

PETITE FLEUR AU DOUX LANGAGE.

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

(From the French.)

Tiny flower, with perfume laden,
That I gathered on the shore,
Have you seen my village maiden
By the streamlet, as of yore?

(REFRAIN.)

Of undying thought the token,
In whatever language spoken,
Whisper in her ear, "loul bas,"
Whisper low, my loving thought,
Whisper oft, "ne m'oubliez pas,"
Soft and low, "forget-me-not."

Should she guess my thought unspoken,
Should you make my future clear,
I will call you "love's own token,"
Wear you, my heart's souvenir.

But, if friendship must expire,
Lethé close o'er love's last hour,
You, who dwell securely by her,
Breathe a prayer for me, sweet flower.

MINNIE MCGREGOR.

L'Original, July, 1878.

THE VEILED PICTURE;

OR, THE HAUNTED STUDIO.

I had just arrived in England after a long tour through India, where I had been sketching to my heart's content, filling my book with views of mighty temples, groves of palm-trees, stupendous mountains crowned with snow, and waterfalls that dwarfed by their extraordinary height the most celebrated cataracts either of America or Europe.

After being nearly laid low by heat, apoplexy in the Red Sea, half suffocated in a sand storm crossing the Desert, and nearly lost in a gale in the Bay of Biscay, I once more found myself a denizen of dear, smoky London, and the guest of my old friend, Gilbert Fontroy.

Of course we had a thousand things to talk over—many a page of notes to compare—and it was late that night before I retired to rest, and thoroughly awoke to the consciousness of the luxury of a good English feather bed, after the hard horsehair mattresses and narrow berths provided for the luckless passengers on board the steamer I had just quitted.

Fontroy was a successful artist, and a man of taste and talent. His house was fitted up in truly artistic style. Everything in it was good. The pictures were by eminent masters, ancient and modern; the furniture was the spoil of ages; the china had graced the tables of nobles centuries before; the tapestry that hung on the walls was the work of fair hands, mouldered and turned to dust years ago; whilst the loveliest flowers, daily renewed, bloomed in every available corner, and shed a sweet perfume around.

Gilbert's studio was a model of comfort and convenience, and many a pleasant hour I spent there, looking over his sketches and studies, and watching the rapid manner in which he sketched from the life, or the careful touches with which he finished his work.

One evening we were sitting as usual after dinner, smoking, when my eyes fell on an embroidered curtain, which had always attracted my attention and admiration by the beauty of its colouring, and I noticed that this curtain had been moved, and revealed the corner of a large picture concealed behind it.

"What have you there, Gilbert?" said I, pointing to the half-opened curtain.

He started, and involuntarily stretched out his hand towards the embroidered drapery, then drew it back again.

"A mystery, Gilbert, eh?" said I, laughing.

"Yes, a mystery!" he replied, slowly. And drawing the curtain aside with a sudden movement, he displayed to my astonished gaze the full-length portrait of the most lovely woman I have ever seen, clothed in a slight classical drapery, and seated on a step of marble, with the basin of a marble fountain at her feet, and a background of dark green olive branches behind her.

"Exquisite!" I cried. "Your work, of course, Gilbert? When do you intend to exhibit it?"

"My work? Yes; but done years and years ago, Clifford. I don't intend it for exhibition. I think you and one other friend are the only persons who have set eyes on it.

And gazing dreamily on the beautiful portrait before him, he said:

"There is some story connected with this beautiful girl?" I ventured to remark.

At length, as I examined the delicate drawing of the drapery, and admired the glowing flesh tints and life-like pose of the finely-rounded limbs—and then the sad, wistful eyes of the picture seemed to follow mine with a mute, appealing gaze that went to my heart—I could not withdraw my eyes from hers, and their sad, penetrating look seemed to pierce my very soul.

Slowly Fontroy let the curtain fall, and with a sigh I awoke from my reverie, and the spell which those melancholy orbs had cast over me.

"May I ask you a few questions about that picture, Gilbert?" I said, rather timidly, and after a pause.

"Certainly!" he replied.

"When and where did you meet the original?" asked I.

"In Venice, thirty years ago, when I was quite a boy," he replied.

"She must have been a lovely creature! What was her name?" I continued.

"Valentina Romani," he answered, in a dreamy tone.

"And you drew that portrait from the life, I suppose?"

"From the life?—Ah, there was the mystery. No, I never saw that fair girl in her lifetime," he answered.

"Then how was it?" I asked, feeling somewhat astonished.

"You may well ask," he replied, rousing himself; and leaving his chair, he began pacing up and down the room.

"It is a strange story, Clifford, and one I have never told to a soul; but I know you take an interest in so-called psychological phenomena, and if you can explain to me this one, I should be only too delighted. For the first time for thirty years I will go back to the past, and tell you of the strange adventure that befel me in Giacinto Ferrari's studio in Venice."

So saying, he lit another cigar, and seating himself in his arm-chair began as follows:—

"When I was quite a boy I began to evince a taste for drawing, and for it I neglected all my other studies. Latin and Greek I could not endure; mathematics were an offense to me, history failed to interest me. Drawing was all I cared for, and it soon became so evident to my father that it was the only line in life in which I should succeed, that at length he gave way to my wishes, and consented to my taking up art as a profession.

"After two or three years passed in study in England, I went abroad and took up my abode in Venice, where I revelled in the beauty of that most beautiful city, and in all the works of art it contained.

"I speedily made friends with many of my brother professionals settled there; and some of my sketches attracting attention, I became known amongst a certain set, and my life was one of the pleasantest.

"Giacinto Ferrari, a painter of great repute, became my fast friend, albeit some thirty years my senior; and in his company much of my time was spent, and from him I learnt more in a month than I had learnt from other masters in a year.

One morning I entered Ferrari's studio as usual, and found him engaged in packing up.

"What, leaving Venice?" I cried in astonishment.

"Yes, for a time, Fontroy," he replied; "Business calls me to Rome. I shall not be away for long, however, and shall hope to find you here on my return. By the way, you will, of course, draw here as usual whilst I am away. I will leave the key of the studio with you, and you are welcome to it at all times. I have several models engaged who will be coming. Keep them or dismiss them just as you like, and make yourself at home in my domains."

"I was not slow to accept this offer, as you may suppose. Ferrari's studio was the best in Venice, and filled with noble pictures and works of art, and it looked out on to the Grand Canal, with its thousands of gondolas gliding to and fro, and the breezes from the sea kept it fresh and cool in the hottest weather.

"Well, Ferrari left Venice, and the day after I visited his studio, intending to settle down to a steady morning's work on a picture I was just completing. The studio was a large, lofty room, with good top lights and one large window. It was one of the upper rooms of an old palace, and a broad marble staircase led up to it. At one corner was a door, in front of which stood a screen, and before this screen was a raised dais, on which the models from which Ferrari drew generally sat; the screen was of old leather, gilt and embossed, and the dais was covered with a piece of Venetian carpet, embroidered, maybe, by some of the noble ladies who, years ago, inhabited the palazzo.

"I sat down in the middle of the studio before a large easel to begin my work, and had painted away for some minutes, when I heard a low sigh, and looking up, perceived, seated on the dais, a young girl, robed in creamy-white drapery—the original, in fact, of the picture there. She had seated herself in a classical pose, and her large dark eyes looked wistfully and sadly towards the window.

"Now my knowledge of Italian in those days was very limited, and the *patois* of the Venetians quite unintelligible to me, so that when I addressed the model, and she did not reply, I felt very little surprise; and as the pose she had taken scarcely admitted of being improved, and as I was every moment more and more struck by her extraordinary beauty, I left the work on which I was engaged, and began drawing from the lovely subject before me.

"For two hours she sat, almost without a movement. It was only by the slight heaving of her bosom as she breathed that she showed any signs of life.

"At the end of two hours I rose to take some fresh brushes from a table at the other side of the room, and when I turned round again, behold! my beautiful model was gone.

"Tired, I suppose," thought I. "Well, she sat splendidly," and I looked with satisfaction on the work I had done. "I wish I had asked her when she would come again, though."

"Three days afterwards, at the same hour, I became aware that I was no longer alone in the studio. Without a word, without a sound, my lovely model had entered, and seated herself exactly in the same pose in which I had begun to draw her on the dais.

"Buon giorno," said I, timidly, as I seated myself before my easel and took up my brushes. "But no word of reply passed the delicately-curved lips.

"So I worked on in silence as before, and the longer I worked the more deeply was I impressed by the wonderful beauty of the girl before me. Her eyes were positively startling, and seemed, with their sad, wistful gaze, to look one through and through.

"As before, after two hours had passed, my model disappeared, this time when my head was turned away for a moment, and I seemed to catch the waving of a drapery as she passed behind the screen, and, as I believed, into the room beyond.

"Strange girl!" I thought. "I wish she would speak. Perhaps, however, she only speaks *patois*, and so it would not be of much use if she did. I wonder Ferrari never mentioned her to me. What did he mean by saying that there was not one model now in Venice who merited to be called beautiful?"

"And so several weeks passed. Regularly at intervals of three days she appeared, sat for two hours, and then vanished. Never a word passed her lips, and as my picture reached completion I began to regret that my lack of Italian had prevented my making friends with the fair stranger.

"One day—it was the ninth sitting, I think—I observed a marked change in my model. She was deadly pale and more sad looking than ever, and a sort of nervous tremor of the limbs—a restlessness—seemed to have taken possession of her. Once or twice she sighed deeply, and turned her large dark eyes towards me, and fixed them on my face. Their expression sent a cold thrill through me, so wild, so sad was it.

"When the two hours were over, she rose slowly from her seat, and walked, or rather glided, across the room towards the window, keeping her eyes fixed on mine; then standing still for a moment, she pointed downwards to the marble floor on which she stood, letting her drapery fall from her bosom as she did so, and displaying to my horrified gaze a gaping wound below the left breast an inch wide. Then throwing up her arms with an agonized expression, she vanished.

"My limbs tottered under me, and large drops of perspiration stood on my forehead.

"What had I been drawing from all these days? No mortal maid, it seemed, but a disembodied spirit!

"I hastily covered over my picture, and fled from the haunted studio.

"Three days afterwards, however, I returned. I half-longed, half-feared to see my unearthly visitor again. It was the third day, and maybe she would be there.

"But, to my surprise, I found Ferrari returned, and the studio open.

"He was standing before my unfinished landscape.

"Why, Fontroy," said he, laughing, "what have you been doing since I left, eh? Your picture not finished yet!"

"No," I replied, trying to smile. "I have been drawing from one of your models, Ferrari."

"Yes—from which one?" said he.

"I don't know her name," I replied.

"Antonio Sandro, perhaps—a short, fair girl?" suggested he.

"No," I replied.

"What! Old Bepo then?"

"No, No," said I, trying to conceal my agitation. "Here is my work, let me show it to you," and I uncovered the picture with a trembling hand.

"Per Bacco!" exclaimed Ferrari, turning pale, "who is this? Where did you find her, Fontroy?"

"Why, she is some model you ordered to attend, I presume; she came the first day after you left," I replied.

"I never ordered her to come," replied Ferrari, gravely. "Did she speak to you?"

"Never a word," I replied, looking at him keenly.

"I saw his hand tremble as he laid back the picture on the easel, and noticed how deadly pale he had become.

"Come, Ferrari," I said at last, "there is a mystery about this, is there not? There is some tale connected with this studio. The being who sat to me for this portrait was not of flesh and blood. Is it not so?"

"You are right, I believe," he replied; "there is some tale connected with this studio, and the appearance of this figure forbodes evil to the possessor of it. Tell me all you saw."

"And I told him the tale I have just told you.

"Ah, it moved across the room before it vanished?" said he, eagerly. "Can you point me out the spot where it stood?"

"Yes," said I; and I placed my foot on the marble.

"Well," said he, "good! I will sift this matter to the bottom. Strange that during all the years I have had this studio this figure should never have visited me, and yet to you, a stranger and an Englishman, it appeared at once. The story about the studio is short enough. I remember being told it years ago, before I ever became a painter. An artist in the last century had this room; loved, ruined, and afterwards, it is supposed, murdered a girl—at least she disappeared, and was seen no more. To tell you the truth, Fontroy, the man was my ancestor, and evil has always followed to our family after the appearance of the figure. I am the last of my family," he added, laughing, "so the finger of fate must be pointing at me."

"That evening we caused the marble slab to be raised, which I had indicated as being the last spot on which I had seen the figure standing. It disclosed a small, secret chamber, and lying stretched on the floor of it was the skeleton of

a woman, with the mouldering remains of a creamy white drapery around it, such as my model had worn. On a broad bracelet that still encircled the fleshless arm, was engraved the name Valentina Romani, 17—

"In silence we returned to the studio, and Ferrari caused the remains of his ancestor's victim to be removed to the nearest cemetery, where they received Christian burial.

"Strange to state, my friend did not long survive the interment of the murdered girl's remains. He died in a fever a short time afterwards, and I was with him when he drew his last breath.

"This is the history of my veiled picture, Clifford; and you will not wonder I keep it hidden from the eyes of the many idlers and butterflies of fashion who visit my studio. It recalls to me the loss of my dear old friend; and those wistful melancholy eyes still send a thrill through my frame, and bring back to me the sense of dread I experienced when the beautiful Valentina, revealing the ghastly wound in her bosom, vanished from my gaze in the haunted studio.

M. H.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

THE Queen was every hour informed of the progress of the discussion on the critical questions at Berlin.

No sooner was the news known that Cyprus had been annexed to England than a number of men well known in the commercial world, after consultation, resolved at once to proceed to Cyprus, in order to establish their agencies and business there without delay.

IT is the intention of a few young men of good family to purchase a site in Armenia, in the neighbourhood of Erzeroum, to found a monastery in connection with the Church of England. It will occupy a similar position to the establishments of Fathers Ignatius and Nugee.

THE telephone is being put into practical use in London. A firm of wharfingers have established this mode of communication between their offices and their wharves in preference to the telegraph. The distance is fully a mile, and the telephone passes through the Thames subway.

LORD BEACONSFIELD, it is stated, has received flattering testimonial from Prince Gortschakoff. The Prince is reported to have openly expressed his opinion that of all the Plenipotentiaries the English Prime Minister possesses to the greatest extent the true qualities of a statesman.

THE sum which will be set down in the annual estimates as the cost of the military establishment at Cyprus, should the present contemplated force of 10,000 men be kept up, will be £1,000,000 sterling per annum. To this will have to be added any excess of the expenses of the civil administration over and above the local receipts.

MIDHAT PACHA is back in London. It is said that he means to remain here until he can go back to Constantinople on terms suitable to his rank and in accordance with his past services. One cannot blame him for his resolutions. He has done much good to his country, and has received but scant reward. Like a good many other honest men, he lives in hope; but the good day for him seems to be a long time is coming.

MR. SALA advises that the statue of Captain Cook, now temporarily erected in front of the Athenæum Club, prior to its despatch to the Antipodes, should be duplicated. The idea is a good one, and could be carried into effect at a comparatively small cost. Nothing need stand in the way of the utilization of Mr. Woolner's casting apparatus, and a valuable addition would thus be made to our metropolitan statues, which at present do not speak much for modern English art.

IN quarters where the truth ought to be known, it is said that the whole of Lord Beaconsfield's Oriental plan and policy is not yet before us. There are other surprises to come; at least there are a few consequential supplements to the Turco-British convention. It is presumed that there is an arrangement or convention or understanding with France as to the East—probably about Palestine. Likely enough. But far more likely, if not almost certainly, it is as to the southern Mediterranean shore.

AT the Theatrical Fund dinner a preposterous effect was produced by the way in which the buffet behind Mr. Toole (the chairman) was piled up into the semblance of something very much like a ritualistic altar, and, as if to cap the climax of the absurdity, some one, a waiter it may have been, who did not wish in any way to interfere with the general view of the chairman, prostrated himself upon his knees on the floor immediately in front of Mr. Toole, for all the world as if he had been a devotee at his devotions. The effect altogether was excruciatingly droll and ludicrous.