

THE PILGRIMS OF THE PLAINS.

BY JOAQUIN MILLER.

They climbed the rock-built breasts of earth,
The Titan-fronted, blowy steeps
That cradled Time. Where Freedom keeps
Her flag of white-blown stars unfurled,
They turned about, they saw the birth
Of sudden dawn upon the world.
Again they gazed; they saw the face
Of God, and named it boundless space.

And they descended and did roam
Through levelled distances set round
By room. They saw the silences
Move by and beckon; saw their forms,
Their very beards, ofttime in storms,
And heard them talk like silent seas.
On unnamed heights black-brown and brown,
And torn like battlements of Mars,
They saw the darknesses come down,
Like curtains loosened from the dome
Of God's cathedral, built of stars.

They saw the snowy mountains rolled,
And heaved along the nameless lands,
Like mighty billows, saw the gold
Of awful sunsets, saw the blush
Of sudden dawn, and felt the hush
Of Heaven when the day sat down,
And hid his face in dusky hands;
Then pitched the tent, where rivers run
As if to drown the fallen sun.

The long and lonesome nights; the tent
That nestled soft in sweep of grass;
The hills against the firmament
Where scarce the moving moon could pass;
The cautious camp, the smothered light,
The silent sentinel at night!

The wild beasts howling from the hill;
The troubled cattle bellowing;
The savage prowling by the spring,
Then sudden passing swift and still,
And bended as the bow is bent,
The arrow sent; the arrow spent
And buried in its bloody place,
The dead man lying on his face!

The clouds of dust, their cloud by day,
Their pillar of unflaming fire,
The far North Star. And high, and higher—
They climbed so high it seemed asoon
That they must face the falling moon,
That like some flame-lit ruin lay
Thrown down before their weary way.

They learned to read the sign of storms,
The moon's wide circles, sunset bars,
And storm-provoking blood and flame;
And like the Chaldean shepherds came
At night to name the moving stars;
And in the heavens pictured forms
Of beasts and fishes of the sea;
And marked the great bear wearily
Rise up and drag his clinging chain
Of stars around the starry main.

MABEL.

Mabel was my only sister, and I am Ellinor Valway.

I am a member of that most objectionable and much-abused class, "old maids," and I daresay I have about the usual amount of vinegar in my composition and severity in my countenance, perhaps more than ordinary specimens.

Years and years ago, when my dear father lived, he used to say: "Ellinor, you will be an old maid, to a certainty," and his prophecy came true, though at that time I laughed and was unbelieving.

We were left quite alone, when father died, Mabel and Harold, twins, and myself, five years older than they. I claimed a good deal of authority over the children because of being so much older, but I fear I was not very successful in my management of them, for every one said they were wofully spoiled.

They were fifteen when papa died, and I was twenty, quite a woman, and a very sedate and grave one, considering my years; for since my darling mother's death, three years before, I had been housekeeper at the Rosary, our pretty home.

Mab—Queen Mab, we used to call her, or oftentimes Queenie—and Harold were at school when I was left alone in the world, and they were to remain there for two years longer. Then Harold was to go the India, to look after the business our father had been a partner in, and which Mr. Drydeed the lawyer often wasted hours trying to explain to me, for I never could clearly comprehend why it was necessary for our only brother to leave us and go so far away. For in those days—close on thirty years ago—going to India was a serious matter. There was no Mont Cenis tunnel and no Suez Canal, or the numberless other methods of expediting the long and dangerous journey. When Queenie was seventeen she came home to me, and we settled down to a very calm, even sort of life in the quiet country village where our home was. Our only neighbours were Mr. Gilbert the rector, Dr. King, and the Cliffords of High Leigh.

We had a beautiful garden at the Rosary, plenty of splendid flowers and fruit, a glorious old library, besides all the newest books sent us from London from Mr. Drydeed. Music and drawing we both loved; riding and boating were also very great pleasures which we had every facility for indulging in, and on the whole I think we were two very happy girls.

We often went to the rectory, but though we dearly loved Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert, it was rather a quiet house to visit at, as there were no young ladies, and Royden, their only son, was away travelling in Palestine, before his ordination.

We used to go to High Leigh to play croquet sometimes, and very pleasant evenings they used to be. There were four Miss Cliffords, elderly ladies, as like four Dutch dolls as it was possible for anything to be. The Christian name of the eldest sister I never heard; the three others were Misses Ophelia, Amelia, and Cordelia, or "Felia," "Melia," and "Delia," as they called each other. They were dear, good, kind-hearted, sociable, cheerful spinsters—not old enough or sour enough to be termed "old maids," loving good

gossip, or even a little dish of scandal to season their five-o'clock tea, but never degenerating into malice or ill-nature. They were attached to Queenie; but I should like to know who was not. Every one the child came in contact with loved her. How shall I describe her, as she was at seventeen, with her wealth of sunny curls dancing over her shoulders, her violet eyes tender or mischievous, one moment cast down shyly, the next dancing and twinkling like stars? Never in all my life did I behold such glorious eyes, in which such tenderness, sweetness, and latent passion lay concealed. People sometimes say of her picture over my chimney piece, "What a lovely face!" But the painting falls far, far short of the original. She was a perfectly beautiful woman, the most perfect I ever beheld, the most finished specimen of all God's created things.

She was neither vain nor selfish, and beyond the fact that she, from her innate good taste, always liked to be and always was well dressed, she troubled little about her appearance; of her hair, which was rippling, waving, living gold, she was as proud as a child is of some pretty toy. She would take up a ringlet, and holding it in the sunlight say, "Ellinor, is it not pretty? What a shame that it must grow gray some day, and short and thin!" In disposition Queenie and I were very different. She was like a sunbeam dancing hither and thither, leaving gladness wherever she went, singingsnatches of gay songs, dancing as she walked, full of life, mirth, and happiness. I was always the very reverse; grave and sedate as a child, I grew up so as a woman. No one ever in all the course of my life applied a more affectionate epithet to me than "Ellinor dear"; no one ever called me "Nellie" or any other short pet name. I was never supposed to care about pretty things or childish amusements of any sort; indeed I believe I never had a doll or doll's house. My father loved me very dearly, but it was more as a friend and companion than as a child. He used to talk to me on the most serious subjects without the smallest hesitation. Mr. Drydeed used to say I was a marvellously clever little woman; and if an intense love of books and an extraordinary thirst for knowledge constitute cleverness, I was so. I was very sensible, I suppose, and acted in quite a motherly way with regard to the children; but I believe until Queenie came home from school and Harold sailed for India, I never knew what it was to be a girl. Then my sister and I were dear friends; we told each other all our secrets, and discussed our plans for the future.

After Mab had been a year at home, Roy Gilbert returned from the East, and was appointed to his father's curacy. He brought on a visit with him a gentleman he had met at Athens—Ernest Gray, an artist, a poet, and—a philosopher.

Then a new era dawned on us at the Rosary; our lives were no longer even and unbroken, for we lived in a constant flutter of excitement.

It was bright summer time, glorious July, with its sunshine, lilies, and roses. Roy Gilbert was never weary of telling Mab of his travels in the East. Ernest Gray found in me a very patient listener to his ideas on art, poetry, and philosophy.

It did not take very much scrutiny to see that Roy was in love with my sister. I knew it from the first night they met, when she stood under the roses and clematis in the rectory porch, the last slanting rays of the setting sun shining on her golden hair; and he, a few steps below, gazing up at her, with all his soul in his eyes, as if she were an angel. I saw it and was glad, for there was no one in the world I would sooner give my darling to than Roy Gilbert. Oh, he was a good man, a true, brave, good man, if ever there was one in the world.

A month or six weeks passed away so pleasantly, that looking back now, it seems like the memory of some fair dream; and then he asked her to be his wife. She did not consent at first, but when after a few weeks I told her that Ernest Gray loved me, and also wished me to marry him, she consented at once to become engaged to Roy.

"Do you love him, Queenie darling?" I asked one night as she came in from a walk with Roy, looking pale and tired. "Do you love him very dearly?"

"Of course I do, Ellinor; why do you ask? No one could help loving Roy, he is so good," she replied, but I thought there was just an intonation of weariness in her voice. However, I was so happy in my own love, that I could not imagine any one else not loving equally so.

I loved Ernest Gray with all my soul. He fitted the very inmost groove of my nature. I sympathised with every emotion he expressed. I believed with all my heart that in all God's earth he was the one man I could best love.

The summer wore away, and winter was coming

"Wrapped in his mantle of gloom,"

when I one day noticed Queenie looked ill. She had grown quieter since her engagement to Roy. I thought it the natural sequence of calm, settled, perfect content, and did not pass any remarks on it. But in the chilly winter evening, when Roy and Ernest left us—for they spent many evenings at the Rosary—instead of happiness there was often weariness amounting to pain in her face.

"Darling are you ill, are you unhappy?" I asked again and again. "Does anything in the world trouble you?" But the answer was invariably, "No, Ellinor, thanks; I am quite well and happy."

She was to be married in spring, "with the very first violets," Roy declared; and after the merry Christmas time had come and gone, I told

our dear old Dr. King, who had attended my mother and father, of my fears about Queenie. "She coughs sometimes, doctor, and seems to have lost all her life and spirits. I am quite anxious about her."

"Let her go to Italy for her honeymoon," he said; "this has been a trying winter, and Mab is only a hot-house blossom; but there is no consumption in the family, Miss Valway, none at all."

Somewhat reassured I watched, and hoped for the best; but as the day drew near I saw with sorrow that she grew worse instead of better. There was something troubling my child I knew! Oh, how I wished for Harold to consult with! I feared, with a strange nervous sensation, to mention the matter to Roy. It would kill him, I thought, if anything happens to her. He loves her so. In his great devotion he was blind to the change I saw in her. He loved her so madly, and she was always so gentle and tender to him, never impatient, never fretful, that he could see nothing to complain of.

I was too much troubled about my sister to observe that the visits of Ernest Gray were less frequent than they used to be; there was no definite time fixed for our marriage. It would be time enough to think of that when the bustle and confusion of Mab's was all over. One evening he called, while I was lying half asleep on a couch in the back drawing-room: Queenie sat reading in the front room. But though the folding-doors were open, Ernest did not see me, and my sister scarcely seemed to remember I was there.

"Mabel, my darling, my darling," he said—I heard every word distinctly—"I can't stand this any longer; it's killing you, and killing me. Let me tell Ellinor. Believe me, it is by far the best thing to do."

"No, no, no, Ernest, you must not! Oh, why do you speak to me like this? It is cruel!"

"Do you mean to say you intend to marry Roy Gilbert in a few weeks, loving me as you know you do?" he asked fiercely. "Do you suppose I am going to swear before God's altar to love Ellinor Valway, when every fibre of my nature thrills with love for you, Mabel? I can't do it! You may marry Roy if you will, but I'll not be so cruel. I'll spare your sister."

"But she loves you, Ernest, and Roy loves me."

"She will hate me soon," he muttered, "for I'll tell her this very night! Mabel, I must go—leave this place for ever; will you come with me? You love me, little one, and God best knows how I love you. They will forgive you, darling, and I'll bear all the blame gladly. O child, I would die inch by inch, I would keep dying a life-time to make you happy."

What happened after that I cannot clearly remember. I have a hazy idea of entering the room suddenly, and my sister fainting in my arms; I also seem to recollect very dimly Ernest's wild passionate craving for pardon, and his terrible agony at seeing Mab white and still as death in my arms.

The next day I felt calmer, and sent for Roy Gilbert. I told him all from first to last, not sparing a single particular; why should I? Who spared me? It is close on thirty years ago, but I have not forgotten the look of dull blank misery that crept into his face as he began to realise the fact that Mabel did not love him, and was not going to be his wife. He is a white-haired man now, but the sorrow of that day has never left his eyes.

Of course I released Ernest Gray from his engagement, and Roy wrote to Mabel such a good kind a letter, telling her he did not blame her in the least, and saying he would pray always for her happiness.

She married Ernest, and they went abroad. But neither the tenderest love of her husband nor the warm air and soft skies of sunny Italy could bring peace to the heart of my darling sister. She died of pure, simple remorse for all the sorrow she had brought on me and Roy Gilbert. A white marble cross, with the simple English inscription

"MABEL VALWAY GRAY,

Aged 19."

stands in a quiet Florentine church-yard, for my beautiful Queenie entered on the better rest before she had been six months married.

Of my own feelings I have not said much; there is a pain too deep for words, and that pain is mine. The years passed slowly away, my brother Harold returned from India, married, and settled down in London, leaving me still mistress of the Rosary. He and his wife come to see me every summer, and I have pretty nearly always one of his little girls with me, generally a Mabel called Queenie after our darling.

I am not very much feared by my neighbours, though I am an old maid, and there are even those who say that my "cordials" and "soups" and recipes are not to be by any means despised, but I daresay I am sour and selfish enough in general. I do not mean to say that I am always brooding over my sorrows, but I have not outlived them. I do not generally look miserable, and I have even been seen to play at "blind-man's bluff" at Christmas time, and lead off a dance for the children's party at New Year. But when I am in my gayest mood our dear good vicar Roy Gilbert will hold my hand in his, and say, "You are a brave woman, Ellinor, my dear! But every heart knoweth its own bitterness," And I answer, "Yes, Roy, you and I can tell that; surely too often

"Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thought."

HISTORY OF THE WEEK.

England is the first to begin building operations for the coming Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia.

The French Assembly has been adjourned from August the 4th to November the 4th by a vote of 470 to 155.

Johnson won the swimming match for the championship of the world, the distance being 10½ miles, covered in 3 hours and 10 minutes.

Telegrams received late by the Secretary of State, bring news of an uprising of the Cree Indians, it is feared some lives have been sacrificed in the attempt of the Indians to capture Fort Carlton, in Manitoba.

The Canadian Copyright Bill has been passed by the Imperial House of Commons.

The Channel Tunnel Bill has passed its second reading in the Lords without opposition.

A London despatch records the death of Sir Francis Bond Head, a former Lieut.-Governor of Upper Canada.

A ring of counterfeiters is preparing to issue \$12,000,000 worth of counterfeit Bank of England and Bank of France notes.

The name given by the Presbyterian Council to the new union is "The Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the world."

The article, in the proposed new constitution of Spain, establishing religious toleration, has been adopted by the Constitutional Committee by a vote of 22 to 8.

The Home Rule members of Parliament will not be able to attend the Home Rule banquet which is to take place in Dublin on the 4th proximo, as their presence will be required in the House on that day to oppose Mr. Newdegate's Convent Bill.

A lockout among the cotton mills of York-shire has commenced.

The Carlists were vigorously repulsed at Guetaria in attempting to surprise the Royalists.

The official statement of the Minister of Public Works to the French Assembly estimates the damages by the floods at \$15,000,000.

The four-oar boat race for \$1,000 a side between the Smith-Nickerson and Ross-Foley crews, was rowed at Halifax on Saturday, and resulted in favor of the former crew.

A despatch from Helena, Montana, says the United States Commissioner has released the parties arrested for the murder of Assiniboine Indians last year in British territory, on the ground of there not being sufficient evidence to justify their extradition.

LITERARY.

AUGUSTA J. EVAN'S new book is to be called "Infelicia."

THE late Prosper-Merimée was a great linguist. He knew even Russian and a little Polish.

DR. PUSEY has been ordered absolute rest for a few weeks, and his letter on "The Present Crisis in the Irish Church" is necessarily postponed.

JOAQUIN MILLER is at Newburyport, Mass., where he has finished a poem on the National Centennial.

OUIDA lives in excellent style in Florence. She has a handsome marriage, and, of course, she is barbaric enough to keep a tiger.

THE Abbé Michaud's new work "De l'Etat Présent de l'Eglise Catholique-Romaine en France," has been interdicted by the French Government.

CERVANTES is a new literary periodical announced to appear at Madrid, the profits to be devoted to a monument to the author of "Don Quixote."

Professor Veitch, of Glasgow University, has just contributed to the ballad literature of Scotland a new volume entitled "The Tweed, and other Poems."

BAYARD TAYLOR will pass the summer with his family at Matapoiset. Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Stoddard will start soon for the same place.

OUIDA lives in elegant style in Florence. She has a handsome carriage, and, of course, she is barbaric enough to keep a tiger.

BERTHOLD AUERBACH has published a new collection of tales, which for poetic fancy, originality and hearty geniality, are said to exceed any of his former productions.

JOAQUIN MILLER dropped his gold headed cane in a hay field near Newburyport, Mass., the other day and swung the farmer's scythe for him. It is thus the poet of the Sierras keeps alive the sacred fire.

DUMAS Jr., is trying his pen on religious subjects, having finished up the subject of woman. His critics claim that he is not likely to be a success in his new line, and advise him to stick to his last—like a good shoemaker.

THE Boston School Committee have passed an order establishing four kindergarten schools for children three years old, with a four years' course of instruction, with a kindergarten teacher, and suitable apparatus for each.

EMILE OLLIVIER'S book "Principles and Conduct" is severely handled by the French critics. They say it shows him to be the same light-headed fellow who declared war in 1870 "with a light heart" from the ministerial bench in the Corps Legislatif.

MR. GLADSTONE, who was present when Dr. Schliemann read his paper on his discoveries at Troy before the London Society of Antiquaries, took part in the discussion which followed and expressed a high estimate of the Doctor's discoveries.

MRS. ANNIE CHAMBERS KETCHUM, the Southern author, has taken up her residence in England for five years. She is to publish a book of verses called "Dolores, and other Rhymes of the South," and is said to be engaged in completing a new novel.

OVER 2,000 inscriptions in the Phœnician tongue, engraved on stone, have now been discovered among the ruins of Carthage lying in one particular spot or rather hole of ground. Fifty years ago, only five or six Carthaginian inscriptions were extant. The more recent findings prove clearly that two styles of forming the letters of the alphabet were prevalent among the inhabitants of North Africa, and also furnish valuable historical dates.

THE monument to be erected over the grave of Edgar Allan Poe is now being manufactured in Baltimore. One of the features of the stone is a bust of the departed poet. The model for the face was furnished by Volck, the Baltimore artist, from a photograph of the original, in the possession of Mr. John P. Poe. The likeness is said to be very striking, and the work is much praised. The monument, it is expected, will be fully completed by October, when it will be formally dedicated.

A LETTER has been received from Alfred Tennyson, in which he expresses gratification that the Maryland Teachers' Association has decided to rear a memorial in honor of Edgar Allan Poe. He expresses a high opinion "of the immortal productions of the American poet," whom he classes among the most brilliant writers to whom the country has given birth, and asks for a photograph of the proposed memorial. Edgar Allan Poe, it will be remembered, entertained likewise a high opinion of Tennyson, as when the first great work of the English poet was published predicted for him a brilliant future.