

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS

BY A. WYLIE MAHON



ANY endearing names were given to Mrs. Julia Ward Howe by those who knew her best, but there was none which expressed more truly than "The Queen of Hearts" the unquestioned sway which she exercised, not only over the brilliant coterie of world-famed Boston celebrities, but also over all classes and conditions of men and women who came under the witchery of her charming personality.

One of the laughable regrets of Mrs. Howe's life was that she arrived in this world three days too late or Queen Victoria and she, who were so much alike in personal appearance, might have opened their eyes upon this dear old world on the same day, and opened their mouths in concert to express in an unconventional way their joy at being alive and at being girl-babies. Some poor male body has said that girls as a general thing are sorry that they are not boys. This was not true of Victoria the Good or of this American girl, whose winsome personality and untiring labours of love won for her a kingdom where she reigned it over loyal, loving hearts.

Julia Ward was a beautiful child, but like Anne of Green Gables she had red hair, which was a great grief to her mother, who tried by the use of washes and leaden combs to change the colour, but she was no more successful in her efforts than the immortal Anne of Miss Montgomery's delightful story.

The time came when her red hair was no longer looked upon as a social handicap. She was a beautiful girl who by her keen wit and sweet graciousness of manner won every heart. Men, young and old, fell in love with her at first sight. James De Mille, the most versatile genius of Canadian literature, in his amusing story, "The American Baron", tells of a girl who was travelling in Europe who could not go anywhere without meeting with an accident from which she was always rescued by a man who hastened to propose to her. The girl came at length to fear the face of man. She longed to get to Rome where she thought most of the men were priests, and then she knew that if rescued from death by one of them he would not propose. Julia Ward had good reason to wish that all men were celibates, although some of her friends felt that she rather enjoyed her fate.

Sometimes there was a serio-comic turn to the love-making. One day an old bachelor sea-captain, who was on friendly terms with the family, asked Julia, who was then eighteen, to walk with him in the garden where the roses and the gooseberries grew. Drawing a visiting card from his pocket on which he had written these words, "My heart is yours", he presented it to her. She felt that he had lived so long with his heart, which had no doubt done him many a good turn, that it was unkind of him to give it away under the influence of the roses and gooseberries.