

ruined barn; I sank down on the ground; the sights and sounds around me became dim and confused. I remember opening my eyes once, and seeing my mother and a little child kneeling in the bright sunlight—the child was like what I used to be, and she was teaching him to pray. I tried to follow, but I had no power of speech. My eyes closed, and there seems a great blank, except a few moments of consciousness I had when I saw you in the doorway—until I awoke one day, and found myself here. I have no language to express the feeling in my heart towards Mr. Grey."

He ceased speaking, and stood by his father's side, looking into the fire. A little face appeared between them—it was Sybil's.

"Father," she said, softly, "I am not the only one in the world who have to love you now, am I?"

The Squire drew her closely to him, at the same time taking the hand of his son in a firm, warm grasp.

"The past must be forgiven between us," he said, with deep feeling. "I do not say forgotten—there is only a half-truth in the old aphorism; we can never forget whilst reason is left to us, and it may do one of us good, perhaps, to remember a little—but all is forgiven on my side, and on yours too, I trust?"

"Yes, oh yes!" replied the wanderer, in broken accents, returning the clasp of his father's hand, and kissing Sybil's upturned face. "Christmas is a wonderful time," murmured the child, thoughtfully.

"It is indeed, my little one," said the Vicar's voice behind her—"wonderful to all of us, though in different ways. I have judged you harshly and wrongly, Mr. Clevedon," he continued, turning towards the Squire. "I am sorry for my prejudice. How completely I am divested of it now, I think Rachel will be better able than I to tell you presently."

They all gathered round the hearth, a happy, smiling group—so much to hear, so much to tell, so much for which to be grateful. Their voices were lowered, and their faces took a sadder turn when they spoke of the tenant of the distant grave; but their gladness was not taken away by doing so, only chastened. She could not be forgotten on such a night as this.

"Her memory will ever live in my heart," said the Squire to Rachel, when the others had withdrawn, and they were alone together. "She was all the brightness of my early life. We never forget the freshness of the first morning of spring, though the summer heat has scorched up all its blossoms; and so it comes that we cling with greater tenacity to the few stray flowers we find in the autumn of life, and perhaps we gather one before the winter closes in upon us. They are very rare and excellent sometimes, these flowers that come in autumn, Rachel."

"Are they as much loved, though in a different way, as those that come in the spring?" asked Rachel, in a low voice.

The Squire took both her hands in his, and looked straight into her truthful eyes.

"I think—Rachel—I think—I hope—I am saying what is true when I tell you they are quite as much loved;—at least, with me it is so. You believe me, Rachel?"

"Yes"—and her heart was in the tone of her voice, though it was still low.

"And you give me, in return for this, your young affections, in all their purity and freshness. Is it so, Rachel?"

The reply was lower than ever.

"I love you with all my love," she said. There was a short silence; then the Squire spoke again.

"You wished your father to reply to my letter as he did, because you thought me hard and worldly, and cruel towards her about my son?"

"I did not know the story of the stranger then," replied Rachel; "but I—" the words failed her; she could not go on.

"You believed the other of me?" asked the Squire, quickly.

Rachel shaded her face from him with her hands as she replied—

"I am afraid so."

"But not now, Rachel—not now? Quick—say!"

"No, never again," said Rachel, with her face no longer shaded.

"In the coming time," said the Squire, presently—"in the coming time, Rachel, when you are my wife, will you wish it otherwise than that I should still remember my children's mother?"

"When you forget her," was the reply, "you will cease to love me. Could I wish that?"

The Squire was satisfied, and Rachel's patient trust and faithful affection more than rewarded. Christmas, as Sybil said, was a wonderful time.

When Mr. Clevedon, the wanderer, and the now happy child had returned to the Manor, although late at night, the fire was still bright on the hearth, and the three chairs were standing before it as they had been left.

"I was right, father," cried Sybil, joyfully; "there is some one to fill the third chair before the fire goes out!"

There might have been four placed there, the Squire thought; but he only said, as he kissed his little daughter—"Sybil, you were well named."

M. Edmond About's new work, entitled "Alsace," has been brought out in Paris. Among other novelties is a story by M. Maurice Sand, "Augusta," the plot of which is chiefly founded on the events of the last war.

LOVE AMONGST THE ROSES.

BY ISABELLA VALANCY CRAWFORD.

When swing the morning-glory bells,
By marble pillar wreathing;
When o'er the perfumed violet dells,
The morning zephyr's breathing,
That time I wandered down a way,
That myrtle sweet enclosed;
And all about I pruned and peeled
For Love amongst the Roses!

A rosy brake I saw ahead,
In golden vapor flashing;
My steps were wing'd, and on I sped,
The fragrant fortress crushing,
The dewy petals flutter'd fast,
The gap to me disclosed;
Asleep upon the daisy blooms,
Sweet Love amongst the Roses!

I stood entranc'd. Oh, beautiful sight!
He look'd so sweet and simple,
Th' infant curls of golden hair—
Th' crimson cheek and dimple.
His golden quiver empty lies;
His chubby hand encloses
A crimson heart, and thus I find
Aish Love amongst the Roses!

A curious sunbeam quivers down,
And trembles while it glances;
O'er rosy limb and rainbow wing,
All gleaming as it dances.
Breathless I stretch my hand to grasp,
And, oh sweet joy! it closes
Upon the artful Paphian child:
Sweet Love amongst the Roses!

What time the moon's young crescent hung,
Low set above the valley;
And silvery vapors ghost-like clung;
I wander'd down an alley
Of sombre cypress-trees, where naught
But Sorrow's self reposes;
For, weary time! no more I found
Coy Love amongst the Roses!

With many a sigh I wander'd on,
Thro' all its dark recesses;
In sable weed all woeful clad,
My foot the dead leaves presses.
When suddenly the darkest brake
A rosy light discloses.
And, full of joy, sweet Love I find
Who died from 'mongst the Roses!

PETERBORO', ONT.

For the Favorite.

Heart Strings Touched by Little Hands.

BY BELLE LÉLÉ,
OF MONTREAL.

Toll! toll! pealed the bells of Notre Dame, chiming forth their glorious Christmas carols o'er the fair city of Montreal.

Toll! toll! they pealed through the clear frosty evening air, proclaiming that on the morrow a Christ would be born. Toll! toll! with joy ringing in their majestic tones, and mystic voices speaking through them to the hearts of those beneath, amid the glad tidings whispering of fraternal charity to the rich and happy, of hope and comfort to the poor and weary, to all of mercy and salvation.

It was just six o'clock, and through the busy streets all classes, mingled together, were hurrying home from their daily labors. The gaily-dressed and brilliantly-lit shop windows presented a tempting aspect, which the proud millionaire as well as the ragged news-boy could not fail to admire, the latter poor little fellow with eager, wistful eyes longing for the morrow, which, even to him, would bring joy.

Francis Raymond had just left his counting house, and was proceeding with slow, heavy steps in the direction of his lordly mansion in the west end. He was a bachelor of about thirty-five years of age, but from the many streaks of silver in his thick black hair and well-trimmed moustache, appeared at least ten years older. His form, which was of the medium height, was enveloped in a costly coat of fur; a cap of the same was drawn low on his brow, yet plainly revealed the dark, cold eyes which shone beneath, and which gazed with a cynical distrustful expression on all. His face was not really handsome, but a certain interest hung around it which could not fail to attract; and on gazing on the broad, well-formed brow and clear-cut features, one could not help feeling that tenderness might have beamed upon them, although it never did. In business, his strict integrity and honorable dealings won the respect of every one, but any attempt at intimacy or friendship was coldly repulsed. His immense fortune gave him *carte blanche* to the first society of the city, and many were the invitations left at the door of his elegant home, all of which were politely and decisively declined. Charitable he was said to be, for when charity was asked of him his gold was lavishly thrown down, but more through indifference to the value of money than through kindness to suffering humanity. Sunday after Sunday he drove to church in his stately carriage. When there, he knelt and bowed his head as others did, but whether in prayer or merely through custom no one dared to judge, and certainly no

one could judge from the dark impenetrable eyes or firm unmoving lips. Known by reputation to all, acquainted with many, to none did he unveil his heart or breathe aught of his past. God and himself alone knew that. Toll! toll! rang the bells, now rolling with great harmonic peals, now more softly, as the wintry winds wafted their tones in another way, now raising their powerful voices as if there were hearts within them that would burst with joy; now whispering in low, mellow tones of peace to men of good-will below. Francis Raymond walked on more slowly, stopping ever and anon to listen, for to him they brought back the remembrance of a Christmas Eve just twelve years ago, when to the music of these self same bells he had vowed his love and received promises of eternal affection and fidelity from the beautiful Ella Vane.

He was then but a poor young clerk in a mercantile house, which he had first entered as a message boy, without friend or relative in the world. When he met Ella Vane she had just come from her home in Upper Canada, where she had lost both father and mother in the space of three months. A widowed aunt with a comfortable income had brought her to reside in Montreal, and in her kindly but ambitious mind foresaw a brilliant marriage for her very beautiful niece. Many, many were the admirers who flocked around, and among them—the poorest but most ardent, perhaps,—was Raymond. Oh, how he loved her; day after day he watched to get a glimpse of her as she passed through the street, and night after night he saw her in his dreams. He seldom came to the house, for her aunt had noticed the depth of his unspoken love, and took every means to discourage it, inwardly fearing his personal and mental attractions over Edgar Lewis, the wealthy rival, whom she had already determined upon as Ella's husband.

And this was the anniversary of the day he had told his love; just at this hour he had sought the house and entering the cozy little parlor found his darling sitting in a low chair before the grate, the warm firelight shining on her dark brown hair and lighting up her dreamy gray eyes. Toll! toll! rang the bells, their tones softened and mellowed by the distance, forming a tender thrilling accompaniment to the words which were breathed in her ears, "Ella, dear Ella, I thought I must know my fate. I love you, I have long loved you." The little hand which he had clasped in his was not withdrawn, warm blushes suffused the cheeks, and tears glistened in the expressive eyes.

"Can you love me, Ella?" The low, scarcely-uttered answer was not necessary to convince him that her heart was his.

"Well, listen, dearest; I am very poor, and to ask you to love me now would be a cruelty to you. To-day I was offered a situation in a large business in the Western States, which, possessing many advantages, I have decided to accept. Will you wait for me a little while? Will you trust me and be true to me?"

"Oh! Frank dear, why leave me?" she passionately exclaimed.

"Because I could not bring you down from comfort to penury, my poor bird. We are both young, and time will quickly fly. Here is a ring, which you must wear as a token of our engagement. It was once placed as a betrothal ring on my dear dead mother's hand. May the simple cluster of pearls which shine as bright and stainless as the first day they were worn be a symbol of our pure, undying affection."

Soon after this he departed, to be away longer than he expected. At first, correspondence was regular between them; then he was obliged to travel, and his letters for a while were less frequent, then they were left unanswered. Two long years had passed before he again set foot in Montreal. All too soon it was for the news which awaited him. Ella Vane had married the wealthy Edgar Lewis and gone to reside in Europe.

With what a crushing weight this blow fell upon him it would be hard to describe. In that moment his whole life was blighted, and with a changed nature he turned again towards the world, a bitter, hardened man. Time went on, each succeeding year, as it added to his wealth, making him more selfishly indifferent to the joys or woes of others, more distrustful of all affection. Soon he found himself one of the richest merchants of Montreal, his magnificent house, his splendid equipages, his liveried servants, envied by many. Who would have done so, had they seen the crushed heart or known the utter sense of loneliness which depressed the man as he wended his steps homewards on that 25th of December?

He had just reached his house, and was ascending the stone steps, when a low sob attracting his attention, he turned, and by the dim gaslight discerned two weeping children. The older, a boy of about ten years of age, was in the act of wrapping his own muffler around a delicate shivering little girl beside him. Something in the piteous upturned faces struck Raymond.

"Please, sir, we have lost our way, and my little sister is very cold," said the boy timidly.

"Lost your way, eh! Well come in and warm yourselves."

The door opened. "Give these children something to eat," he said to one of his servants, and then entering his elegant dining room, sat down to his own sumptuous dinner and forgot all about them. He had not much appetite that evening; somehow the long-buried past would arise again and unfold itself before his weary eyes.

He lit a cigar and sat down in a great arm-chair, hoping that the wreathing clouds of smoke

from his pure Havana would dim his vision to the ever-recurring picture of what might have been.

The voice of a servant aroused him.

"What will we do with those children, sir?" "Do with them! Oh, yes; I had forgotten. Why, bring them home, to be sure. Where do they live?"

"That's what they don't know themselves, sir. They only came into the town to-day; their mother died in Quebec last week, and some old woman, a nurse or something, is going to take care of them; but it's little care she is taking, when she let them out alone and them not knowing the name of a street."

"Send them to me till I question them!"

Once more alone, and the broken spell returned—the long-buried past arose again. He did not notice when the door softly opened and the two children stood close behind his chair. No, all the world might have been there then. He was dreaming again his past short dream of bliss. His Ella, his loved one, stood before him, and gazed upon him with her fond grey eyes. For a long time he remained perfectly quiet, his head resting forward upon his hands. Suddenly he raised it. He looked up, and the vision fled. "Lost! lost!" he cried out, and for the first time in many years the fountain of his heart was let loose—he burst into tears. For several minutes the strong man's frame shook with long suppressed emotion, and the children watched in silent surprise.

At last the little girl, unable any longer to restrain her impulsive heart, approached him. A little arm stole round his neck, a little cheek rested against his, and a sweet little voice whispered imploringly in his ear:

"Don't, dear sir; please don't cry!"

He started to find that he was not alone, and wondered at himself when he felt that he could not repulse the child.

"Is any one you love dead, like our dear mamma?"

"Yes! dead, indeed," he muttered to himself.

"Have you no one to love you now?"

"No."

"Where are your little children?"

The words stung him; he strove to shake her off, but the little arms clung more tenderly, and the little voice sounded like long-forgotten music to his ear.

"I am sorry, poor sir, that you are not happy."

"Humph!" he hated pity, even from a child.

"I would love you if you would let me."

At this juncture the boy came forward saying:

"Stop, Ella! you are bothering the gentleman."

Raymond started. Was it the name alone which blanched his cheek and made his arm quiver? No. On the hand which the boy stretched out toward his sister shone a cluster of pearls—the same, yes, he knew it, the very same he had once given to his lost love.

"Where did you get that ring?" he cried roughly, grasping the boy's arm.

Frightened into tears, yet with a proud candor overspreading his noble brow, the child answered:

"Indeed, it is my own, sir. It was given to mamma by an old and very dear friend, and she told me never to part with it."

"What is your name?" Raymond asked.

"Edgar Lewis."

"And your mother's name before her marriage?"

"Ella Vane."

That was enough; the name which for so many years had never been pronounced in his hearing, which he had never allowed to cross his own lips, now fell with sweet magic on his ear, and, sinking into his heart, purified it of its selfish grief and softened it towards the homeless orphan, who stood gazing at him in great amazement.

"My poor children!" he said at last, laying his hand gently on the rich brown tresses of the little girl. "I am your mother's friend. It was I who gave her that ring."

"You, sir?" exclaimed the boy. "Are you Francis Raymond?"

"Yes, child; but how do you know my name. Did Ella—did your mother ever mention it?"

"Oh yes; and when she was very ill, and did not know any of us, she often repeated it to herself. When she was dying she gave me this letter to post for you in Montreal, as she said she would then be sure that you would get it. Ella and I went out to look for the post-office to-day, as old nurse was sick, and we lost our way, and I don't know what we would have done if you had not brought us in."

With reverent awe he took the packet from the boy's hand. Then he rang for his house-keeper, and bade her take the children and provide comfortable beds for them.

Once alone, he gazed on the well-known writing; he pressed it to his lips, and with trembling hands broke the seal which the fingers of the beloved dead had fixed. It read as follows:

"FRANCIS RAYMOND,
"You have long blamed me, despised me, perhaps. You have believed me false and fickle; but now, in my last hour, allow me to plead my excuse, and tell you of the deep love which has filled my soul even to this my dying day. For years my heart has been slowly breaking. Ah! beneath bright eyes and smiling lips there are more breaking hearts in this world than any one imagines. After you left me, your letters came regularly for about six months, then at more distant intervals, and finally stopped. Though grieved beyond measure, I still trusted you and hoped in the future to hear that you were always true. One day