

KIND HEARTS ARE MORE THAN CORONETS.

BY NED F. MAH.

One day in smiling Paris, at her attic window stood
A maiden with a face as fair, as her young heart was
good.

A Conservatory student. She raised her soulful eyes
Abstractedly exploring the mysteries of the skies.

Then drooping her long lashes—between the flowers
which fill
That tiny mimic garden that blossom on the sill—

She pensive gazed till she perceived, in the far street
beyond.

A squalid, ragged, wrinkled hag—a homeless vaga-
bond.

An aged crone, decrepit—feeble, and bent, and old,
Whom pangs of hunger and despair to croon a song
made bold,

Trusting long suffering charity her tuneless lay might
bless,
Pitying her effort for what seemed its very hopelessness.

Or—haply—her shrill discords some slight reward
might meet
Flung angrily, and as a bribe to "go in the next
street."

Alas! her crack and diemal voice made hideous
the day.
And all who heard her closed their hearts and hastened
on their way.

Till, fainting with protracted fast, 'neath the archway
she sank prone,
Her wan face on her lean, long arm, upon its corner
store.

With bleeding heart the student sees. Hastening to
hide each curl
Beneath a plain black kerchief, with trembling feet
the girl

Decended many storied stairs, her footsteps rendered
fleet
By her pure soul's eager purpose—to the stony-
hearted street.

Then, like incarnate Mercy, bent o'er the hag the
maid,
Touched tenderly the poor bowed head and in kind
accents said,—

"Dear friend, despair not! Aid is nigh. Arise and
take my hand,
I pray you press it now and then, and helpful by me
stand."

Then lifting up her fresh young voice, by Heaven
inspired she sang
As men dream highest angels sing, and far the full
notes rang

Clear, pure and mellow as a bird's the simple song
she trilled,
Whilst a noble heart's pulsation thro' every accent
thrilled.

The cabmen ceased their *sacrees*—their whip crack-
ing, jokes and jeers,
The way worn nags were halted and pricked their
jaded ears.

The gamins ceased their gambles, and busy men
stood still,
As by a modern Orpheus enthralled against their
will.

While from window, door and balcony pours down a
welcome shower
Of silver, gold and copper which had made a poor
maid's dower.

And thus the coy young damsel, in a noble purpose
bold,
Soon reaped a plentiful harvest, which was garnered
by the old,

Which promised food for many months—for the rem-
nant of her life!
And left her there bewildered, with sweet surprises
rife.

It seemed so like a miracle! She stood there, half in
fear
Lest, in a vision, she had seen a winged seraph near.

Her heart bewitched, her withered lips, unused to
praise or pray,
She murmured low her thanks to God—rejoiced, and
went her way.

And when the name Dronsart shall wear Fame's
diadem
This action of her student youth shall prove its
brightest gem.

KEEP MY SECRET.

I was returning to London from Paris by way of Dieppe; the month was September, the weather hot enough to make the longer sea journey seem inviting. I found myself at the station with a good half-hour to spare, and to while away the time I bought books, newspapers, fruit, emptied my pockets, arranged my notebook, and sorted my money. It seemed to me I had a good deal more French gold than I need carry back with me, and I asked a military-looking individual standing by if he knew of a money-changer handy. Yes, there was one round the corner of the opposite street, not ten doors away—he would keep an eye on my belongings, while I went so far. I started, found the house, managed my business, and returning just in time to be let out on to the platform, hurried to secure a corner seat in a carriage. When I had drawn breath it struck me I need not have been in such a bustle, for, although there was a crowd of passengers in the waiting-room, none of them came my way; apparently I was going to make a solitary journey. Not too fast, though; here come some fellow-travellers—two, a man and a young lady; they pass my carriage, come back again, hesitate, look round; and finally she gets in and he walks away, to return, however, a few minutes later, and stand chatting at the window, out of which she leans. I get a good view of the man's face—

not a pleasant one to my mind; his eyes roam uneasily about, as if looking for some one who has not come; and though the girl is talking earnestly and quickly, he seems to pay very scant attention to her.

Up comes the guard—there is a final scrutiny of tickets, a banging of doors, a shriek, a groan, a shrill whistle, and we are off—unexpectedly as it seems to my companion, for she starts up crying, "Papa! papa!" and then, "Oh, mon Dieu!" and she has sunk down on the seat in a passion of tears.

"Now I ask any unprejudiced person"—this was the way I soliloquised on the occasion—"What I have done that I should have the grief of this young Niobe forced upon me." Positively the girl seemed able to turn on taps of tears, for when she drew away her handkerchief from her eyes it was wet and sopping. An idea seemed to have occurred to her that this utter abandonment was a little out of season, for, after throwing a timid glance in my direction, she resolutely closed her hand over the ball her handkerchief was reduced to, buttoned her eyelids tight over her eyes, as if determined not to let out any more of the tears that were there, tucked up her feet, and sat silently battling with the sobs which she could not quite overcome.

I cannot now remember what it was that interested me in the paper, but something caught my notice, and I suppose for a time engrossed my attention, for the next thing I recollect was a train of thought—a travelling back into past days caused by my eyes having fallen on my fellow-traveller. She was fast asleep now, and I was able to take a good look at her. Poor child! I wondered what was the cause of her sorrow—could it be leaving that broken-down, rascally-looking father? Suddenly a vision of myself came to me, and I was living over again that day when at something about her age I had left behind all that was dear to me. Great Heaven! the agony I had endured at saying good-by to my mother, the horrible forlornness that took possession of me, launched out into the world alone, without a creature near to care for me. The mere sight of the scar left by those sufferings stirred up my compassion to this little stranger whose feelings seemed so tender. Why, she could be barely seventeen; her face was much younger than her figure; round peachy cheeks where dimples love to linger, a rosebud of a mouth, and eyes—for at that instant she opened them—as blue as the forget-me-nots that grow by the river. Over the face there stole a little pinky flush, and then there came a timid conscious air such as a child puts on who fears it has offended you. Before I knew it I was smiling at her, and she, though still looking afraid, began to essay a half smile back. Confound it! what a nuisance that I couldn't speak better French—I should like to say something to her—but what! Happy thought! the pearls that I had provided myself with at the station! I seized the basket.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "voulez-vous accepter une?" and I held them before her. Oh! those roguish dimples, that came out in hide-and-seek all over the face as she answered: "Monsieur, I am not French, but English, like you."

"Then do have one!"—and in my haste to press them on her I gave a little jerk forward which sent the whole half-dozen rolling on the floor. Well, by the time we had picked them up, crawled under the carriage seat, humped our heads together, and were reseated a little worse for dust, we had become friends, and laughed honestly and openly each in the face of the other. It did me good to see her plunge her little pearly teeth into that pear, the skin of which I vainly entreated to be permitted to remove.

"It is so good," she said, "for I feel hungry now. There was a breakfast for me, but I couldn't eat before I came away;" and the quiver in the voice supplied the reason.

"Are you going to school?" I ventured to say.

"Well, yes and no; I am going to a school, but to teach as well as to learn there." I was silent; and after a minute she added, "At home it isn't what it used to be. Papa has married another wife. I have lost my mother—she died when I was a baby."

"Ah!" I said by way of consolation, "that is a sad loss to anybody."

She nodded her head affirmatively.

"She—the other one knows that I have no body but papa; it is cruel of her," she said, "to send me away."

"Oh! but you must not take it like that!"—it seemed to me that any excuse that removed her from that shady-looking father's influence ought to be counted a fortunate circumstance—"I dare say they thought going to school again might be good for you."

The rosy button was pursed up to show that its owner did not share my opinion.

"I do not believe that I speak English with such a bad accent," she said poutingly; "do you find that I do, monsieur?—what do you think?"

Because I laughed she turned away her head vexedly, the truth being that what I did think was that this was the most bewitching-looking monkey I had ever in my life come across. It was my first experience of innocent childish coquetry, and the fascination was irresistible.

"You laugh at me," she said reproachfully, "and that is what they will all do. I told papa so, and he said, no. He likes the English, that is why I got into the carriage with you; he thought perhaps you might be going the whole way—are you?"

"Yes, I am going to London."

"So am I."

"Then we shall cross together."

"Cross the sea!" She clasped her hands tightly. "Oh! I am so frightened of the sea—the thought of being alone on the water terrifies me."

"But," I said, "you won't be alone—that is if you will permit me to take charge of you."

She shook her head doubtfully. "Oh, thanks! but I should not dare to trouble you. Papa himself always gets angry with me, but I cannot help it; I say to myself, this time I will be brave; but, my foot on the ship, and, ah!"—her face expressed how her courage melted—"if I cannot find somebody who I can hold on to tight, I feel I must die."

"You shall hold on to me like grim death!" I said, laughing encouragingly. "We are due at Dieppe by two o'clock; that gives us plenty of time for a good luncheon before we start." Something in her look made me add, "Oh! you must eat; beside, you tell me you have had no breakfast—that you are hungry."

"Yes, I am; only papa said I was to go on board immediately."

"Very likely he forgot about your wanting something after this journey."

"No, I don't think it was that," she said, with shy hesitation; "but, frankly, monsieur, we are not rich; and before saying yes, I think I must count my money."

Already I had closed my hand over hers, and the shabby little purse it held, which while speaking she had drawn out of her pocket. "Now," I said, in return for the care I mean to take of you, you must do me a favor. I am an old bachelor, you must know, and very seldom get the chance of a young lady's society; whenever I do I always make it a point that she shall have luncheon with me."

"Really! but that is very nice of you."

"Oh! I'm a despot in that respect."

"But it's very fortunate for me that you are so," and she clapped her hands gayly, "for do you know that I could eat you, and I have nothing but a packet of bon-bons in my pocket to satisfy me;" and she divined her hand down in search of them. "Oh! what did I do with my money!" she exclaimed suddenly. "Ah! here it is; I get into such a fright because I think I have lost it. Papa told me to be very careful, and so I am; but I don't know where to put it."

"It often strikes me that ladies are very badly off for pockets," I said.

"But no!" and she pointed to the sides of her jacket. "I have one there, one there, and one in the skirt of my dress; how many have you?"

"Oh! the number of mine is legion;" and I pointed to my outer coat; "not that I should think of carrying my money about with me there."

"Wouldn't you? where would you put it, then?"

I took out some of the loose coin I had, and held in my hand to show her.

"What, without any purse?" she asked.

"I never carry a purse with me."

"And all the money you have you carry loose like that?"

"Yes, all that I want for daily use I do. Of course in travelling one is forced to have more about one, but that I keep in a place of safety."

"Out of sight—hidden away," she said, confidentially.

"Yes, that is what I ought to have; a pocket that no one could get at; and it might be done in this lining, I should say," and she unbuttoned her jacket so that I might give an opinion.

"Perfectly; you have only to stitch a piece of stout stuff on that—don't you see?"

"Yes—it would bulge out, though."

"Not if done properly."

"Doesn't yours?" and she bent forward to see.

"No, mine seems flat enough;" and I further turned open the flap of my coat, a little amused at her curiosity. The little nimble fingers had half drawn out my pocket book; and then, looking up, she suddenly recollected herself. "Oh, pardon! pray excuse me! for the moment I forgot—I am so accustomed to papa that—" She hesitated, and I found nothing to say. Positively for the first time in my life the thorn that I was no longer young ran its point into me; of course a girl of that age would look upon me as her father. Why shouldn't she?

Fearing that my silence would make her think that she had offended me, I pulled the note case out and opened it wide.

"You see," I said, "that mine is a more portable form of money;" and I unfolded the roll of crisp notes that had been given me at the exchange office. But her propriety had evidently taken fright, and though she smiled at me, she cast no more than a glance in the direction of the money.

What an unaccountable being is man! full of strange surprises for himself as well as for other people. Here had I been roaming at large for six months or so, seeing every day fresh faces, and being brought into contact with women, young, pleasant-mannered, good-looking, who had made not the slightest impression on me, had failed even to whet my curiosity to the point of a king who they were, or wanting to know what had become of them, and, suddenly, after a few hours spent with this school girl, I was enslaved—charmed with her society, and felt miserable to think how soon I should have to part with her.

I expect that waiter reckoned me up to a farthing when he spoke of "madame" to me; and

didn't the fellow snigger in his sleeve at the liberal tip I gave him? At the time I was vastly amused by the idea of his supposing such a child could be a wife; and I should not like to be bound by a solemn affidavit to affirm that no blush warmed my cheeks at the supposition that it was my wife she was taken for.

It was but natural that I should give her my arm, for we were just going on board the steamer, where I had promised to take care of her; and never did bridegroom, young or old, go more fassily about from stem to stern to get every possible thing she could want, and ask after every impossible thing to obtain for her. A rug, a foot-stool, a wrap for her shoulders—for the wind blew keen, and she had no better covering than this thin cloth jacket on—nothing was forgotten; and then down I sat close beside her, as happy as any young Tom Noddy of eighteen. I quite forgot how I had valued the superiority of my simple estate on other occasions; it never entered my head to wonder what the other passengers thought of me; they might think what they pleased, I did not care—having the rug between us, and as we got further on, an extra wrap too—the enjoyment of the passing hour was enough for me; a little golden head rested on my shoulder, and every now and again there smiled up into my face two eyes of heavenly blue.

"You are not frightened?" I often whispered.

"Not a bit."

"Didn't I tell you so!—there is nothing to be afraid of on the sea."

"Not like this there isn't," she said naively;

"I should not mind going ever so far with you."

Although I did not say so, my own inclinations echoed the sentiment.

"Is my head too heavy? Am I leaning too much?" she asked anxiously.

"No; what makes you suppose so?"

"Because I hear your heart beating so quickly—that is your heart, isn't it?" and she stretched out her hand, patting with her fingers gently.

"Somewhere about that spot—at least," I added gallantly, "that is where it used to be."

"Isn't it there now?"

"Well, I am not quite sure; I was just beginning to wonder if it hadn't strayed off a little way."

"Oh, the wanderer!" she exclaimed, laughing; "I wonder how long it means to be before it comes back again."

Already on my lips I found a ready answer, which, no more than the rest of the conversation, need be set down against me; enough to tell that I sighed discontentedly as we approached the shore, and my comfort was not increased by the fact that my little companion was resolved to go on by the train which started as soon as the examination of the luggage set us free. In vain I suggested dinner or tea, and then going on by the train which followed after—she was inexorable.

"Perhaps it is arranged that some one will be there to meet you?"

"No"—she did not expect to be met by anybody.

"Then you must let me see you as far as the end of your destination in safety."

"Will you?" she said gladly—but you do not know where it is."

"I shall, though, when you tell me. I was going to ask you to give me permission to call and inquire after you. I thought perhaps that, being a stranger in London, you would let me take you to see some of the sights there."

"Oh, monsieur! but you are too kind to me."

"The lady of the school need not know how short our acquaintance has been," I went on warily; "she can suppose that I am a friend of the family."

"But certainly you are, since you have been so good a friend to me."

"Then we'll arrange our programme during our up-journey. And now to get our luggage through without delay."

"If we miss I'll meet you on the platform."

"But we shan't!" I was going to give the reason why, when the pushing crowd seemed to separate her from me, and it was not until the train was about to start that we again joined company.

"What a fright you gave me," I exclaimed, when by reason of a heavy tip to the guard we were off in a carriage without other passengers—I thought I had lost you."

"Oh, I saw you all the time. I got my box at once, and then I sat down behind some ladies and watched you."

"Was yours a wooden box painted in stripes with blue ribbon tied to the handles?"

"Yes, did you notice it?"

It was next to impossible not to, but I kept this to myself, merely saying, "Then I shall be able to spare you all trouble at Victoria Station, and when I go for my luggage I can bring yours."

"And I can keep the cab by sitting in it until you come. And now about afterwards. When you call for me what will you take me to see?"

Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkling with anticipation; it was the face and air of a happy child! looking forward to a holiday.

"How old are you?" I said irreverently.

"Just over eighteen. Last month was my birthday."

"Is it possible? Then you are quite a woman."

"They tell me I ought to be. Do you think so too?"

"I think you ought to be as you are"—I