

FAIR ROMAINE.

BY CAROLINE A. MERIGLI.

There lives a story, a story of old—
The Lily of France is fair to see!
Ora true heart slain and a proud name held—
Ah me! ah me!
A sentence as staid as a priest's ore
And a field of argent with masked man,
Fair as it glittered in days of yore,
When best blood ran.

Ah, pride, ye saints, is a deadly sin!
Proud is the House of D'Algois!
And angels may weep if the devil but win,
And laugh with glee,
He, but the Equerry Champdelorine,
She, the Damsel Romaine,
They met at the chase ere the hounds were in.

Saw you ever the teeth of a gnashing boar?
The Lily of France is fair to see!
All wide with fury and wet with gore?
Ah me! ah me!
A pathway down with its white sides torn:
A maiden, fallen, with loosened hair,
Mid cries of horror on winds upborne,
And a sire's despair!

Ah, fate it swoops like a hawk above!
Proud is the House of D'Algois!
And the fate of the haughty is oft-times love,
Ah, grammarer!
Fatal of men and fond of eye,
Nobly and swiftly his steed he rides,
Bold heart he hath and a bold war cry,
And naught beside!

Who but the Equerry Champdelorine—
The Lily of France is fair to see!
Who gave the soul of the Saxon Gynue
At D'Algois,
Bides to the rescue and leaps to the earth,
Mid fury of boar and moan of hound,
And leaving his sword from its silken girth,
Bestrides the ground!

A tucked boar and a fair, fair face—
Proud is the House of D'Algois!
So close together, ye saints of grace!
I was dread to see!
Is loveliness lost forevermore?
An instant still and a hideous death!
He stabs the throat of the furious boar,
And stays its breath!

And then as the maiden she opens her eyes—
The Lily of France is fair to see!
In a storm of anguish her pale sire lies,
Ah me! ah me!
But red is the cheek of La Belle Romaine
As held to the breast of her savior, told
She sleeps on his steel o'er the wide domain
To castle-hold!

Alas! alas! that they met to love!
Proud is the House of D'Algois!
For doom is written in stars above,
In mystery!
A pale cheek and a faltering breath,
A maiden's tears and a brave man's pain,
Who knows not Love it is oft-times death?
An old refrain!

'Tis dear that the lovely in grief should die!
The Lily of France is fair to see!
That the rooking dungeon give no reply—
Ah me! ah me!
That the saved and the savior should pine apart,
And only live in the sound of verse,
And the bravest deed and the truest heart
Prove but a curse.

This for pride and a haughty name!
Proud is the House of D'Algois!
For better were death than a blush of shame,
Ye saints! ye see!
Sculptured in marble with folded hands
Beauteous and calm as in life she lies,
Where the wind to the willow's low demands
Makes weird replies.

Champdelorine on the field he fell—
The Lily of France is fair to see!
For the castle-warden served him well
To set him free!
But the troubled brain and the anguish'd breast
Nor stint nor stay to the fabled prove,
Swift was the deathblow that gave him rest,
And deep as Love!

There stands not seneschal, ward nor page—
Proud is the House of D'Algois!
At the old chateau that is black with age,
Ah me! ah me!
In desolate chambers hung the spears,
Rattles the armor in dismal halls;
And the standard gnawed by the swarming bats
Quivers and falls.

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JOAN:
A TALE.BY
RHODA BROUGHTON,AUTHOR OF
"Cometh up as a Flower," "Red as a Rose is she," etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER III.

Yes! the new régime has begun. No one beyond childhood is fond of a new order of things merely because it is new. Everybody hates new boots; most people hate new situations.

On most ears the joy-bells of New Year's-eve, rashly, and over-hastily mirthful, jar. Why, in Heaven's name, should we pull bells and get drunk, because we are one twelvemonth nearer "the Conqueror Worm"? If it were the worm that rang the bells, we could understand his jollity.

Joan's new régime over which she has about as much reason to exult as we over our new year, may be said to begin as she steams out of the station at Dering, with the footman standing on the platform, and touching his hat to her for the last time. She tried to inaugurate

the new epoch last night, when she made a zealous effort to pack her own clothes; and, after hours of patient but unskilled wrestling, rose from before the imperials, which indignantly disgorged her too numerous gowns—rose fagged and red, yet semi-triumphant under the idea that at least she had succeeded in getting everything in—only to discover behind her a forgotten and overlooked heap, hardly inferior in size and incompressibility to that with which she had been contending. Thereupon the old régime returns for a moment, and her maid, who has been looking on in impatient pain at dresses folded in the wrong places—at vacuums where no vacuums should be—and a general in-artistic inequality of level, retakes her office and for the last time packs.

When all her imperials—great and many, as if she were an American—are at length shut, locked, and strapped, Joan eyes them with a new distrust.

"If the house is as small as he said, they will never get into it!"

Joan has no good-by kisses to give, at least not to people. She kisses a chair, a walking-stick, a pair of muffetees that she herself had knitted only two months ago; but they do not kiss her back again, and one-sided kissing is, as every one knows, a discouraging employment. She cannot even kiss the fresh spring grass that grows above her grandfather's head, for no fresh green grass does grow above it. He lies far down in a great and peopled vault—the Dering mausoleum, on the building of whose solid grossness some by-gone Dering spent a fortune. It would be small comfort to Joan to go inside the high-spiked iron railings, and give her forlorn good-by kiss to the great stone slabs that cover the entrance. It would be given to twenty others as much as to him.

The journey that is before her is long, so she sets off early. For the last time she opens her eyes on a lace-edged pillow, and looks round at her dainty walls, palely hung in shimmering green, at her toilet-table, at the cheval-glass in which she has so often seen and so thoroughly enjoyed the sight of the reflection of her own figure and Worth's gowns.

The thought just passes through her head, "In what sort of a room shall I wake to-morrow?" but she dismisses it. "What does it matter?"

For the last time she drinks her coffee out of a canary-colored cup, with little ladies and gentlemen making love upon it in the easy, sunshiny, practical way in which china love is always made—a cup so thin and transparent that you hardly feel it between your lips as you sip. For the last time she is carried to the station on C-springs, drawn through the first, sharp freshness of a young April morning by a pair of satin-coated bays, tightly bearing-reined, and loftily stepping over their own noses.

You will say that there is nothing affecting in these "last times"; that if she were parting for the last time with a sweetheart—exchanging with him split rings or crooked sixpences—you could be sorry for her, but not now. And yet he could be much more easily and cheaply replaced than can satin hangings or bay thoroughbreds.

For the last time the footman gets her her ticket, for the first and last time (this is perhaps the exact moment when the new life opens and the old one closes) he tells her in which van he has put her boxes; hitherto in all her former travels this has been no concern of hers.

With one ear-piercing yell, as of a lost soul, the train is off, and with a parting view of the footman and of all the porters, looking rather relieved at having one more of the morning trains off their minds, Joan is off too. Past quite familiar fields first—Aix fields, where she seems to know every hedge-row thorn, every pasturing cow, as well as she knows all the little dips and pleasant rises in the park, where the very sunshine and the skittish winds seem to belong specially to the Derings; then past farms and wheat-fields, and rick-yards less familiar; then quite strange.

Joan longs to cry. What do sore-hearted dogs do—dogs who cannot cry—into the wistfulness of whose sorrowful eyes no tears can steal, and yet who have quite as much capacity for the sufferings that the affections cause, as any Niobe that ever wept herself to stone? But Joan can cry, and thanks God for it. The tears are already dripping one after another, quick and large, on her erape lap, when all inclination to weep is suddenly and effectually choked and killed by the discovery that, on the seat opposite to her, a child is deposited—a fat, crépe-haired, prosperous child—who is staring at her with unblinking, brazen pertinacity; in solemn astonishment that a grown-up person can cry. Then her tears seem dried and burnt up at their fountain: she puts her pocket handkerchief back into her pocket, feeling sure that she will no longer weep it.

It is perhaps as well. One must stop crying some day, and this day, Monday, April 12th, is perhaps as good as any other. It is as difficult to weep in a train with a person opposite looking at you, as it is to eat sandwiches gracefully and comfortably under the like circumstances. By-and-by, finding that Joan furnishes no further phenomena for observation, the child slithers down from its seat, begins to run playfully up and down the carriage upon the inmates' feet. Then it climbs up again on the seat and thrusts most of its body out of the open window, excluding air and view; being forcibly pulled down and rescued by a palpitating parent, it screws up its nose and howls. Joan is a long and weary journey, and there

are many changes. The ticket that the footman got her does not last her for the whole length; she has to get another for herself. It is market-day, and for some other and unexplained reason there are more people than usual travelling. She has to stand—out of a long string of people—before the ticket-office, with a heated market-woman before her, and a high-flavored, hurried man treading on her gown, thrusting her on, and roughly urging her to be quick in taking up her change, behind her.

She forgets in which van her luggage was put. She is nearly knocked down by a porter and truck trundling noisily down the platform, inexorable as Destiny and as unalterable in their course. The other porters are overworked and unkind, and have quite laid aside their usual suavity. The attention of most of them is occupied by a furious man-passenger, who has lost his portmanteau and is dealing death and damnation round to the whole staff in consequence. When at length, by dint of painful perseverance, she has induced one of them to give her his reluctant attention, she finds that his whole soul revolts against the number and magnitude of her boxes.

His sense of fitness is evidently jarred by finding that a single woman travelling ignobly alone, without maid or footman or male protector, and who, by all the laws of analogy and probability, should have been contented with one, modest canvas-covered box and a carpet-bag, is furnished with an array of imperials that would not disgrace a countess.

From a conscientious desire to economize, she travels the last half of her journey second-class. The carriage is at first full, gorged to repletion with market-people who crowd in in much greater number than the carriage can hold, and jocosely sit upon each other's knees. They gradually diminish, as each station drains a few off, and she is at length left *elle-même* with one man, distinctly drunk, who insists on shaking hands with her when he too, at last, to her infinite relief, gets out. When at length (to her it seems a very long length) the train draws up at Helmsley station, she is alone.

It is evening; well on toward night, indeed, and the station lamps gleam all arow. Having got out, she stands looking wistfully about to see whether she can notice any one that looks as if he had come to meet her. In vain. The station is rather empty; there is no one that looks the least expectant, or is eyeing with any air of possible proprietorship any of the men or women that the train is disburdening itself of. Work being tolerably slack, the porters are able to attend to her. In process of time—it takes time—all her great boxes stand on the platform.

"Where to—please, ma'am?"
"I suppose that they must have sent to meet me," she answers, uncertainly. "Do you know if there is a carriage here?" Mrs. Moberley's carriage?"

"What name did you say, 'm'?"
"Moberley—Mr. Moberley," speaking with painstaking distinctness.

He shakes his head.
"Do not know any one of that name.—Jim, run and see whether there's a carriage a-waiting."

In two minutes Jim is back.
"There ain't no carriage of any kind."
A disheartened chill creeps over Joan. They have neither come nor sent.

"There is no cart for the luggage, then, either, of course?"

"No, there ain't no cart neither."
"I must hire a fly, then, I suppose," she says, swallowing a sigh. "If I'll one fly take them all! if not, I must have two flies."

"There ain't no flies here 'm,' replies the porter, suavely; "unless you order them afore-hand."

"No flies!" repeats Joan, eyes and mouth both opening in uttermost discomfiture; "then how am I to get there?"

"They keep a fly at the Railway Inn, 'm,'" says Jim, who is younger and tenderer-hearted than his comrade. "You can have that if it is not out."

"And where is the Railway Inn?" she asks, catching at this straw, and with a faint gleam of comfort dawning on her soul. "Is it near?"

"Just over the way, 'm,'" he answers, pointing across the line to the other side of the station; "not more nor a hundred yards off."

"Will you go and order it for me then, please?" she cries, eagerly; "tell them to get it ready at once—as soon as ever they can" (clapsing unintentionally into the tones of polite authority and command that have been habitual to her all her life.)

"If it is in, 'm'; but it is mostly out."

With this cold comfort he leaves her. She sits down on the smallest of her boxes, with a weighty dressing-case that makes her knees ache, on her lap. She looks vacantly round; first at an engine that is fussing and snorting about by itself; then at a man who is shutting up the book-stall; then through the doors of the glaring refreshment room at the giant-headed young ladies and commercial travellers exchanging gallantries. By-and-by her emissary comes back.

"Please, 'm, it is not!"

"Out!"
She has not faced this possibility, though he has warned her of its likelihood. It seemed one of those things that are too bad to be true. "It took a party up to Brickhill this afternoon, and it ain't back yet; they do not expect it back for another couple of hours!"

"Then what am I to do?" says Joan, still

sitting on her box, and speaking with slow desperation.

She does not mean it as a question put to the porter, but more as an ejaculation, a protest addressed to Destiny—to Nature—to the dumb, distant sky, where all the mighty fires are beginning to be lit. But he takes it to himself.

"Perhaps, 'm, if you would step across and speak to Mr. Smith yourself—it is he as keeps the Railway Inn."

"I will," she says, catching at the suggestion; "thank you."

And so she rises, and staggers across the line as quickly as the weight of the dressing-case will let her.

"Just oppo-site, 'm,'" says the porter, leaning heavily and lengthily on the last syllable of the word, accompanying her outside the station and pointing. "You cannot miss it!"
Then he goes and leaves her alone in the world.

Oh, why—oh, why did not he stay and escort her? But he spoke truth. She cannot miss it. "Railway Inn" in gilt letters across the wall; "Railway Inn" in gilt letters across the blinds. It tells its name to all its hills, as plainly as Wordsworth's cuckoo. About the door stand a knot of men enjoying bad tobacco, starlight, and small beer, and before the door stands a butcher's cart, whose master has evidently just pulled up to refresh himself.

They all take their pipes out of their mouths, and stop talking as she approaches. Joan has entered a score of well-thronged drawing-rooms, has made her courtesy to her sovereign and danced with her sovereign's sons, with a good deal less nervousness than she now experiences in introducing herself to this half-dozen of convivial bores.

"I am sorry to hear that your fly is out," she says, abruptly, and looking from one to the other, as not knowing to which her question belongs.

"Yes, miss, it is; it took a party to Brickhill this—"

"I know," she answers, interrupting; "and have you no other conveyance? no wagonette? no dog-cart?"

"I have a dog-cart, miss, but you see my son has took it to market to Ongar this morning, and he's oftener not back afore ten or eleven."

What came's back could stand such a last straw as this! Were it not for the audience Joan would put down her dressing-case in the dusty road, would sit upon it, and break into forlorn weeping. As it is, she only looks round rather pitifully—for they are not drunk, and seem quite ready to be civil and sorry—and says, sighing patiently:

"Then I must walk; do you think you could help me to find a boy to carry this; it is very heavy, I do not think that I could carry it for three miles, and I believe that that is the distance."

"If you please, miss, which direction is it you are going in?" asks a man who has not spoken hitherto; a man with a purple nose, a husky voice, and one of those blue blouses that all oxen, calves, and sheep must regard with so lively a distrust and aversion.

"I am afraid that I do not know even that," she answers, turning to this new interlocutor, and speaking with a starved little smile. "I only know the name of the house, and the name of the lady to whom it belongs—Portland Villa—Mrs. Moberley—Mrs. Moberley—Portland Villa!" laboriously repeating and elaborating each syllable.

"Po-ortland Villa!" repeats he, dubiously; "you do not happen to know, miss, which side of the town it is on? they've been building a many new villas lately.—Bill, do you know where Po-ortland Villa is?"

Bill shakes his head. He does not know. None of them know. Portland Villa is apparently not much known to fame.

"I should not wonder," suggests the landlord, presently, "if it were one of them houses on the London Road; little houses with a bit of garden at the back, about three miles out of the town; just after you pass the Cancer Hospital and afore you come to the Lunatic Asylum."

Joan shudders. Good Heavens! What a situation!

"If that is your road, miss," says the husky butcher, affably, "why it is mine too; I can give you a lift as far as the hospital; it won't take me none out of my way."

"You are very good," answers Joan, not yet quite taking in the situation; "thank you very much; you are going to drive in that direction?"

He nods toward the cart, and the stout gray horse, who, with his nose in a bag, is waiting with the good-humored patience engendered by long habit outside in the starlight.

"That is my cart, miss, and I don't mind giving you a ride in it."

She gives a little unintentional gasp, but happily nobody notices it. It is not often, perhaps, that it has happened to a lady to drive in the morning to a station in a barouche, behind a pair of sleek thorough-breds, and with a six-foot London footman to open the door for her; and to drive from a station in the evening in a butcher's cart. However, it is butcher's cart or nothing, so she chooses the former. Not being used to mounting into carts, and being tired and rather faint, she shows no great agility, and a chair is brought out to aid her. By its help she clammers in, and her dressing-case is solemnly handed up after her. It is the first time that it also has traveled in a butcher's cart. Once seated, she looks apprehensively round to see whether any dismembered calf or murdered lamb is to be