

A Song of June.

Song-birds soar in the blue,
Butterflies dance on the green,
Roses are blushing the garden through
With lilies laughing between;
O'er the boughs long bare to the blast
A fluttering pomp has passed,
And the whole earth is shouting,
"Away with all doubting,
'Tis summer, 'tis summer at last."

No pale face presses the pane,
Open the casements start
To the breeze that is balm to the burning brain,
Surcease to the stricken heart;
And from out of a may-bush white
The song-bird lilts with delight
"All melancholy
Is folly, is folly,
When June is growing bright."

A. P. G.



THE CASKET OF DIAMONDS.

I AM looked upon generally, by those who know me as a good-natured, unsuspecting sort of man, ready at short notice to respond to the appeals of suffering humanity. Like the hare in Gay's fable, of whom he wrote—

"His care was never to offend,
And every creature was his friend,"

I have never refused to lend a helping hand to those I believed to be in need. I am told that one of my granduncles had twice brought himself to the verge of ruin through endorsing for his acquaintances. He, luckily for himself, perhaps, died an old bachelor. As heredity plays us strange pranks, sometimes skipping over a generation or two to reappear in some oddity or other in a great grandson or nephew, it is probable that I inherit this easy trust in my fellow men—and women—he never left me anything else—from that remote relation.

In the animal kingdom the lower forms are protected by their resemblance in color to the soil or vegetation amid which they live. Not so with man; his face, his figure, his actions all betoken the character of the mind within, and I am no exception to the rule. My face alone sufficiently proclaims the friendly disposition of my nature. I have, nevertheless, escaped being victimized by any of my friends or acquaintances, and very much to my surprise too. With the fair sex, however, it is different. The ladies, God bless 'em, have time and again measured the extent of my generosity. The last case of this kind that occurred to me contains so useful a lesson that I am tempted to have my revenge by publishing it for the benefit of all middle-aged gentlemen with a heart to feel for the sorrows of womankind.

It was in the summer of 1887. I had taken a brief holiday trip to a popular resort on the coast of Rhode Island and secured comfortable quarters at a fashionable hotel. Although a large number of the people who flock there every season live in cottages, the hotel had a fair sprinkling of people of distinction in their own homes. They hailed from every State of the Union and from the Canadian cities of Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, London, Quebec, Kingston, &c. Among those who came from an Ontario city were a government clerk, his wife and little daughter. The little girl was seldom seen, but not so the lady herself, who was dressy and conspicuous and seemed to enjoy the evening hops as well in her husband's absence as when he was by.

In age Madame Beltier was somewhat over her seventh¹ strum. She was rather short in stature, inclined to *embonpoint*, and had a profusion of fair or sandy hair which—after her bath in the sea—she was wont to spread out over her bust and shoulders where it shone in the sun like the shower of gold in which Jupiter visited Dante, and was the envy of many a younger woman. "There goes the madame spreading out her net," was the remark of a young lady from Montreal on one of these occasions. I had been slightly acquainted with Madame Beltier for some years but, though thrown occasionally together in the music-room or dance-hall, for some reason or other I had never asked her to dance. One evening, nearly a fortnight after my arrival, she reminded

me of this neglect on my part. I immediately faltered out some excuse and asked her to be my partner in the Lancers. She danced like a German angel. The evening wore pleasantly away with music and conversation. About ten o'clock as I was sauntering through the hall to enjoy my evening cigar, Madame Beltier passed out into the dim light of the corridor, and suddenly halted as though to let me pass by. In reply to my "Good night" she said, "Remain here a minute, I want to talk with you. I love the smell of a good cigar. Do you remember Shelley's Good Night?" and she began to quote the beautiful lines,—

"Good night! Ah, no; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be good night."

Here she stopped as if endeavoring to recall the remainder. I took up the thread and said—"Let me finish them."

"How can you call the lone night good
Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight?
Be it not said, thought, understood
Then it will be good night."

To hearts that near each other move
From evening close to morning light,
The night is good, because, my love,
They never say good night."

Here she carolled out, as though some beautiful bird of night had burst into melody, the burden of Robert Louis Stevenson's song:

"And the moon was shining clearly,"

which it was.

"Mr. Eldridge," said she, laying a hand gently on my arm, "I want you to do me a service."

"Certainly, madame," I replied.

"You know," she went on, "I visited New York a few days ago. It was for the purpose of getting a number of very valuable diamonds set. They were bought for me when we were at Paris, a year ago,—I remember it was the 13th July—the day before the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille—and 'twas at Garnier's on the Rue Rivoli. I brought them down here and left them in the hotel-safe, informing the proprietor of the contents of the package. They are worth here, I believe, about fifteen thousand dollars. Let us sit down."

Seating herself, she continued:

"Now, Mr. Eldridge, I have a telegram from my husband this evening, to meet him at Troy next Friday. The set diamonds will be forwarded to the proprietor of this hotel, who will hand them over to you and get your receipt for them."

"Yes, madame; I am all attention," was my response to a pressure of the hand on my arm.

"As you are returning home before us, and I do not feel quite safe in travelling with these valuables about me, I felt that I should entrust them to your care."

I had myself some scruples about undertaking the carriage of such valuable property, and suggested that she could send them with more security by an express company, but she overruled my objections, and I consented to take charge of the casket of diamonds to be handed me in a few days by the hotelkeeper. The diamonds arrived in due course, and having received a letter from my partner in Montreal, I packed up, locking the casket of diamonds in my valise. I had a presentiment that all would not turn out well, and kept a firm hold of the valise on my way to the railway station.

(To be concluded next week.)



COULDN'T PLAY IT.

A HIGHLAND piper at Stronachlachar, on Loch Katrine, entertained several tourists early the present month with strains of native music while they were waiting for a number of early diners to get on board the steamer "Lady of the Lake." After doing full justice to "The Moon's on the Lake," the "McGregor's Gathering," and "Hey, the Bonnie Breast Knots," he was asked to play a Retreat. "Na, na, she nefer learnt tat kind of music." We believe a similar answer was once given by another Highlander to a request for a "Retreat" after one of the Peninsular engagements in Spain.