

as graceful and stately as the swan, which seems to float on the clear water by their side.
"Hly. Jove! who's a beauty," thought the young man, as, stately and pure as a garden lily, the young lady approached them.
But it was his head, not his heart, which gave this verdict; and even as they went in to luncheon, he thought "He would be a bold man who would ever try to make love to my lady."

(To be continued.)

A LOVE STORY.

BY GEORGE SMITH.

Bending o'er some dainty story,
In the balmy sunny air,
Shall I picture for thee, maiden,
Days far off with pleasure fair?

Slender hands so pure, and gleaming
'Gainst the robe of snowy white,
Seem to speak of snowdrops springing
From the heart of Winter's night.

Falling wealth of golden tresses,
Dazzling in their wondrous sheen,
Tell of some divine fruition
For thy soul, Evangeline.

Yet all of thy charms, the dearest
Are the tears which fill thine eyes,
Mingling with the happy sunshine
Like the broken summer skies.

Other friends may watch thy beauty
Into majesty mature;
But my wishes e'en may follow
Grace and loveliness so pure.

And, in parting, let me whisper,
Whisper gently in thine ear,
Words which, while they call sweet smiles
Are immeasurably dear—

If thy heart be moved so deeply
At some fancied tale of love,
What must be the burning ardour
Which that heart itself shall move?

All the grandeur of the ages,
All the poet's winged sublime,
Thou wouldst but for a moment
Of that Paradisaic time.

SWIFTER THAN A WEAVER'S SHUTTLE.

BY JUDITH CONNEDINE.

CHAPTER I.

GREEN BEFORE THE SUN.

This way, sir! Plenty of room 'ere, sir! Smokin' carriage full, and open files the door of a first-class compartment in the 5.10 Birmingham express, as that punctual and admirable train groans and jerks itself to a standstill by the up Oxford platform one fine September evening.

There is only one person to be seen in this compartment, and she is so very small a person that perhaps you might not see her at all, were it not for her scarlet shawl, and broad-brimmed, steeple-crowned felt hat, with the bit of peacock's feather stuck in the brim, gleaming gold, and purple, and dark green in the steady sunshine. *Figaro* beguiles her solitude, but at the sound of the porter's voice she looks up with large grave eyes, no-colored as seawater, and out at the valiant "Sir!"

At what his cause of him rather, namely, a broad, flat, black-grey back, and a long, black-grey arm working to and fro, apparently in connection with a waistcoat pocket.

Suddenly the arm darts viciously against the porter's corduroy shoulder as he steps out of the carriage, having hoisted a good-sized travelling bag into the netting, and satisfied himself as to the working condition of the wheel. And the porter, being a fat, easy-going little man, laughs a fat little laugh, and then the back turns itself about, and there is a meeting of hands and a mumble of something like "Thank you, sir!" and now the small person is looking down at the "G.W.R." decorating the carpet—somebody great, and neutral-tinted, and keen, with a tightly-strapped grey rug in one hand, and a paper-bound book in the other—such strong lean white hands—gets between her and the porter and the running, vociferating, crazy creatures on the platform—between her and the work-a-day world, as it were.

Now, in these hyper-sensitive, overwrought days, the unprotected female traveller is apt to fancy that to stare hard at a man for more than half-a-dozen consecutive seconds is an error of judgment likely to lead to awkward mistakes, such as the development of latent insanity on the part of the stared at, or the exhibition of felonious instincts of varied enormity; wherefore, having perceived that the intruder on her privacy is considerably larger in volume than the majority of his fellow-creatures, our small person picks up her *Figaro*—it has slid off her black silk knee—not too new silk or too substantial, and immures herself in the consideration of the "If you dream of" sheet of likenesses with beautiful instant-

But the veiling of one pair of grave, sea-water

colored eyes does in nowise preclude the use, and good use, too, of another pair of bright much-seeing brown ones; and the great grey man looks hard at the small person in the scarlet shawl and black felt wideawake as he takes off his hat and stows it away in the netting beside his bag.

This is what he sees. A little pale face, such a little face, with a little straight nose, and a little thin red mouth, and a curious grave look about it like a shadow, and soft babyish flakes of flaxen hair—short hair—out straight like an ill-clipped boy's all round the pretty head, and tucked away behind two pink little ears, and on the top of this the great felt hat.

It is unlike anything in the way of womanhood, girlhood, the great grey man has ever before seen in his life, and he is thirty years old if he is a day. Yea! and thirty years of energy and moving about, and getting acquainted with lots of places, and lots of people, or I am very much mistaken; the only thing he fancies he has ever seen at all like it is an old Giltshire-borough picture somewhere—South Kensington Museum, most likely—this settling down, he and his long grey legs, in the seat next to the window, not her window, an odd Giltshire-borough picture of a weird outlandish child with a gun over its shoulder or a lamb by its side, anyhow with just such a hat on its head, and just such a face under the hat. H'm, and he looks at his watch.

Ten minutes to six!

She is not strange to the city of domes and spires, or she would be craning her neck out of the window, and gaping and hailing cads to tell her where Magdalen is, and the Barges, and the Rodolfs, and the "High," and the Martyrs' Memorial, and Tom Quad, and all the rest of the dismal old topographical, and ethnological, and archaeological rigmurle one has heard over since one was born.

No, she is not a stranger, and *Figaro* must have picked up some to be so particularly interesting. Half off at last, goodly city of domes and spires! Ta, ta, done and done. Somehow the academic groves don't seem quite the same to critical, hard-headed manhood as to ardent, soft-brained youth. It is well to see what pleased, satisfied, inspired one once, if only to measure the great space of trudge, years faring 'twixt thought and deed. But—and the great grey man smiles at his own thought, so that strong even white teeth gleam out between his unsmothered lips, and the small person sees the smile and the strong beautiful teeth, and the keen, dark, clever face and quail. To be boxed up in a space not exceeding ten feet by seven, with an escaped lunatic over six feet high for upwards of an hour and a half, (this express runs straight to Paddington, without stopping) is truly a somewhat awful prospect.

What is he going to read? Bret Harte? Come, we may weep over our small once more. No man can be very mad who has the sense to do that. So they journey on between the red-denied hedges blackberry speckled, by the daffodil green meadows fringed with undulating shade, studded here and there with grand elm trees unlifted massively against the tender sky, with dusky depths of leaves; and then suddenly the Parodies are tossed aside, and a sleek dark head goes out of the window, and comes in again, and a pleasant confident voice—the voice of one who knows good from bad, and likes it best—says, "This is quite the best view of Oxford!"

The grave eyes listen; eyes can listen just as a big dog's left front paw can watch. "You should see it!"

She gets up, not a very prolonged performance. When she is on her feet the peacock's eye is barely level with the top of the blue cloth padding, and gathering her red shawl round her, so that you can see how very small a person she really is, she comes to his window and puts out her head and looks back at the crowding towers veiled in golden light, and over her face steals a soft, shy happiness born of sudden pleasure. It is perfect, and perfection is the congruity of her life.

"Well!" he says, "don't you think I'm right?" "Yes!" quite—still with her head out of the window—"I am so much obliged to you for pointing it out to me. Oxford always looks best from a distance."

"Yes," he answers, marvelling a little at the fashion of her hair, "in more senses than one." She makes her way back to her seat; but his eyes follow her, and when she sits down he turns himself about, and composes himself in his corner, and crosses his long legs in a decidedly conversable manner, scarcely consistent with the terms of that canon of rigorous British etiquette, which provides for the humiliation and confusion of the nameless.

"I have been a good deal abroad since I left Magdalen, and one loses old ways and likings as easily as old friends," quite as if they had taken their tickets together, and started together, and were bound for a common destination; and yet there is nothing of the insolent ruffian about him. She is a wise little lady, she knows that.

"But not your conviction that Magdalen is the most beautiful place in the world, I hope," she answers, considering him with her calm young eyes.

It is such a queer little face, so much in sober earnest with this poor wicked world—so innocent of worldliness. "How old is she, seventeen or seven-and-twenty?"

"Is that your opinion?" he asks, with fine caution.

"Yes!" promptly. "I think it has no equal, not as a matter of prejudice but judgment."

She must be seven-and-twenty at the very least; these fair mites of women preserve wonderfully.

"It is my college."

"Indeed!" And then she pulls herself up with a jerk, and looks out of the window at two colts, who are scampering away across a field hard by, startled by the ruckling snorting train.

"And I quite share your admiration for it. Have you seen the alterations they have been making in the school and Long Walk?" "No,"—and she looks back at him—"I have not been living in Oxford. Are they an improvement?"

"Very great. The next generation of boys will be much better off than we old ones were." "Were you a Magdalen schoolboy, then?"

"Yes, I had that privilege." "But not a chorister," quite eagerly. "Yes; a chorister—after a fashion," laughing, and knitting his long fingers round one knee.

"I should think"—she begins, and then she stops and looks down at the square toe of a little boot protruding from beneath the plaited black silk petticoat—"I should think it was very pleasant to be a chorister," but this is not what she was going to say, and he perceives the clumsy subterfuge.

"It depends on whether you're particularly fond of music. I can't say I was when I was a boy. Have you been to the chapel lately?"

"I went once during Commemoration week. Lady Slade's little nephew is a chorister."

"What Lady Slade's is that?" hitching himself further back into the seat by his elbows, and clasping his hands behind his head. Verily, the angularity and restlessness of this great man are astounding.

"Not Lady Slade of Wrentham?" "Yes, I"—and just a moment's hesitation—"I have been her companion for a year, that is how she came to take me to Magdalen Chapel with her."

"I used to know young Slade. He was at New, and a wonderful scholar. What's become of him? Is he married?" smiling as men do, and will smile, at the idea of the once familiar royster hewing away at the domestic shrine of beef, or rocking the domestic cradle.

"Yes; he's married, and got a living in Northamptonshire."

"A fat living, I hope; poor parsons are a curse to themselves and their parishioners. Bless me! How odd! Well, when you go back"—straightening himself up, and looking as pleased as Punch—"Oh! but I'm not going back," with much energy. "I've been ill, and have been ordered a holiday, and change of air, and all sorts of pleasant things. I'm not going back, that's very certain," and she laughs out loud, a merry little laugh, like a bird's sudden brief song, and shakes her head with a cunning wisdom calculated to impress the casual observer with the belief that she must be a very sly, small person indeed. But the great grey man can scarcely be classed under this category. To observe, not casually but closely, keenly, has been his pleasure from his youth up, and he is so observing now.

"What has been the matter with you?" he asks.

"I have had bilious fever." "And they cut off all your hair, eh?" with serio-comic pity. She is seventeen now, the merest child. How wonderfully these fair mites of women can deceive one!

"Yes," solemnly, trying hard to look old and grim.

"I'm a doctor, you see; so sickness interests me," stretching out an arm and clutching himself tightly by the back of the head. "You don't look like a bilious subject, though!"

"Wrentham is not a very healthy place; the poor people are always getting ague and low fever," turning away her little white face. It is not pleasant to be spitted on two sharp eyes, and held up to the light of science in naive impression unadorned.

"Really! and you tried bilious fever for a change?" Still in that serio-comic tone, then more gravely, releasing his head, and slipping his arm through the rest by his side, "Well, I hope you are bound for some healthier home. People elect to fancy that directly they're out of the doctor's hands they're safe; but convalescence to many proves as fatal as the actual disorder they have been suffering from," with a slow, sarcastic smile, showing that this man of angles is a man of opinions too.

"I am going to Surbiton—near Kingston, you know—on the Thames," explanatorily, as if he was a recently dropped moon man.

"Yes; I know!" smiling at her compassionately, her efforts at superiority are so pitifully mature, as immature as the tragic airs of a stage-struck mite of seven. "And who's to take care of you at Surbiton?"

A shrill ear-torturing scream of steam, a pash, a second fainter whistle, as 'twere the echo of the first, and then a sudden jerk back, jarring every bone in its socket.

In an instant the great grey man's face changes from bantering serenity to quickest expectation—not fear, there is no fear in those bright, dark eyes, about that suddenly-compressed, firm mouth.

"Sit still!" he says, but gets up himself and looks out.

And she does sit still—quite still, gripping the arms of her seat tightly with her two little grey hands, and watching him with scared, wide-open eyes. What if she and this great man are bound to die together. What if death be even now close upon them, in front of them, round about them? Her breath comes fast in many

panta, her lips paroh and burn, and he does not speak. What is he seeing? Is it coming? The violent blood beats force upon her brain, each throbbing clear positive as a blow; in her ears rises and roars the noise of many voices; and he will not speak. She cannot sit there and be killed and make no sign. With a great start she jumps up, but the floor shakes and vibrates beneath her feet, so that she can scarcely stand; a crash of groaning iron, another dismembering jerk—a jerk that knocks her fairly off her legs back into her seat.

"Thank God! we are saved!" says the great grey man.

She does not hear him or understand him, or see him, she is praying so hard to her Father in Heaven.

He watches her a second or two, rubbing his damp forehead dry with a great white silk handkerchief.

"Come," he says at length, gently; "you've no need to be frightened now. It's all over." His words mix themselves up with "Them that trespass against us." She looks up at him as if he were miles away.

"It's all over," he repeats, laying his hand on her red shoulder, and giving her a little shake. "The brake's on, and we're getting out of the way as fast as we can."

The quick blood stains her face to the color of her shawl. She has never died before, and she is not very strong—rather a slender, wind-flower of a creature indeed, and—

No," he says, sitting down on the opposite seat, and holding her eyes with his, as a stern elder would hold a naughty child's. "No."

The poor red face quivers pitifully, and the long gold eyelashes twinkle in the sun, now sinking crimson-robed to rest upon a primrose bed—her last and goodliest of suns.

"But," she begins presently, looking about her in vague alarm at the rushing hedgerows, at the whizzing telegraph, a post: "hedgerows, telegraph posts, they live passed before. What are we doing? What—"

"We are going back to Oxford," he answers quietly. "We have been within an ace of complete smash. By some infernal mismanagement or other, a goods train met us plump—on the same line of rails, you know. When I looked out, there wasn't fifty yards between the two engines."

"And you never said a word; you could see that and keep still!" knitting her pale brown eyebrows, and regarding him with amazed incredulity.

"Why not?" smiling as calmly as if to be horribly mangled and mutilated were a normal concomitant of daily life. "All the yelling in the world could have made no difference. As it is, you see, we may both live to be a hundred," and he laughs and looks at his watch, and holds it to his ear. Those two jerks have stopped it. Perhaps, had the engine driver been a fool or a coward, or the guard had been asleep, or the brake had been too weak to bear the strain put on it, or the boiler had burst, this fact might have decided the precise moment at which the "heart-rending catastrophe" occurred. "Among the debris of a first-class carriage were found the bodies of a man and a woman—the former apparently about thirty years of age, tall and well dressed; the latter short, slight, and young, as far as it is possible to judge from the aspect of the corpse, which is very much disfigured, the face being completely battered in, and the legs—"

"Out!" those newspaper paragraphs have more in them than one gives them credit for. The small person contributes this slip to the unpublished journalistic literature of her native land, and shudders.

"Do you think we shall go back to Oxford?" asks she after a while, when silence had steadied her nerves somewhat, and matter-of-fact has partially resumed its sway over her intelligence.

"No; I shouldn't say so. I should think we should pull up at some intermediate station and wait there till the line was telegraphed clear, when we should start again for Paddington."

"Oh, I'm so glad of that!" How she trusts him! Why should she? Why should she not nod out all this for herself, too good? "If I didn't get home to-night, Ned would be so put out."

"Ned, Ned—what Ned? Ned a husband? Ned a brother? Ned—a Ned who dares to be 'put out' too—to be sulky—rude—savage to her. That sounds like a husband." The great grey man stares gloomily out at the darkling world—the world whence the sun has vanished oddly all of a sudden, in some inexplicable, eccentric and complete manner—such as no well-regulated sun would think of attempting.

"I daresay you'll be late," says he stolidly, somewhat as though he took a dull sort of pleasure in Ned's agonies of mind.

"I daresay I shall," unbuttoning and slowly pulling off her left glove, finger by finger. It is delicious to trifle with time when one has recently known the sensation of being at one's wit's end; a kind of rare and choice pleasure, like spending the first five pounds of an unexpected fortune.

The left glove off, and in her lap, she begins upon the right. The great grey man looks round; looks straight at the third finger of her thin, white hand. She is very thin. My dog could eat her for his dinner and feel hungry. It is there. The plain, thick gold ring, and next to it a diamond keeper. The great grey man looks away again out at the world, quite a benighted world now, and off comes the "right glove. There is no ring upon that hand.

So they travel back into a lonely country station, and there come to a standstill, whereupon a vast deal of talking and questioning and god-bless-me-ing ensues, and the great grey man