

(For the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.)

## AS THE ROSES FADE.

BY CATHERINE OWEN.

I don't know where to find another such old-world looking nook as Acton on all this vast continent, and precisely because it reminded her of her dear English village home had Mrs. Maberly settled down in it with her little daughter; how she found out the secluded little nest I can't imagine, unless she had a nose for sylvan beauty that led her so completely out of the beaten track to find it, for at the time she became one of its inhabitants it just seemed one of those spots forgotten by the outside world which passed within a dozen miles on its way to busy Montreal, but left it to grow quite ancient in its picturesque beauty. Nowadays it has been discovered, card-board villas are springing up, and village lots are for sale, for a bigish city on the nearest line of railroad has outgrown itself, and needs suburbs, and so Acton is getting to look prosperous and common place. But when Mrs. Maberly first saw it, it was yet uninvaded, so green, so mossy and primitive that she decided at once that it must be her future home. Luckily an old vine clad cottage that had been built so substantially half a century before as still to be in good repair was vacant, and the fortunate lady on finding herself its possessor sighed with satisfaction.

In this old house the little Linda Maberly grew up like a flower, carefully sheltered by her mother from all contact with the outside world; she seemed, now a maiden of eighteen, to partake of the old-world character of her surroundings; her mother, her books, and her music made her life. Of the best literature of her day, the day of Scott and Byron, Mrs. Maberly had a fine selection, but of more modern works none, and so Linda read, and read until she knew pages of her favorites by heart, and inevitably her manner of speaking and thinking was flavored with what her mind fed upon. She lived like her mother in the past, and, except when letters came to Mrs. Maberly from her lawyer, they both forgot that there was a teeming, struggling, changing world outside their pleasant hamlet, a world of splendor and misery, love and sorrow, and suffering and joy.

But one can rarely shut the world and its trials from life altogether, and when Linda was eighteen the spell broke, and the trouble of life came to them.

The bank in which Mrs. Maberly's money was deposited had failed, and she found herself almost penniless. The poor woman who had made her nest so comfortable and had brought up her child so carefully ignorant of the world's trials found herself obliged to face them now, and perhaps to struggle for a living.

To Linda the news conveyed very little. It seemed to her that it would be very easy to do without many things they had now. She was sure they ate very little, and their clothes would last another twenty years, and if they must give up the pony carriage, they could as well walk as their few neighbors. It was not until Mrs. Maberly hinted that she should be obliged to sell the cottage, their dear home, that Linda saw how great the change would be.

"Oh mama! It cannot be! How could we get used to another person's house. Let us rather live on bread and salad which we can grow ourselves; and we have honey and poultry, thus we need very little money to live."

Mrs. Maberly shook her head as she assured Linda it could not be done, that they must not only let or sell the house but cast about them for some employment.

"Mama let us get some work here, we must have a house wherever we are," said Linda.

Then Mrs. Maberly explained that they could go to Montreal and board which would be cheaper than anything else, and as she spoke, the poor mother shuddered as she thought of taking her pure innocent Linda to live in a cheap boarding house in a city.

"Can we not have some one to live with us? Then we can keep our house, it will not be pleasant to have a strange inmate, but it will be better than living with strangers, in another person's house."

At first it seemed very impossible to Mrs. Maberly, for who would come to such a remote corner of the world? And yet, might there not be others like herself for whom its very remoteness would be the greatest charm? She resolved to try, and wrote to her lawyer at once to insert advertisements for her. A very few days brought an answer from the lawyer, Mr. Indd, saying a gentleman friend who had met with an accident wished for very quiet rooms in the country while he fully recovered. He had mentioned Mrs. Maberly's house to him, and he was ready to make arrangements whenever he should have Mrs. Maberly's answer.

This letter threw the lady into great perplexity. A lady she had hoped to meet with, but a gentleman! Bring a gentleman into the house with Linda who had never known one, but the minister and the doctor of the village, and they poor good men, scarcely came under the category. But then a gentleman friend of good old Mr. Indd was different from any stray animal of the gender, and he was in a measure guaranteed, where as even a lady found promiscuously might be quite as much a wolf as this poor invalid. Then the house was so large, Linda could have her piano taken upstairs, and they need not meet often. Thus it was decided, and within a week Mr. Lee arrived.

Mrs. Maberly knew that he was lame from

the kick of a horse, and by what reason I do not know, was expecting an elderly grey haired gentleman. She was disagreeably surprised then to see a young man. However the best had to be made of it, now that he was there, and as the days went by, and he seemed to be as desirous of shunning society as she could wish, she ceased to regret his age; indeed if she must have an inmate of her house, she felt that she could not be better suited.

Mr. Percy Lee had been in the house a week, and had not yet met Linda. He amused himself with writing, and often had his writing material taken out under an old apple tree near the house, where he would sit for hours together reading or writing or listening to Linda's piano. She went for her long morning walks in the village as usual, and had to pass this tree, thus he could not fail to have seen her, and perhaps he was anxious to become acquainted with the daughter of the house; at any rate, I don't believe it was quite an accident that made him rise from his seat one morning, as Linda was approaching, and walk across the lawn as if he was going out of the gate by which she entered, and that just as he was near her, made his crutch fall from his hand, not dropping straight at his feet when he could get it easily, but propelled, in defiance of all laws of gravitation, some distance in front of him, almost to Linda's feet. He looked at it in a perplexed manner, for to get it, he must hop some few feet or else put his lame foot to the ground. His perplexity was relieved, as he had no doubt expected it would be, by Linda raising the crutch, and handing it to him half shyly, half smiling.

"Miss Maberly, I presume! I am ashamed of my clumsiness, but I shall get use to this contrivance these horrible crutches."

"It must be very tiresome," said Linda.

He had no intention of going out after all, it seemed, and turned back up the path with Linda, who was wondering to find herself walking with him, and whether she ought not to walk on faster; but then he was lame, and to do so might wound him if he was sensitive to his crippled condition, and so she lingered. She had been too bashful hitherto to see very clearly what he was like, and a girlish curiosity to do so coming over her, she glanced up as they got to the porch, but quickly looked down blushing all over, a lovely roseate hue, for she had caught his glance fixed on her with a look of amused admiration. Gliding swiftly by him she went up to her room with a strange excitement agitating her. She thought it was because she was not sure if she had done right in allowing him to talk with her after she had given him the crutch, and yet how could she have done otherwise? And from that she wondered whether she had been very stupid, and what her mother would say.

When Mrs. Maberly heard that what she had tried, but hardly expected, to prevent had come to pass, she only said:

"Well dear, you could do nothing less than you did. I do not wish my daughter to run away like a shy child when she is spoken to, but yet I wish it had not been."

Mrs. Maberly knew her daughter was no romantic girl expecting every man to fall in love with her, and prepared to do the same herself. In wishing to keep her daughter from new acquaintance, she obeyed a sentiment rather than any principle, and the ice once broken, Mr. Lee soon made himself opportunities of joining the family circle, not every day—he saw too well the shy reserve of mother and daughter to risk that—but three or four times a week. Without anything having been said, it had come to be understood that Mr. Lee was an author, and for some reason or other the profession invested him with the gravity that was wanting to his years in Mrs. Maberly's eyes.

To Linda these pleasant hours, spent in the society of a cultivated and polished man, were a new and perfectly delightful experience. How dangerous, she did not know; she was too simple to question herself, to attempt to analyse her feelings or the reason of them; content to enjoy the hours as they flew, and to think that her mother's experiment in taking a boarder had vastly increased the pleasure of their life, she drifted on; happier than she had ever been, she knew not why, nor asked.

Mr. Lee's leg was getting rapidly better, in fact was almost well, but still he made no sign of leaving. He was able now to stroll about the woods near the house, sitting on some convenient stump when he got tired, and often getting as far as the village where he soon made friends with several of the country folk, and often, too often indeed to be an accident, as Linda might have known had she had more experience, she would come upon him as she returned from some village expedition, seated outside a cottage door, chatting to those within, or busy with his notebook.

On seeing her, he would rise, and start for home with her, apologising for inflicting his limping presence upon her. I am afraid he made a little more than was necessary of that limp to see the look of concern and pity that flashed into Linda's face.

These walks were very pleasant to Linda, and gradually there was established a great confidence between the two. She told him, more freely than she had ever done her mother, all she thought about her favorite authors. All the ideas that were floating in her mind she unwittingly betrayed in her beautiful enthusiasm; good as her mother was, she had never encouraged her to converse on such topics, she had little sympathy with a young girl's thoughts called up by reading some grand poem or book; she had read them herself, and they had amused her, nothing

more. But now Mr. Lee not only sympathised, but pointed out new beauties, or so spoke as to increase her sense of those she already admired in the authors she loved.

Gradually there had crept a tenderness into Lee's manner towards Linda of which she was scarcely aware, although a relapse into an ordinary tone would have struck her as strange perhaps. In this half unconscious way too, she knew that she and Mr. Lee were more to each other than mere acquaintance, dear friends she hoped, and as such she loved to think of him when alone, to dream over his words, her thoughts would stray to his looks, but having got so far, she shrank bashfully from the light that forced herself upon her. What had looks to do with friendship!

One day that they had thus met, he told her as he had often done, of his travels, the grand Museums of Art in Europe, and the glories of beautiful Italy.

"Ah that I could take you there, could see them with you!" he exclaimed passionately as he watched her listen with kindling cheek.

A delicious sense as of a new life ran through Linda's frame, and yet she was frightened. With face burning she hurried forward, but forgetful of his limp, a few strides brought Mr. Lee to her side.

"Linda, what are you frightened of? Should I be such a dreadful companion to the beauties of the old world that you start away in fear?"

"Oh no," murmured Linda, looking at him for an instant with confidence, but meeting his passionate glance she withdrew her eyes in confusion.

"Linda sit down on this stump for a moment, I want to talk to you."

He drew her out of the path into a little grove, and as she obeyed him, he threw himself on the grass at her feet, and looked up into her sweet eyes so full of trouble.

"Linda."

She shivered as he called her "Linda." He had never done so before.

"Linda, would not you like to go with me to Italy. Could not you enjoy everything with me better than with any one else?"

Linda covered her face with her hands.

"Tell me, darling!"

"Oh yes, but you must not talk of what cannot be," she said in distress.

"But I must talk, I will talk, I have been laying restraint upon myself day after day. I can do so no longer. You love me, but I want you to tell me so."

He drew her hands down from her face, and held them between his own.

"Do not turn your head away, my Linda. Look at me and tell me you love me!"

She looked at him. With all her agitation a happy light was in her shy eyes.

"I—I don't know whether I love you."

"Ah, but you do, dear. You may safely tell me the secret I have watched in your eyes so long."

Linda looked as one transfixed, her face betrayed her awakening to a rapturous consciousness which her maiden timidity struggled to hide; the struggle was vain except to render her more deliciously attractive to the passionate man at her side.

"Ah Linda, Linda, my darling, I knew it was so." He kissed her again and again as he spoke until, blushing like a rose and trembling, she drew herself from his arms bashfully.

All the way home she walked in a blissful dream while Mr. Lee poured tender passionate words into her ear.

The awakening came, when, as they approached the house, Linda said:

"I wonder what dear mama will say. Whether she will be pleased to know you love me."

"Oh my darling" he said hastily "do not let us vulgarize our love so soon. To me now it is too beautiful, too sacred, to be spoken of except between our two selves. Let us enjoy to the full the sweet poem for a few days at least, then we will talk it over again."

Linda sighed a little, even in her new bliss. To her it would have been more perfect could she have shared it with her mother at once, but then she thought it was natural that Percy should feel differently, and she had some dim foolish idea about an author's feeling being more sensitive, more delicate than grosser mortals, and so being totally without worldly wisdom or experience, she was persuaded into acquiescing in what her lover urged so winningly.

For the next few days the meetings that had been accidental hitherto, on Linda's part at least, took place now by arrangement, and for a few delicious hours each day, Linda wandered by her lover's side in the woods, drinking in his love, and loving him every day, now that she gave play to her feelings, more tenderly and truly.

Knowing how impossible it would be for Linda to affect to treat him as a mere acquaintance before her mother now, or to dissimulate in any way, he did not ask her to do more than keep silent, but took care to avoid her when her mother was present. This was easy, Mrs. Maberly having arranged, when he first came, that he should take his meals in his sitting room, and although the rule had lately been relaxed, and he had several times joined their tea-table, and spent the evenings listening to Linda's music, he had but to plead the necessity of working, to account for relapsing into his solitary manner of passing his time.

Linda, notwithstanding an uneasy feeling that she was doing wrong, yet had felt a sort of charm in hugging her secret joy to herself, to feel she had a treasured source of happiness of which no one knew. But as the days went on, her heart

told her she was ungrateful to one whom she had hitherto loved best in the world, and again she suffered her own wishes to give way to his.

Linda lived now entirely in the present, no thought of future or of change occurred to her; she never asked herself how long this enchanted life could last, had no thought of the natural goal of all lovers—marriage, and therefore she never noticed that Percy avoided all reference to the future, that he never spoke of her being his wife; a more worldly girl would have known that she ought to look to marriage as being in the distance, and would have noted his omission. He had in fact not followed up his passionate love making with any offer of marriage. Had she but remarked it, he even winced when she spoke of what they would do next summer. One day only, when speaking of something he had seen abroad, she said:

"How very much I long to see all those beautiful things."

He kissed her passionately.

"My darling, I would give ten years of my life that you could go with me there."

Linda looked up wonderingly.

As I said, she had not thought of marriage because she had not thought of any change as possible or desirable, but she could not conceive of a future in which they would not be together, and now there was a something in what he had just said that seemed to hint at a possibility of his being "there" without her. She was about to ask why they could not at some future time go there when she checked herself, a sudden consciousness came to her, but he was looking down at her so lovingly that she put all ideas but that of his being with her then, out of her mind; he had seen the wondering look, and before they separated, which they always did when they reached the wood near the house, he asked:

"Will you miss me very much if I were obliged to go away—for a time?"

"Go away?" she asked in a low terrified voice.

"Oh, not for long, dearest, but you know when I came, it was only for a short time, and I had made arrangements," (he clenched his hands as he spoke), "which will prevent my remaining much longer. I may in fact get a letter that will call me away very suddenly. I want you to be prepared, my Linda. Remember, darling, men must work, and women must weep, in this world."

"But you will come back?"

Heaven knows what he may have intended to say, how far he had meant to be honest, but the sight of the agony in Linda's face made him say with affected gaiety:

"Assuredly, if you are sure you care enough about me to want me."

"Oh Percy, you know I cannot do without you."

The tears were falling fast down her cheeks, and Percy wiped them tenderly away.

"Don't cry, dear. I will not stay long away when I know my dear girl wishes me back, but Linda are you sure, if you were to hear anything bad of me that would make me appear a villain, that you would wish me to return?"

For a moment she shrank from him, then clinging closer, said earnestly:

"Sure, sure, nothing could alter me. You could not be a villain, and I don't care what you might seem."

"Don't Linda, you don't know me, my poor girl."

"Yes I do," she said confidently, smiling through her tears, as she kissed the hand she held. "But Percy, before you go, you will let me tell mama?"

"Wait till I return, love, and then you shall tell her that very day if you wish."

(To be continued.)

## LITERARY.

ROBERT BROWNING's new poem is entitled "The Inn Album."

VICTOR HUGO was once accused of having changed sides more than once. He replied, "J'ai grandi," (I have grown).

MR. EDWARD JENKINS, is writing a Temperance Story, which will in size and form resemble "Ginx's Baby." The title of the story will probably be "The Devil's Chain."

A limited impression has been prepared for distribution by the trustees of the British Museum among the libraries of Europe of a finely-executed volume of cuneiform inscriptions.

THE death at Paris is announced of the Abbé Migne at the age of seventy-five. He was the founder of the journal the *Univers Religieux*, which afterwards became the *Univers*.

MAJOR BUTLER, the author of *Akim Foo* and *The Great Lone Land*, who has just returned with Sir G. Wolseley from Natal, will probably write for *Good Words* a series of papers describing that expedition.

MR. JUSTIN WINSON, Superintendent of the Boston Public Library, will shortly publish, by subscription, a biography of the original quarto and folio editions of Shakespeare's works. It will contain 62 heliotype facsimiles. The edition will be limited to 250 copies.

WALT WHITMAN is in Washington, for the first time in several years. Though yet ill from paralysis and other ailments, and very lame and slow in gait, his large figure, clothed in gray, with the regular old open neck, white collar, red face and copious beard of yore, looks much the same.

DR. CHARLES MACKAY has been trying to prove that Shakespeare is a Scotchman. He has attributed to every word of doubtful meaning, which could be twisted to his purpose, in our greatest poet's plays, a Gaelic origin. Among other words, he deals with "Grammery." This, he says, is a Gaelic word. If you say so, and point to the Norman "Grant merci" as its origin, he replies that it is not French, but Chaucer, in the "House of Fame," says—

"Nay forsooth, friends, quod I;  
I can not hynder; grant merci."