

The Lady in Muslin.

The darkness of the night closely concealed whoever the noise-maker was, and I could distinguish no form of either man or animal. The rustling, too, was not repeated, and I began to fancy that the intruder could only be some bird in the hedge, when a flash of lightning, suddenly illuminating the whole country, showed me something moving up the garden—what I could not tell.

I rose—listened; not a sound broke the stillness. Flash after flash again lighted up the scene; but the moving thing was gone. In vain I watched and listened; all was silent, nothing appeared.

Half an hour passed—an hour. I began to think of returning to bed, when, in another flash, I saw something standing almost beneath my window. For an instant I fancied the form was like a human figure—the Indian!

The idea was too absurd. Whatever could a grave, dignified person like Zemide—the descendant, as he once informed me, of a line of Indian princes—want with mine host's hens or eggs? My fancy had deceived me. I was getting sleepy; perhaps I was having a preparatory dream.

Miss Owenson did not make her appearance the next morning; but she sent to Gaunt to ask how Cecile was, and invite us to join her in a walk to some ruins that she wished to sketch; we might bring our fishing apparatus, she wrote, as the river was close by.

The remembrance of that walk is still vivid in my mind. Margaret had resumed her high spirits; and the woods, as we passed through them, echoed with our mingled laughter. It was a bright sunny day, and our humour kept with the sun, unclouded. We were content to stoop to the enjoyment of a country walk; our mighty intellects deigned to wonder over flowers and bird's-nests; and if one of us attempted to get scientific and make clever remarks, the laughter and quizzing of the other two soon banished such attempts. What did we care about classes or species? or this system or that? It was the hand that held up the spray of flowers—the eyes that glowed over them—that constituted their beauty and their interest. The only drawback to our—at least, Gaunt's and my—entire pleasure was that we were one too many: but *who* should be banished?

We fished in the river, and Margaret took her sketch from the banks whilst we talked and flung our wit and repartees to our entire satisfaction and mutual admiration; and then we lunched. Margaret! Margaret! how could you have the conscience to laugh and talk as you did? How could you have the heart to listen, with downcast eyes and smiling lips, to those low-toned sentences Dick whispered so earnestly to you, when, as we got separated in one part of the wood, the stupid fellow thought I was out of sight and hearing?

Miss Owenson was very tired when we reached Hazeldean—so tired that she told us we should see her no more that evening; so tired that she grew quiet impatient, as Dick would stand talking just beneath the verandah of the inn, instead of allowing her to rush away as she wished across the garden (we had come through the inn to shorten the distance); she meant to go to bed the instant she had dined.—“No, certainly Dick mustn't go to visit her to-night; to-morrow, if he chose, he might visit her in the day, though. Good-bye.”

As she spoke the words, I noticed she threw a hasty glance up at the curtained window of the sick-room. At the same moment a hand was slowly drawing back the curtain and then Mrs. Marsh's thin, yellow face looked smilingly down on us. Even through the closed window I could see that the little old lady was fixing on Miss Owenson a glance, with the action of the head, which reminded me of an ugly little ferret.

“Good-bye,” again Margaret said, abruptly this time, wrenching her hand from Dick's; and, turning away, she walked swiftly down the garden, and was soon out of sight behind the shutters of the cottage.

We did not have the opportunity of seeing Mrs. Marsh again that day. There was a good piece to be acted at the theatre, and we hurried off, intending to dine at —, and probably pass the night there.

XV.

WHO SHE IS!

L— was rather attractive that evening. We met a couple of college friends, and made, what Dick called, a night of it; such a night, that the sun of the next morning was shining very wakefully before we went to bed.

The consequence was that we breakfasted late, and our friends, looking in on us during the meal, delayed us so long that it was six o'clock p.m. when we reached Hazeldean.

On our parlour-table lay one of those queerly twisted notes, which were always so well received by us both, and which Gaunt immediately seized.

He had not time, however, to open it, before we heard the whisking sound of Mrs. Marsh's approach, and in another moment in came the little yellow lady with the important determined air of one who has something to say, and is resolved to say it.

She stopped short our polite enquiries respecting herself and Cecile, with a wave of her dry hand, and began.

“I did not expect this of you, Richard Gaunt,” in a tone in which solemnity was ludicrously mixed with reproach.

I don't know whether Dick's memory was affected in the same way as mine, but this address, joined with the consciousness of last night's dissipation, transported me some ten years back, when I was a would-be fast young man, but still subject to the vigilance of an acute pair of maternal eyes.

Dick looked inquiringly at Mrs. Marsh, and then, as if dimly conscious of what she intended to reproach him with, turned away with a muttered haughty word.

“Pray,” continued the old lady, in the same solemn tone, “will you kindly inform me of the reason of your intimacy with Mrs. Huntingdon, or, rather the person who calls herself by that name?”

“Mrs. Huntingdon?” Gaunt almost shouted “what the deuce do you mean? I never saw the woman in my life.”

“Stuff and nonsense! Don't make such a noise, Richard Gaunt, and don't try to deny a plain fact,” answered Mrs. Marsh, rubbing her hands contemptuously.

A light seemed suddenly to break on Dick's mind; he started up, seized the astonished old woman rather roughly by the arm, exclaiming, “Do you mean to say that that girl is Cecil Huntingdon's wife?”

(To be continued.)

SOME SHORT POEMS OF MERIT.

Without going so far as Edgar Allen Poe in his essay, “The Poetic Principle,” and saying that no long poem can be a great poem, I make bold to express the opinion that the lyric is more fully charged with the life-blood of true poetry than any other class of poem. In the domain of literature, with so many gems of this character from which to choose, the chief difficulty lies in the *embarras de richesse*. I have always regarded Longfellow's “The Day is Done” as a very finished lyric, full of beauty, delicacy of expression and graceful *insouciance* of metre. It is so well known that I need not reproduce more than the opening and closing stanzas:

The day is done and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs
And as silently steal away.

Again, what could be more beautiful than the following lyric, from that gifted poet, Colonel McAlpine (Myles O'Reilly)? There is in it a

rhythmic charm peculiar to itself. Everybody will recognize the fair form and beauty of “Jeanette”:

Oh! loosen the snood that you wear, Jeanette,
Let me tangle a hand in your hair, my pet,
For the world to me had no daintier sight
Than your brown hair veiling your shoulders white.

It was brown, with a golden gloss, Jeanette,
It was finer than silk of the floss, my pet;
'Twas a beautiful mist falling down to your waist,
'Twas a thing to be braided and jewelled and kissed—
'Twas the loveliest hair in the world, my pet.

My arm was the arm of a clown, Jeanette,
It was sinewy, bristled and brown, my pet;
But warmly and softly it loved to caress
Your round white neck and your wealth of tress,
Your beautiful plenty of hair, my pet.

Your eyes had a swimming glory, Jeanette,
Revealing the old, dear story, my pet,
They were gray with that chasten'd tinge of the sky,
When the trout leaps quickest to snap the fly,
And they matched with your golden hair, my pet.

Oh! you tangled my life in your hair, Jeanette,
'Twas a silken and golden snare, my pet,
But so gentle the bondage my soul did implore
The right to continue your slave evermore,
With my fingers enmeshed in your hair, my pet.

Thus ever I dream what you were, Jeanette,
With your lips and your eyes and your hair, my pet;
In the darkness of desolate years I moan,
And my tears fall bitterly over the stone
That cover your golden hair, my pet.

My last gem—for gem it undoubtedly is—is from Tennyson. No person will deny the merit of true poetry to this selection from the “Princess.” Its greatest merit is that it evades criticism. There is in it, as in all real poetry, a something which no human mind can lay bare in words. It is the pulse of inspiration beating with divine measure. Reading it, we feel in our hearts an ethereal presence:

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on the sail,
That brings our friends up from the under-world,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange, as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love and wild with all regret;
O death in Life, the days that are no more.

As I have already stated, lyric gems are so numerous in literature that one might continue setting them for months and years. Such are Walter Savage Landor's “Rose Aylmer,” Fawcett's “The Old Beau,” Moore's “To Rosa,” and Mangan's “A Sigh.” Each of these charms with its beauty, imagination, brevity and finish. Nor is the heart of mankind exhausted. Day by day the world is dowered with new gifts of song.

Walkerton, Ont.

THOMAS O'HAGAN.

THE HOPETOUN LIBRARY.—Another great library is about to follow in the wake of the Sunderland and the Gosford Libraries; that of Lord Hopetoun, which, for nearly a century, if not longer, has been known to be one of the best to the north of the Tweed, is to be brought to the hammer towards the end of the present month, by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, of Wellington Street. The library is rich in *editioes principes* and early printed works in general, including a copy of the “Mazarin,” or “Gutenberg Latin Bible,” the first book known to have been printed with moveable metal types, a copy of “Balbi Catholicon,” printed by Gutenberg, in 1460, the *editio princeps* of Virgil, printed at Rome, in 1469, the first Virgil, and first and second Petrarch, &c., printed by Albus, “Polifilo,” first Aldine edition, several illuminated manuscripts, an extensive collection of Scottish State papers, and a copy of “Les Statuts de l'Ordre de Saint Michel,” printed on vellum, and adorned with the arms of Henry II., and the device of Diane de Poitiers.—*Times*