

THE CONCEPTION-BAY MAN

SELECT POETRY.

STANZAS.

BY FANNIE RAYMOND.

"It was not the vine-leaves or the moonlight
made the bird give melody to-night; the secret
of its music was the presence of a thing beloved."
—Zanoni.

Bright hours, bright youthful hours!
O, like a fairy dream,
In Eden's loveliest bowers,
To this fond heart, ye seem:
Gay shines the summer sun
From cloudless azure sky,
Lovelier when day is done
Stars brilliant gleam on high.

Swiftly life glides away,
Filled with unclouded joy,
Hope twines a chaplet gay
Time never can destroy;
Soft, gently murmuring breeze,
Bright flowers and wood-birds' voice—
Not these, oh, no, not these
Makes this light heart rejoice.

Thou whom my soul adores,
Dearest and ever blest;
Thou, love the sunlight pours
In this wild throbbing breast,
Oh, dark were all on earth
Wert thou not ever near
Merriest halls of mirth
Ne'er could thy spirit cheer.

Thou only, worshipped one,
Thou makest the fond heart sing;
Moonlight, nor cloudless sun
Ne'er could sweet music bring:
Heart-lute echoes gay
E'en to thy lightest tune,
List to the roudelay,
Ever my own, my own!

THANKS FOR A FLOWER.

BY W. H. E.

I thank thee for the pretty rose
Thou kindly gav'st to me,
Fair lady of the southern sun
And of the southern sea!
For I'm a lonely wanderer
From northern vales afar—
Though still, indeed, the light of home
To me's a guiding star.

A few days have passed away—
A few days quickly fled,
Since I have seen the summer flowers
Beneath the grass lie dead;
But 'twas in climes where chilling blasts
Blew fiercely o'er the plane,
And ice and snow were holding earth
Beneath their wide domain.

But now I'm 'neath a southern sky,
And down upon me gleams
The same bright sun that used to haunt
My childish, wondering dreams;
For I have dreamed of southern climes,
Of gay and gorgeous flowers,
Of birds which sang the sweetest strains
Throughout the golden hours.

There's more of kindness in thy gift
Than were it wealth untold,
And dearer far to me's this gift
Than thrice its weight in gold;
May flowers fair thy journey strew
Down through the paths of Time—
O, daughter of the southern sea,
And of the southern clime!

LITERATURE

THE CATARACT.

Among the objects of curiosity to which the attention of the traveller through the west part of Perthshire is directed, is a fall or rather a series of falls, formed by the little river Devon—the clear-winding Devon of Burns—the loftiest of which is termed the 'Caldron Linn,' and a bridge that stretches its 'wearisome but needful length' over the stream, and which, from the noise and turmoil of the waters, that tear and bellow like a chafed lion, some forty feet below it, is called the 'Rumbling Bridge.' The Rumbling Bridge no longer exists, or rather, I should say, it is no longer accessible; and the manner in which this has been brought about is not a little indicative of the calculating genius of the people of the 'north country.' Some fifteen or sixteen years ago, the road, a wild and rugged and neglected mountain path, after toiling up the precipitous bank, dived down again almost perpendicularly, until it reached the bridge; and, that once passed, a similar descent awaited the traveller before he could reach what was, comparatively speaking, level ground. The bridge itself was, or is (I shall explain this ambiguity by and by) one

When two wheelbarrows tremble when they meet.

The eight of the time-worn and tottering parapet had never exceeded eighteen inches; and when a wayfarer, whether on horseback or in a carriage, halted on the crown of the sharply-turned arch, and beheld, within a foot on each side, the fence that mocked his fears with the semblance of protection, and looked to the wild and tangled banks and dark dripping masses of rock beetling over and almost shutting out the light, and listened to the stream that roared beneath him in all but utter darkness, and this apparatus of terror accompanied, as it at all times was, by a strong blast of wind sweeping down the narrow and tortuous funnel through which the waters poured, he must have possessed an imagination of the dullest, and a head of the hardest materials, if he did not feel the grandeur and giddiness of the scene.

When the present secure and convenient fabric, which joins the highway from Crieff to Stirling with the hill-road to Cleish and Dunfermline, was erected, the thrifty engineer, instead of hunting about for a more suitable point of projection, wisely considered that it would save expense to build the new bridge above the old—the abutments of the latter serving as a foundation for those of the former; and the old arch was used as a *point d'appui* for the frame-work of its successor. The new bridge, in consequence of its struts, in all the pride of upstart greatness, above the humble and hidden friend to whom it owes its support; and it is only by clambering down the bank for a considerable way, that a glimpse can be caught of the real Rumbling Bridge hanging in unapproached obscurity some twenty feet below the structure that now usurps its name. Down these falls a stray cow or sheep is often accidentally hurried; and in no case has it happened that the animal has not been found at the foot of the hill, broken, and bleeding, and lifeless, from dashing against the sides of the fearful rift, in its descent. Human beings have also stumbled into the stream, and with one very singular and providential exception their fate has been similar.

One fine summer day, Mr. H. was wandering down the rugged banks below the Rumbling Bridge, alone with an older and more staid companion. Mr. H. was then a very young man, full of the vigour, activity, and joyousness of his years, and possessing all the fearlessness and dexterity of a mountaineer: in person somewhat about the middle size, and slightly but compactly formed. The stream had been swollen by a recent 'spate,' and the roaring of the cataract was like a continuous peal of thunder. Both parties were anxious to obtain a full view of the fall, but the nature of the ground rendered it a matter of considerable difficulty. They were creeping cautiously along the giddy and overhanging bank, when Mr. H. perceived, at some distance below the spot where he hung half suspended by the roots and branches of the brushwood, a flat projecting piece of rock, within a few yards of the Linn; and pointing it out to his companion, and decking him to follow, he began to move downward in that direction. His more considerate friend endeavoured, by his gestures, to make him desist—to communicate by any other means was impossible—rather from a general apprehension of danger, than from any anticipation of what was to follow. The admonition, however, as admonitions addressed to youth usually are, was received with a laugh of ridicule at the timidity in which it was supposed to originate, and only served to confirm the climber's purpose. In a few seconds he reached a spot immediately above the point aimed at, and dropped lightly down; but no sooner had his foot pressed the stone, than, to the unspeakable horror of his companion, whose eye followed his progress with mingled terror and admiration, it trembled, loosened, and fell from beneath him! The unhappy young man grasped convulsively at the root of a bush immediately over his head, and had it been sufficiently strong, he would have escaped; but root and bush, and turf, gave way together under his weight, and he fell into the water a very few feet above the fall. Once and once only, his eye met that of his friend as he rose above the surface; the next instant he sped over the cataract, like an arrow shot by a vigorous arm, and disappeared amid the clouds of spray, and the roaring billows of the pool below. The companion of the unfortunate young gentleman although convinced as he afterwards declared, that he should never again behold him alive, did not for a moment delay to embrace what he conceived to be the only chance of saving him. He climbed, or rather ran directly up the bank, a feat which nothing but the excitement of the moment would have emboldened him to attempt—indeed he never was able very clearly to state how he accomplished it—and shouted an alarm to the farmhouse close by. The cry was heard, and he was immediately joined by three or four of the inmates who seeing him alone easily guessed what had happened; and the whole without question asked or answered, rushed down the steep road that led to the point where the Devon enters the plain. Here, in a little bending, scooped out by the eddy of the stream was usually landed whatever floating body happened from accident to pass over the falls. As they approached the cove the first of the party, a strong and active shepherd perceived a hat floating on the surface and plunged into the water, from an idea that it was the body of the

drowned youth. He was soon undeceived, and wading out with the hat in his hand, in a suppressed tone of voice said to the rest who were now at his side, 'He is in some of the Linn-pots—we must seek up the water.'—He had fallen with the bit whin in his hand, it is like, said another, pointing to the furze which, with the sod still in part attached to it had slowly circled round until it was arrested by the water worn pebbles that strewed the bottom of the shallow pool.

I must now return to young Mr. H. Before he recovered his recollection, after the plunge into the water, he was hurried, as I have described, over the fall and found himself, after sinking in what seemed a bottomless abyss, whirling round with fearful and dizzy rapidity. Luckily he could swim a little, and from an instinctive desire to prolong life he struck out with his hands and feet and endeavoured to gain the edge of the whirlpool. To his astonishment, when his breath and strength, and hope were just departing, he found he had succeeded in reaching a spot where the waters were comparatively still and where the depth was not above a few feet. The bottom on which he had found a resting place, was, however, of the loosest and most yielding nature. It was indeed, a mere ridge of sand and pebbles that had come down from the fall, and which in that spot, and in it alone, the diminished agitation of the water had allowed to subside. On the crown of the ridge Mr. H. had by accident stopped; and his momentary feeling of joyful surprise was followed by the bitterness of agony, when he found, after remaining for a second, the mound on which he stood gradually slipping away from beneath him. He looked upward as the blast swept aside the dense cloud of spray, and saw afar off the line of the clear blue sky with the light fleecy clouds swiftly sweeping over it, and caught a glimpse of the edge of the bank, with the trees and bushes bending in the breeze and the birds flitting across the chasm, whose black and frowning and slippery sides rose to a height that seemed interminable. Behind, and touching him, was the whirlpool, from which he had with so much difficulty escaped; and beyond it rushed down like a solid wall, the waters of the Linn, over which he had been tumbled; while in front roared other falls, whose high he knew not, and which nothing but a miracle could enable him to pass and live. He saw all this, and he felt at the same moment that but a few minutes could elapse ere he must see them no more; yet he determined to struggle with his fate to the last. At first he endeavoured, by altering his position, to stay his feet from slipping; but a very few trials convinced him that to shift at all only accelerated his sinking, and that his best chance lay in remaining as stationary as possible. Still, however he sank to the breast—the shoulders—the neck. A thought now seized him that seemed even more bitter than the death that was trembling over him. Had he sped over the falls his body would at least have been recovered by his friends—it would have been composed by kindly hands—pious tears would have dropped over it—a mother's lips would have pressed his cold cheek—troops of Linsfolk and neighbours would have accompanied him to his last resting-place—the sun would have looked down upon his grave, and the wind of his native hills would have swept over it; but now, the bottom of the whirlpool was to be his burial-place, and his bones were to bleach forever in the torrent of the Caldron Linn! His mind began to give way under these dismal tancies. Amidst the roaring of the waters, he heard shrill and unnatural howlings. The superstitions of his childhood came across him, and he thought, while he listened to those terrible voices, that he heard the demons of the stream rejoicing over their anticipated victim; and in the fantastic forms of the frowning rocks, as the wreaths of spray passed over him, his imagination pictured the lurid aspect and goggling eyes of the water kelpie glaring upon him, and its rited jaws open to devour him. His soul was wound up to agony beyond endurance. He struggled to free himself from the gravel in which he had sunk, but his struggling only sank him deeper; the water rose to his lips—he gasped for air and it came not; another second, and his sufferings would have ceased for ever. But the same Power which had guided him over the fall, and snatched him from the whirlpool, was still watching over him.

As the party that were searching not for their companion but for his body (for not one of them supposed it possible that he should ever be seen alive again), the same young man who had plunged into the stream as he sprung from rock to rock along the dizzy brink of the chasm, with the sharpened eye which a shepherd's life never fails to bestow, his vision rendered doubly acute by the excited state of his feelings perceived a dark stationary speck in the water which a moment's inspection convinced him to be the head and shoulders of a human being. 'Ropes! ropes!' he shouted to his companions; 'he is alive; I see him standing at the foot of the Linn.' The binding ropes from a couple of hay waggons were knotted and handed to him and the upper extremity being firmly secured to the trunk of one of the twisted birches at the top of the bank, the adventurous shepherd slid down with the other in his hand until the overhanging rock forbade farther descent; those at the top hallooing in the

meantime to attract the attention of their half-drowned friend, with what effect I have already stated.

No noise, indeed, that they could make would have been sufficient, but luckily, the wet and dripping hat, which the shepherd had fished up from the cove, was still grasped in his hand, he dropped it into the water and the wind at that moment lulled and the spray clearing away, it fell immediately before the object whose attention it was designed to attract. Roused by the sudden splash he turned his despairing eyes upwards and beholding the rope his friend was endeavouring to steady, he raised his arms and by a vigorous spring contrived to catch hold of it, there was still, however, much between him and the shepherd had propped himself was fully twenty feet; the rock jutted over the stream so that while drawn up, young H. had to hang suspended by the hands, the power of which was nearly lost, from the time he had been immersed in the river. He was swung backwards and forwards at a fearful rate by the wind, and not unrequently struck with violence against the points of the rock. The rope also rubbed against the sharp edge of the precipice and ran a momentary risk of being cut through. By great care, and greater good fortune he at length approached the top of the rock; and his humble friend, whose encouraging voice had nerved him in his dangerous ascent, stooping down caught the wrist of the exhausted youth firmly in his grasp and placed him at his side. In another instant they were both in the midst of the group at the top.

Young H. sickened and fainted as soon as he was placed once more on the grassy bank. He was conveyed to the farmhouse, where he was put to bed; whence he arose, after a few hours of heavy sleep, without any other symptoms of suffering than extreme weakness, from which youth and a healthful constitution, in the course of a few days, completely relieved him. For many years after, however, his sleep was occasionally disturbed with dreams of rocks and rushing waters; and even in his waking moments a convulsive shudder would not unrequently pass over him, when he thought of the Caldron Linn.

THE DAMP UMBRELLA.—"Misery," says the old proverb, "makes us acquainted with strange acquaintances." But who ever expected to hear of a miser who being obliged to lie with a damp umbrella? A man named Couscousson was tried last week, by the Paris Tribunal of Correctional Police, for having beaten Madame Couscousson, his wife.

"It appears that you thrashed her with great brutality; what have you got to say for yourself?" asked the President.

"Pray Mr. President," he replied, "if your wife wouldn't let you carry an umbrella, what would you do?"

"Oh, the monster! oh the brigand!" chimed in Madame Couscousson.

"What he says is not true, Mr. President, he was drunk when he beat me."

"Who doesn't get drunk now and then?" asked M. Couscousson.

"But you get drunk always," answered the wife. "And, Mr. President, when he's drunk, he insists on going to bed with his boots on, and with his umbrella. That is his character."

"I wear my boots in bed to keep my feet warm," observed the accused.

"I don't so much object to the boots," said the wife, "though they dirty and tear the sheets but I do object to the umbrella. Think of a wet umbrella in bed, Mr. President!"

"It is in the wetness of the umbrella," said the husband, that I find my excuse. A prudent man is never without his umbrella when it rains and, as it was raining when I arrived at home and went to bed, I took it with me!"

"Oh, you drunkard!" shrieked Madame Couscousson. "But I appeal to all women here present," she continued, turning round to the auditory, "if it be pleasant to be in bed with a damp umbrella?"

"It was raining, I tell you," exclaimed the accused, "and I was afraid that I might have dreamt that I was getting wet; and, as I have a great antipathy to water, I took the umbrella with me as a precaution!"

"Yes, and you beat me when I wanted to remove it from the bed."

The tribunal cut this discussion short by condemning M. Couscousson to two days' imprisonment.

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