

## BARCAROLLE.

(Translated from Théophile Gautier.)

"Oh! where, sweet girl,  
Shall I pilot thee?  
My sails unfurl,  
And the breeze blows free."

"I have ivory oars,  
And my flag that soars  
Is of crimson watered silk;  
While a swan's bright wing  
To the mast doth cling  
For my sail, which is white as milk."

"Oh! where, sweet girl,  
Shall I pilot thee?  
My sails unfurl,  
And the breeze blows free."

"Wilt thou doat with me  
To the Baltic Sea,  
Or the blue Pacific Isles?  
Shall we eastward go,  
Or where North-winds blow,  
And the sun-dower sadly smiles?"

"Oh! where, sweet girl,  
Shall I pilot thee?  
My sails unfurl,  
And the breeze blows free."

"Oh! steer, I implore,  
To the happy shore  
Where lovers constant prove."  
"That shore, my dear,  
Is marked, I fear,  
In the chart of the Land of Love."

Montreal.

GEO. MURRAY.

## A CHARADE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

BY JAMES PAYN.

I.

THE SMALL END OF THE WEDGE.

Proverbs, like people, are sometimes so familiar that they only excite contempt. There is one connected with "the small end of a wedge" which, from its "constant appearance upon platforms in connection with the British lion," used to form a subject of mirth with dear Charles Dickens, and I confess (until lately) with me also. I had heard of it so many times, always spoken of in tones of warning, and yet seen no sort of harm result from its application, that I did not believe it, even as a metaphor. It had become a mere vague and shadowy menace, like "the beast" in Revelations, only, of course, smaller. It was always used when we in England adopted any improvement in our affairs borrowed from the United States—such as sherry cobbles, for example, or goloshes. It was the first step toward "Americanizing our institutions"—and all the rest of it. Now, I have been much the better for sherry cobbles, (and very seldom the worse,) and I believe goloshes to have been the first step (although rather a slippery one) to my enfranchisement from colds. The Reform bill, vote by ballot, table ice, Neapolitan pepper, and arbitration have all been "small ends of the wedge" in their time, as doubtless at an earlier period of the world's history were clothes, combs, cooked food, and sobriety. I had known no harm come of these things, and I ridiculed those who thought that harm would come of them, and who quoted the above words of warning. Therefore, when a certain loving daughter of mine whispered to me after dinner one evening, "Papa, let us have charades," and my brother the lawyer, who overheard her, remarked, "Take care what you are about, Jim; charades are the small end of the wedge," I said, "Well, we'll see about it, darling," to the one, and "Why not, Jack?" to the other.

"Well, I'll tell you 'why not,'" said Jack, who didn't look like a Jack at all—only we had always called each other by our boyish names—being bald and fat, and also Recorder of Maryborough, "and if you are wise, you'll listen to my advice. Charades are not bad in themselves, except for their stupidity, but if by some unlucky accident they chance to succeed, they are as certain as D. T. is the end of drinking, to be followed by private theatricals."

"Oh, nothing would induce me," said I with confidence, "to have my house turned upside down by the performance of private theatricals."

"That girl there, Jenny, will induce you," was Jack's oracular reply, delivered in the severe tone with which he addresses prisoners in the dock. "Once convicted of weakness in allowing them to act charades, you will be hurried by your wife and daughters into the vortex of the amateur drama, and—" Here Jack's mouth was stopped by a pink plump hand, about an inch long, which belonged to our baby, and had been dexterously applied to the offending mouth by his favourite sister, Grace. She had picked him up and cast him into her uncle's lap—who doted on the child—with the quickness of a fireman who sees at once the point where a conflagration is making head, and turns the hose on. In "Baba's" clutch, Uncle John, who was also his godfather, was powerless; his judicial lips could then only kiss and purr.

"But what are these charades?" inquired I, more alarmed than I cared to show at the loss of my ally; for Jack, though not himself a paternalist, had a fellow-feeling for me, I knew. "I thought charades were the same as riddles. Of course, you may ask as many riddles—"

"Oh, you wicked story!" cried Jenny.

"Oh, Mr. Innocence!" cried Grace.

It was hopeless to stem the tide of juvenile Sadduceism, and the more so as I felt convicted

of being a Pharisee myself, for I knew perfectly well what charades were. In this strait, I looked toward my wife for help, with, "What do you think, Julia?" Julia was working at some embroidery, from which she had never raised her eyes, though perfectly conscious of the siege that was being laid to me, and she only raised them now to say, "The girls seem to have set their hearts upon it, Jim; but, of course, you will do as you please," which was equivalent to going over to the enemy. When a wife tells her husband that "of course, he will do as he pleases," he is, if I may use the expression, "done for." There is no compulsion—only he must. It was not necessary for Jack to laugh contemptuously (which he did), and to inform me that the affair was settled from that moment as to the charades.

"You see, Grace, being tall and stately," explained Jenny, "is to be *Thalestris*, Queen of the Amazons; and I, being a good deal shorter, though much more beautiful and accomplished, am to be her daughter *Lampeto*. Cousin Tom has written the loveliest verses for us to recite in character; and Baba is to appear with gilt all round his frock as the grandchild of *Alexander*. My dear old papa knows the story, of course."

"Oh, yes," said I coldly, for it was the first time I had ever heard of it. "But I hope Baba will not have much to say, because his vocabulary is rather limited."

"What nonsense you talk, papa! He is to be my baby, of course, and *Thalestris* wants to kill him, because he is not a girl, such being the custom among the Amazons."

"And a very good notion, too," observed Jack, judicially. "If we had only one criminal class, or at least sex, even though that were the most troublesome one, to deal with in this country, it would immensely simplify matters."

"There, you see," cried Jenny triumphantly, (although not understanding in the least,) "Uncle John is already converted to our opinion. He sees that it will be an excellent charade."

"Nay, my dear, I only said it would have a good moral," observed the Recorder gravely.

"The moral is everything," said Grace confidently; "that is, if we can hire the proper dresses. Maamma thinks that for 5l.—"

Julia shook her head.

"Well, then, for 6l.—"

"I never said one word about the matter, Grace, as you know very well," said my wife reprovingly; "I simply referred you to your father."

"Well, then, let us say 6l. That will procure the armor—"

"Armor!" cried I. "You're not going to appear in armor, surely?"

"Oh, yes, and on horseback," put in Uncle John. "You can hire trained horses from the Hippodrome."

"Don't believe him, papa. We wish for nothing out of the way nor extravagant. Just a little body armor, with silver sandals instead of shoes."

"The well-greaved Grecians," observed the Recorder, who prided himself on his classical attainments.

"Just so," continued Grace, whose way it is to take not only silence for consent to any of her propositions, but also all remarks not absolutely of an antagonistic character. "And Tom will lend us his bows and arrows."

"No, no. You will be shooting all over the place," said I. I had begun to perceive by my wife's being so quiet that the suggestion was insidious, and the whole affair of quite a serious character.

"But, my dear papa, the bows will be only strung at our backs, and the arrows will be in their quivers; and you said you would 'see about it,' you know, and you never go back from your word."

And that was how the charades came about, as many other things do in the house of which I am the reputed master, where to hesitate is to be compromised, and to "see about it" is a binding promise.

The girls assured me that the "proper dresses" had been procured from Nathan's (the costumer), so, although I confess that they did not altogether come up to—or rather down to—my ideas of propriety, I supposed it was so. The spectators, too, were, fortunately, confined to a select circle of relations or familiar friends; and really the way in which Grace stood, spear in hand, as *Queen of the Amazons*, and denounced the degeneracy of her daughter because she wouldn't drown Baba like a kitten, made one quite a convert to infanticide.

"Daughter of mine thou art not," (which was certainly very true.) "What should this madness mean?" she inquired with ferocity; and then proceeded with a personal narrative: had not she (*Thalestris*)—

"Sought the Macedonian out from amidst his wars,  
And turned her softest love-songs to the clash of scimitars."

That there should be a Princess as was not looked upon since the great sun began to shine or Thermopylae to run.

To whose bold heart not stranger should be the flash of fear  
Than that false love which dyes thy cheek and shames it with a tear.

Whose voice should speak, as I should hear, alone of victory.

Up through those liquid lashes look, *Lampeto*, art thou she?"

Then *Lampeto* looked up through her liquid lashes, and to the astonishment (fortunately mute) of Barbara thus replied:

"I am, I am; thou knowest it. Where fiercest fell the blow,

Where friends are few and faintest, where thickest stand the foes.  
Thou knowest whose foot is firmest, thou knowest whose battle-cry  
Far, far beyond the foremost, rings clearest through the sky."

Here the voice of Baba, alarmed by Jenny's unwonted excitement of tone, began to ring out pretty clearly, as if in illustration. The spectators, who had at first been all for *Lampeto*, would have veered round to *Thalestris* (as a female substitute for *Herod, King of the Jews*) had not *Lampeto* been too quick for them:

"It is not well to taunt me. See here, upon my brow,  
The Scythian's brands fell moons ago, and ye would think but now."

Ay, and methinks not always are those blue eyes so tame,  
When the wild war-note waketh the slumbers of their flame;

Ay, and not always thus, too, with suppliant hands,  
When the Albanian cometh, the waster of our lands,  
Who of their crested chieftains, who of their mailed men,  
Has seen this right arm raised to strike, and sought his home again?"

Here Grace raised her right hand, which, with a very deadly weapon in it, might possibly have harmed a mouse, and drew down quite a tornado of applause. Everybody said that "they had no idea it was her" to express herself so forcibly and look so fierce, except Uncle John, who muttered something about "all women having a temper of their own," which happily was drowned in plaudits. But now it was the turn of *Thalestris* to cut in again, who had been meanwhile very successful in reducing Baba to silence by a terrific shaking of her spear:

"Now 'tis in truth my daughter; thus should she always speak."

"Heavens!" thought I, but said nothing.

"Now can I mark her father well on her brow and cheek."

"That's good," said Jack; "so can I."

"More, tell me more, I pray thee. Again he's at my side—  
His love-moods and his vengeance, his passion and his pride."

I see the captive armies watching without his tent,  
The haughtiest look is humbled, the proudest neck is bent.

I see the broken armies, their noblest chiefs in chains,  
Their bravest with the vultures upon Arabia's plains,  
And his own warriors round him, swift at his beck and call,  
And that fierce stamp that shakes their souls—ay, I can see it all."

"Nay, mother, nay; though dost but see thy daughter and her child,  
Proud words flow free and fast enough when wrong drives women wild.  
There are no warriors here, in ther, but these two tiny hands  
Have far more force with *Lampeto* than all the Grecian bands."

After a few more lines, finding *Thalestris* still implacable, she drew a jeweled dagger (the hire of which I afterward noticed, was the exact price of an attorney's letter, namely, six-and-eightpence) and stabbed Baba among his flannels. With the trifling exception of the child himself, who resented his own assassination beyond measure, the performance was a complete success, and my nephew Tom, who wrote the charade, came in for his full share of congratulations. He had evidently, it was agreed, a talent for domestic drama, and some one suggested aloud that it was quite a pity he didn't write for the stage. Tom looked at Jack, expecting an outburst of disapprobation; but his uncle only nodded and said he could see no harm in that, so long as nothing he wrote was accepted. "I have known a young man to write for the stage for years," were his words, "and not to be a penny the worse for it;" which I very well knew was a sly hit at me, who had had a few plays in manuscript for an indefinite period, though the fact was only known to some friends of my early days, and I should have been very sorry (from a professional point of view) had it got abroad.

There was a good deal of talk about the charade both then and afterward, but it had been played at Christmas-time, when diversions of all kinds abound, and it was taken by our friends very much as a matter of course. "Months rolled on," as the story-tellers say, and I flattered myself that the excitement created by *Thalestris* and *Lampeto* (not to mention Baba) had died out; that the girls, though proud of the success that had attended their first dramatic effort a year ago, were content to rest upon their laurels; and that I should hear no more upon the subject, at all events in connection with the small end of the wedge.

I confess I had taken some measures for self-defense by earnestly observing that, after what I had seen of the fuss and trouble caused by the gettars-up of a mere charade, it seemed to me that people must go mad before they allowed their back drawing-rooms to be turned into a stage; and that, while I had not much to say against the Amazonian affair, I thought the less young ladies exhibited themselves in other characters than their own before spectators, the more highly men of sense—and means—would be likely to regard them; but these precautions seemed to be unnecessary. I was at ease and unsuspecting as Adam in the garden—indeed, I was reading the evening paper after dinner—when Eve appeared one evening in the person of my Julia, and caused my fall.

"My dear husband," said she, "I have come upon quite a treasure;" and with that she handed me, not an apple, but a little rolled-up manuscript, dim with the rust of ages, which I presently recognized as one of my almost forgotten plays. It was called "The Deputy," and though I do not say of it as the famous *Scudery* did of his "Arminius," "It is a masterpiece; and if my labour could ever deserve a crown, I

would crown it for this work," I must confess it was a very pretty little thing, and would have been worth a good many crowns to a discerning manager.

"Why, where on earth did you find it?" inquired I, not displeased to see this offspring of my youth.

"In the old cabinet in the library, my dear, along with several others. As it was a wet day, I read it to the girls this morning, and they were perfectly charmed with it."

"They are good girls," said I, "and sensible girls; girls of considerable taste and culture. Some of the other plays were far from bad, too, if I remember right."

"They were all excellent, my dear, but we liked 'The Deputy' best. It is so witty, and runs so pleasantly. And how admirably, we all thought, it would go off on the stage!"

"It it ever got on there, I dare say it would," said I dryly.

"It ought to be acted," mused my wife; "it really ought." And there the matter dropped—for about five minutes. Then in came Jenny with, "Oh, papa, I have such a capital plan in my head about your beautiful play! There are two old lady characters in it which would just suit me and Grace; and the third, the leading one, seems really written for Rose Symonds—if we can only get her to do it. Why should we not play it at home?"

Now, as I have said, I had the greatest objection to private theatricals in a general way. I think they make young ladies who act in them to say the least of it, conspicuous; and they are also often objectionable in themselves. But, on the other hand, here was a play of my own, really in every way admirable; and what could be more fitting and, indeed, filial than that my daughters and Rose Symonds (who had a magnificent figure, and would look the heroine to perfection,) should see what they could make of it, before a few friends, and strictly, as it were, within the home circle? The whole thing, put in that light, seemed a very pleasant notion, and I wrote a few lines to Tom, who frequented the theatres a good deal, to ask him to help us. I also thought it right to inform my brother Jack, being Baba's godfather, the girl's only unmarried uncle, and having a pretty penny of his own, what we had in contemplation.

"Dear uncle," was Tom's reply. "I'm your man for anything. The Emperor of Morocco to the Second Robber; and I know two eligible young gentlemen who will make themselves useful or ornamental, as required."

I thought his note flippant, considering that the play had been forwarded to him, and had no Emperor of Morocco or robbers in it at all; but I was willing to look over that in consideration of his services.

My brother's reply—which he wrote in pencil from the Bench of Justice—was even less satisfactory:

"Dear Jim,—I wish you luck with your theatricals. Did I not tell you that that charade would be 'the small end of the wedge'? I've got a fellow here for burglary with violence, who began with adulteration. It's the same story. Yours affectionately, JACK."

II.

THE THICK END.

I don't deny that Jack's letter gave me an uncomfortable impression of having been, so to speak, "taken in and done for" by my wife and the girls; but it was not the first time (nor the fifth) that the thing had happened, and it only remained for me to keep the damage within limits. In this there was, however, some difficulty, as I could not but agree with the argument that "it was a pity so admirable a play should be witnessed by only a score of people, and those one's own relatives and belongings, who are notoriously the least appreciative of audiences." And yet the larger number of spectators the more extensive must needs be the preparations to receive them. Somehow or other 150 got invited, although I objected to them literally inch by inch; for, if they all came, it seemed to me that there would be much less room for them than is usually allotted for the human body.

"Oh, I'll manage that," cried Julia confidently, "if the expense does not alarm you. You would not wish them to have a stand-up supper, I suppose?"

"No," said I simply, "certainly not; they will come here for intellectual gratification. Give them tea and toast, and perhaps some coffee and ice."

"Tea and toast?" echoed Julia disdainfully.

"I am really astonished at you, my dear James. We have always had some name for hospitality. They must have supper, of course. The question is whether it should be only a stand-up one."

"Why, they can't have a lie-down one, surely, like the Romans, as Jack would say," was my simple and classical reply.

"Now, my dear James, this is a serious question," said my wife reprovingly. "People think nothing of a stand-up supper, where everybody is reaching over everybody else's shoulder." ["Good heavens!" thought I, "what a picture!"] "and scrambling for legs of chicken and scraps of pie. My advice is, if you do give an entertainment of this kind it should be a good one."

"Well, I suppose it's only a question of chairs," said I. "Let them have chairs."

"Very good; then you consent to a sit-down supper!"