

THE STRANGER.

(From the French of Madame Emile de Girardin.)

He passed from vision like a cloud,
Or wave that onward sweeps;
My heart, that once was cold and proud,
His image keeps.

One keen, but fascinating glance
Entranced my spell-bound eyes,
And since that moment of romance
Life's breath I prize.

Too daring, and too rapturous
My self-communings seem—
I love him—and to love him thus
Is joy supreme.

And yet, in lonely hours alas!
Mine eyes with tears are dim
To think my youthful years may pass
Apart from him.

His was the soul of which I dreamed,
For which I vainly pine;
The long-sought sister-soul that seemed
The twin of mine.

And I had found it—oh, my heart!
Thy throbbings I must quell;
'Tis hard from all we love to part,
And cry "Farewell."

But still, if pitying Heaven will deign
To aid us from above,
Hereafter, I shall meet again
My only love.

One moment let me hear him sigh,
And feel his fond caress—
E'en were I doomed that hour to die
From joy's excess!

GEO. MURRAY.

BONES.

THE APRIL FOOL OF HARVEY'S SLUICE.

March was drawing to a close in Harvey's Sluice, and the glare and heat of the antipodean summer had toned down into the rich mellow hues of autumn. It was never a lovely place to look upon. There was something hopelessly prosaic in the two bare rugged ridges, seamed and scarred by the hand of man, with iron arms of windlasses, and broken buckets projecting everywhere through the endless little hillocks of red earth. Down the middle ran the deeply rutted road from Buckhurst, winding along and crossing the sluggish tide of Harper's Creek by a crumbling wooden bridge. Beyond the bridge lay the cluster of little huts with the Colonial Bar and the Grocery towering in all the dignity of whitewash among the humble dwellings around. The assayer's verandah-lined house lay above the gulches on the side of the slope nearly opposite the dilapidated specimen of architecture of which our friend Abe was so unreasonably proud.

There was one other building which might have come under the category of what an inhabitant of the Sluice would have described as a "public edifice" with a comprehensive wave of his pipe which conjured up images of an endless vista of colonnades and minarets. This was the Baptist chapel, a modest little shingle-roofed erection on the bend of the river about a mile above the settlement. It was from this that the town looked at its best, when the harsh outlines and crude colors were somewhat softened by distance. On that particular morning the stream looked pretty as it meandered down the valley; pretty, too, was the long rising upland behind, with its luxuriant green covering; and prettiest of all was Miss Carrie Sinclair, as she laid down the basket of ferns which she was carrying, and stopped upon the summit of the rising ground.

Something seemed to be amiss with that young lady. There was a look of anxiety upon her face which contrasted strangely with her usual appearance of piquant insouciance. Some recent annoyance had left its traces upon her. Perhaps it was to walk it off that she had rambled down the valley; certain it is that she inhaled the fresh breezes of the woodlands as if their resinous fragrance bore with them some antidote for human sorrow.

She stood for some time gazing at the view before her. She could see her father's house, like a white dot upon the hillside, though strangely enough it was a blue reek of smoke upon the opposite slope which seemed to attract the greater part of her attention. She lingered there, watching it with a wistful look in her hazel eyes. Then the loneliness of her situation seemed to strike her, and she felt one of those spasmodic fits of unreasoning terror to which the bravest women are subject. Tales of natives and of bushrangers, their daring and their cruelty, flashed across her. She glanced at the great mysterious stretch of silent bushland beside her, and stooped to pick up her basket with the intention of hurrying along the road in the direction of the gulches. She started round, and hardly suppressed a scream as a long red-flannelled arm shot out from behind her and withdrew the basket from her very grasp.

The figure which met her eye would to some have seemed little calculated to allay her fears. The high boots, the rough shirt, and the broad girdle with its weapons of death were, however, too familiar to Miss Carrie to be objects of terror, and when above them all she saw a pair of tender blue eyes looking down upon her, and a half-abashed smile lurking under a thick yellow moustache, she knew that for the remainder of that walk ranger and black would be equally powerless to harm her.

"O Mr. Durton," she said, "how you did startle me!"

"I'm sorry, miss," said Abe, in great trepidation at having caused his idol one moment's uneasiness. "You see," he continued, with simple cunning, "the weather bein' fine and my partner gone prospectin', I thought I'd walk up to Hagley's Hill and round back by the bend, and there I sees you accidental-like and promiscuous a standin' on a hillock." This astounding falsehood was reeled off by the miner with great fluency, and an artificial sincerity which at once stamped it as a fabrication. Bones had concocted and rehearsed it while tracking the little footsteps in the clay, and looked upon it as the very depth of human guile. Miss Carrie did not venture upon a remark, but there was a gleam of amusement in her eyes which puzzled her lover.

Abe was in good spirits this morning. It may have been the sunshine, or it may have been the rapid rise of shares in the Connemara, which lightened his heart. I am inclined to think, however, that it was referable to neither of these causes. Simple as he was, the scene which he had witnessed the night before could only lead to one conclusion. He pictured himself walking as wildly down the valley under similar circumstances, and his heart was touched with pity for his rival. He felt very certain that the ill-omened fact of Mr. Thomas Ferguson of Rochdale Ferry would never more be seen within the walls of Azalea Villa. Then why did she refuse him? He was handsome, he was fairly rich. Could it—no, it couldn't; of course it couldn't; how could it? The idea was ridiculous—so very ridiculous that it had fermented in the young man's brain all night, and that he could do nothing but ponder over it in the morning, and cherish it in his perturbed bosom.

They passed down the red pathway together, and along by the river's bank. Abe had relapsed into his normal condition of taciturnity. He had made one gallant effort to hold forth upon the subject of ferns, stimulated by the basket which he held in his hand, but the theme was not a thrilling one, and after a spasmodic flicker he had abandoned the attempt. While coming along he had been full of racy anecdotes and humorous observations. He had rehearsed innumerable remarks which were to be poured into Miss Sinclair's appreciative ear. But now his brain seemed of a sudden to have become a vacuum, and utterly devoid of any idea save an insane and overpowering impulse to comment upon the heat of the sun. No astronomer who ever reckoned a parallax was so entirely absorbed in the condition of the celestial bodies as honest Bones while he trudged along by the slow-flowing Australian river.

Suddenly his conversation with his partner came back into his mind. What was it Bones had said upon the subject? "Tell her how they live at the mines." He revolved it in his brain. It seemed a curious thing to talk about; but Bones had said it, and Bones was always right. He would take the plunge; so with a premonitory "hem he blurted out,

"They live mostly on bacon and beans in the valley."

He could not see what effect this communication had upon his companion. He was too tall to be able to peer under the little straw bonnet. She did not answer. He would try again.

"Mutton on Sundays," he said. Even this failed to arouse any enthusiasm. In fact she seemed to be laughing. Bones was evidently wrong. The young man was in despair. The sight of a ruined hut beside the pathway conjured up a fresh idea. He grasped at it as a drowning man to a straw.

"Cockney Jack built that," he remarked.

"Lived there till he died."

"What did he die of?" asked his companion.

"Three star brandy," said Abe decisively.

"I used to come over of a night when he was bad and sit by him. Poor chap! He had a wife and two children in Putney. He'd rave, and call me Polly, by the hour. He was cleaned out, hadn't a red cent; but the boys collected rough gold enough to see him through. He's buried there in that shaft; that was his claim, so we just dropped him down it an' filled it up. Put down his pick too, an' a spade an' a bucket, so's he'd feel kinder perky and at home."

Miss Carrie seemed more interested now.

"Do they often die like that?" she asked.

"Well, brandy kills many; but there's more gets dropped—shot, you know."

"I don't mean that. Do many men die alone and miserable down there, with no one to care for them?" and she pointed to the cluster of houses beneath them. "Is there any one dying now? It is awful to think of."

"There's none as I knows on likely to throw up their hand."

"I wish you wouldn't use so much slang, Mr. Durton," said Carrie, looking up at him reprovingly out of her violet eyes. It was strange what an air of proprietorship this young lady was gradually assuming towards her gigantic companion. "You know it isn't polite. You should get a dictionary and learn the proper words."

"Ah, that's it," said Bones apologetically. "It's gettin' your hand on the proper one. When you've not got a steam drill, you've got to put up with a pick."

"Yes, but it's easy if you really try. You could say that a man was 'dying,' or 'morbund,' if you like."

"That's it," said the miner enthusiastically.

"Morbund!" That's a word. Why, you could lay over Boss Morgan in the matter of words. 'Morbund!' There's some sound about that."

Carrie laughed.

"It's not the sound you must think of, but whether it will express your meaning. Seriously, Mr. Durton, if any one should be ill in the camp you must let me know. I can nurse, and I might be of use. You will, won't you?"

Abe readily acquiesced, and relapsed into silence as he pondered over the possibility of inoculating himself with some long and painful disease. There was a mad dog reported from Buckhurst. Perhaps something might be done with that.

"And now I must say good-morning," said Carrie, as they came to the spot where a crooked pathway branched off from the track and wound up to Azalea Villa. "Thank you ever so much for escorting me."

In vain Abe pleaded for the additional hundred yards, and adduced the overwhelming weight of the diminutive basket as a cogent reason. The young lady was inexorable. She had taken him too far out of his way already. She was ashamed of herself; she wouldn't hear of it.

So poor Bones departed in a mixture of many opposite feelings. He had interested her. She had spoken kindly to him. But then she had sent him away before there was any necessity; she couldn't care much about him if he would do that. I think he might have felt a little more cheerful, however, had he seen Miss Carrie Sinclair as she watched his retiring figure from the garden-gate with a loving look upon her saucy face, and a mischievous smile at his bent head and desponding appearance.

The Colonial Bar was the favorite haunt of the inhabitants of Harvey's Sluice in their hours of relaxation. There had been a fierce competition between it and the rival establishment termed the Grocery, which, in spite of its innocent appellation, aspired also to dispense spirituous refreshments. The importation of chairs into the latter had led to the appearance of a settee in the former. Spittoons appeared in the Grocery against a picture in the Bar, and, as the frequenters expressed it, the honors were even. When, however, the Grocery led a window-curtain, and its opponent returned a snuggery and a mirror, the game was declared to be in favor of the latter, and Harvey's Sluice showed its sense of the spirit of the proprietor by withdrawing its custom from his opponent.

Though every man was at liberty to swagger into the Bar itself, and bask in the shimmer of its many colored bottles, there was a general feeling that the snuggery, or special apartment, should be reserved for the use of the more prominent citizens. It was in this room that committees met, that opulent companies were conceived and born, and that inquests were generally held. The latter, I regret to state, was, in 1861, a pretty frequent ceremony at the Sluice; and the findings of the coroner were sometimes characterized by a fine breezy originality. Witness when Bully Burke, a notorious desperado, was shot down by a quiet young medical man, and a sympathetic jury brought in that "the deceased had met his death in an ill-advised attempt to stop a pistol-ball while in motion," a verdict which was looked upon as a triumph of jurisprudence in the camp, as simultaneously exonerating the culprit, and adhering to the rigid and undeniable truth.

On this particular evening there was an assemblage of notabilities in the snuggery, though no such pathological ceremony had called them together. Many changes had occurred of late which merited discussion; and it was in this chamber, gorged in all the effete luxury of the mirror and settee, that Harvey's Sluice was wont to exchange ideas. The recent cleansing of the population was still causing some ferment in men's minds. Then there was Miss Sinclair and her movements to be commented on, and the paying lead in the Connemara, and the recent rumors of bushrangers. It was no wonder that the leading men in the township had come together in the Colonial Bar.

The rangers were the present subject of discussion. For some few days rumors of their presence had been flying about, and an uneasy feeling had pervaded the colony. Physical fear was a thing little known in Harvey's Sluice. The miners would have turned out to hunt down the desperadoes with as much zest as if they had been so many kangaroos. It was the presence of a large quantity of gold in the town which caused anxiety. It was felt that the fruits of their labor must be secured at any cost. Messages had been sent over to Buckhurst for as many troopers as could be spared, and in the mean time the main street of the Sluice was paraded at night by volunteer sentinels.

A fresh impetus had been given to the panic by the report brought in to-day by Jim Struggles. Jim was of an ambitious and aspiring turn of mind, and after gazing in silent disgust at last week's clean up, he had metaphorically shaken the clay of Harvey's Sluice from his feet, and had started off into the woods with the intention of prospecting round until he could hit upon some likely piece of ground for himself. Jim's story was that he was sitting upon a fallen trunk eating his mid-day damper and rusty bacon, when his trained ear had caught the clink of horses' hoofs. He had hardly time to take the precaution of rolling off the tree and crouching down behind it, before a troop of men came riding down through the bush, and passed within a stone-throw of him.

"There was Bill Smeaton and Murphy Duff," said Struggles, naming two notorious ruffians; "and there was three more that I couldn't rightly see. And they took the trail to the right, and looked like business all over, with their guns in their hands."

Jim was submitted to a searching cross-examination that evening; but nothing could shake his testimony or throw a further light upon what he had seen. He told the story several times and at long intervals; and though there might be a pleasing variety in the minor incidents, the main facts were always identically the same. The matter began to look serious.

There were a few, however, who were loudly sceptical as to the existence of the rangers, and the most prominent of these was a young man who was perched on a barrel in the centre of the room, and was evidently one of the leading spirits in the community. We have already seen that dark curling hair, lack-lustre eye, and thin cruel lip, in the person of Black Tom Ferguson, the rejected suitor of Miss Sinclair. He was easily distinguishable from the rest of the party by a tweed coat, and other symptoms of effeminacy in his dress, which might have brought him into disrepute had he not, like Abe Durton's partner, early established the reputation of being a quietly desperate man. On the present occasion he seemed somewhat under the influence of liquor, a rare occurrence with him, and probably to be ascribed to his recent disappointment. He was almost fierce in his denunciation of Jim Struggles and his story.

"It's always the same," he said; "if a man meets a few travellers in the bush, he's bound to come back raving about rangers. If they'd seen Struggles there, they would have gone off with a long yarn about a ranger crouching behind a tree. As to recognizing people riding fast among tree trunks—it is an impossibility."

Struggles, however, stoutly maintained his original assertion, and all the sarcasms and arguments of his opponent were thrown away upon his stolid complacency. It was noticed that Ferguson seemed unaccountably put out about the whole matter. Something seemed to be on his mind, too; for occasionally he would spring off his perch and pace up and down the room with an abstracted and very forbidding look upon his swarthy face. It was a relief to every one when suddenly catching up his hat, and wishing the company a curt "Good-night," he walked off through the bar, and into the street beyond.

"Seems kinder put out," remarked Long McCoy.

"He can't be afraid of the rangers, surely," said Joe Shamus, another man of consequence, and principal shareholder of the El Dorado.

"No, he's not the man to be afraid," answered another. "There's something queer about him the last day or two. He's been long trips in the woods without any tools. They do say that the assayer's daughter has chucked him over."

"Quite right, too. A darned sight too good for him," remarked several voices.

"It's odds but he has another try," said Shamus. "He's a hard man to beat when he's set his mind on a thing."

"Abe Durton's the horse to win," remarked Houlahan, a little bearded Irishman. "It's sivil to four I'd be willin' to lay on him."

"And you'd be after losing your money, a-vick," said a young man with a laugh. "She'll want more brains than ever Bones had in his skull, you bet."

"Who's seen Bones to-day?" asked McCoy.

"I've seen him," said the young miner. "He came round all through the camp asking for a dictionary—wanted to write a letter likely."

"I saw him readin' it," said Shamus. "He came over to me an' told me he'd struck something good at the first show. Showed me a word about as long as your arm—'abdicate,' or something."

"It's a rich man he is now, I suppose," said the Irishman.

"Well, he's about made his pile. He holds a hundred feet of the Connemara, and the shares go up every hour. If he'd sell out he'd be about fit to go home."

"Guess he wants to take somebody home with him," said another. "Old Joshua wouldn't object, seein' that the money is there."

(To be continued.)

HUMOROUS.

WHAT nonsense it is to say it is unhealthy to sleep on feathers—look at the spring cabbages, and see how tough he is.

A WIT being asked, on the failure of a bank, "Were you not upset?" replied, "No; I only lost my balance."

A LITTLE Livingston county girl anxiously asked, the other day, "Ma, if a bear should swallow me, would he go to heaven too?"

A FAMILY MATTER.—It is acknowledged that the child never sees the necessity of strict obedience until it becomes apparent.

"WHAT is this man charged with?" asked the magistrate. "With whiskey, your worship," replied the sententious policeman.

A HIGH-CHURCH parson asked a Low-Church parson: "Do you have matins in your church?" The latter replied, "Oh, dear, no—kumtation right up to the communion-table!"

A SMALL boy who was playing truant the other day, when asked if he would not get a whipping when he reached home, replied, "What is five minutes' flogging to five hours of fun?"

A SOLDIER, telling his mother of the terrible fire at a battle, was asked by her why he did not get behind a tree. "Tree!" said he; "there wasn't enough of them for the officers."

SHURE!—A traveller in Galway saw a pig in a peasant's house, and he said, "Why do you have this pig in here?" "Shure," said Pat, "the house has all the conveniences that a reasonable pig requires!"