THE WORLD AND I.

BY NELLY MACKEY HUTCHINSON.

Whether my life be glad or no,
The Summers come, the Summers go,
The lanes grow dark with dying leaves;
Icicles hang beneath the eaves;
The asters wither to the snow:
Thus doth the Summer end and go,
Whether my life be glad or no.

Whether my life be sad or no,
The Winters come, the Winters go.
The sunshine plays with baby leaves;
Swallows build about the eaves;
The lovely wind-flowers bend and blow:
Thus doth the Winter end and go,
Whether my life be sad or no.

Yet mother Nature gives to me
A fond and patient sympathy;
In my own heart I find the charm
To make her tender, near, and warm:
Through Summer sunshine, Winter snow.
She claps me, sad or glad or no.

MINA BRETTON.

A STORY.

Leading out of a tiny room fitted up as a library is a long narrow glass conservatory; one side of it is filled with a mass of blooming flowers, the other with simply twelve green boxes containing twelve orange trees just bursting into bloom. Standing in the room is a solitary individual—a young man about twenty-five years of age, nearly six feet high, with broad masculine shoulders. Of his face, the lower half is concealed by a short Italian beard, and the upper lighted by a pair of large grey eyes set very far apart. This human case contains the soul, heart, and mind of Frank Legget, who is now for the first time in his life gazing on the flowers in Mina Bretton's conservatory. He is fresh from Germany, laden with a letter for her from her brother. He wonders what the sister of his friend will be like. He congratulates himself that (as the man-servant has just informed him) Mrs. Bretton is out—he shall see *the* Mina (of whom he has heard so much) *alone*. "Girls never come up to a fellow's expectations," he tells himself as he stands there, half consciously, half unconsciously waiting to fall in love with her. Talk of "spontaneous affection,' or "love at first sight," this sort of thing is generally predetermined on. *Love* is a science, that takes a certain time to learn, so if the process is not gone through after the preliminary meeting, it has taken place before it; unless, indeed, the man is of that flimsy material that any "human form divine" in the shape of a woman fails not to produce the same result. Now Frank Legget has gone through the first stage, and is all ready for action. The air is heavy with the sweet scent of lemon verbena, roses, and orange blooms. One last ray of the setting sun sends a golden glow aslant the flowers, and helps to dazzle his vision, as a quick, soft tread ascends the steps from the garden, and a tall pale form, clad in white, is at the top. Is this his ideal? He pauses not to consider whether or no—he but feels she is his fate. Scarcely does he know how he introduces himself and his letter to her—afterwards he cannot recall to his memory how they arrived at the degree of intimacy he feels they have achieved, ere Mrs. Bretton appears. Has he been there, seated opposite to Mina Bretton, ten minutes—ten hours—or ten years? He knows not! Her mother is an interruption, but not altogether an unwelcome one, for does it not depend on her whether he shall ever see his divinity again? Joy unheard of! She invites him to stay to dinner, if he has not a better engagement; she is sure "Mr. Bretton will be delighted to hear of his son George, from the lips of one who has so recently seen him." What other engagement could he possibly have? He accepts without a moment's hesitation, perfectly oblivious of the fact that Jack Lawson is waiting dinner for him at his club, by appointment. In what a maze the dinner passes! He talks of George Bretton, he interests the father with sketches of their German student life, and he watches to hear Mina's soft low laugh at some quaint tale or other. He never thinks of what he is eating. The first time that he really regains his senses since he saw Mina in the conservatory is when she and Mrs. Bretton rise and leave the room. And, as one awaking from a dream, he hears Mr. Bretton say, "Try that port, Mr. Legget; it is a great favourite with George, and I suppose friends' tastes agree in wine, as well as in other matters—here's your very good health. I am delighted to have made your acquaintance, and hope as long as you are in town you will make this house your head-quarters."

Frank expresses a ready acquiescence to do as the old man proposes, and tosses off the wine with sympathetic alacrity.

When he and Mr. Bretton enter the drawing-room a quarter of an hour later he takes in the scene at a glance. Mrs. Bretton at the tea-table pouring out the tea, Mina seated on a low chair with an open book in her lap, and within a few feet of her is (a *fiend* in human shape) a young man about his own age. He is glad to observe that he is short and stout, with round black eyes, and short, crisp, curly black hair. He sits with his hands, which are white and fat, spread out on his knees, and his head thrown well back. This creature appears to be very intimate with the whole family, is patted on the shoulder by Mr. Bretton with "Here you are, John," and actually talks to Mina as if she were of the same flesh and blood as other people. The "beast" has a very good tenor voice, Frank is obliged to admit, and sings remarkably well; but why should he order Mina to play his accompaniments in that off hand way, and actually take her to task for not performing some bar to his satisfaction? Frank would like to punch his head.

"Don't you sing, Mr. Legget?" inquires Mina presently; "John is monopolising all the music." Poor Frank is fain to admit he does not. "Not a tiny, tiny bit? We will forgive you if you don't sing as well as John; hasn't he a lovely voice?"

"Yes, I suppose so," answers Frank, in a low tone, looking straight into her face.

"You suppose so!" echoes Mina; "don't you know?"

"I was not listening," says Frank. "I was looking at you, and wondering how and why you stood his corrections so meekly."

"John's corrections!" returns the girl in an amazed voice; "why, I have been used to them all my life—I should feel quite lost without them."

"And without *him* also?" inquires Frank, hotly.

"And without him also," laughs Mina—"I have never thought of that before. Here, John, Mr. Legget wants to know if I should feel lost without you."

"Yes, Mina; did you speak to me?" And John Elliot turns away from answering Mrs. Bretton and crosses the room—very like a black bear, Frank thinks. Is it something in the expression of Frank's large eyes that causes Mina to reply (with a hot blush), "Nothing of any consequence, John. Will you come and sing another song?"

"Not to-night, Mina I think," he answers gravely. "You look warm; have I tired you with my music?" (This last remark in a tone too low for Frank to catch.)

"No, I am not tired of your music or anything-why do you ask? You are not generally of so inquiring a nature."

"Because you do not generally *look* as you do this evening," he replies; "I shall say good night, Mina," and he holds out his hand. Mina lays hers in it for an instant, and simply returns "Good night." Frank feels obliged to follow in his train; he too holds out his hand. "Good bye, Miss Bretton." Her eyes drop beneath *his* gaze; Frank feels his power—he is satisfied.

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A fortnight has elapsed since Frank's first visit to the Brettons.

He is again standing in the library alone—again waiting for Mina—but the scene is very different. It is nine o'clock in the evening, the room is brilliantly lighted, and the conservatory gay with many-coloured lamps, for it is Mina's birthday, and this is her birthday *fête*. During the past ten days Frank has been constantly in her society, and the intercourse has ripened his love. He has talked, walked, gardened, shopped, read poetry, fetched and carried, escorted her and her mother to tea-fights, theatres, routs, and balls; has quizzed all her female and covertly abused her male friends, and in short made himself as thoroughly, miserably happy as any young fool of his age could well do in fifteen days of love-making. The detestable John has been absent, but Frank hears he is to be of the party that evening, although, as Mina observed at luncheon, "he didn't dance."

So there Frank stands, taking a last stare in the glass at his faultless "get up," and then examining a large bouquet of red and white roses (minus paper) in a jewelled holder, his birthday offering for Mina. He hears the rustle of her dress ere she enters the room; she does not know he has arrived, and starts with a glad surprise when she perceives him. Timidly he places the bunch of roses in her hands, without a word.

"For me!" she exclaims, pressing her face down over them; "how good of you! and what a lovely holder—it is the prettiest present I have had to-day."

Frank watches her pleasure. "Do you know the language of flowers?" he asks.

"No—tell me," she entreats, looking up into his face.

"Innocent yet,' thinks Frank. "I can't now," he answers, turning away into the conservatory. She follows him.

"Isn't it all pretty?" she asks.

"Yes," he replies. "If by *all* you mean yourself and your attire. Turn round, young lady; let's have a look at you. You have a white dress on to-night, I perceive, but it is not so pretty as that one I first saw you in, a fortnight ago—that looked like an angel's."

"And this?" she laughingly inquires.

"Is like a bride's; you only want the orange blossom. Shall I pick you a bit?"

"No, no, not for the world," exclaims Mina; "don't touch them."

"Why not? are they sacred? That reminds me, your mother told me these orange trees had a history attached to them—and I was to ask you for it. Come and tell me now; there is plenty of time before anybody comes; here is a seat; now begin."

Mina seats herself, and murmurs. "You ought to know, I suppose. If I tell you the story of my orange flowers, will you tell me the meaning of your roses?"

"Yes, I promise," answers Frank firmly. They have both turned a little paler than usual. She lays the roses by her side, clasps her hands on her knees, and with half averted head and cast down eyes commences (as a child would say a lesson, hurriedly and monotonously): "I was born in Sicily. It is the custom there to plant twelve orange trees the day a girl is born—the flowers to form her bridal wreath when she shall marry. We came over to England when I was five years old, and papa brought the trees he had reared with him. As a child I called them mine, and watched as year by year my bridal garland grew. I laughed and joked; and wondered when the trees would bloom, and when I should wear their blossom. And my kind cousin John teased and coaxed, petted and spoilt me, until this time last year—then, as I stood idly counting the buds upon the trees, he came and asked me to marry him. Papa and mamma both wished it, and so I said I would. I promised that this year's flowers should make my wreath—and that is all."

"*All*, Mina! all! You have left out one thing in your tale altogether—you have never mentioned the word *love*. You want to know the meaning of my roses—they mean that word love. In these days I suppose it is an exploded notion to join love and marriage together, and a girl can make her bridal wreath of orange flowers alone, and have not one rosebud in the whole wreath." Frank raises his voice as he finishes. (And they are both too much occupied to observe that John Elliot has arrived on the scene of action before the close of Mina's narrative. He stands in the library concealed from veiw, overhearing the conversation between his affianced wife and a man who a fortnight since was an utter stranger to her. He also has his floral offering—a huge bepapered Covent Garden affair, all colours of the rainbow. Poor fellow! it is never offered.)

"Why did you not tell me this before?" asks Frank excitedly.

"I did not know—I did not feel," Mina answers incoherently, standing up and grasping her roses tightly,

"You will keep my roses," he exclaims. "Mina! have I taught you their meaning? (grasping her hand) tell me."

"I hear some one coming; let me go," she entreats.

"One word—if you were not going to marry your cousin—would you throw away my roses?"

For answer Mina presses her lips on to the flowers, pushes them back into his hands, and says, "I give them back to you—and all my happiness goes with them; but John loves me; and now I know what that word means; I cannot ruin his happiness to make thy own."

"And am I not to be considered at all, then?" asks Frank, sadly.

"I can't help you," she answers. "I have promised John, papa, mamma and everybody." Then suddenly, as he turns impatiently away, she cries out, "Oh, my love! my love! are you not satisfied? Don't you see my heart is breaking?" And she passes bewildered through the library, her dress almost brushing the concealed lover.

The guests arrive; stout mothers and slight daughters, sweet seventeens and girls of sevenseasons; tall dark Young Englanders, with beplastered hair carefully parted down the middle of their craniums, and lilliputian specimens of every known flower carefully arranged in their button holes; fair bearded men, from the War Office, who loll at the doorways, and tumble the artificial flowers and bows that loop back the muslin curtains— men who "don't dance," and make themselves particularly disagreeable to their hostess, when she dives though the crowd in a vain effort to look up a partner for a girl unable to find one for herself. Flirtations—valses—ices—nonsense—champagne—supper—and thumb, thumb, thumb on the piano by the hired musician, with more coat sleeve and knuckle than "touch," as the cornet waxes louder and louder, and the evening progresses.

"What a jolly valse!" remarks Angelina to Edwin as they pause in the dance—hot, giddy, and excited. Amongst all this moves Mina, the queen of the *fête*. Her crown seems to hurt her though, if one may judge by the occasional contraction of her brow. She dances the opening quadrille with John, as in duty bound; then in five minutes fills up her programme promiscuously to the very end. Frank also dances away industriously. His partners find his manners do not come up to his appearance, and "awfully slow!" is one girl's verdict to another, in after-supper confidences.

"Your birthday, Mina," observes old Mr. Lucas, "and no one brought you any flowers! What have you young cavaliers been thinking about! Here, John—Mr. Legget—how came you to be so neglectful? I would have provided my niece with some myself. but I thought she would be overwhelmed with bouquets." (Are there not two withered bunches lying neglected at the foot of the conservatory steps? Yet both the young men look as guilty as if she accusation was true.)

At half-past three it is over—the last "Good night" is wished—the last carriage rolls away, and Mr. and Mrs. Bretton, Mina, Frank and John, stand alone together in the deserted drawing-room. "Well, it all went off capitally," observed Mrs. Bretton with hospitable pride. "But I don't think Tompkins's jellies were quite as clear as usual. Come, young people, it is time to think of bed. You all three look wofully tired—not a touch of colour in the cheeks of the whole of you. You most show John your presents to-morrow morning, Mina."

"Yes, mamma," answers Mina wearily. And she rises to say "Good night." "Stay a moment, Mina," says John, "I have not given you my present yet—will you come into the library with me?" Mina silently acquiesces, and passes from the room with him.

"We'll go to bed, my dear, if you have no objection," remarks Mr. Bretton cheerfully—"and see the present in the morning. No use waiting up; lovers keep no count of time; they may be half an hour. Ha, ha, ha! Take my advice, Frank. and follow our example." Frank mutters incoherently something about having a smoke before he turns in; and as Mr. and Mrs. Bretton leave the room, throws himself upon the sofa and buries his head in the cushion. John leads the way, followed by Mina, silently along the passage, through the library, and into the conservatory. With two or three exceptions the coloured lamps are all burnt out, and the orange flowers are dimly seen, like shadowy white flakes, resting on their shiny leaves.

He takes her hands and places her on the seat she has occupied once before that evening, when Frank was her companion. (She notes the coincidence.)

"I have brought you here, Mina, to give you a birthday gift; but before I do so I want you to listen to something. A great, awkward, stupid fellow was foolish enough to fancy that he could make his cousin happy if she married him. He thought his love would smooth the pathway of her life, and shield her from all harm. He gained her parents' consent to woo her, and in the end she promised to be his. And then—then another fellow came and stole her heart away. But still she remained loyal to her cousin, and thought—poor child!—he would accept her sacrifice. One evening he overheard a conversation between her and the—the other man. Not much of it, but yet enough to show"——

But Mina starts up and interrupts him, "Enough, John, enough. Do not be so cruel."

"Cruel, child!" he replies calmly. I shall never be cruel any more. *My* birthday present to you, is——your freedom."

Mina stands before him with dilated eyes, and gasps out, "You are not teasing me, John? Do you mean it? is it true? *true* that I am free?"

"Yes, Mina, it is true." He presses his lips upon her forehead calmly, almost coldly, stern resolve in every movement.

"And *you?*" she murmurs inquiringly.

"Never mind *me*," he answers, as he stoops to pick a tiny sprig of orange blossom. and turns away—a smile so sad upon his face that Mina puts her hands up to her eyes to shut it out.

He meets Frank in the hall, and quietly says, "Mina wants you in the library." Then takes his hat down from the hat-stand, opens the front door, and steps out into the cold pale morning light—the scent of the orange blossom in his hand the transient memorial of his happiness.

THE CAVES OF ADELSBERG.

[*From Belgravia.*]

Ant. These be lies.
Men. Ay, that they be, and truth;
For truth, like woman, must be clothed with lies,
Lest foolish man lack sympathy.
Titus Andron., act ii, scene 4.

I think, when beginning to write about something in which one feels great interest, it is best not to go straight at the subject at once, but for a time to wander about a little, that one may get a better idea of its position, and so be able to come down on it with a swoop, like a hawk after its circlings in the air. So I shall start from Vienna, and trust to Providence and luck to carry me on to Adelsberg.

It appears—but of this I cannot be sure—that at Vienna some strange distinction, which I cannot understand, is made between the trains of *grande vitesse* and *petite vitesse*. My reason for saying this appears so is the following:

We, A. and B., booked our luggage at Vienna for Adelsberg, received the usual tickets—after the usual delay—and saw our beloved portmanteaus labelled "Adelsberg."

We started with the train.

"Didn't see the luggage put in," said A.

"Nor I," said B. "We must ask."

So we asked. And we looked, and the luggage was not there. We telegraphed from the next station, and at Adelsberg received an answer.

The luggage had been sent on by a later train to Nadresina.

"Can't be right," said A. suspiciously, "You've made a mistake in translating. Why sent on to Nadresina?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," replied B. "This fellow says it's because our train was grande vitesse, and the next petite vitesse."

And this is why I fancy there is some strange distinction between the trains of *grande vitesse* and *petite vitesse* which start from Vienna.

It was past eight P. M. when we got to Adelsberg, very dark, very cold, and most drizzlingly wet. There was no carriage, no omnibus, at the station, and not one house to be seen outside.

"Can't go on without the luggage," said A. "How can we enjoy the caves after this?"

"Not a bit," murmured B.

A German man, and a German woman with a bag, had got out of the train with us. They went to the waiting room, we having been informed that the omnibus would come soon. They spent the intermediate time in taking out of the bag bread, which they ate, and a bottle of wine from which they drank.

At last the omnibus came. It appeared to our insular gaze to be a broken-down brougham; and great care seemed to have been taken in