guise, whose respective mem-

bers graced the Court, the camp, the church, and the council; the Bourbon brothers, Anthony, Duke of Navarre, and Louis, Prince of Conde; the family of the famous Montmorency, who had enjoyed the confidence of the three last Gallic monarchs—all lent their laurels to adorn this reign. "Fair women and brave men" are inseparable; and at Henri's court clustered the loveliest and most remarkable women of the time. His own consort, Catharine de Medicis, shone in all the lustre of transcendent talent and unfaded bloom, while the vices which afterwards deformed her character lay undeveloped in her bosom. His sister, the Princess Margaret, a beautiful example of female loveliness, and the idol of the nation; his two fair daughters, just verging into womanhood, carefully reared and accomplished; and his beautiful ward, the renowned Mary Stuart, added interest to his Court.

The gaiety of Henri's reign was unexampled. Summer tournaments and fetes were succeeded by winter festivals and masquerades. Sailing, fishing, and hunting; snow-balling, skating, and dancing, occupied alternately the attention of the royal votaries of pleasure; and the places and gardens of Paris seemed almost to embody the poet's dream of paradise.

One lovely day in July, the gardens of Fontainebleau echoed with the gaiety of a *fitte champetre*; and the noble revellers, dispensing with the stately etiquette of more ceremonious meetings, wandered, as impulse prompted, amid the natural and artificial adornments of this charming spot.

A mirthful and boistered party, consisting of a dozen persons in the very dawn of youth, stood under the trees near a fountain; and prominent amid them all was one who became the heroine of many an after tale. Her features narrowly escaped being Grecian—her nose being somewhat longer and her lips fuller than the antique model. Her bright brown eyes, chameleon-like, varied in hue with the maiden's mood; seeming blue in her sunniest moments, but growing almost black with thought or sorrow. Her hair a beautiful auburn, defying restraint, clustered in short, close curls around a brow, the high and fair expanse, of which gave a regal character to her girlish face. The dazzling whiteness of her complexion, and the no less dazzling radiance of her wreathing smiles, imparted that sunny, seraphic expression which may be observed in pictures of the halo-encircled head of the Madonna. Oh, Mary Stuart was born to reign a queen! Four other members of this interesting group were the celebrated Scotch Marys—Mary Beaton, Mary Fleming, Mary Livingston, and Mary Seaton. These young girls were near the age of their royal mistress; and had been selected, while yet in infancy, from the Scotch nobility, to share the charming exile of the baby queen. They had emulated her studies in the convent, and were now beginning to taste with her the intoxications of the Court. The sixth figure in the group was the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of the reigning monarch, whose beauty, though not so conspicuous as that of her royal companion, was scarcely less enchanting. Her face was more pensive, her movements more gentle than Mary Stuart's, whose impetuous mountain blood endowed its possessor with energy and action. A younger sister of Elizabeth's, entertaining her brothers Charles and Henri with an animated narrative, completed the group.

Aloof from the rest, a pale, slender boy of sixteen stood leaning against a tree, with melancholy eyes contemplating the mirth in which he did not venture to mingle. Then, as the boisterous Charles laughed, with unrestrained hilarity, at the narrative of his lively sister, he turned away with a long-drawn, heavy breath. Was it envy that prompted the sigh of the young dauphin?

"See," cried Mary Livingston, as her eye rested on a magnificent retinue in the distance, "yonder is the queen and all the gay gallants of the Court. How they follow her footsteps and listen her words! Oh! it must be delightful to be a queen!"

"Mary Stuart is a queen," said another, "but she is as one of us; she reads with us, studies with us, dances with us, and—"

"Queen of the Barbarians," interrupted Mary Stuart, laughing; and then added, more seriously—"Oh, if you could hear my lady mother tell of her joyless Court, you would not envy me my poor kingdom."

"But to be Queen of France," suggested the Princess Elizabeth, archly, alluding to the betrothal of Mary to the heir of that kingdom.

Mary crimsoned, and glanced hurriedly at the boy dauphin; but, seeing he observed them not, replied, with merry railery—"Yes, or of Spain!"

The young girls, by their ready mirth, testified their appreciations of Mary's quick retort, for it was well understood that the princess was regarded with tenderness by Don Carlos of Spain.

"They are belle countries," cried Mary Beaton, "but it is wearisome to be a queen! I would rather be a nun, and so would you," addressing the Queen of Scots. "Ah, you shall be Sister Genevieve, and I will be Sister Anastasia, and our days will glide peacefully away in holy prayers to our sweet Mary Mother, and sublime anthems to the glorious heaven of which she is queen. Oh, Mary Stuart we will be nuns!" and the enthusiast clasped the hand of her mistress between her own.

"I should like to be a nun," said Mary

Stuart, gently, touched by the animated earnestness of her attendant. "You know how dearly I loved our convent life; but my uncle, the cardinal, says it is not the will of Heaven."

"And my uncle, the cardinal, says I was born to be a nun. I am sure it is greater happiness to sit quietly in the calm cloister, where care and sorrows never come, than to marry some odious lord whom one cannot but hate."

Again Mary Stuart's eyes sought her boy lover, and this time encountered his gaze fixed upon her. A shade of anguish crossed his countenance, and he turned away.

Mary saw, with ready sympathy, the disquiet of the dauphin, and flow to his side, saying, "Nay, Francis, do not leave us."

He paused, and looked in the fair young face of his betrothed, with an expression of sad inquiry, mingled with reproach. "You would be a nun, Mary?"

"Oh! Francis, I thought so once, but I do not desire it now—indeed I do not."

Mary spoke the truth; her introduction to the gaieties of the Court had entirely dissipated her predilection for the cloister.

"You prefer being the wife of a husband you must hate," continued Francis, with petulant jealousy.

"Nay, nay; those were not my words," said Mary, good-humouredly. "And, indeed, Francis, you know I love you."

This artless confession, so unlike the Mary Stuart of after years, soothed the ruffled feelings of the lover, although it failed to overcome his self-distrust.

"How can you love me, Mary? You, so peerless, so beautiful! you, around whom the gallants of my father's Court cluster in adulation and homage. No marvel that I fear the gay, the handsome, and the noble will win your heart from me, a poor timid boy."

"Nay, dearest Francis, I know naught of them beyond the hour; but you I have known from infancy. And you are so good and gentle to all, so tender to me, how can I help loving you?"

The sad eyes of the dauphin lighted with triumphant gladness. It was a proud thing to be beloved by the peerless beauty; it was a precious thing to be beloved by the object of his young heart's idolatry.

CHAPTER II.

The marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots, to the Dauphin of France, was one of the most imposing spectacles of that age of wonders, and called forth all the enthusiasm of the most enthusiastic nation in the world. The ceremony was celebrated in the renowned cathedral of Notre Dame; after which, the royal cortege partook of a magnificent collation at the palace of the Archbishop of Rouen. They then returned to the palace of the Tournelles, where a banquet was prepared, the splendors of which defy description. The royal party feasted at a marble table, with "one hundred gentlemen" in attendance as musicians, and "princes of the blood" as servants. Supper was followed by a series of magnificent pageants, at which modern royalty would stand aghast, and own itself a neophyte. In the midst of the festivities, twelve artificial horses, magnificently caparisoned, rode down the hall, each bearing the young heir of a noble house. Then followed six galleys, decked with cloth of gold and richest hangings, with a youthful cavalier on the deck of each; who, as the fairy barge sailed down the hall, advanced and bore from amid the admiring revellers the lady of his heart. On one of these galleys sat an illustrious stranger, whose large eyes glistened with the lustre and blackness of kindling coal, while his olive complexion betrayed the rich dark blood of Castile. This was Don Carlos, only son of Philip II. of Spain. As the curious mechanism moved down the hall, he leaped to the side of the Princess Elizabeth, led her to a seat on his barque, threw himself at her feet, and glided from the gaze of the applauding Court.

"My beautiful one," said the Spaniard, "look up, and smile to-night, for to-morrow I may not bask in my lady's favor."

"So soon?" sighed Elizabeth; and her cheek paled.

"Ah, yes, so soon," responded the impassioned son of Spain. "But we will give to love the moments which are left. Let me tell thee once more how long I have worshipped thee. Oh, Elizabeth, in my very boyhood thy bright image was enshrined in my gloomy heart, filling it with light and glory, like the angel in the sepulchre. And as I grew to manhood, its every pulsation has beaten with a deeper, truer, stronger love for thee. I have not loved thee vainly, for thy royal father has promised thou shalt be mine; and I am filled with joyful and triumphant exultation. Speak, dearest, and say that my bride is not the victim of a father's policy; say that she brings the priceless dowry of love to her affianced."

"A victim!" she exclaimed, reproachfully. "Couldst thou look into my heart, and see how its thoughts and hopes have centered in thee; couldst thou hear me nightly thanking the Virgin for my blessed lot, and imploring her to preserve our love from blight, thou wouldst not question me."

"How eloquently am I answered! But, beloved, fear not; for our love must prosper. Have not the kind Facts favored us in all things? They prompted me to love thee and oh! bliss, they have bidden thee love me in return. They have instigated Henri and Philip, thy sire and mine, each to desire, most

earnestly, an alliance which will secure the friendship of his powerful neighbor. What, then, can part me from my bride?"

"I know not, Carlos; and yet a weight of foreboding oppresses me. I cannot feel joyous to-night, even with thee. Love as intense as ours is fearful, and I tremble lest our happiness may not last."

"Thou hast been consulting the astrologer, Nostradamus," said the lover. "Nay, hide it not, but tell me his prophecy."

"He told me I should be Queen of Spain," said the lady, timidly.

"Ha! said I not so?" cried the impetuous lover. "And what next?"

"That the crown should be my cross."

"Never!" exclaimed Carlos—"never as I am a true knight and Christian gentleman! Dost doubt me, dearest?"

"I doubt thee not," she answered, meekly; "and fear naught save losing thee."

"How soon will I teach thee to mock at that fear! I leave thee to-morrow; but when next we meet, I will be here to claim my bride!"

When next they met!

CHAPTER III.

The affection subsisting between the dauphin and the dauphiness was of a very different nature from that entertained by the lovers. Francis and Mary were sixteen years of age at the time of their union; but she was tall, finely developed, and womanly; he slight, delicate, and boyish in appearance. The one looked older, the other younger, than was really the case. The dauphin loved most tenderly the bride which policy had assigned him; but, mingled with his admiration of her lustrous charms, was a sense of his own inferiority and unworthiness, which occasioned him intense pain. It is hardly possible that the unfortunate dauphin could have inspired his gifted consort with the same passionate love which he entertained for her; but strong minds, like Mary's, rejoice in the appealing love of weak ones, and his amiable, affectionate nature, his timid self-distrust, were very touching to the tender heart of the playmate of his infancy, now the wife of the youth. We doubt if the depths of her nature had been stirred by her delicate boy; but she loved him with a generous affection, and devoted herself to him with assiduity.

"The couriers bring weighty news to-night," said Elizabeth to the dauphiness, who had just arrived at the palace. "Queen Mary, of England, is dead."

"Ah!" said the merry Mary, "we must congratulate your ladyship on your deliverance from so fierce a mother-in-law."

"Poor lady?" sighed the gentle Elizabeth, "with all her faults, I cannot but pity her unhappiness. Oh! Mary, it must be a living death to be scorned and slighted, as she was, by the husband of one's love!"

"We must hope that the son will prove a better husband than the father," said the Queen of Scots, playfully.

Elizabeth raised her meek eyes to the speaker, full of anguish and reproach.

"Sweet one, forgive me!" cried the queen, winding her arms around her sister-in-law; "I did but jest. Carlos is as unlike Philip as day is unlike night, or Elizabeth of France unlike Mary of England. You will be happy, lady-bird—happy beyond your fondest dreams—happy as I now am."

The two young creatures with arms entwined, stood looking from the window in silence. Elizabeth was musing of the future and her lover, while Mary's thoughts were with the fate of queens.

"Mary of England, in experiencing domestic unhappiness, has but shared the common lot of queens," said the youthful moralist. "The hand of a princess must be bestowed for the benefit of her kingdom, though sorrow and blight be her portion. This martyrdom of the heart is the penalty of royalty; but we, sweet sister, you and I, are favored by Heaven. When I think of my union to one who from childhood has been dear to me, and all the happy moments of my unclouded life; when I think of the fond devotion of your affianced to the bright lady of his choice, and her unutterable tenderness in return, I almost think that Providence has forgotten our royalty."

Elizabeth's eyes sparkled, and her cheek glowed, while the queen spoke; and she ejaculated, "Oh! we are, indeed, blessed!"

Could Mary of Scotland, from the pinnacle on which she stood, have looked down the dim aisles of futurity, and marked the sorrows gathered in her path—the outraged love, the humbled pride, the thwarted ambition, the crushing, in turn, of every passion of her noble nature—could she have marked, in this hour of triumphant happiness, her faltering footsteps winding downward, through a life of woe and weariness, to a death of degradation—her mighty spirit would have burst its bonds, and folded its wings in heaven. Could Elizabeth of France have realized the horrors which beset her shorter pathway to the tomb, her gentle heart would have broken then, instead of a few years later, and thus escaped the anguish through which it was destined to win its way to rest.

Even while these fated ones revelled in the security of present bliss, the cloud was rising, "no bigger than a man's hand," which was soon to shroud their heaven.

The death of Queen Mary, of England, was an event which gave unmingled satisfaction to her husband, Philip, King of Spain; and he

lost no time in searching among the daughters of royalty for a more pleasing successor. The beauty of Elizabeth was alike a theme for gossip and minstrelsy in the Spanish Court, and awakened in the king a determination to make the *fiancée* of his son his own.

France and Spain were at the time engaged in a war, which had been attended with such successes to the Gallic arms, as (in the language of a French historian) "secured to that country an advantageous peace." But Henri, who was neither warrior nor statesman, neglected to avail himself of the advantage which these triumphs gave him, and submitted to his enemy's terms. By the treaty of Cambray, styled among his people the *Pain Maudite et Malheureuse*, he relinquished all which had been gained by the bravery of his army, and promised in marriage his daughter Elizabeth to Philip, and his sister Margaret to the Duke of Savoy.

The news of this new disposition of her hand fell on the heart of Elizabeth with overwhelming horror. In the flushing of youth, love, hope, and happiness, a summons to the tomb would have been more welcome. There, at least, she would find repose; here, naught but lingering, hopeless disquiet of the heart. Resistance she felt would be vain; for those were days when youth and loveliness were the legitimate traffic of power. We turn shuddering from the unnatural Circassian, who sells one daughter to buy bread for the rest, forgetting the long list of examples afforded by history, of men who have sacrificed their own blood for the less excusable purpose of self-aggrandizement.

The marriage was celebrated with the usual rejoicing—the Duke of Alva acting as proxy for the kingly bridegroom. There was a relief in this; he, at least, was not tied to her for life; his presence excited no loathings, his language no disgust. He was nothing to her. Banquet, masquerade, tilt, and tournament followed; and the unhappy bride moved amid them all, an automaton, impelled by the eternal springs of habit, scarcely feeling the bitterness of their mockery. Excessive grief had stupefied her brain, paralyzed her soul, and, in mercy, prevented her from realising the extent of her despair.

On the other hand, the marriage of his daughter, and the consequent rejoicings, filled Henri with delight. He mingled in the sports with boyish avidity, and himself pressed the Count Montgomery to meet him in the lists. The count's spear being broken in the encounter, he attacked his adversary with the stump, and a splinter from the shivered weapon pierced the eye of the king. The wound was considered trivial at the time, but in eight days Henri the Second was no more.

The new calamity roused Elizabeth from her mental stupor, and she shed tears—bleeding, refreshing tears of unaffected grief. In the first gush of sorrow, subdued into tenderness towards a parent who was no more, and awed by the presence of the mighty conqueror who says to the wild waves passion "Be still," the memory of her rebellious grief filled her with remorse. But, as her mind grew familiar with these new emotions, the old agony returned, and from the midst of sorrow and darkness, hope arose like a star. A fond, wild hope—a hope that first faintly cheered her drooping heart—then kindled into certainty. She could yet be saved! The will she had obeyed was powerless to trammel her; the father who had urged her fate was no more, and she would be free. True, she was already wedded; but she had not seen her lord. She was in France, Philip in Spain; and the mock espousal with his proxy could not be of sufficient strength to bind her while the rites between herself and Philip were unperformed. The chains were forged; but they had not yet received their final rivet. She would be free!

(To be Continued.)

THE CHAINED HOST.

The potato famine in Ireland was nowhere felt more severe than in that part of the country where the following story is told as a true tale.

In a small village in one of the most barren districts of the west of Ireland lived a very poor widow, whose sole inheritance from her husband were two healthy children, girls, of the respective ages of three and five. Painfully, and by the utmost effort, she had contrived to pass two years of her sorrowful widowhood. Bad and scanty food, obtained only by labor too great for her delicate frame, had at last thrown her upon her sick bed, and death, in pity, removed her from her earthly troubles. The poverty of the whole parish was so great that nothing could be done for the poor orphans. All the neighbors, with the utmost desire to help, were too famine stricken, and heard their own children too often cry in vain for bread, to assist others.

"If the children could only get to Kilburn," a village some miles distant, said one of the neighbors, after the poor mother had been buried, "a brother of their father lives there, and he could not possibly refuse to take care of them.

"But matters are as bad there as here, for nothing but starvation stares them in the face. If we send them to their relations we have done our duty. We cannot possibly keep them here."

So a carrier, as an act of charity, took the