

Poetry.

TO MY POLAND ROOSTER.

'O thou, whatever title please thine ear,
He-Chicken, Rooster, Cock, or Chanticleer;
Whether on France's flag you flap and flare,
Or roost and drowse in Shelton's elbow chair;
Or rouse the drones, or please the female kind,
And cluck and strut with all your hens behind;
As symbol, teacher, time-piece, spouse, to you
Our praise is doubtless, Cock-a-doodle, due.

Oviparous Sultan, Pharaoh, Caesar, Czar,
Sleep-shattering songster, feather'd morning star,
Many-wiv'd Mormon, cock-pit Spartacus,
Winner alike of coin and hearty curse;
Sir Harem Scaram, knight by crest and spur,
Great, glorious, gallinaceous Aaron Burr,
How proud I am—how proud you corn-field thrack
Of cackling hours are—of thee, old Cock.

Illustrious Exile! for thy kindred crew
When Warsaw's towers with morning glories
glow,
Shanghai and Chitong may have their day,
And even Brahma pootra fade away;
But thou shalt live, immortal Polack, thou,
Though Russia's eagle clip the pinions now,
To flap thy wings and crow with all thy soul,
When freedom spreads her light from Pole to Pole.

THREE MAIDENS MARRIED.

[CONTINUED.]

'Poor Caroline!' sighed Mrs. Leicester, with more truth than caution, 'I wish she had lived.'

'She is better off,' was the reply of the housekeeper. 'There is nothing but crosses and cares for us who are left. I hope, ma'am, you and Mr. Leicester will come often now. You can have no conception of the effect it has had upon my mistress to-night: she is a thousand ponds nearer being well!'

Mrs. Leicester turned to her. 'Do you think Mr. Castonel makes her a good husband? You and I, Mrs. Muff,' she added, in a tone which seemed bespeak apology for herself. 'knew each other years before this stranger ever came near the place, and I speak to you as I would not to others. He seems affectionate, kind but—what do you think?'

'I cannot answer you ma'am,' replied Mrs. Muff. 'I wish I could. Before us he is all kindness to her; and yet—I don't know why it should be, but I have my doubts of its being sincere, I force the feeling down, and say to myself that I was set against Mr. Castonel at the first through the injury he did my old master. I had my doubts in the same way of his sincerity to his first wife. And yet, I don't notice it in his manners to other people.'

'Does he go to see that—person now?' asked Mrs. Leicester, lowering her tone.

'Well, ma'am, I can't say. All I know is, that the other—servant, or whatever she may be—who lives with her, was at our house lately.'

'Indeed!'

'It was a night or two before my mistress was taken ill. There came a quiet knock at the door. John was out and Hannah was up-stairs, turning down the beds; so I answered it myself. She asked for Mr. Castonel. I did not know her in the dusk, and was about to show her into the study, where master sees his patients, but it flashed over me who it was; and I said Mr. Castonel was not at liberty, and shut the door in her face.'

'Was Mr. Castonel at home?'

'He was in the drawing-room with my mistress. And I believe must have seen her from the windows, for he came down stairs almost directly, and went out.'

'Did Ellen—did Mrs. Castonel see her?' breathlessly inquired Mrs. Leicester.

'Ma'am, I have doubts she did. No sooner was Mr. Castonel gone, than the drawing-room bell rang, and I went up. It was for the lamp. While I was lighting it, my mistress said, "Muff, who was at the door?"'

'That put me in a flutter, but I gathered my wits together, and answered that it was a person from the new pork-shop—for of course I would not tell her the truth.'

'What did they want?' asked my mistress.

'Brought the bill ma'am, said I. For, luckily the new pork people had sent in there bill that day. And I took it out of my pocket, and laid it on the table by her.'

'What could the person want walkin' before the house afterwards and looking out the windows?' then questioned my mistress.

'Quiet impossible for me to tell, ma'am,'

I said; and I won't deny that the question took me aback. 'Perhaps they wanted a little fresh air, as it's a warmish night, and the street is open just here!'

'Was that all that passed?' demanded Mrs. Leicester.

'That was all. Mr. Castonel was not in for two hours afterwards, and I heard him tell my mistress he had been out to a most difficult case. I'll be whipped if I believed him.'

'Is he out much in an evening?'

'Very often, he used to be, before my mistress was taken ill. He is always ready with an excuse—it's this patient, or it's that patient, that wants him and keeps him. But I never remember Mr. Winninton to have had those evening calls upon his time.'

They reached the parsonage, and entered it. The housekeeper was to take back the receipt for some particularly nourishing jelly, which Mrs. Leicester had been recommending for Ellen. It was not immediately found, an Mrs. Muff sat with her in the parlor, talking still. The rector came in from the vestery meeting, and she rose to leave.

Conscious that she had remained longer than was absolutely needful, Mrs. Muff walked briskly home. She had gained the door, and was feeling in her pocket for the latch-key, she possessing one, and Mr. Castonel the other, when the door was flung violently open, and the tiger sprang out, for all the world like a tiger, very nearly upsetting Mrs. Muff, and sending her backwards down the steps.

'You audacious, good-for-nothing monkey!' she exclaimed, giving him a smart box on the ears. 'You saw me standing there, I suppose, and did it for the purpose?'

'Did I do it for the purpose?' retorted John. 'You just go in and see whether I did it for the purpose. I'm a-going to get the horse, and tear off without saddle or bridle for the first doctor I can fetch. It's like as if Mr. Rice had took his two days' holiday just now, a purpose not to be in the town!'

He rushed round towards the stables, and Mrs. Muff entered. Hannah met her with a shriek, and face as white as ashes. 'Mrs. Castonel!—Oh! Mrs. Castonel!' was all she cried.

'What is it?' asked the terrified Mrs. Muff.

'It is spasms, or convulsions, or something of the sort,' sobbed Hannah, 'but I'm sure she's dying.'

Once more, as connected with this history rang out the passing-bell of the Ebury. And when the startled inhabitants, those who were late sitters-up, opened their doors, and strove to learn who had gone to their reckoning, they shrank from the answer with horror and dismay.

'The young, the beautiful, the second Mrs. Castonel.'

And again a funeral started from the house of the surgeon to take its way to the church. But this time it was a stranger who occupied the clergyman's chariot. Mr. Leicester's task was a more painful one; he followed as second mourner. Many people were in the churchyard, and their curiosity was intensely gratified at witnessing the violent grief of Mr. Castonel. The rector's emotion was less conspicuous, but his feeble form was bowed, his steps tottered, and his grey hair streamed in the wind. On the conclusion of the ceremony, Mr. Castonel stepped into the mourning coach, solemnly to be conveyed home again at a mourning pace; but the rector passed aside, and entered the parsonage. The sexton, a spare man in a brown wig, was shoveling in the earth upon the coffin and shedding tears. He had carried Ellen many a time over the same spot when she was a little child.

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER STRANGER COMES TO EDBURY, AND SEEMS TO BE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR INFORMATION.

A WEEK after the funeral of the second Mrs. Castonel (Ellen Leicester, that had been), Ebury had a visitor. Visitors were never plenty in the place and the advent of a stranger broke the monotony of village life, and gave rise in a deal of comment. In this case, however, there was more than ordinary cause for the tongues of the gossips to wag actively, and from Mrs. Major Acre, down, they all had employment.

The stranger was a man to set conjecture at defiance. He was a very well-dressed personage, indeed, with quite and refined manners, and an air of ease and self-possession which betoken an assured position. On the other hand, it was to be noticed that

he lodged at a little village inn, that he brought letters to no one in the place, was attended by no body-servant, and his luggage consisted of a dressing-case, a portmanteau, and an umbrella. As for his name, that was his own property, which he seemed ready to surrender to no one; and his business seemed to be his own also, which he kept in his exclusive possession. Ebury was in that part of England known in old times as Merica, where the law had been centuries before, that every stranger in coming was obliged to blow a horn and proclaim his business, on pain of being considered a thief; and though the people of Ebury did not carry out the custom of their forefathers to the harsh letter, they considered the reserve to be very suspicious, at least. There was one comfort—he had an ample store of money for his present purposes. The landlord of the inn was convinced of that by actual demonstration and the conviction partly satisfied the publican, though he would fain have known more of his mysterious guest.

But if the stranger was reticent in regard to his own affairs, he was curious enough about those of other people. At first, he asked no questions, and sat dreamily enough, either in his own chamber or the tap-room, where occasionally he discarded to smoke a curious looking red pipe, with a red stem, and to read the news-paper. The second day after his arrival he chanced to look through the window, as Mr. Castonel emerged from the recesses of a cab, and entered the door of a house on the opposite side of the way.

The stranger summoned the landlord.

'Mr. Jenks' said he, 'does the owner of that cab live in the house yonder?'

'The owner of that cab, sir? Oh, no, sir. That is Mr. Castonel, sir, the surgeon of these parts, sir. He has gone there to see a patient, sir.'

'Mr. Castonel. Is that his name?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Does his wife live with him?'

'Oh, no, sir! She died a week ago. You see he is in mourning. She was a very fine woman, sir.'

'Dead?'

The tone of the stranger had in it so much of horror and despair, that the landlord looked at him in surprise. The other threw off the feeling, if any such existed, by an effort, and in an indifferent way put another question.

'Of what disease did she die?'

'I don't quite know, sir. The other wife died in the same way. It was a sort of convulsions, as I heard, sir.'

'The other wife! Then he was married a second time?'

'Yes, sir—to the rector's daughter. It was a runaway match, sir. Miss Leicester, a very pretty young lady, indeed.'

'And the first wife died the same way?'

'Yes, sir, so it is said. She was Miss. Hall, Mr. Winninton's niece. Mr. Winninton was our apothecary when Mr. Castonel came here to settle. Mr. Castonel first took his practice, and then he took his niece. It quiet broke the old man's heart, sir, and he never held his head up afterwards, sir.'

'Mr. Castonel was a widower then, when he came here?'

'I'm sure I don't know, and not knowing, can't say, sir. Nobody knows much about him here. May-be his cousin could tell, sir; but she never sees anybody to say any thing to.'

'His cousin?'

'Yes, sir, if she is his cousin. Some say she's a sister-in-law. She lives at Beech Lodge, just out of town. She is quiet the lady, sir; every one says that who ever saw her. To be sure, when she first came here people used to talk harsh-like about her and him; but she is so much the lady, and he's such a proper gentleman, that it all died away—anyhow, pretty much.'

'And he's a proper gentleman, eh?'

'Oh, quite, sir, quite. A little gay among the ladies, perhaps. They do say that Mary Shipy—but that is gossip. Woman will talk, sir; they've nothing else to do, some of 'em. There's my wife, sir (here the cautious landlord's voice sank to a whisper), she never could abide Mr. Castonel, and says that Mary Shipy is not the only one; but I never saw any thing myself, never.'

'And that cousin lives alone, you say?'

'Yes, sir—no, sir. She has a servant, a very quiet woman—never has a word for any one.'

The stranger pursued his questioning until he had obtained a description of the female recluse, and then inquired particularly ab-

out the precise location of Beech Lodge. Having received an accurate description of the spot, he dismissed the landlord, and quietly finished his pipe alone.

That afternoon, rather late, the stranger strolled leisurely out of the village. On arriving in front of Beech Lodge, he glanced around, and seeing no one in view, crossed the road, and tapped at the door of the cottage.

The servant girl who came at the summons, stared at the visitor in surprise. Without noticing this, he inquired for her mistress.

'She is in, sir, but she is not at home to any one.'

Without replying, he pushed her aside, and entered the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MYSTERIOUS INTERVIEW BETWEEN TWO MYSTERIOUS PERSONS.

The woman, whose name and position were so much of a mystery to Ebury, was seated at a work-stand, with a tambour-frame before her, busily engaged in embroidery, as the stranger entered. She did not hear his approach, and it was not until she felt a light touch on her shoulder that she looked up. In an instant she started to her feet, dropping her work, while her face was covered with an almost death-like pallor.

'You here!' she exclaimed. 'Do you know that he—'

'Oh, yes,' he interrupted; 'I know it. But it strikes me that he is playing a very strange game; and for what purpose, or to what end, is not very clear. But, why you endure it, is a puzzle still more startling.'

'You know my promise, and yours?'

'Oh, I am here by the merest accident. I only returned from America a short while since. By way of rest, I came to what I thought the quietest quarter of England. Here I found him, and from the description I had of a lonely woman, supposed I should find you. I learned enough to-day from my gossiping landlord to see that our friend—he laid a bitter emphasis on the last word—'is—as they say among the Yankees—cutting a broad swathe. I can see why you make no audible demur to his proceedings; but, why remain here at all?'

'I dare not do otherwise. But go—go—if he should meet you!'

'Let him meet. It is possible that he may meet me, before I leave England.'

'Avoid him, Richard for your own sake—well, then—for mine!'

'Lavinia, that is an adjuration I cannot well resist.'

'Yes, for my sake, go!'

'I will; but if his tyranny becomes so insupportable that you can bear it no farther, let me know it. I will give you my address, and you can write to me by the first packet.'

The woman wrung her hands in agony.

'I dare not. Go at once. He may come at any moment. If he be provoked, you do not know him as well as I, he would stop at nothing. I have tried in every way—have offered every thing; but I cannot bend him, or alter his purpose. Ah! you don't know how inflexible he is!'

'But what is it I hear about these women—these wives of his—their mysterious deaths?'

'Don't ask me—it is too fearful; and yet it is only suspicion. Would you destroy me? Is that the return for all I have suffered—all I suffer? He has those letters—I am in his power. It would not hurt you, but—'

'I understand your reproach. I will go, Lavinia. I leave England in a week; but I shall return again to remain here in defiance of him. I will see then if there be no means to rescue you, without risk to yourself. Good-by.'

He bent over her, and before she could divine or resist his purpose, kissed her forehead. He then went out.

The woman stood there, rooted as it were, to the spot. The blood which had receded from her face, now rushed back in a full tide, covering face, neck, and arms, with a deep crimson flush. She passed to the window, and looked out at the stranger, who strode on without turning. A bend in the road hid him from sight and then the woman tottered to a chair into which she sank, sobbing passionately.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COMING OF THE NEW CURATE, AND HIS PRIVATE ENGAGEMENT.

A young and somewhat shy-looking man was making his way down the street of a country village. He appeared to be a stranger, and his clerical coat and white