

wants your care. This despatch is vague—horribly so. I am in perfect torture. If this woman dies, good-by to hope! Leave everything, mother, and save this precious life!"

I rushed from the room, sprang into the waggon, and, urging the horse at a full run, was in time for the train. I telegraphed Launcelot to meet me at the station.

At the ferry Launcelot came to me.

"Rupert is well, had only his clothes torn. Mrs. Launcelot has not even a bruise," he said. "And, for God's sake, Launcelot, tell me—I could not call her name."

"Miss Aubrey is hurt badly. It is a broken leg—perhaps internal contusion. When the car ran off the siding, the instant the crash came—the boy was seated by her—she had taken Rupert in her arms. The iron frame of the seat before her, as the car rolled over, must have struck her, and, shielding the boy, she received the blow, which would have killed the child outright. She is low, very low, dear boy. To-night," and the tears were in his eyes, "this very night that poor girl was to have opened the theatre."

"Where is she?" I gasped.

"Where, but at my house?"

"Can my mother come?"

"Poor Polly is so dazed that just now she is of but little use. Yes, by all means, have your mother come. Don't take on so, Carter; be a man. I have the best physician in New York by her bedside. Here is my cab. We will drive to the house. Rupert's first words were for his grandmother and his uncle. Claudia was unconscious until this morning at day-break. You are sure your mother will come? My God, the distasteful work I have to do! I must open the house to-night, and how—how to do it! When an audience has to be pleased—what's my trouble, my worry of mind to a lot of people who have come for an evening's enjoyment? Carter, stay with my folks; you are my best friend. Telegraph to your mother if you are not certain about her coming."

"But she will come. She loves Rupert, and will not be satisfied until she sees him. I ought to have waited for her; but, Launcelot, I could not."

"I tell you what we will do. As soon as we get to the house, the boy with his nurse will take this cab and they can go to the train to meet your mother."

"That is it, Launcelot. I am so stricken down with grief that I can think of nothing."

"Carter," said Launcelot, "did you love Mary Brady—that's her real name?"

"Yes, as I never thought I could love a woman; but, you torture me, Launcelot."

"Then you had—at least once you had—a queer way of showing it—that is all. Ah, here we are! See, Rupert is at the window. Pray God she is better!"

It was my mother who was Mary's nurse.

"Ah! dear lady, is it you who have come to see me first, instead of my calling on you?" was what Mrs. Launcelot told me. Mary said when my mother sat beside her. Many a weary day did I pass before I could gain admittance to her. My mother scarcely left the sick-room. The broken limb had turned out to be a fracture of some smaller bone. The internal shock was of slower cure, but at last convalescence came. Then—then I hungered to see her. I almost hoped that my mother would plead my suit. It was the beginning of February now. How months had passed I knew not! They were as years of agony to me. I would spend a day or so at the farm in utter wretchedness, and then would return to Mr. Launcelot's house. Mrs. Launcelot let me take Rupert with me, once or twice, for company's sake. Then I stayed from the city longer, but the country in the winter, even with the boy, brought no cheerfulness to me. For my mother I had built a tiny conservatory, and the flowers decked the invalid's room. At last the doctor suddenly said, "Crutches!"

"Hideous as they may seem to over-sympathetic friends," remarked the doctor to me with a smile, "to the patient crutches mean wings. They bring the joy of locomotion. The breakage of the external malleolus, with dislocation of the foot properly attended to, does not really amount to much. The tibia is intact."

"For Heaven's sake, doctor, stop your horrible anatomy!" I cried, impatiently.

"A lady's shin-bone, I know, is inelegant; therefore I said tibia," continued the doctor, imperturbably. "The starch apparatus we removed some time ago; and I flatter myself that, had the illustrious Dr. Pott been alive to-day, why, he would have been delighted with the case I have had the pleasure of managing."

"Confound Pott!" I cried. "Doctor, be on your guard. Makers of comedies, from Molière down, have ridiculed surgeons."

"But Pope did not. Why don't you get them for the lady?" said the doctor, with a malicious twinkle of his eye as he furbished his glasses.

"Get what?" I asked.

"Why, crutches, man. Have them just forty-eight inches long. I took the measure yesterday; and I say, Mr. Carter, had you not better—ahem! by advice of the surgeon—see to the lady's using those crutches yourself, for the first time? Tut! tut! man, Miss Aubrey, or Miss Brady—I get dreadfully mixed sometimes about—will with care be able to dance some of these days."

It was Rupert to whom I told, as a profound secret, that he might inform the lady of my intended visit next day, with the crutches.

That morning there came to me a little note.

"Will Mr. Carter bring those blessed crutches as soon as he receives this? I don't want to break my neck."

That was all. Dear handwriting, I knew it, and could have cried over it, for it was so shaky.

The room was very still when I entered it. The woman I loved so dearly lay on a lounge. Rupert was at her feet, with a toy-book in his hand.

"Mr. Carter," she said, gently, "it is not kid gloves which you bring me this time, but something, if not as ornamental, yet much more useful. Please don't look so miserable and weebegone, and don't hide those crutches behind your back, as a dentist does his forceps. I feel pretty sure that I shall be able to walk some day—some day. It's in the annals of the family—at least on my mother's side—that she broke her leg once, and never was much the worse for it. Rope-dancing, you know."

"My dear Miss—" I said, hesitatingly—for I knew not what to call her; I felt the keenest distress when I saw the traces of suffering on her face—"dear Mary!"

"Mary! Did I tell you my name? I think I did once—but am I not Claudia Aubrey?"

"No, no; you are Mary to me! Do not, for Heaven's sake, break the charm of that name!"

"But, Mr. Carter, it seems it is not only crutches you bring me, but something more." Here she covered her face with her thin white hands.

"Yes, yes, more than these horrid sticks. It is a deep, ardent affection of a passably rude man to a revered woman."

"Mr. Carter, stop! Once you hurt me deeply—sent a shaft which rankled ever so long in my heart."

"Your heart?"

"Yes, why not? You can't understand that! It might have been impossible for you, who dealt yourself in mimic affections, to understand that a woman's heart, no matter if it did not belong to one who simulated feeling, could have respect for honest affections, might have had aspirations as pure, as undefiled as those—"

"Mary, Mary, will you never pardon me?"

"Do you still feel that intense dislike for people of my calling? Pray don't kneel that way. Men don't, I understand, in actual life do it any more. It is stage manners. Then I see, too, that that bald spot on your head has grown bigger."

"Mary!" I saw she was smiling. Now I hoped for the first time. "I shall be without a hair on my head if you repulse my suit. Poor child! do you not know that I love you? When you turned me out in the street that cold November day you almost broke my heart. It was as quick as that, and I have been loving you in a despairing, brooding way ever since. It was love at almost first sight."

"Would you have my confession of faith? Well, it was a sad woman who drove home from that ride on that wintry day. I tried to think of you as an arrogant upstart. Perhaps you did not know that I had read all you had ever written! I know you are not acquainted with the fact that I prevailed on Launcelot to read your piece, and made him accept of it. You literary people have so many rough points, and make yourselves so awfully uncomfortable. I don't know why I refer to this. It is rather about myself I wanted to talk. I have been quite near to death, Mr. Carter, and it was your mother who saved me. I must always love your mother."

"And that mother's son—" I pleaded.

"Perhaps if I had not broken my leg, I should not now be listening to him. Do, Mr. Carter, set me up, please, and let us stop this nonsense."

"Mary, Mary, you will break my heart!"

"What is a simple fracture against a compound one? Please don't dawdle. Ill people are so impatient and nervous" (here she almost sobbed). "Oh, I have tried so hard, while I lay so still, to be gentle and patient, and to banish resentment, and a certain impetuosity; but it is not, I suppose, in my nature. Come—those crutches! Please put those things under my arms, and prop up a crumbling ruin. Why don't they imagine some kind of a derrick to hoist lame people into crutches with? What pretty things! With velvet, too, and such soft, elastic ends to them! I am ready. Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte. That is quite as good as Mrs. Florence's French, isn't it, sir?"

"Admirable, my darling."

"Whose darling? Don't you see, you cruel man, that I am at your mercy—completely so? Can't I hop on one of these things at a time, and keep up my equilibrium with the other one—this way—like a balancing-pole? Now let me fall, and smash me to pieces, like a pipe-stem."

"Rupert is in the way, Mary," I whispered. "Is he? Well, he mustn't budge. Sure and I sh'n't thrip over um. That's my brogue—the Bradys'."

With my assistance, half laughing, half whimpering, Mary left her reclining position, and I must assist each movement. Rupert clapped his hands with joy at her first feeble steps. As for me, my heart was in my mouth.

"Now I am going for you, Rupert. Oh, that footstool is in the way!"

"Rupert, my boy," I said, "go tell your mother to come in in say twenty minutes, and then she will see a lame lady racing along like our colt."

Away sped Rupert.

"Mr. Carter—Mr. Carter, this is a stage trick, and you have played me false."

As if she were a child, I guided her tottering steps. Now she laughed with confidence, and then trembled with dismay. In a few minutes, with but slight aid on my part, she stood alone in the middle of the room.

"If I could only hobble to those flowers in that jardinière there, I should think I had mastered the rudiments. Now stand clear. Don't these pretty sticks get tangled somehow? You are an arrant deceiver, Mr. Carter, for you have moved that jardinière toward me fully six feet, as if I were a baby. Why don't you say, 'Loney, loney!'"

"But, Mary, you do not hold your right-hand crutch properly. It looks as if it might slip. What have you crumpled up in your fingers? Pray drop whatever it is."

"You just talk to me now and confuse me, and I shall be sure to trip. Ouch! my foot! There, now catch me, the leaning tower of Pisa is coming down, down with a run. Quick! It is more exhausting than I thought. Pray lean me against the wall, like an umbrella. That's it. Now wheel the lounge close, close to me—so. I can't help it!"

She sank into my arms, and burst into a torrent of tears.

Was it over-fatigue that disturbed her? Presently she opened her eyes, and now the colour was mantling her cheeks.

"It was no sham faint, only a half-delirious swimming of the head—it is better, much better now—no, don't ring the bell—not exactly painful, though."

"Mary," I said, taking her hand and opening the closed fingers, which still concealed a bit of paper—"Mary, I do believe you care for me."

"Believe it! you have taken advantage of the situation. I can't be coy, Mr. Carter; if I were stronger I might be. Oh! what have I in my hand? This scrap of paper? Do you remember those impertinent notes I wrote you at the first rehearsal? I didn't tear them up, I made believe to, it was another piece of paper—what is called a stage substitution. To think you were not up to that! What did I keep them for? For my autograph album. But I have never written any impertinent notes since."

"Mary, you have not answered me."

"I have, I have. I do. Are you willing to take a woman without a leg to stand on?" Then I kissed her forehead, her lips. "But I will allow you this kind of compromise. If I limp in six months to come, you are as free as the air. Is that a bargain?" she asked.

"No, no! I take you, Mary, as you are. I will have no compromise," I passionately replied.

Just then a knock was heard at the door, and Rupert, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Launcelot and my mother, entered.

"The performance is closed," said Mary, with a smile. "You are too late. Mr. Launcelot, please return the money at the door."

"It's all right, then?" inquired Mr. Launcelot, in a subdued voice.

"I made a voyage around my room almost twice," replied Mary, naively. Then I took her hand in mine, and said, "Mother, will you kiss my future wife?"

"It is a pearl of price you have there, my son." Here my mother kissed Mary. "I knew he loved you, dear, though I could not tell you so. My son opened his heart to me long, long ago."

"Did he, Mrs. Carter—did he?" asked Mary.

"Yet I never told any one."

"As if it were not apparent to me! Why, this kind of thing, good people, is as old as Shakespeare," said Mrs. Launcelot, reflectively.

"Right, Polly. I was raking my brain to find where I had seen something of the sort. I fancied it was familiar," added Mr. Launcelot, with fine discernment.

"Let us be thankful for the conclusion, devoutly so. Come, good people, all of you, clear the room. The piece our leading lady has been performing must have overtaxed her strength.—My dear Mrs. Carter, pray insist that Mary shall have peace and quiet."

"My wife is right. Ring down the curtain," said the manager. "Small boy" (this to Rupert), "walk—Carter, march! clear the stage."

"Must I go too, my darling?" I said, bending down to the invalid.

"No, no, stay yet a little while, if you will. If you don't my heart will break for sure." So they went, and, alone with her, the first hour of my great happiness dawned on me.

BARNET PHILLIPS.

VILLANELLES.

Of this peculiar form of French verse, M. Joseph Boulmier offers the most charming of recent examples in his volume issued by Liseux, in Paris. His little casket is filled with enamelled ornaments in the style of the Renaissance as sweetly and deftly wrought as the amateur of jewellery in words can desire to possess. The author is a perfect master of the verse into which he chooses to fix moods of gaiety, melancholy, pity, and enjoyment. He knows exactly what he intends to do, and he intends to make no very deep or solemn impression. His are the tempered sentiments which writers like Præd and like Thackeray in his verse never permit to grow up to degenerate into passions. The author of courtly verse

has equally to avoid earnestness and flippancy. His pleasure and pain, unlike those of the severer poets, must be the pleasure and pain of a man who takes Montaigne's advice, and "makes no great marvel of his own fortunes." Poetry which submits to these limitations has a distinct place of its own. M. Boulmier preludes to his volume by a treatise in prose on that form of verse which the French call the villanelle. Unlike the ballade and the rondeau, the villanelle had originally no strict rules. To be somewhat gay, with a rustic or pastoral mirth, and to possess a refrain, were all the qualities needed to make a short piece of verse a villanelle. Thus most collections of French lyrics contain the poem of Philippe Desportes:

Nous verrons, volage bergère,
Qui premier s'en repentira.

That poem was a villanelle before modern writers introduced the stricter rules. Just as the laws of epic composition were deduced from the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," so M. Boulmier has restricted his villanelles to the form used by Passerat (1634-1602) in the line "J'ay perdu ma tourterelle." This villanelle is composed of five "tercets," followed by a "quatrain," or nineteen lines in all, of which seven are the mere repetition of the two refrains. M. Boulmier thinks that nineteen lines of this kind of thing are quite enough at a time, and most readers will agree with him. According to ordinary French practice, a villanelle "may stretch from here to Mesopotamy," or, at least, may go on as long as the villanelle can find rhymes. As for the topics and style, M. Boulmier lays down this rule:—

En fait de style, ce qu'il faut avant tout à la villanelle, c'est du tendre et du naïf. Les souvenirs aimés, les mirages du cœur, les divins enfantillages de l'amour, voilà son meilleur domaine. . . . Mais ce qu'elle abhorre, et à juste titre—en raison de son origine paysanne—c'est l'emphase, la sonorité banale, la mièvrerie prétentieuse, la jonglerie des mots.

We cull from the volume an example of a villanelle engaged with les souvenirs aimés:

PRIMAVERA.

Elle avait quinze ans à peine,
J'en avais dix-huit au plus;
Souvenir, qui te ramène?

Combien de fois dans la plaine
Nos pas se sont-ils perdus!
Elle avait quinze ans à peine.

Nous poursuivions, hors d'haleine,
Les papillons éperdus;
Souvenir, qui te ramène?

Puis, un jour, sous le vieux chêne
Nos cœurs se sont entendus;
Elle avait quinze ans à peine.

Bref, on la fit châteline,
Et loin d'elle je vécus;
Souvenir, qui te ramène?

C'est une histoire lointaine.
Tous regrets sont superflus.
Elle avait quinze ans à peine,
Souvenir, qui te ramène?

Does not this melancholy little lyric remember its dancing-days—the old days when all these peasant measures were sung as the music of the dances? The refrains cross, and take hands, and cross again; the poem is like a disappointed little rustic beauty at a fair, tearful and half-consolated. "Le Quatorze Mai" is in the same style, but sadder. The poet writes almost as much about his cats, *Gaspard* and *Coquette*, as about his memories. *Coquette* and *Gaspard* inhabit his rooms and make them less lonely, till poor *Gaspard* dies. "Il n'est plus, mon vieux *Gaspard*," and *Coquette* easily consoles herself. The whole philosophy of the moody bachelor is summed up in the poem "Je tisonne." But perhaps what one likes best in M. Boulmier's book is his extremely frank epilogue:

Soyons franc, à bas la frime!
Ce n'est pas pour toi, lecteur,
C'est pour moi que l'on m'imprime.

For others as well as for himself, they have printed M. Boulmier very prettily, with neat rubrics, on paper which is "a separate ecstasy." If all the world took to writing villanelles, life would be made hideous; but there is room surely for those of a reforming poet who has docked the endless amplitude which some of his predecessors permitted to these exercises.

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