

LISETTE'S PENANCE.

BY NED P. MAH.

God's blessed sun in heaven's are shone bright,
Bringing sweet hope where hope before was not—
Shed a soft, mellow flood of golden light
Upon the humble fisher's gleaming cot.
Where, o'er the little harbor's peaceful creek
Sheltered by rugged, lofty, steep-hewn rock,
The village crowded the cliff; and on the wall
Of the still chapel, where the bell's low call
Summoned the aged cure's pious flock
To thank their Maker for a prosperous week.

There, in that simple temple's sacred bound,
Where voice offerings of saved seamen hung,
And texts, and painted legends gleamed around,
The white-haired preacher's earnest accents rang.
Heaven's messenger, to warn, exhort, command,
Saint-like, and pure, free from passion's trace,
Faith and meek charity illumined each trait,
While holy hope made bright life's waning day,
And mild enthusiasm fired the aged face
Stayed the weak, quivering voice and palsied hand.

"Love one another," was his theme. He spoke
Of brotherly affection, of the love
Of children for their parents, and awake
The tenderest chords which human hearts approve.
Then spoke he of that holy mystery,
Of that close love which maidens feel for men—
Which Heaven sends as foretaste of the bliss
Perfected in a purer world than this—
Wiping its moistened lashes now and then
Happily at thought of his own history.

The love, he said, of woman, pure and bright,
Such a man's burdened soul's world weary pain,
Was scrubbed by the mellow, softened light
That shined through the painted window pane.
Shedding a heavenly, hallowed, peaceful glow
Over the dull things of earth. But that the love
Of evil women was not like the curse
That Eve has brought us—made the wicked worse.
Unfitting them for the great heaven above—
Made hell of home, which should be heaven below.

Then he portrayed, with a great eloquence,
Grand in the power of each simple word,
Which charmed the higher nature's purer sense
Of those who sat in his sweet teaching heard.
The vast, sublime, ethereal expansion
Of love angelic, where no shade of doubt
Marred spirit communion—while those whose base
And greener natures gave such love no place,
Became as devils, and were cast without
The confines of the great celestial mansion.

And then he brought his sermon to an end,
Breathing a blessing, and the little flock
Began its meditative way to wend
Down the sun-flooded pathway of the rock.
Old men and matrons thinking of the days—
The halcyon days of courtship—preludes sweet
To peaceful years of happy union.
Young men and maidens, who had just begun
To taste those joys which make life's springtime
Sweet—
The transient bliss which no foreboding stays.

And side by side walked two with lingering pace—
A bright-eyed maiden and her comely swain,
Such wealth of joy beamed in her laughing face
As who beheld might ne'er feel sad again.
Her lover's stalwart, well-knit, manly form,
Fashioned in nature's best proportioned mould,
Towered at her side in youthful pride erect,
Loving to cherish, powerful to protect,
And the warth, weather-beaten visage told
How woe he was to battle with the storm.

And, as they halted underneath the tree
That shadowed her home-porch—laughing Lisette
Cried, "Ah, revoir, Pierre! You dance with me
First at Maitre Guizot's fête?" But with regret
He shook the curls back from his handsome head
Sadly, and said, "No, not to-night, Lisette,
My mother is sore sick, and I must be
Where filial duty loudly calls for me.
Dance with some other, dearest, do not fret,
My thought shall watch thee from my mother's
Bed."

Bright-eyed Lisette was quite resolved to go.
At evening, in all her fiery deck,
She, with her sister and her sister's beau,
To Maitre Guizot's eager steps direct.
Pierre, lost in anxiety's sad, gloomy round,
Pierre forgotten, soon the bright coquette
Fired with all—yet he who pleaded her best
Was a young, dippant, pleasure-loving rascal,
A town-bred student, who was deep in debt,
And *blasé* of the joys in cities found.

Jogon, he quaffed the brimming, ruby glass,
Nimbly he tripped it in the merry dance,
Blythely saluting every comely lass,
Vexed in the arts which nature's gifts enhance.
But chiefly on Lisette he ever bent
His amorous eyes, and for her favor wooed
With courtly compliments, and softly tried
The loving arts which he so deftly plied.
And oftentimes it was for her hand he sued
In merry dance, or whispering o'er her leant.

And when it all was over, who but he
Guided her home with fond solicitude,
Half-circled in a close embrace, which she
Had censured in Pierre as rather rude.
Although the night was dark, and then, you see,
The way was rough. She might have stumbled, or
Have struck her dainty foot against a stone,
Had her young escort not been guarded for,
A thousand dangers must be guarded for,
Before they reach her home's gigantic tree.

And there they stood and whispered. When at last
They parted—saw the evening's transient bliss
Was o'er already—on its wings, the blast
Wafted their sighs, and more than that—a kiss!
Then, as Lisette turned to the wicket white,
A dark form intervened. Shrieking with awe,
Trembling and shrinking, asked she, "Who is there?
Child, how you frightened me! You had Pierre!"
The tall chieftain answered not. She only saw
The bowed form rise betwixt her and the light.

He pushed her from him. "Wanton! Get thee in!
My mother dying and my sweetheart false,
Go! Whence this penance? What has been my sin?
My mother dead and my best loved one false."
And with a curse which sounded very dread,
He swore he'd take his boat and put to sea.
A rare wild night for fishing! It might be
Death would overtake him. Then she would be free!
Lisette sobbed angrily. "You may for me,
May you be drowned! I wish that you were dead!"

Proun on her couch she flung herself, and tried
In vain to slumber, but still sobbed and tossed
In passionate writhings, till at length she cried
Herself into a fitful slumber, lost
In horrible imaginings, and dreams
Of terrible shipwreck. Till in torrents fell
Force rain, and hail, which her frail casement broke,
And mingled lightning flash and thunder stroke
Starting her slumber to a waking yell,
While all her fancy fled in full flight seems.

It seemed to her that over, mid the hoarse
Wail of the tempest came distressful cries—
Fancied she saw Pierre, a pallid corpse,
Amid the seething billows sink and rise.
And when the storm subsided, ere the dawn
Shed on the reeking rocks its garish light,
She rose and tottered, filled with dire remorse,
Where the mad billows spent their useless force
At the cliff's foot, and knelt and strained her sight,
Her wretched breast with dire forebodings torn.

And as she kept her vigil on the crags,
Another's craft came home with splintered mast.
A woeful wreck—its canvas all in rags.
A terrible testimony to the blast.
But still his boat came not. She tore her hair
And wrung her hands, and called upon Pierre,
And grovelled on the rock, and gazed and gazed,
Till the hot sun her burning eyeballs dazed,
And evening's shadows found her sitting there
In a mute agony of deep despair.

And on the third day of her vigil sad,
As she sat gazing out with stony orbs,
As one whom dire despair had driven mad,
As one whose being one great grief absorbs,
The aged cure sought her out and told
How wrong it was thus to succumb to grief,
And whispered of repentance—softened, led
Her to the convent—had her put to bed,
Till a great flood of tears gave her relief,
And tender ministry her mind consoled.

That convent was her home. Religion won
The life naught else was powerful to save:
And she became a quiet, meek-eyed nun,
Sedately modest—pure, and pale, and grave.
In midnight watchings by the bed of pain,
In daily ministrations doing good,
Her life flows outward like a peaceful stream,
And sick men welcome like a sunny beam.
The sweet, wan face beneath the sombre hood,
In heaven she hopes to meet Pierre again.

But chiefly where the course of youthful love
Is ruffled, warped, and choked with carking care
By green-eyed jealousy, which strives to prove
Its phantom wrongs are real—it is there
Her mission lies. Or where some gay coquette
Toys thoughtlessly with some great loving heart
In cruel sport—she tells with bitter tears
Her own sad tale. And thus, in the long years
When she shall end her penance and depart,
Those whom she reconciled shall not forget
The village Mediatrice, sweet Sœur Lisette.

MISS CARLSFORD'S RADICAL CHANGE.

For years Miss Carlsford had known she was
a failure. But when Doctor Felton told her
that her view of herself was correct she was
dumbfounded.

"Now," said he, "there is but one thing
will do you any good. I should recommend
you—"

"Stop there!" she cried. "Now, don't tell
me to go to Europe for the sea voyage; don't
send me to a heathenish place for variety. I
have tried all that. I have tried allopathy,
homeopathy, hydropathy, galvanism. No, sir,
the change I require is not this sort."

"I should not suggest anything of the kind;
I should suggest a radical change."

"A radical change!" she gasped. "Then all
I have done was perfectly normal! Heaven
help the man, does he want me—a woman,
to dress like a man, and go and discover coun-
tries like an idiot!"

"Miss Carlsford," he went on, "there is
nothing the matter with you; you are only
nervous. I reason with you as though you
were a man, for you are not a feeble woman by
any means. Now, suppose you were to act like
a man for a while."

"And discover countries?"
"Men do a few other things; they sometimes
make fools of themselves."

"I am to do something that a man or a fool
would do, am I? Then, sir, may I request you
to get out of this house as soon as you can?
When I am like a woman again I'll send for you
and apologize!"

She left the room and went up-stairs. Such a
temper! She tore around, she fretted and
fumed. She sank into a chair. She covered
her face with her hands.

"What a child I am!" she almost sobbed,
and seized the daily paper lying at hand. "I'll
read every editorial, I will! No, I won't!
I'll read every advertisement. And if that's
not doing what a man or an idiot would do, just
tell me!"

She went desperately at her dreadful work.
And yet she was not at all a disagreeable
woman; she was tired of everything because
she thought that she had treated herself very
badly years ago, and she never forgave that
weakness; she had loved a man without the
slightest reason for doing so. He had been
married to some one else five years now. When
she heard of that marriage she came to the con-
clusion that she was quite a lonely woman, dis-
gusted with nonsense and sentiment—having
been sentimental over him for a good ten years
before his marriage—and that she had every
reason to be sick. So she had been sick off and
on for five years. And last week her niece had
absolutely come to her and told her that she was
in love, and had gone on and praised the young
man.

"Why was I not told of this before?" Miss
Carlsford had asked, severely.

"Oh," said her niece, pointing, "you know
you were sick—and then mamma—"

"What has your mamma to do with my ill-
ness? I've not caught anything from her."

"Aunt Sarah, mamma thought that, con-
sidering that James—"

"And who is he? I've nothing to do with
him—I've caught no contagion from him
either!"

"Don't take me up so," stammered her
niece, "and mamma thought that as James—
you know very well that the gentleman's name

is James Summers—well, that he is the cousin
of—the gentleman everybody once thought
you would marry—"

"Becky Carlsford, cried her aunt, "if I were
speaking to anybody else but my own mother's
granddaughter, I'd say that of all donkeys your
mother has the largest ears. If you'd told me
in the beginning about this James Spring,
Summer, or Autumn, or whatever his unseason-
able name is, I'd have forgiven you. Now, go
away; I'm sick!"

They never called when Miss Carlsford re-
ported herself sick! She had led Dr. Felton
such a life since last week! But to-day had
capped the climax; she had never counted on
the doctor's positively ordering her to make a
fool of herself. So she read the advertisements
in the newspapers. She read and read. All
at once she collapsed, almost in hysterical laugh-
ter.

"I'll do it, I will," she cried. She called her
maid and packed a bag. "Mary," she said,
"don't be stupid whatever you are. My phy-
sician has ordered me a radical change."

Mary made for the door. "Oh, yes'm," she
cried, "they have it fresh at the drug-store at
the corner in little boxes."

Miss Carlsford threw her bag at Mary.
"Mary," she said, "it's no fault of yours.
Now I'm going away—I don't know when I shall
return." Then she was in a carriage on her way
to the depot. She arrived in New York city.
She wrote a note. The next day she followed up
her note. She had answered an advertisement
in the *Harvard*—she was going to an establish-
ment where paper boxes were made, and where
employees were wanted. Could Doctor Felton
have proposed a greater change? She entered
the place springingly; she was not used to being
afraid.

"Have you ever made boxes?" asked the
foreman who engaged the hands.

"Now that's a beautiful question, is it not?"
she said, out of a patience with such nonsense.
"Ever made boxes! What do you suppose I
came to learn for if I knew already."

"We would rather not take green hands."

"Green hands! Who are you speaking to?"

"But if you are willing to go with the begin-
ners—"

"Did I hint that I desired to go with the
enders! This is beautiful. Be like a man,
must I? Oh, preserve me!"

A gentleman came up and said: "Let the
woman have her place, and don't confuse her."

"I don't mind in the least, thanks," she
said. She found he was looking at her. She
saw she had forgotten herself; she must be
careful if the radical change was to come about.

She was conducted to a long room full of busy
women.

"Why, they're absolutely merry," she said.

"And if there isn't a creature singing her
'Grandfather's Clock,' I won't have it! I'll—"
Then she remembered again, and laughed a little
as she had laughed over the *Harvard*. "But I
won't paste!" she said. "Ouch!"—for some-
body's elbow had struck her.

The owner of the elbow was apologizing when
she looked to ascertain who it was that had
dared to molest her. The owner of the elbow was a
very pretty girl indeed, in a rusty black gown,
and looking quite nervous and frightened.

"I am a little awkward," said she, softly.

"I should think you are," cried Miss Carls-
ford. "It won't do you any good to go through
the world taking people's breath away."

"I did not mean to do it," said the girl dis-
tressed.

"You don't suppose I'd put up with it," cried
Miss Carlsford. "If I thought you did it pur-
posely, do you? I don't allow people to thump
me in the liver for amusement. Bless my
heart! What are you crying about?" for the
girl was wiping her eyes and smiling at the
same time.

"Pardon me," she said, "I am so afraid I
shall not prove competent. And it is quite ne-
cessary that I— You know I am a new hand;
I only came to-day."

"A new hand!" ejaculated Miss Carlsford;
"why, so am I."

She looked at the young girl again—she was
very pretty. She looked at the black frock; she
noticed a tear rolling down the flushed cheek.
Somehow her heart softened as it had not soft-
ened for many a day, and she said something
gentle about being glad they had met, and the
like, even going so far as to hope her manner
would not be minded. Then a forewoman came
and gave directions, at which Miss Carlsford be-
came rebellious.

"Hush, pray!" said the pretty girl, "it
might lose you your place."

"Oh—oh, yes," laughed Miss Carlsford, and
turned to the girl. "You're the nicest-looking
one in the room," she said. "What's your
name?"

"Phenie Beck," was the reply.

"I don't like the name," decided Miss Carls-
ford; but that's not your fault. I shall call you
Josephine. My name is—oh, well, my name is
Carlsford—Sarah Carlsford."

There! she would make no mystery; she was
doing nothing she was ashamed of. She was
only going to act like a man—or a fool.

All day she worked beside her new companion,
and quite liked it—particularly the various
little tiffs she got into. At six o'clock she pre-
pared to leave, after being told by the fore-
woman to be at work in the morning at seven.

"Seven!" she cried. "Why, I never rise
till nine!"

"What business were you employed in that
you didn't get up earlier?" asked Phenie Beck.

"Humph! Business! The fact is, I've been
out of a situation for some time, and I fear I've
grown lazy." How she enjoyed it.

"Do you go my way?" asked Phenie, at the
corner.

"Your way?" repeated Miss Carlsford. Then
the thought of the incongruity of living in a
high-priced hotel while she was in for the radical
change. "Not to-night, Josephine," she
said. "I shall change my boarding-house to-
morrow."

The next morning before seven she was at her
place. Phenie Beck she loved on the spot. At
dinner-time she got the girl to go out with her.
"For I want to find a place to live in," she said.
"If I dared," hesitatingly said Phenie, "I
should say, if you don't mind, you could come
to my house. There's a room next mine, with
some little gold shells on the wall-paper."

"Humph!" said Miss Carlsford. "I hate
shells. I once had a piece of almond-shell in
my tooth. But I must first find out what kind
of people you are. Who's your father, now?"

"My father is dead; my mother, too. I am
quite alone."

"Child! alone!—a girl of your age! No
chaperon—no one to look after your faults!"
She caught the girl by the arm. "Phenie Beck,
come into the cakeshop and tell me everything
about yourself immediately."

And then and there she heard the story of a
girl left alone in the world—the story that is
more often untold than told, because it is so
old and stale.

"Josephine Beck, I'm coming to live with
you," Miss Carlsford said—"to look after you.
Somebody, I don't know who, ought to be
ashamed to leave you unprotected."

That night she went to the cheap house where
Phenie had a room. And thus was Miss Carls-
ford held in bondage. She could not have left
that factory had she wanted ever so much; the
helpless girl kept her there. Strange how the girl
affected her. Was it because she was so young
and simple and sure? She was nervous, ill at
ease, and almost motherly. She resolved never
to leave Phenie, and even some thoughts of mak-
ing a will in her favor and cutting off Beckie
floated across the mental horizon. But one day
a pair of shears, falling from a shelf and threat-
ening the forewoman, were ward off by Miss
Carlsford and fell upon her own foot, making an
ugly wound and disabling her for a month, and
did the business of years, as you shall hear.

"But, Josephine, child," groaned the sufferer,
"who is to walk home with you of nights and
protect you?"

"I have been long enough alone to take care
of myself," laughed Phenie.

"You being alone so long may only have
made you careless," remarked the protector;
and Phenie had quite a time to pacify her. She
made Phenie, though, tell her every evening all
that had been done during the day, trying to
and the carelessness she dreaded. After a while
she was more confident and did not worry so
much, and used to sit thinking by the hour in
the room with the little gold shells on the
wall, lost to all around her. And this was the
Miss Carlsford, petted and cajoled! She grew
into deprecating her curt, rude manner, which
had been adopted five years ago when the mar-
riage of the man who thought nothing of her
made sneers her portion, and she braved it all.
She wondered how all this would end!

Once Phenie came home and told her Mr.
Forbes had inquired after her.

"Don't tell me that foreman's name is For-
bes," she said—"the man who didn't want
green hands and spoke of beginners."

Phenie laughed. "Why, Mr. Forbes is one
of the firm," she said—"have you forgotten?"

She had forgotten the name in the advertise-
ment. Again and again Phenie came home with
word of Mr. Forbes, how he had stopped for a
minute to speak to her, how she had accidentally
met him on the street. To all of which Miss
Carlsford listened almost carelessly at first. Then
she grew more interested. Then she grew
thoughtfully disagreeable.

"Josephine," she said, "is he a young man?"

"Oh, mercy, no," cried Phenie; "he's
thirty-five."

"My age," said Miss Carlsford. "And why
should you think by 'he' I meant Mr. Forbes?
However, he's passed the age for being an ex-
traordinary man to young women like you."

And one young woman fidgeted.

Again this one young woman came home one
night radiant. "Oh," she cried, "what do
you think?"

"I never think," replied Miss Carlsford. "It's
bad for the complexion."

"Mr. Forbes is coming to see you this even-
ing. He told me so."

"I don't see why you should be so rapturous,
seeing his visit is to me."

So Mr. Forbes came. He had not been in the
house two minutes before Miss Carlsford said
to herself: "I was wrong; he didn't come to
see me. And it's because Phenie is helpless as
I was at her age that attracts me to her. Oh,
my poor young things of twenty! We silly girls
of twenty! But I must act like a man now."

After that night she questioned Phenie a good
bit about Mr. Forbes, and she found that he was
in that workroom more than she considered quite
good for him, considering that he was not a green
hand. The innocence of Phenie in telling her all
made her dislike it the more. She got Phenie
to ask Mr. Forbes to come and see her again
when he could. It appeared that he could come
that very night. She said she was anxious about
her situation, and he assured her it should be
retained for her. She watched him all the time