

THE IRON PEN.

Made from a Fetter of Bonivard, the Prisoner of Chillon; the Handle of Wood from the Frigate Constitution and bound with a Circle of Gold, inset with three Precious Stones from Siberia, Ceylon and Maine.

I thought this Pen would arise
From the casket where it lies—
Of itself would arise, and write
My thanks and my surprise.

When you gave it to me under the pines,
I dreamed these gems from the mines
Of Siberia, Ceylon and Maine
Would glimmer as thoughts in the lines;

That this iron link from the chain
Of Bonivard might retain
Some verse of the Poet who sang
Of the prisoner and his pain;

That this wood from the Frigate's mast
Might write me a rhyme at last,
As it used to write on the sky
The song of the sea and the blast,

But motionless as I wait,
Like a Bishop lying in state
Lies the Pen, with its mitre of gold
And its jewels inviolate.

Then must I speak, and say
That the light of that summer day
In the garden under the pines
Shall not fade and pass away.

I shall see you standing there,
Crowned by the fragrant air—
With the shadow on your face,
And the sunshine on your hair.

I shall hear the sweet low tone
Of a voice before unknown,
Saying, "This is from me to you—
From me, and to you alone."

And in words not idle and vain
I shall answer, and thank you again
For the gift, and the grace of the gift,
O beautiful Helen of Maine.

And forever this gift will be
As a blessing from you to me,
As a drop of the dew of your youth
On the leaves of an aged tree.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

We offer this delicious poem to our readers as further proof of the proposition which we lately discussed in these columns, that the author of *Evangeline*, has not, in his old age, lost anything of his youthful grace and finish.—[Ed. C. I. N.]

"WITH A SILVER LINING."

III.

It was all over.

The funeral had taken place, the few necessary arrangements been made, and Vera awoke from the pain and lethargy of grief to the startling fact that she was alone in the world, and penniless.

What little money her father had just sufficed to pay the necessary expenses of his death-bed; but for her there was nothing save the cottage, she lived in it, what was she to do to earn her bread—to support herself and the faithful old woman who had lived in their service for over twenty years, and mourned her master's death as deeply almost as his child?

To be poor was nothing very terrible to one who had never known riches; but the necessity of doing something, of turning from dreams to work, from dependence on another to dependence on herself alone, at first fell upon her with the cruel sharpness of necessity, and a sense of the bitter helplessness of youth and womanhood.

The rector's wife advised her to become a governess, though she had so few accomplishments, and promised to write and interest friends on her behalf. Vera had never liked the fussy, patronizing little woman, and liked her still less when she came, full of advice and suggestions, to intrude on her grief.

Human interests and human sympathy seemed alike indifferent to her now. It was so terrible to think of the love she had lost, the sympathy and tenderness and care which had guarded her life so long, and were now forever fled beyond recall.

It was about a week after her father's death when, as she sat alone in the little parlor in the summer dusk, old Dorcas, the servant, entered.

"If you please, Miss Vera," she said, "there's a strange-looking body without who wants speech of you. She says she comes from the Glete."

The girl raised her pale sad face from her hands.

"Tell her to come in here," she said, listlessly. "I will see her."

A moment after, an old, bent, witch-like woman entered—a woman with a brown wrinkled face, and hard fierce eyes, and long, bird-like, quivering fingers that clutched her ragged shawl as she spoke.

"You wished to see me?" said Vera, gently. "He bade me come," mumbled the old creature, indistinctly. "He bade me haste and say he was ill—a-dying, he thinks. He would see you at once."

"Whom do you mean?" asked the girl, in wonder.

"My master—the miser, they call him. Ay, and a miser he is, sure enough, and gold heaped up there like dust, and he stinking and starving and hoarding all the time. But he is ill now—very ill. He would see you at once."

She mumbled and muttered the words in strange disjointed fragments as Vera sat gazing at her, half in wonder, half in fear.

"He lies a-dying," she repeated, as though she found some inward pleasure in the sound of the words; "and all the good gold heaped up, and none to gather—none to gather—kith and kin all dead and gone. Ah, it is a fine world—a fine world!"

"Is he really so ill?"

"He lies a-dying," she repeated. "He bade me come: he would have no doctor—none, only you. Are you coming?"

"Yes; I will follow you."

"Indeed, miss, and you don't go to that heathenish place at this time of night alone," interposed old Dorcas, who was still lingering near the door.

"Who will harm her, do you think?" chuckled the old crone. "Not he, the old miser—he is a-dying. Alack! the good gold! who will have it now?"

And nodding her head and muttering half aloud, half to herself, she turned and went out of the open door, Vera following, and old Dorcas, staying only for a shawl to wrap around her, started in pursuit.

Along the quiet roads and through the dewy fields they moved slowly and silently, Vera bewildered by the strange summons, the old woman each engrossed by her own thoughts.

It was some twenty minutes before they reached the absolute, neglected-looking abode known as the Glete, and then the old crone paused, and took a key from her dress and unlocked the door, which creaked hideously as it opened. Then she led the way up the weed-covered, moss-grown path, and to the back entrance of the great, gloomy building, which was almost falling to pieces with long neglect.

Quite silently, and half-awed by the weird, intense stillness that brooded everywhere, Vera and her companion followed. Through the old dim kitchen and dreary passages and carpetless rooms they passed, till at last, pointing to a door beneath which a faint ray of light streamed, the old woman bade Vera enter.

Whispering to Dorcas to remain outside but within call, the young girl opened the door, and moved quickly and almost noiselessly across the shadowy chamber.

It was a gaunt, musty, dreary room, very bare and very cold; even the summer heat that reigned without seemed chilled here, and Vera shivered as she stood beside the great funeral bedstead, and looked down on the withered face all gray with pain, and lined with the weariness of great age. He glanced up as the shadow fell across him.

"You have come?"

"That was all his greeting. Vera touched his restless, feverish hands with her cool, slim fingers.

"Yes," she said; "you sent for me."

"And you could humor an old man's fancy even in your grief?"

"I was sorry for you—are you very ill?"

"My hour has come, I suppose?" he said, grimly. "I do not complain; I have already lived fifteen years beyond man's allotted span. Do you wonder why I have sent for you?"

"You need help, or nursing perhaps?"

"Help—nursing! No such woman's follies for me! No, girl, I sent for you for far different reasons. Let me look at you first. Ah! there is a change. The shadow has fallen, has it not?"

The pale lips quivered, the beautiful eyes filled with tears.

"Can you ask?" she said, sadly.

"I was a true prophet, you see. Well, on the whole, I am sorry—the gladness suited you better. Now a few words will tell you why I sent for you here to-night. You are poor, and you are alone?"

"Yes," she said, sorrowfully, as he paused.

"I know all, and I hear all, you see—the old miser is neither so blind nor so deaf as folks say. Well, you can be rich—ay, rich as any lady in the land; you can have everything your heart desires, everything that woman loves, if you will. Does the prospect allure you?"

"No."

"No?" He laughed a short, caustic laugh.

"Well, you are different to most of your sex, then—for gold they would sell their very souls. Let me paint the other side of the picture. In the life before you, you will be poor, nameless, dependent, at the mercy of women more pitiless on the weak and dependent of their own sex than any man would have the heart to be, you will drudge and slave and toil; you will miss all sympathy, kindness, forbearance; you will lose your beauty and your youth in the ceaseless effort to gain your daily bread—a life of hardships of which you can not dream and tortures you can not imagine opens out in your future. On the other hand, I would offer you peace, wealth, honor, the power to benefit others. Ah! that touches you, I see—the opportunity of doing endless good, of winning happiness, of bestowing it as you please. All this I give you with gold—for gold is the compeller of all things good and great, the key that unlocks all doors and opens them to fame, success, greatness. Nay, do not speak yet. I have neither kith nor kin; I will give all I have to you for no other reason save that your beauty and gladness attracted me long ago by their very contrast to my own decrepitude and hard-heartedness. I mean to make you my heir; but first I place two alternatives before you—poverty and degradation, or honor and wealth with but one condition attached."

"What is that?"

"Wait a moment. I wish I could paint the power you will inherit better than I do."

"Why did you not use it better yourself?"

she interrupted. "If the gold was yours, had you not the power also?"

His face grew dark and stormy.

(To be continued.)

FRENCH TITLES.

THE TRUE TITLES OF THE FRENCH NOBILITY—BOGUS CLAIMS TO NOBILITY.

A conversation is supposed to take place between a newspaper reporter and an old baron, a French edition of Sir Bernard Burke. The former, wishing to know the reason of the multiplicity of titles, of which every Frenchman appears to possess one, calls upon this baron of the old regime, who lays down to him the law upon titles, a law which Frenchmen all transgress: "I am not astonished at your surprise at the immense number of titles in France, and I am delighted to give you some particulars. To begin with, you too easily confound gentleman (gentilhomme) and nobleman. God makes the gentleman, and the king makes the nobleman, so that nowadays the creation of noblemen is impossible. Every gentleman is noble; but, on the other hand, a nobleman of recent date, without ancestors, however high his title may be, is not a gentleman, nor can he ever become one; his grandson will be the first gentleman of his line."

"The French titles of nobility are due, marquis, comte, viscount, baron, chevalier, écuyer and vidame. Since 1816 these last have fallen into disuse. Prince is not a French title; it is only the generic name given to members of the royal family and to such old sovereign families as the Bonillons and Bohans. The exceptional appellations of Prince de Condé, Prince de Conti, Prince de Joinville and Prince de Lamballe only prove the rule, as do the titles of Prince de Marcillac, Prince de Broglie and Prince de Sagan, whose title was authorized by Napoleon III."

"The head of a family alone has a right to a title, whatever it may be. All the other members of the family have no right to it or any other, save by special decree, as in the case of the Graysmouts, the Talleyrands the Rohans, or the La Rochefoucaults, as the marquise does not derive in any way from a dukedom, it is contrary to all heraldic rule for the sons of a duke to take the title of marquis during the father's lifetime. This is, however, constantly done, and as sons of marquises, earls and viscounts take the title immediately below that borne by their father, this accounts for the numberless titles one meets with in France. But, I repeat, no child has a right during his father's lifetime to bear his title or one inferior to it, even by adding his Christian name. At the father's death the eldest son only inherits his title, his younger brothers having no right to a title of any kind. If this rule were strictly observed our aristocracy would be select indeed."

"The impartial noblesse has three titles only—duc, comte, and baron; all the others are merely borne by courtesy. In all times absurd usurpations have taken place, but at no time have abuses been more flagrant than during the present republic. The Duc de Broglie during his tenure of office as garde des sceaux tried to put some order in the matter, and issued, on the 22nd of July, 1874, a ministerial circular, but from the first it remained a dead letter."

In this causerie the writer only speaks of those who, belonging to good families, think they have a right to the titles they bear; but there is another numerous class of persons who, taking the name of the town or village where they were born, or, again, putting their Christian name after their surname, gradually usurp any title to which they aspire. I will take a fictitious example. A Lefebvre is christened, let us say, St. Hilaire, and he calls himself, first, Lefebvre St. Hilaire, then L. de St. Hilaire, until one day his visiting cards unblushingly give him forth to the world as Marquis or Comte de St. Hilaire. Probably the old baron would have classed such a person outside the pale of honest men.

EARLY DAYS OF VICTOR HUGO.

Victor Hugo was born in 1802, and in his parentage we find a two-fold influence which has affected his character; from his father, who was a General of the Republic, and an ardent admirer of Napoleon, he drew his Democracy and his hero-worship—from his mother, the daughter of a ship-builder at Nantes, the Royalist fervour of his early opinions, the devotion to throne and legitimacy which produced "Louis XVII." and "Le Sacre de Charles X." His first years were years of wandering, as the exigencies of the service demanded. General Hugo and his family removed from Besançon to Marseilles, from Marseilles to Paris, and thence into Italy, where the young imagination of the little Victor was nourished in the very land of poetry and of beauty. His earliest recollections were of the "silver sparkle" of the Adriatic, the Bridge of St. Angelo, with its imposing statues, and Naples, glistening in the sunshine, fringed with azure sea. General Hugo was appointed Governor of Arellino, but before long was summoned to Spain by King Joseph, and the children were sent with their mother to Paris for education. They were lodged in the ancient convent of the Feuillantines, whose chestnut alleys and tangled vines were the delight of the three boys. Victor showed a great aptitude for study. At nine

years old he taught himself Spanish in a few weeks, with the help only of grammar and dictionary, and spoke it passably, only hesitating as to the pronunciation. The family of General Hugo joined him at Madrid in 1811, and already the feeling for architecture which afterwards so strongly distinguished the man was taking root in the mind of the boy; a deep impression was made upon him by the towers of Angoulême, which he drew long after from that early memory of travel. The boy was placed with his brother at the College of Nobles; the Spanish solemnity, the rigid monastic severity, of this institution, where the French children were naturally looked upon as intruders, chafed their expansive natures; and it was with joy they prepared to follow their mother back to Paris. The affairs of Napoleon were going ill in Spain; General Hugo judged it prudent to place his family in safety. The restoration of the Bourbons found them once more at Les Feuillantines, where they were joined by the General, now deprived of his command, and occupying himself with the future of his children. During these schooldays at Paris it was that Victor Hugo essayed his first verse. A chivalrous and dreamy character stamps them; the child repeated in his lines the beliefs of the mother; her passionate love for royalty and hatred of the revolution breathe in these early and faltering stanzas. The Academy would have crowned his poem on "The Happiness Afforded by Study," had they not considered it impossible such verses could have been written by a lad of fifteen. His earliest prose work, "Bug Jargal," also dates from this age, and was written in a fortnight, as the fulfilment of a wager among some young students of the Collège Louis-le-Grand.

DE QUADAM MORTUA AMICITIA.

Ah, child, it is not Love is dead, but Friendship's self. Were it but Love, small mischief had been wrought, for Love, The boy, lives on, though faith and trust be dead. (Not so indeed, that older Love the Grecian poets knew). The careless rogne would but have laughed and left un hurt. With flirt of wings; flown off to-day, to come, hot haste, Back home to-morrow with a thousand added charms, But she, sweet Friendship, with the trusting, faithful eyes, So tender, meek and pure,—she could not help but die, So cruelly you struck with heedless, selfish hand. How could you be so blind? so weak and foolish? Why Say you were poor and sick, her health and wealth were yours; Faint, worn and weary, who would raise and soothe like her! Say you were cold, her own soft bosom's warmth she gave; Say that the whole world shunned you, she had open arms, Ready to share your griefs; be glad when you were glad; Met you with sneers and frowns? she scattered them with smiles; Shame could not hurt, so thick her mantle's fold. Was she not Friendship; constant, though the world changed? She could not change. And yet, this gracious Presence, you, With many blows, repelled; beat down all faith and trust: And so, at last, she died. How does the fable fit Your case and mine? Why, thus— When first we met and where It matters nothing. By the law of nature, came That influence magnetic, unexplained, through which Man draws to woman, woman too to man, called "Love." Was it some spell of lutesome form? some turn of neck? Some curve of rosy lips? or peach-soft bloom of cheek? Some rounded grace of throat, or glance of eye? Who knows! And slowly, but full surely, were we building up A tiny home for Friendship, made of trust and love. Until one day I said, "The child has power to hurt." The next, I saw your soft complacent faithless hand Held by another, whilst your little wanton tongue Chattered small spiteful nothings to a newer friend Of all that we had said and done, so lying bare The sacred secrets love and friendship gave to both. Because, good luck! your pretty childish whims and mine Had disagreed, this way you chose to show your mood!

It was a pain, yes, for a while, as sharp as though A dozen nerves at once had felt the surgeon's knife; Then, with a fine painted smile, gay words, but aching heart, I bid good night, and left. You should not know you hurt. So then sweet trust was killed, and Friendship could not live.

Thenceforward, I could laugh at all your wiles, and say— "My pretty maiden, you have now no power to hurt!" And after you became, for my philosophy, A pleasant, curious study, as half humming bird, Half spider, wholly excellent for microscope. I used to watch how cleverly you caught your flies; But never wondered at the flies being caught: I had been fly myself, ay, had been eaten too, But for the grace of God.

So now, you live your life, Content if but some two-legged thing may press your hand, Whisper smooth pretty words into your pearl-shell ear, Fill up your silly, giddy, graceful head with praise, Or, with caressing arm about your pliant waist, Where in the vale the thistle down of girls. Lovers you have, and will have—while your rose-bloom lasts. That is—but not a friend; poor child! Hard words you say. But who gives heart in whole, gives mind and soul and life. To you, a toy; no more; which at your slightest touch Dilates or shrinks, grows warm or chill: a charming toy. Say that an infant grips your crystal goblet, graced, By cunning Florentine, about its dainty marge With such and such fair fancies; all a life long toll For hand and eye, and brain before its grace could be. One idle look—a crash! and—good-bye Florentine! Who blames the silly child? The fault was yours alone; I knew no better; put your Florentines elsewhere; Give children cakes and comfits, things they understand.

Ottawa.

FREDERICK A. DIXON.