

CLEOPATRA.

Last night as I lay in the moonlight,
I listened in vain for your speech;
I opened my arms, and held them,
But empty my aching hands reached.
I drew back the silken curtains
To let in the splendor of night,
And it shone on my warm, throbbing bosom,
That glowed and pulsed in its light.
I passed on my couch of purple,
Till I wished that it were a grave;
Then I went to the crystalline fountain,
There my parched body to lave.
I bathed in the sparkling waters,
Beneath the broad high of the moon;
And the air was oppressive with fragrance
Of flowers that hang folded at noon.

I listlessly gazed on the river,
Where rich trees bow to the wave,
For my heart lay under a burden
Of jealousy strong as the grave.
Ay, strong as the grave, and more cruel,
For Antony carries away
Has a woman captured my hero,
My victor in every fray?
Has a woman fettered my tyrant,
With chains of her golden hair?
Does she feed on his eloquent kisses,
And has he forgotten me there?

Last night as I lay in deep slumber,
Oppressed by the evening's still heat,
I dreamed I saw you lying
Stretched at a woman's feet;
That up to her pale, high forehead
Were raised your passionate eyes;
And you lifted the hem of her garment
While your breath was broken with sighs;
You raised the hem of her garment
And pressed it long to your lips;
As though hers were under their pressure,
You kissed as the honey-bee sips.

Then, roused by jealous fury,
I sprang at her slender neck;
But you stretched your hands and caught me,
And held my fury in check;
And I struggled and screamed and panted,
While her crimson cheeks turned pale;
And she trembled and dropped and shivered,
Like a lily before a gale.
And then your red lips parted,
And your white teeth showed between,
As you said, "I will go to Egypt."
And I never will leave my queen?
Then I awoke and called you,
But I called to empty space;
I listened for your answer,
To hear but the sullen pace
Of the slow and sluggish river
As it creeps by my palace door,
And I turned on my heated pillow,
And wept, for my heart was sore.
I would give my kingdom to see you
If only one little while.
You would kiss me again and call me
Your own sweet serpent of Nile?
For where is a king like my soldier,
With his royal god-like form?
With arms strong as steel from Damascus,
And voice as grand as the storm;
With shoulders like broad snowy mountains,
With lips like the pomegranate's bud;
With dark eyes like the deep pools in forests,
But stirred with his hot, jealous blood,
Never another was like him,
No warrior so brave and so true!
Can any one blame me, or wonder
That into my life he grew?

Charman! call me a messenger,
I will send once more to my love,
My grand, gray-haired old Roman,
Safe carry this message: O slave!
Since the dreary day when my soldier
Girded his armor and sword,
And marched at the call of young Caesar,
I have never forgotten my word.
Not made was my promise for breaking,
Though Antony said with a smile,
"The word is a woman's promise."
"I'll not so, my sweet serpent of Nile!"
O Antony, Antony,
Hear then my voice in Rome!
My heart aches so with longing,
Come home, oh my love, come home!
Glorious my love here, Iris,
I will sing a sad, low strain;
It shall be so dear and tender
It will win him back again:

The passion vine in masses dark
Sweeps low against my window pane;
And roses drink the nectar dew,
Drooping from the chalice of the rain;
Tall cocoa palms all trembling lay
Upon my floor their shadows gray.

Like a white angel on the wall,
Through my lone casement glides the moon;
The little panes are silver-rayed,
That golden, bright once seemed at noon.
When brightened by thy smile all day,
But now, my Antony's away.

A golden vase of purple flowers
Sheds perfume here, so like his breath;
A string of pearls that careless lie
Are white and even as his teeth;
My lonely couch, ah, whose fair brow
Is like that pillow's polished snow?

The night is dead, cold morning's horn
From chilly clouds of ghastly gray;
I hate the morning's loitering hours,
For Antony is still away.
Shut out the light, I will no day;
Day shall be night when he's away!

Bring a tiger lily, Iris,
I will have my fortune told;
I have had a lover for each
Black spot on its petals gold;
But all that fire and fever
Oblivion shall drown,
And the regal love of Egypt
Shall my Roman soldier crown.
Lily, what is my fortune?
My Antony, will he come
To his burning sands of Egypt
Or tarry here in Rome?
Look! The spotted lily quivers;
And the heavy golden tree wave;
And the lions now lie crouching,
That once stalked roaring brave;
And the listless, hugging waters
Have languished till they burn;
And it seems all Egypt's waiting
For Antony's return.

What! Here a Roman soldier?
Good news bring you from Rome?
Quick, tell me of my Antony,
And say he is coming home!

Home to his queen who loves him:
Home to his longing mate
Who days and weeks has wept him
So weary: but she waits
Your news, grim, silent minion,
My Antony! When will he come?
And was he friend with Caesar,
When you left him there in Rome?

Charman, have I been dreaming,
Was a soldier here from Rome?
Did he tell me of my Antony,
And say he was coming home?
Here, let me whisper softly,
In faith, I think I rave:
O ye gods! he told me Antony
Has wedded the blond Octave!
What shall I do, O Charman,
Where hide my shame and grief?
Give me to drink mandragora,
Till oblivion bring relief!
O Charman, robe me in sable,
And drape the place in gloom:
I care not now for its splendor,
A palace may be a tomb.
O Isis, the glory of Egypt,
To the earth is traded and torn:
No more the head of kingdoms—
Her queen is held for scorn!
When I think of the deep devotion
I laid at his lightest breath,
My heart beats faint and heavy,
And I wish it might me in death.
Think you, Isis, he is happy,
With that bloodless, blond Octave?
And forgets his queen in Egypt—
Gods, let me reach that, slave—
The black night-bird of Erebus,
That brought this withering tale—
I'll scourge, and lash, and rack him,
Till his Roman heart shall quail:
A fitting name, the traitor!
A Roman soldier, shame!
Oh, shame most base! For Antony
Bears a Roman soldier's name!

List, Charman, hear ye music?
Methinks I hear the sound
Of a warlike tramp: the footfall
Of my Antony on the ground.
It is my soldier's footstep,
Now the gods be praised, he's come!
My love has proved a magnet,
And drawn him back from Rome.
Ay, now I will sound a paeon,
That shall echo far and near,
And the evensong bells shall listen
As it rings out glad and clear!
He loves me, Antony loves me!
Spouse, tear your tawny hair,
And curse the dark Egyptian!
Fold your slithered hands in prayer!
Let Caesar behold your sorrows,
And bewail your woe's charms,
Tell him Antony's in Egypt,
And a deep in Egypt's arms.
Ho, slaves, pour out libation—
Rivers, ay, seas of wine!
Rejoice, rejoice, for Antony
Is mine again, all mine.

THE OLD NORTH STATE.

In answer to your request that I should write you something of my life here in the "Old North State," I will give you a description of a recent visit I paid to my bosom friend and *quondam* school-mate, Fannie Hicks. Her home is among the cotton fields of our section, and as my short stay with her was thoroughly full of novelty and enjoyment, I think a sketch of it will interest you. Papa's business, as you know, calls him to the country early in the cotton-picking season, and it was on a day soon after the beginning of September that he took me on board the *Morchis*, one of the Cape Fear River boats, plying between Wilmington and Fayetteville. It was two by the strokes of the town clock when the boat moved off from the pier and steamed away on her bi-weekly trip. I leaned over the deck railing and watched the bustling scenes on the wharves as we glided from it. Among the crowds that thronged the landing was a huge old apple-woman pushing her trade with an amusing impudence and skill; a gentleman's discarded white felt hat, old and grimy, adorned the back of her round head, its wide brim giving her shiny black face a comical, happy-go-lucky expression that made me laugh, and she, glancing up, gave me a friendly wink and nod as she turned her back on the boat and her tormentors, the deck hands. The laughing, jostling negroes seemed each to have a word for her, which she roundly answered as she picked her lumberous way across the muddy streets between cotton bales and rolling barrels of tar and resin. The few white men that lit up the dusky throng paused in their work to see us out in mid-stream and then betook themselves to their several duties. Street after street sped by as I watched, until the last sound and the last spire of my own dear city by the sea was left behind, and only the wooded banks met my gaze. Then, remembering my complexion, and that the hot, burning sun was shining directly on me, I crossed to the east deck, and, drawing a chair close to the stern railing, leaned over to watch the great wheel churn the water into a foam, and to feel the cool spray on my face. There was no one to disturb my quiet enjoyment, I being the only lady on board, so I gave myself up to the influence of the scene, and dreamed and wondered foolishly and aimlessly, while my eyes wandered from the shimmering river to the cool, green banks, and my ears drank the music of the dashing water.

The broad, cypress trees, dense and dark, spread their feathery boughs, like a hedge, along the margin, and planted their great knees in the shaded water. A net-work of the roots of vines and smaller trees sprang between and bound them together. As the boat glided on, here and there were glimpses of dense cane brakes that painfully suggested snakes and alligators; and at intervals bushes of blooming wild roses lit the dim scene with a beauty beyond the frail pink of their blossoms.

As the time wore away I was reminded by the slanting rays of the declining sun to cross to the west side of the boat and feast my eyes for a space on the lovely green of the rice fields that line the west bank of the river for several miles above and below the city. I think you will never know the real expressiveness of the phrase "living green," until you have seen our rice lands in their summer dress. As I watched the sun dipped behind the tall pines that close these rice lands in, and then papa coming on deck, I went to join him at the prow of the boat. The pleasant, handsome captain gave me his arm-chair, and, fetching another, sat by me. On board was a beautiful brown bird-dog, belonging to one of the captain's friends, and I was delighted with the friendly way in which he soon treated me. It was interesting to watch his movements when the boat came within gun-shot of the wild ducks that frequently rose to the surface of the water. The captain and other gentlemen shot several times, but without killing any of them. I need not describe the findings at which we stopped, further than to say they were all unexpected to me, hid as they were by the woods that lies in unbroken extent along the river shores. After supper in the little saloon, we returned to the deck, where I had for company during the rest of the evening the owner of the bird-dog. The gentleman proved himself a delightful entertainer, and I spent a most pleasant evening sailing on the moon-lit river and listening to his agreeable voice in song and conversation. I had my guitar with me, and with my permission he fetched it from the cabin, and we exchanged songs, sentimental and otherwise. Leaning back in my chair I gave myself up to the witchery of the hour. Mr. Walker was singing in a low voice the "Whip-poor-Will" song, his really exquisite touch bringing the sweetest accompaniment from the guitar. The hum of voices sounded from different parts of the boat, mingled with the splashing of the water wheel, and in the dark woods that bounded our liquid path several mocking-birds and a Whip-poor-Will were holding concert. The gem of night, the glorious September moon, mad-shining paths across the reeking water. The swelling river bent in and out in long, sweeping curves. It was truly lovely, and with an effort I withdrew to my cabin. Indulging in a stanza from Byron, as I took a last glimpse of the moonlit scene, I said:

"And this is night, most glorious night!
Thou wert not made for slumber."

Then, slipping into my berth, I lay in a half-dream, listening to the low, chant-like voices of the negroes singing some water song.

Next day, a little before ten o'clock, we reached Elizabeth, where we were met by papa's old friend, Colonel Hicks, and my young friend, Fannie, the Colonel's daughter. My trunk and papa's valise were strapped on, and we were stowed away in the great family box-car for a sixteen mile drive through the hot sun and sand. But the journey was none too long for Fannie and I; we had not at all exhausted our fund of confidential gossip when a turn in the road discovered the place of our destination. The way led through a long avenue of hickory and walnut trees, and Colonel Hicks, with his whip, pointed out from among the many hogs that were grunting and munching under the trees, one round and fat, that was to serve as a barbecue in honor of my visit. Just think of having a whole pig barbecued in one's honor! We passed inside the gates and went by a winding drive to the front of the large, white house that is in the midst of a most delightful grove of magnificent oaks. I wished often for your presence, dear cousin, in the long evenings we spent under those glorious old trees. The moon shone so enchantingly through their great, moss-draped branches, and made such lovely flickering shadows on the white, hard walks. The very first evening of my visit Fannie and I stole away from the supper-table, also from the very kind advice of Mrs. Hicks, who recommended immediate repose for the fatigue of the journey. We perched ourselves in the rope swing that hung between two of the trees. Winding a festoon of the long Florida moss round our heads, "to keep from being moon-struck," we quietly chatted, while I watched the lovely shadows and the brightly-lighted house. It is one of our model country houses—large, square, of two stories, with upper and lower piazzas extending quite around it. The pillars that support the lower piazza were festooned with vines that grew in urns at their bases. The double doors at both ends of the great hall were ajar, and the light of a lamp suspended from the ceiling streamed out. The shadows of the tall shrubbery in the rear yard fell across the path where negroes, with dogs in attendance, passed to and from the kitchen. A mass of dogs, if you wish to see dogs in abundance, hounds of all ages, sizes and varieties, come and go with me to a North Carolina plantation. Colonel Hicks has twenty-five queer, lean-looking animals, and it is wonderful to hear their voices in the morning. But strong nerves are a necessary possession in order to enjoy the canine concert.

I slipped from the bed quite early on the first morning of my visit, and threw back the window shutters. We were in an east room, and the sun had just risen. A tall, old sycamore tree rustled its leaves close to my face as I bent over to peep out and get a breath of the morning. The little birds were hopping about and twittering in the branches, and from below there came the most delicious fragrance of flowers and ripening scuppernon grapes. Through the branches I spied an extent of arbor that pleasantly sug-

gested grapes without stint or limit, and I must confess that I hurried to poor Fannie's bedside and roused her to the duties of entertainer. When we got down to the yard "the hands" were just starting for the "cotton patch," and on Colonel Hicks' laughing invitation, we forgot the grapes, and went with him and his escort of dogs to the gin house. To my bewildered vision there seemed at least fifty negroes standing about the door. There was the great cornfield fellow, with enormous flat feet and hands, and the cornfield woman, with her turban and scant cotton drapery. There were the little round-headed, bow-legged children in all manner of rags, and some there were without any rags at all. While I stared like one uninitiated, the Colonel unlocked a door, from which huge baskets were thrown out to the noisy pickers, who invariably mounted them to their heads and started with shouts, and jests and singing to their work. We returned to breakfast happy with the thought of Colonel Hicks' promise that in an hour or two we should have horses saddled for a ride to the cotton fields. At breakfast I expected to meet Fannie's brother Charlie, who, to speak figuratively, had not long since returned from Chapel Hill with learned brow, wreathed by the victor's crown of laurel. Fannie had not mentioned his name to me, and I felt somewhat piqued, as the breakfast hour passed without his appearing for his name being mentioned. I just dismissed the gentleman from my thoughts without having apprised any one of his being there, and papa, the Colonel, Fannie and I soon set out for the fields. I was mounted on the sweetest little Texas pony, and enjoyed a most delightful canter through a long stretch of pine and loblolly into the "bottom lands." These "bottom lands" are low, muck lands, lying along Goshen Creek, and Goshen Creek is quite a stream that joins the Cape Fear at some point above its mouth. This land is mostly devoted to corn raising, and certainly it does its duty. As we rode between the rings the great stalks towered above our heads, and the ears that weighed them down averaged, papa says, not less than twelve inches in length and six inches in circumference. We came out of the forest of rustling, brown corn into a piece of plowed land, where we halted for Colonel Hicks to explain some matter to papa. It was a triangular piece of land, bounded on two sides by the creek and the woods. Down by the creek side I noticed, as we emerged from the corn, a plowman, with his back to us, and who was just finishing a furrow. A thought of what a square-shouldered, erect negro it was passed through my mind as I turned my attention and eyes to the soil under discussion. Fannie's exclamation of "Why, there is Charlie!" set my vision wandering inquiringly over the field, and I perceived that the plowman had turned and was plodding steadily on the ridges toward us. It was a *bona fide* gentleman, though dressed in horrid top-boots, blue home-spun overalls and shirt-waist, driving gloves, and an enormous palm-leaf hat. I noticed as he approached us that his face was very red, and I had a little funny that we should cause him embarrassment, but my sympathy was quite misplaced. Flowing quite up to his chest, and with as much grace and serene unconsciousness as though he was dressed in his best tail and tucker, and we had not in his own prior, he removed his hat, bowed low, and welcomed us with kind words and smiles. Leaning against the plow handles, he drew from his pocket a large, handkerchief, and while he applied it to his glowing brow, remarked that he had felt the heat more that day than on any previous day of the summer. Colonel Hicks suggested that, as it was growing so warm, he should stop work and accompany us to the cotton field. He paused before answering, seeming for the first time to become conscious of his attire. He glanced down at his boots covered with soil, and then up at us with an expression of deprecation and inquiry that was relieved by a mischievous glimmer in his dark eyes. Fannie and I laughed and nodded consent, and Fannie added, "Hurry, Charlie, we do want you to go with us." With one side movement he literally scraped the harness from the ugly old gray mule, and, mounting, rode away between Fannie and I. His manner, as we rode along, was one of quiet dignity, and his conversation was quite edifying, but from the occasional sparkle of what was suspiciously like mischief in the depths of his owlish eyes, I knew what to expect in the future.

We came out at the head of the cotton field, a large, ten-acre field, and sat lacking over the animated scene. Laughing, whistling, singing, whooping, dancing darters with huge baskets, bags and bundles dotted it over! and down the long rows of green and brown stalks shone the soft white stuff that brings so much of comfort and wealth to this Southern land. Our cotton is to us what your lumber is to you, or better what it was to you twenty years ago. Cotton picking season is the heyday of the negroes. Then it is that they indulge in gay dresses, bac-a-lasas cake, and all manner of luxuries. For every pound they pick they receive one-half cent, and as there is no age after infancy unit for the work all are made partakers in the glory of good times. We rode slowly between the ridges which were three feet apart, and came to the foot of the field where were the large scales by which each picker's cotton was weighed before being emptied into the immense boxed wagon. This weighing takes place twice a day, at noon and on quitting work at evening. Of course you have studied your geography and there learned what cotton is and how it is cultivated, but let me give you greatly abridged, Charlie's elaborate description of it, and also