

OH, SOON RETURN!

The white sail caught the evening ray,
The wave beneath us seem'd to burn,
When all my weeping love could say
Was, "Oh, soon return!"

SARITA.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER FRASER.

PART I.

She lay stretched on the cool greenward beneath an old oak-tree. Her face, partially upturned to meet the sun-god's kisses, was a marvel of purity. The features were small, and the tints as colourless as a statue.

As her name rang out on the air, the black lashes parted slowly and reluctantly from their resting place, and the girl opened her eyes. They were southern eyes, big and luminous, and with a good deal of passion slumbering in their dusky depths.

The features, wonderfully rit with human beauty and human feeling, indubitably suggested a *jeunesse d'orgueil*.

Sarita rose and went towards the house; but as though loth to lose the beautiful outer world, she bent against the casement, with her gaze lingering on the scene.

Within the room her father, the pastor of the small village of Milton, bent over some theological work; while his wife, a wan fragile woman, with a red flush tinging her thin cheeks, nervously paced the floor with an open letter in her hand.

"From Millicent Charville, to say she will be here to-morrow!" she exclaimed in hurried accents as her daughter's shadow fell across the room.

"So soon!" and Sarita's cheek reflected back a bloom more vivid than that on her mother's. "I am so glad! Are not you?" she asked eagerly.

Millicent Charville, a penniless, friendless girl—a waif, in truth, cast by ill fortune rudderless on the rough waters of life—was the orphan daughter of Mrs. Conway's only brother, who had been an officer in a colonial regiment, and had fallen a victim to the climate a very few years after his child's birth.

Out of compassion the Conways had invited Millicent to their house for an indefinite period, and to Sarita the prospect of companionship with one of her own age was delightful in the extreme. Her eyes and smiles waxed doubly radiant as she realised the speedy coming of her cousin.

"We do not know what Millicent is like," Mrs. Conway remarked nervously. She was one of those beings that *must* have a "cross."

That cross, *pro tem*, was Millicent, and she shrank from the proximity of one who might turn out the very reverse of what she ought to be.

"I am sure she is nice," Sarita averred with an unreasoning positiveness that was truly feminine, and which drew a smile from her father.

"Sarita is too young to be sceptical, and let us hope that she will long preserve her unlimited faith in human 'niceness,'" he remarked to his wife.

before she had accomplished many steps she was firmly pinioned in a pair of strong arms, and a man's face with laughing eyes looked closely into her own.

"There was no need to hear more than the bare intonation of the eight letters to know that Sarita had yielded up every wish of her great passionate heart to the bearer of the name.

"She did not even attempt a struggle for freedom, but subsided at once quietly and contentedly into the embrace of her captor.

"What makes you so gay, Sarita?" "Millicent Charville will be here to-morrow," she said joyfully, glancing up at him for sympathy in the pleasure she felt; but she was doomed to a lack of sympathy on the subject.

No sign of gratification at the news was visible on Escourt Eyre's features, and in truth an incipient frown contracted his brow.

"Are you sorry she is coming, Escourt?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes." "Why? at any rate she will be additional society."

"So my society does not satisfy you, Sarita?" he said reproachfully.

In a moment her soul was at his feet. Millicent or a hundred Millicents could weigh not a feather's weight in comparison to a hair's breadth of annoyance to this idol whom she had set up on high to worship all her life, no matter how faulty he might be.

"O Escourt!" and large tears rushed involuntarily to her eyes, and glittered on the long black lashes; but the lover kissed them off, and her heaven grew serene once more.

"We do not know what this Miss Charville is like," he said.

His words were a *fac-simile* of Mrs. Conway's sentiments; but Sarita's mood was quiet subdued now, and instead of launching into rhapsody or wielding the cudgels in the new-comer's defence, she contented herself with answering,

"In point of looks we do not; but her letters are frank and nice, and she appears to be so unfortunate and desolate that I cannot help pitying her."

"Is she suffering in pocket, or has any one been wicked enough to blight her young heart?" Escourt asked laughingly.

"I cannot say about the condition of her heart, but the condition of her purse is forlorn enough. Millicent is an orphan, Escourt, and unless we had invited her here, she would have been forced to go out as a governess to earn her daily bread. The Charvilles come of a good old stock, and it would have been rather *infa del* for her, you know."

Escourt's laugh deserted him. He was both imaginative and inflammable. A picture of a young girl presented itself vividly to his mind.

A girl, orphaned and friendless, innocent and "put upon"—possibly pretty and gently nurtured—exposed to ravening wolves, having to run counter to the hardness of this world.

The picture brought seriousness to his lip and commiseration to his soul at once.

Sarita marked the change in his mobile face from levity to gravity, and she rejoiced at it. She had found a sympathiser at last—a powerful coadjutor in Millicent's cause.

"You do not so much mind her coming here, now that you know how unfortunately she is placed, Escourt?"

Escourt looked into the large dark eyes, a little worried still, but full of an intense worship for him and genuine pathos for her cousin, and an ebullition of affection came over him.

"You are an angel!" he whispered, as he pressed an ardent kiss on the unresisting red lips of his betrothed.

It was the last fervent kiss his lips implanted on hers, and just as it was given a tall man with a muscular figure and aristocratic air came upon the scene.

The sight of that carress was evidently a distasteful one to him, for a heavy cloud flitted quickly over his broad forehead and sunny blue eyes, and he bit his nether lip hard under the shadow of his long tawny moustache.

"Arthur!" Sarita exclaimed, with a hot blush all over her face and throat.

"In a very inopportune moment, I perceive," Sir Arthur Eyre observed with a lame attempt at a smile; but the smile died away in an almost imperceptible quiver, and his voice had lost its usual pleasant ring.

"Your presence does not discompose me in the least," Escourt said carelessly; and throwing an arm round Sarita he tried to draw her closer to him; but she quietly disengaged herself, and moved off a few paces, looking shy and a little ill at ease.

As the two brothers stood side by side, Sir Arthur's Saxon face and fair curling hair afforded a curious contrast to Escourt's Murillo-like beauty of raven locks, and eyes dark as midnight.

Both men were undeniably handsome; Escourt's features perhaps the more perfect of the two, while the charm of Sir Arthur's countenance lay in its expression.

"Good news for you, Arthur. The close advent of a beautiful woman, to whose charms of course you must fall a prey, and whom we shall salute as Lady Eyre by and by. What will the dowager say to it, I wonder?" Escourt cried, remembering his regal mother's adhesion to dignity, and her repugnance to a wife for her eldest born.

His brother flushed up brightly. An acute physiognomist might have detected a quick yearning glance go out towards Sarita as he answered:

"Cupid and I are sworn enemies. No fear of my falling a prey to any one's charms, so the Dowager Lady Eyre may rest content."

"How sweet are looks that ladies bend On whom their favours fall! For them I battle till the end, To save from shame and thrall. But all my heart is drawn above, My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine: I never felt the kiss of love, Nor maiden's hand mine!"

Escourt spouted mockingly. A red spot burnt more deeply on Sir Arthur's cheeks as he listened.

"That is quite true," he said quietly, and with grave eyes that silenced his brother's remarks. "Is the new-comer your cousin, Sarita?"

He always lingered over her pretty southern name, as if it was pleasant to him to do so, and he uttered it so softly and tenderly that it sounded differently to the girl from his lips than from any one else's. Even Escourt's voice failed to convey the same impression to her ears, although that voice was the music of the spheres to her.

"Yes," she replied.

Somehow her discourse with her brother-in-law elcet was usually limited to monosyllables. In spite of the efforts she made to conquer it, she could never throw off completely a species of constraint in which his presence wrapped her, although she admired and liked him more than any man she had seen in her life, save Escourt.

"We lead so peaceful and primitive an existence in this paradise of Milton, that it would be a pity for a serpent to crawl in among the Eden flowers. Not that I mean to insinuate Miss Charville is an *anguis in herba*," Sir Arthur observed with a laugh.

"It is a shame to allow oneself to be prejudiced. I daresay Miss Charville is both beautiful and charming," Escourt flashed out in a hot impetuous way that was habitual to him.

The picture he had conjured up was yet present to his mind, and, unknown to himself, the original had created an interest within him. But Sarita, tired perhaps of champaignship, kept a dead silence, wondering to herself whether Escourt's belief would be realised.

A tall girl with magnificent shoulders and a slight supple waist, soft silky hair of a russet brown, with golden gleams athwart it, crowning her dainty head; a face simply perfect, with pure pink and white tints and small straight features, and almond-shaped eyes of the deepest gray looking out dreamily on the world.

This was Millicent Charville, the homeless and friendless waif, the would-be governess. Her face was a fortune in itself.

In point of beauty Escourt's belief was fully realised. Would he find her "charming" as well? Sarita questioned her heart sorrowfully.

She was utterly free from all pettiness of feeling—envy, malice, and all uncharitableness found no place in her breast—but she was human, and she was desperately in love.

Involuntarily her spirit sank as she noted the marvellous hair, the bewitching gray eyes, that were to be under Escourt's gaze and undoubted approval day after day in the familiar routine of country life.

Sarita was not vain, and, in comparison with Millicent, her own swarthy attractions grew dreadfully mean and despicable. Millicent's style, too, was irreproachable as far as refinement went; though to Sarita, born and brought up like a wild-flower, the sweetness and freedom of nature untrammelled by social doctrines and ignorance of the *convenances*, her cousin seemed slightly *manière* and a shade artificial in her voice.

Millicent had taken off her simple travelling garb, and donned a white dress, fresh and flowing, and passed a deep-violet ribbon through her hair, when she went into the drawing-room and sat down by the window during the interval before tea.

It was superb July weather, bright and sultry, and an errant sunbeam lit up her face, tinted like a rich damask rose, when Escourt's gaze burst upon her. Sarita watched the expression of his eyes with a beating heart, and the study was unsatisfactory; for she turned away with a pallid face and a stifled sigh to Sir Arthur, who stood near, looking cool and imperturbable to the charms that had called up a vivid colour to his brother's dark cheek.

In a little while Escourt, oblivious of Sarita's claims, devoted himself assiduously to the fair waif's material requirements, while she thanked him with languid eyes and wonderfully modulated tones.

In reality Millicent's voice was thin and metallic, but she had schooled it into the softness of silver bells.

"Is she not beautiful, Arthur?" Sarita whispered with an irrepressible falter in her cheeks.

"Not to my thinking. I hate those pink-and-white dolls," he answered curtly. The falter in Sarita's voice had hurt him like a knife-thrust. She was his lie.

Since she was a child she had grown nearer and dearer daily to his heart, and the bitterest hour he had known was that in which Escourt had acknowledged that he loved Sarita, and that the love was returned.

If Escourt had been different from what he was—if he had possessed a little of stability—Sir Arthur would have yielded up the girl he so dearly loved with less regret; but he knew his brother's character so well, its fickleness and its weakness, that he trembled for Sarita's future. And now, as he marked Escourt's undisguised admiration for Millicent Charville, he felt both contempt and anger for the unstable, selfish spirit that could deliberately wound a loving trusting heart for the sake of self-gratification.

A gratification of the senses, too—for it was through his eyes only that Millicent had fascinated him and detained him at her side all that first evening—the longest, most dreary evening that Sarita had ever spent; and when it came to a close, she could barely repress a shudder as a conventional kiss, light and unmeaning, fell on her cheek from Millicent's perfect lips.

(To be continued.)

LITERARY.

MR. ANTHONY TROLLOPE will shortly commence a new serial story in *Temple Bar*.

MR. SALA, who has been dangerously ill, has much improved in health during the last few weeks.

A translation of Schleicher's work on the German language, "*Die deutsche Sprache*," is being prepared.

MIDLE DE LA RAMÉ, better known to readers of sensational fiction as "Ouida," has, it is said, been lately married to a Russian gentleman.

MR. THOROLD ROGERS has in the press "*Epistles, Satires, and Epigrams*," the first two adapted from Horace and Juvenal, but entirely modernised.

WE have to report the death of Lady Chatterton. She was the author of many novels, poems, and books of travel in Ireland, the Pyrenees, &c. She also wrote a *Life of Admiral Lord Gambier*.

THE *St. James's Magazine* for March contains an original sonnet by Shelley. It is said to be in the poet's own handwriting, and forms one of a series of Shelley MSS. in the possession of Mr. Townsend Mayer.

It is said there is a probability of Sir Archibald Alison's autobiography seeing the light shortly. It contains keen and discriminating criticisms on many of the historian's literary and political contemporaries.

PROFESSOR MAX MULLER has undertaken to edit for the University Press all the sacred books of the world, except the Bible and the Chinese Scriptures, which last will be allotted to the eminent sinologue, Dr. Legge, who is to be the first occupant of the Chinese chair at Oxford.

ONE of the French academicians, Count Louis de Carné, died the other day. He was a contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a follower of Guizot in thought and style, and, when elected to the Academy in 1858, was considered to be worthy of the distinction from the value of his works on political history.

THE Marchioness of Salisbury is a contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, the recent article on "Barnet House" being hers. It is some time since her ladyship, as Lady Robert Cecil, ceased her connection with the *Saturday Review*, to which she used to contribute some of those caustic articles on the follies of the day to which that journal owes its first reputation for satire.

A relic of the conquest of Great Britain by the Romans has been brought before the Paris Académie des Inscriptions. A Latin inscription recording the triumph of the Emperor Claudius over the Britons and the taking of Caractacus has been found engraved on a stone in the wall of the ancient Circus in Asia Minor, and the copy brought to France. Claudius is here designated as *Vindex Libertatis*.

ARTISTIC.

THE well-known Austrian sculptor, Franz Molnitzky, died recently. In Vienna his works are ranked among the best productions of modern sculpture.

MEISSONIER'S "*Charge de Quirassiers, 1807*," purchased by Mr. A. T. Stewart, for sixty thousand dollars, has been photographed in Paris, and copies are to be found at Schaus's Gallery.

A London house has just successfully cast a bronze statue, eight and a half feet high, of Dr. Livingstone, which is to be erected in Edinburgh. In one hand the great missionary holds a Bible; in the other an axe.

MR. GEORGE SMITH, the Assyrian explorer, has started for the East to renew his explorations. He proceeds first to Constantinople next to Alexandria, and thence he will, perhaps, take a different route to the interior from that he has formerly followed.

THE proprietor of Meissonier's picture called "Eighteen Hundred and Fourteen," is M. de la Haute, who paid \$5,000 francs for it. A picture dealer recently offered 200,000 francs for the painting, but M. de la Haute replied that he would not sell for less than 250,000 francs for himself and 50,000 francs for M. Meissonier.

MR. RUSKIN spoke in rather complimentary terms of a young artist's work. He made a remark to the effect that he would have to go through the valley of humiliation before reaching the mountains of beauty. He meant himself, of course, not the young artist, but the young artist, wrote to Mr. Ruskin saying that he greatly valued the advice of so eminent a critic, and that he would be highly delighted to know what this phrase actually meant. Mr. Ruskin's reply was to take a tumbler, place it bottom upwards, put half a dozen cherries round the tumbler, and send him a water-colour sketch of this subject; then he would tell him his meaning. The artist did as he bid (cherries are not to be had for love or money), and sent the sketch. Mr. Ruskin returned the sketch, asking why the shadow of cherry number six had been made broader than the shadow of cherry number five, whereas it ought to have been narrower? The ingenious painter humbly replied that he had eaten the shadow first, before the cherry.

HUMOROUS.

THE man who painted Patience as a healthy-looking female perched on a chunk of sandstone, never saw an editor chewing the end of a pencil, whilst three compositors stood in the back-ground yelling for copy.

FRANK BEARD, the artist, while at dinner recently, was told of a man in Nassau street with three hands. "How is that?" asked Beard. "He's got a little behind-hand," was the reply. "You are a more extraordinary man," was the reply, "for you have two heads; you have a head of your own, and you've got a head of me."

A French doctor many years ago, advertised a cosmetic—the "balm of one thousand flowers." It finally got him into court, charged with swindling the purchaser, because it would be impossible to collect and combine the odor of "one thousand flowers." But the witty Frenchman with a ready smile, put them down with the reply, "Honey"—which was one of the ingredients in the "balm."

ANCIENT pomological prophets are prone to prognosticate that sleek is productive of an excellent fruit crop. Let us, therefore, be thankful. As we cress the pavement with the back of our head, let us reflect that it is all for the good of the peaches, and as we luminate the terminal of our spinal column on the icy hummocks of the street, let us rise and shout "bully for the apple prospects." There is a hidden blessing in all things where there is not an apparent one, philosophy teaches.