

MARJORIE GRAY.

Blithe in the sun of a summer's day
Tripped little old fashioned Marjorie Gray,
Maiden quaint of a long past day—
Marjorie Gray!

Loud sang the robins on branch and spray,
Madly and gladly and long sang they,
Carolled to Marjorie on her way—
Loud sang they!

Sweet was the roses' breath in the air,
Clear flowed the brook through the garden fair,
White lay the road in the sun's bright glare—
Warm the glare!

But maid Marjorie, waiting there,
Had not for heat nor dust a care,
Knew not that she and the roses rare
Were so fair!

Saw not the lithe and graceful bound
Running to meet her with joyful bound,
Leaping and springing over the ground—
Friendly bound!

Farther away, with gaze profound,
And girlish forehead slightly frowned,
Her eager eyes their object found—
Gladly found!

She was a little belle from the town,
Dainty in manner and face and gown;
He was a poet of no renown,
Far from town;

Yet the taughty eyes so brown,
Under the poet's smile, or frown,
Gleamed with joy, or, shy, looked down,
Soft and brown.

Sad that one could not leave them so,
Maiden and poet of long ago,
Meeting with joy by the old hedge-row—
Long ago.

But time's departure, steady and slow,
With years of roses and years of snow,
Has wrapped the park in chill and glow—
Roses and snow!

Marjorie married the son of a peer;
Marjorie's life was short and drear;
Forgotten she, for many a year,
In church-yard drear;

While to the poet's record clear
Came sweet fame and a long career,
Fortune, and love, and all things dear—
Blessed career!

Blithe was that summer passed away;
Happy the little maid, they say;
Tender the poet that sunny day—
Passed away.

Flown are the birds from tree and spray;
Dust is sweet little Marjorie Gray;
Deathless the honored lay—
Welladay!

ADA M. E. NICHOLS, in *Harper's*.

HIS LADY BOUNTIFUL.

"Yes," she proclaims to herself decisively, "there is no reason in the wide world why I should marry at all! Now, I'm glad that I see my way quite clearly. Decidedly, my best plan by far is—to marry nobody!"

The person at this moment seated at the high latticed window of her little chamber—a chamber chosen as her own in preference to all the other pretty rooms of the old farm house—calmly arranging for herself a life of celibacy, will in exactly three weeks complete her nineteenth year; we see clearly, therefore, that she is at the present date only eighteen years old, according to female reckoning. Rosalind Moncrieff is a pretty girl, her sun-tinted nut-brown hair, her darkly shaded grey eyes, and her soft mobile mouth, are all pretty things; but she is not in truth a beauty, although the farm—of considerable extent and prosperous—being now her own she is naturally always considered one. But as yet her face, though expressive, is still only sunny and serene as a child's; the grey eyes are charming, as soft eyes in a woman generally are, but they are eyes that have not, we may be almost sure, yet read one single page of their own story, though it may be that the book even now lies open before them.

Her grey eyes have roamed away over the sun-warmed tops of her own trees, over her acres of whitening grain, away down far past the boundaries of her own land, and are now resting upon the distant sea—the broad, blue Frith, across which the coasts of Haddington and Fife for ever peer at each other. But why does the sight usually so pleasant to the girl's eyes only call up a little puckering frown above them this morning?

"Marriage for some people," so her thoughts run, "is a great mistake. How thankful I am that I see that in time! and it would be a very bad mistake indeed were I to marry cousin Ned. If father could only see him now he would never even think of it; that West Indian station has just ruined him. Besides, who ever heard of a sailor turning out a good farmer? Why, Ned scarcely knows oats from barley or mangold-wurzel from a Swedish turnip! And if he couldn't manage the farm why should I marry him, when I'm so well off with Brewster? Oh, no, dear old dad, for once you were entirely wrong; I can't help seeing it; you could buy and sell and sow with the best of them, but," shaking her head sadly, "you were wrong about him. And I won't marry Aunt Bab's fossil farmer either, that old Kilgower. Why should I marry a fossil when I have Brewster?"

"Well, I'm glad that's settled, for really this half engagement with Ned was spoiling the whole summer, and it's such lovely one—fr too lovely to be engaged to Ned—or for that matter to be engaged to anyone! No, my best and easiest plan is just to resolve to marry nobody, and then Brewster will just continue to manage

the farm as hitherto, and his wife the dairy; Alec can keep the books and help his father, and I will superintend them all. And then when, as Auntie Bab is always saying, old Brewster is 'called away,' there will be Alec to slip into his place, so that I need never want for a good, faithful, honest griever. And now that I think of it," sitting suddenly very bolt upright as a new idea darts into her mind, "had not I better see about getting him suitably married at once? Yes; that would be more to the point than thinking about myself. I must say he has been very unsettled of late, he keeps me quite uneasy. But then"—meditatively—"we couldn't let him marry just anybody, as so much on the farm will depend on his wife some day, and a bad one would be perfect ruin to him. Let me see—yes, what we must do is this; find out some nice, sensible—above all things she must have plenty of good common sense—quiet girl, who will be able to manage him and the dairy, and yet be very yielding and soft. She must be good-looking too, that's of course, and religious—but not pious, he would fight shockingly with a pious person—and thoroughly good-tempered; strong, healthy, and active—I shall require that—and cheerful and domestic. We must look out too for some one fairly well educated, else he will turn up his nose, and entirely devoted to him or then he will be unhappy. And there's no fear but that, if we find the kind of girl I mean, he'll take a fancy to her. No fear on that head; he's quite fancy free as yet."

"Heigho!" rising, stretching shapely arms upwards, and clasping white hands on the crown of her little brown head, her fine lithe form in its closely-fitting black dress clearly delineated against a background of golden sunlight; "heigho! I'm glad that I've settled everything so comfortably at last! Oh!" gazing again intently out of the window, "yonder he is coming up from the river? Now I had better not stand here any longer when there's so much to do and to look after."

Hastily catching up her hat, Rosalind hurries from her room and runs lightly down a long flight of old well-worn oak steps—steps which, in the days when Scotland's loyal sons toasted their king over a bowl of water, were trodden by the dainty brocaded shoes of ladies of high degree, and echoed with the clank of many a sword and spurred heel; past odd little loophole windows, giving now a peep of the distant Frith, now a glimpse of dreamy lilac hills stretching away in the south, till she reaches the second floor of the house.

Rosalind passes on, and throwing open the door of yet another room, her own private sanctum, looks inspectively inward. Here everything she finds is much as usual—her sewing machine silent in its corner; upon the table the usual bulky pile of good-works-in-embryo, waiting patiently for better days and Aunt Bab; the butcher's, baker's, and grocer's books ranged upon the mantel-shelf; and a few stray articles of her wardrobe, a tennis apron, a hat, a pair of garden gloves scattered about the room. Yes, everything is much as usual, with one or two slight exceptions only; on the table—her quick eyes see it at once—lies an empty soda-water bottle, and on the sofa lies—her lover!

"You here, Ned!" she cries, advancing into the room, and giving a faint little disapproving sniff as she scents brandy and then a suffocating little cough as she immediately chokes tobacco.

At his cousin's appearance, Lieutenant Barstow, of H.M.S. *Dunferhead*, gets up cumbrously to his feet and politely hastens to throw his all but finished cigar through the open window into a bed of lilies.

"Ah, Rosalind, I thought you'd turn in here sooner or later. You don't mind my having had a smoke in your den, do you?"

"Oh dear no," she replies looking blandly round; "I can have the flannel and calico," glancing at the table, "well boiled before I make them up, and the window curtains are going to be bleached at any rate."

"Oh, then that's all right," returns the lover. "I say, Rosie," stretching himself and yawning gigantically, "what do you do with yourself all day here? Must we always get up as early we did this morning? I'll be hanged if I know what to do with myself."

"Why don't you go and sit in the drawing-room properly with Aunt Barbara?"

"Oh, Lord!" with a frightened look.

Rosalind gazes at her guest meditatively, fairly puzzled what to do with him, and vaguely wondering if his feet are really larger, and his eyes smaller, than they were three years ago, or if it is only fancy.

"Won't you come out and play tennis?" he proposes, naturally not divining her thoughts.

The girl's face overcasts. "I played with you the whole of yesterday," she reminds him in a somewhat injured tone. (Yesterday, the third day of her semi-beerthod's visit, and one of the longest, she thinks, that she ever spent in her life.)

"And that reminds me, Ned; I haven't another moment to stay with you, I have so much to do and look after; you must excuse me leaving you. But why," a happy idea occurring to her at sight of his dejection, "don't you walk over to Butterton and get some of the girls there to come out and play tennis? You used to like them all well enough."

"That's a good idea, Rosie!" her lover cries, cheering up a little. "That's to say of course," pulling himself up, "if you don't mind my leaving you?"

"Oh no, it will be delightful," she cries brightly, only pleased that he is pleased and in-

tending no rudeness. "And," and she turns back again from the door to add anxiously, "if they ask you to remain and spend the rest of the day with them, don't for a moment think of me, be sure and stay! And perhaps, who knows," anxiety to dispose of him momentarily, depriving her of all sense of the ludicrous, "they may even ask you to stay the night; it wouldn't do I suppose to," instinctively sinking her voice to a whisper, "to take something with you, a bag—a small portmanteau."

"A portmanteau—to go and play tennis?" he says doubtfully, even his dull faculties perceiving the inexpediency of the proposal. "I don't think that would do."

"No," sighing, "I suppose it might look odd. Well never mind; I hope you'll have a good game and enjoy yourself."

From the shelter of the house into the hot blazing sunlight the girl passes through the old garden in which the sun loves so well to lie; then, across the busy, noisy farm-yard and into the adjoining hay-field. By the side of the hedge that borders the latter runs a narrow path, and up this path at the present moment a young man is walking leisurely, yet with a long even stride that brings him quickly over the ground.

The girl proceeds slowly onwards, her gaze fixed meditatively upon the advancing form, albeit one most familiar to her eyes, familiar to them all her life. As an infant Rosalind had been wheeled about the farm in her perambulator by little Alec Brewster, the only child of her father's grievance, sometimes even carried in his arms; as child she had played with him often in this very field; and as a young woman, how frequently had she not essayed to give him the vast benefit of her wisdom in advice. And it is Alec—no longer little though—who is now approaching her; Alec returning from his bathe in the river, the river water still wet in his hair, the glow from his plunge yet twinkling on his cheek, with bare, sunburnt throat, at this moment innocent of collar, and a towel flung across one shoulder. Striding as if the stubble and the hedge and the path beneath his feet, if not quite the firmament above his head, were his own, his fine physique tells of perfect health and strength; yet a close observer would detect that in the keen dark eye there lurks just a something that is neither the outcome of happiness nor yet even of peace. To the uninitiated on-looker young Brewster's exact position in life might be a matter somewhat difficult to determine; his dress, neither that of a ploughman nor yet that of the eldest son of a duke, furnishing but small clue to his circumstances. We who are initiated know that his lines, almost touching the ploughshare, lie very far apart indeed from the strawberry leaves.

"Good morning, Alec," Rosalind cries, her voice sounding through the sunshine sweet as a blackbird's note.

"Good morning, Miss Rosalind," responds the young man, shifting his towel from shoulder to hand, actuated apparently by a belief similar to that which teaches our cavalry to place their sword upon their shoulders at the approach of Royalty.

"Have you seen Paterson?" she asks, chiefly because she is not thinking of Patterson at all.

"I was over there this morning. It's all settled, he'll give the price."

"Well, I'm glad that's settled; two stacks off our shoulders and into our pockets. You manage quite as well as your father now, Alec."

Turning with him as she speaks, they walk up the path together, the blazing sunlight shining right into their faces; it touches the man's tanned cheek hotly, but glances dazingly, as if on snow, upon Rosalind's milk-white throat.

"Alec," she says after they have walked for a few moments in silence, "I have been thinking about you."

Accustomed to her ways, he evinces no surprise.

"Yes." This is all the answer he makes, and a somewhat weary tone in his voice would almost induce one to suppose that—oh most uncommon case!—he is not absorbingly interested in the great first personal pronoun.

"I think, I mean do you not think—you know, Alec, I take a great interest in you, that's why I speak at all about so private a matter—but don't you think it is time you were settling down now; I mean with a wife?"

A curious look passes over his face. "I think it's time I were settling down somewhere or somehow, but not with a wife. I've no wish to settle in that way yet; why should I?"

"Well, of course for your own sake in the first place, but for mine also, Alec."

"For your sake!" His whole manner changes; with lightning glance the dark eyes, telling now that some most passionate, inmost chord is touched, fasten themselves on the girl's face, whilst the blood this moment glowing in his brown cheek ebbs away, leaving him white and faint looking in the strong sunlight.

"Of course, Alec. You know that everything here will depend on you and your wife some day; and you have seemed so unsettled of late that I have felt quite anxious."

A sight of the girl's calm profile even more than her words stills the heart tempest as suddenly almost as her previous ones had raised it.

"I was not at all surprised when you left Ross, Murray and Thomson's," she goes on cheerfully; "you only tried that to please your father. Indeed any one," giving a piquant smile to him and the world in general, "who had once watched you walking between hay stubble and a thorn hedge would know that you would not be able to sit still very long on a stool in a solicitor's office."

He smiles. "I hate the stool and I like the stubble, you see."

"Then, why not be content now you are amongst it again?" she asks quickly. "You know, Alec," reproachfully, and leaning against the wooden gate which they have now reached as she speaks—"you know that I look to you for the future. What would become of the farm and me if you failed me?"

Brewster moodily lifts a long straw and puts it into his mouth before answering.

"You forget, Miss Rosalind," hesitatingly, "that you will soon have some one to take care both of you and the farm."

Instantly the indignant blood rises in a flush to her cheeks.

"Not I!" she cries, sending an outraged glance over the hedge into the turnip field beyond. "That was poor father's idea"—more gently, and bringing her softening grey eyes back from the swedes, where they were harmless, to look up into the unfortified windows of the young man's soul—"but it is quite impossible to carry it out."

"But," hesitatingly, "there other men."

"No, Alec," interrupting decidedly, "I saw quite clearly just now when I was sitting at my window that there are no other men."

He looks perplexed. "Then other grieves."

"Neither men nor grieves. Now come, Alec, don't be obstinate. Phew! how hot it is here!" breaking off suddenly, and reaching up to lay her two bare hands one on either side of her own soft throat, thereby, though without perceiving it herself, detaching a tiny jet clasp that fastened a narrow band of velvet round the pretty pillar. "Let us go into the plantation for a few minutes; it will be cool there, and I have nothing particular to do just now."

No officious telephone, fortunately, carries these words to the ear of the tall gentleman, at this moment setting out hopefully on the long, dusty road lying between Pinkney and Butterton Farm.

Rosalind walks away from the field as she speaks, and Alec, after a second's delay—during which he stoops to pick up something from the ground, something which, after one wistful caress, that would surely have brought tears to his mother's eyes had she seen it, he puts away carefully in his breast pocket—follows her.

The plantation lies on one side of the farm-yard, divided from it by the long shed wherein the different farm carts are kept. A very few minutes suffice to bring them to it. Here, under the trees, the sun's power is charmingly tempered by the green interlacing branches overhead, and here, in the cool air, God's happy little birds are singing loudly. It is very pleasant to be in the plantation, amongst the trees and the blackberry beds and the birds; both Rosalind and Alec feel that. The girl is the first to resume the conversation.

"Now, Alec," she begins, "do throw away that straw; it makes you so difficult to deal with."

Brewster obediently surrenders the straw; the next wind blowing through the plantation will whirl it away.

"Well, do you see things now as I do?" she asks.

"I'm afraid I don't, Miss Rosalind."

"But, Alec," the quick tears starting into her eyes, "don't you know that when you are always so discontented and unsettled, and speaking about—Brewsteries, that you make me very unhappy? You know that I depend on you now that your father is getting so frail; that I know nothing about anything!" forgetting surely in her tribulation that she has arranged to superintend everything and everybody. "And besides, putting aside all that," she goes on with eager innocence, "what would I do myself if you were not here? Even as a child I came to you in all my troubles—do you remember, Alec, Dolly Julianna's head the wrong way?—poor old thing, she's been looking back ever since. And then, when father died, and my heart was just fit to break, it was only you who seemed able to help me. And somehow, whenever I am happy about anything, I can never be quite happy until you know about it too. And now, Alec, I ask you candidly, could I come and cry in a brewery? What would people think?" a very watery smile closing the case for the prosecution.

But poor Brewster can't smile at all, his heart is beating so fast at this glimpse of a possibility which only her very unconsciousness gives. Rosalind employs the time in extracting from somewhere near the region of her heart a snowy square of cambric, drying her uncomfortable eyes therewith, and restoring it again to its hiding-place. Is it in the nature of things that this action should assist the young man in his endeavour after composure?

"But what would you have me do, Miss Rosalind?" he asks at length, his voice low and unsteady.

Her answer came prompt and easy.

"Marry some nice girl and settle down here comfortably for a together." Like a lump of frozen lead it falls down into his heart.

"We can build a couple more rooms to the cottage, or three if you like," she continues persuasively, "and I'll bring up your salaries to £300; you ought to be comfortable with that."

But he scarcely hears her now, so busy is he telling himself that never did greater, more miserable fool than he walk down Pinkney Plantation.

"Are you not listening to me, Alec?" after a pause, during which she has built and partially furnished the new rooms.

"Certainly; what else am I here for?" rather bitterly. "Now which of my acquaintances