

THE CHILDREN OF THE FLOSS.

The little ripple meets the floss:
The floss sweeps onward to the sea,
Between low banks of reed and moss,
To greet the great tide, lovingly.

As, long ago, its waters swept,
When crushed and ground the busy mill,
Where hapless Maggie played and wept,
Or wrought her wayward brother's will.

Far out, the plain still stretches wide,
As when to her a world it seemed,
Of gypsy tents, where she might hide
And be beloved and esteemed.

The loaded barges groan and move
The ships are out upon the sea;
The tide still fills its olden groove,
And meets the river lovingly.

Where are the Children of the Floss?
Did e'er their footsteps press the earth?
Did none bewail their early loss?
Did fiction only give them birth?

Or were they part of that broad land,
Where hopes and sorrows few may know,
The bone and sinew of the land,
Whose hearth-fires make a nation's glow?

We know not. But the river flows:
The landscape lies before us spread,
What matters it, that no one knows
Or lived they not, or are they dead?

For while the ripple meets the floss,
And sweep the floss toward the sea,
A world will feel their early loss,
And greet their birth-place lovingly.

FRANCES ELMS.

THE GIRL I WAS ENGAGED TO

"Yes, I am sure she is everything that is perfection. Beauties of soul and face, and altogether glorious as the King's daughter, the essence of fairy tales, and the grandeur of a Grecian goddess—"

"You are laughing at me," answered my friend, "but I can pass it by. I feel so entirely happy that anything you can say, in earnest or not, no more makes an impression on me than the Trojan's arrows on Vulcan's armor."

Bertie McAllister was my especial friend; though many years younger than myself, there was a bond of union that, until to-day, bid fair to continue for ever. But now a new factor had appeared on the scene. In brief, Bertie was engaged to be married. From his rapturous talk I gathered it was to be soon, and then, of course, farewell to the joyous companionship—the long talks, the interchange of thought for thought that had so long existed between us. To another ear than mine would he tell his joys and griefs, his hopes and his success. He was one of those rare beings who are popular alike with women and with men; there was a magnetism in his smile that drew all hearts unto him. A good-looking man he was, too, with a face that, though not exactly handsome, was brimming over with animal spirits and good-nature. What was there surprising, after all, that already matrimony had marked him for her own, and I was to be left alone.

So I thought as I sat in my studio while the sun was sinking behind the hill, and Bertie, unmindful of anything but his great joy, poured out sentence after sentence of rhapsody with a heart that took no care of the hours passed in the joy of having some one to talk to of the all-absorbing topic that filled his whole being.

I saw he was hurt at the way in which I had received his news, saddened at the thought that I did not feel the same adoration for the being he had raised in the innermost altar of his heart. Alas! how often does the friendship of years go to pieces on that rock; and yet if we venture to profess an equal amount of admiration, does not our friend remain equally dissatisfied? Ah, Bertie, I thought, while he went on, "Dream out your dream," inhale the perfume of your roses, hang garlands round the shrine of your idol, though her feet be of clay; yet she will look them for the while, and for the while you will believe her the one for whom the sun rises and for whom the seasons change.

I saw he was sorry that I had not received his tidings with more rapture, so I tried to soothe him by saying I hoped they would be very happy.

He looked at me in silence for a few moments, then answered:

"Yes, you hope so, but you doubt it. Ah, if you only knew her! What can you know of how I feel? I don't believe you have ever felt as I do. What can a crusty old bachelor like you know of the power that moves the world?"

"That is it exactly. I have known it!" I answered.

"Ah! But you never told me about it."

"Nor any one," I answered. "It was not an experience I like to recall by repetition."

"But you will tell me," he said. "I am just in the state to cry or to laugh with you."

"It is not a pleasant topic; but I don't know—if you would like to hear it, I don't know that there is any reason now that I should not tell it. You remember I studied in Paris a great many years ago. It happened there. I was just at the age when every bush to me had its wood-nymph and every river its god. I did not live in the present at all; my life was made up of visions of what the future would bring to me, and of what the past had brought to those heroes and goddesses before history was. I was a dreamer, and I used to wander for days in the country trying to get as far from my fellow men

as possible, alone with my visions and dreams. One day I had gone further than usual along the banks of the Seine; there were few houses in sight just there, only a long line of poplars that seemed standing sentinels over the tombs of dead gods. I had gone on so for some time, when, as though some nymph had risen, I saw at the foot of one of the tall trees one of the loveliest visions that had ever come before my eyes in dreams or in reality. I could not take my eyes from her as she sat there. I dare say you remember the first time you ever saw your fiancée. Of course! Well, it was something like that I felt as I looked at her. I looked till I dared look no longer, and walked on; then I found that I was not the same being I had been before I had seen her. It was as though one long accustomed to the light of a candle should, for a few moments, stand in the bright sunlight and then return to semi-darkness. So it was with me. In all my dreams and visions came her face. In everything that I painted my brush drew likenesses of her. Hero, take that portrait there; do you not see the same face looking out whether as princess or peasant. Yes, it is a lovely face. But it is only the shadow of Madeleine. Days followed days; on every one, rainy or sunny, I took the same walk, and often saw her, always alone. My blind devotion grew. Every time I saw her added new fuel to the flame that was consuming me. I felt it would be impossible for me to go on, so I must speak to her whether she would be offended or no. Yet I feared even then that I should lose the pain of seeing her without speaking my thoughts, or the torture of never, perhaps, seeing her more. At any rate, I determined to risk it, and a few days after I bowed to her as I passed, and, to my unutterable joy, she nodded her head in return. How very happy I was that day! Had Rothschild left me a million or that single nod of the head of my unknown divinity to choose between, I should have unhesitatingly taken the latter. You know how I felt. I would give anything to live that day over again. Now—well I shan't dwell any more on our getting acquainted. That bow was the small end of the wedge; as the days went by the seed that had that day been planted grew and flourished. We sat daily at the foot of the poplar-tree talking with that joyful carelessness of time or man that lovers know.

"She was a charming creature, not very intellectual to be sure, in fact rather uneducated in some things; but what more charming talk could one have than in teaching such a one as she all the treasures art has left us? She was so charmingly frank and ingenuous—such a low musical voice that when she merely said, 'Do you think so?' I was thrilled with greater delight than I had ever experienced in looking at the finest creation of art or poetry.

"Such was the magic web that was being woven about me; at last the fever reached its height. I told her I loved her. Half-hoping, half fearing what her answer might be, my doubts were soon banished; for, like a dove that flies to its mate, she came to me dove-like, glorious in her blushing beauty, too fragile, too lovely for earth, I thought. She had never said much of her parents—her mother, I learned, was dead many years before. Of her father she said little, but I learned that he was often away. A remark that I ventured in regard to his profession was answered evasively. She merely said he had often very little to do, and then some times a great deal; what it was I did not ask.

"In time I was introduced to him. I found him a jolly enough old gentleman, fat and hearty, the type of the *genius* that takes things as they find them and asks for no more. We got to be capital friends in time. I spent a great deal of my time at their house, and saw with satisfaction that the father did not frown on my attentions to the daughter, which he must have noticed.

"Many hours we spent together in a state of bliss, which even you would have found sufficient in their complete happiness and peace. I was in such an atmosphere of love that life had assumed another shape since this romance had come into it. Like a disembodied spirit, I seemed to have left the body, with all earthly corruptions, and to have been borne on the win of Eros to a supreme state where care and pains were alike banished.

"Sometimes I would doubt the possibility of life going on so always; some of my brother artists in the school would smile at my notions, my absent-mindedness and dreams, or hint at my chasing a phantom of whom I really knew so little, and told me to beware lest my happiness, like Lullaby, did not fade and leave in its stead a hissing snake. I smiled at them who dared to presage ill. Like you I was invulnerable.

The autumn came on, as the leaves changed from uniform green to gold and scarlet, blazing up to a dying glory such as all summer long they had not known. I kept thinking, Will not perhaps my life be like these leaves? Am I not even now at the epoch when life seems to me all gold and rose colored, and may it not be the forerunner of the time when it shall fade to brown and gray, and then to the darkness of sorrow's winter and the barrenness of blasted visions.

"Such thoughts as these made me the more anxious to see the consummation of my hopes. Until Madeleine was really my wife I felt that maybe some unforeseen obstacle might arise to take her from me.

"I finally succeeded in getting her consent as to the day that was to make me the happiest of men. She insisted on having the wedding as

quiet as possible. No one but her father, she and I, were to be present. This did not make much difference to me. In truth, I was anxious to have her to myself entirely.

"The days went on, and the eventful day came very near, only a few more and she would be mine—entirely and for ever. I was looking forward as you do, I dare say, towards your wedding day. It is very much the same with us all, I suppose.

"After walking with Madeleine one morning I was obliged to leave her for an engagement I had.

"I shall see you this evening," I said.

"I was surprised to see a troubled look come into her clear eyes, as she answered in a tremulous voice:

"I am afraid not."

"What? I said, surprised, it was so entirely unlooked for.

"Please don't be angry," she continued: "father is going to have some of his friends here. I don't think you would care to meet them. I never do—but I must meet them this time. Don't think it strange—pray don't! I must not see you to-night. Now promise me you won't come. I will tell you everything afterwards."

"I gave her a half-promise, kissed her quickly, and was off. When I had gone some distance I turned. She was standing motionless, as though supplicating me not to doubt her; and yet, for the time, I did.

"It had always appeared strange to me that the more one worships one's idol, when everything is smoothed over, when the adoration has been given and the fullest love returned, that no one is more ready than we ourselves to grasp at the slightest straw of doubt, to magnify quibbles till they are like camels, until we are entirely miserable. So it was with me. As anatomists take the tooth of some extinct animal and construct an entire skeleton, so I, from the fact that I was not to see her for one night, wove in my fancy plot and deception enough to fill a novel. Some old lover was coming back. It was only a pretext to get rid of me for ever. She was to be spirited away from me, and I should never see her again. Friends of her father! Who were these mysterious friends whom I would not care to see? Why not? Was I not to be a member of the family soon?—had I not a claim upon them? I was miserable, like a man who makes a bed of thistles and lies on it. I kept figuratively saying, 'Ah! how extremely miserable I am!' I finally decided that I would go and see what the mysterious assembly was that I was so unreasonably kept from meeting. I had a right to know all I could about my father-in-law's friends. Then I felt that I had been unjust to Madeleine, and called myself all sorts of uncomplimentary names; but I had raised the demon of doubt and felt that I could not suffer its tortures for the day without trying to dispel the mystery that night.

"About nine o'clock in the evening, in a strange state of fear, hope and curiosity, I crept noiselessly towards the house. There was a brilliant illumination that shone from all the windows. It was a somewhat warm evening, and through the open windows I could hear the soft sounds of music.

"A party, evidently," I said to myself, feeling a sort of melancholy satisfaction that so far my doubts had not been groundless. "This is scarcely kind in Madeleine."

"I crept nearer, the bushes shielding me from observation, and came quite near one of the open windows. From there I could see what took place.

"The rooms seemed to be quite full of people, mostly men in evening dress. A singularly benevolent class, I thought, like heads of some state institution, as I found out shortly they were.

"There were two of them sitting quite close to me, with their backs turned towards me in the open window.

"That was an exceedingly neat job of M. de Paris," said one.

"Indeed it was," said the other, "a triumph of art. A great stride in surgery."

"Ah, surgeons!" I thought, "but why do they smile?"

"Do you know, M. de Lyon, I have always a certain amount of trouble in making my patients' toiletts entirely as I could wish."

"Ah!" answered the other; then ensued some sentences I did not catch, for just then I saw Madeleine come past, on her father's arm, looking as lovely as a Madonna of Raphael.

"Very handsome girl, M. de Paris's daughter," said one of my friends at the window—that the other called M. de Lyon.

"I had never heard my fiancée's father called M. de Paris, but I supposed that there might be some relations of his of the same name; so this was called to distinguish him as the Parisian member of the family.

"Yes," answered the other, "she is soon to be married."

"Ah!"

"Yes, to an American."

"I am enchanted. I hope his father-in-law won't have to practice his art on any member of his family," with a laugh.

"The young aspirant—don't know, of course?"

"No; I suppose not. It is not likely M. de Marseilles." Then they smiled in a way that made me wish I could kill them. What was this I did not know? My position was getting frightful.

"Oh, Madeleine, Madeleine, is this the beginning of the end?"

"Have you seen the improved instrument of M. de Rouen, M. de Marseilles?"

"No; but I hear it is quite a wonder—the most perfect thing of its kind. As you know, M. de Paris asked us here for the purpose of passing on its merits, or suggesting improvements."

"They have not a patient, I suppose," said M. de Marseilles, with a grin.

"Only a straw man."

"I was entirely in the dark by this time, as I was endeavoring to understand. A large shapeless thing, covered with a cloth, was brought in and stood in the middle of the room."

"My prospective father-in-law, standing by it, addressed the company, who all seemed to be of noble blood, bearing the names of the chief towns of France."

"My friends, I have to exhibit to night the new instrument of M. de Rouen. With the modesty of true genius he wishes it to speak for itself. It is so easy of manipulation that a child may work it as well as a man. To instance that, my daughter will officiate instead of myself."

"He stepped aside.

"I can almost imagine I am assisting at an operation in reality," said M. de Lyon.

"There are no people with handkerchiefs around to keep up the illusion."

"No, to be sure," answered his friend.

"I turned my eyes towards Madeleine. She was standing by the thing with a slight color in her cheeks, but with no apparent emotion. Suddenly her father drew the cloth away, and I saw a strange combination of posts and groves, a block and a knife—the latter, broad and heavy, hung over the block, on which lay, with pinioned arms, the figure of a man in straw."

"I saw, though I had never seen one before, that it was that terrible engine of death that has in its time laid so many of the best and worst in France in early graves."

"I shuddered as I saw Madeleine standing by it with no fear, no shame."

"I could not utter a word, as calmly she cut the string and the terrible knife came down with a thud, and the straw-man's head fell in the basket."

"Ah, neatly done—very neat; worthy of her father. She should adopt our profession—the Holy Order of the Guillotiners of France."

"In an instant the whole truth flashed before my eyes—my love was the daughter of the chief executioner of France—and, with a shriek of terror and grief, feeling that all my hope and happiness had been killed at the stroke of that guillotine, I hurried from the place."

"Such is the story of the girl I was engaged to."

VARIETIES.

BARTLEY CAMPBELL is engaged on a new play, to be called "A Brave Man." It is to be ready early in the fall, and will be produced in New York. He has been summoned to Germany, where "The White Slave" is now being performed. He intends to have all his plays translated and produced in German. Frau Rauh, wife of Herr Nieman, is to take the role of the "Heroine in Rags." The piece will first be produced in Munich. The Secretary of the Society of Dramatic Authors of Germany, Emil Draucker, will be the translator, but Mr. Campbell's presence will be required in the stage business and strong parts. "My Partner" will follow "The White Slave" in this series of German presentations.

It is stated that Sir Michael Costa has sent to the Naples Conservatorium an autograph copy of his opera, *Malch Adel*, accompanied by the following letter:—"This opera, composed and copied by me, was represented for the first time in the Italian Opera in Paris, in the Salle Favart, in 1837. After the fire that destroyed that theatre my score was almost miraculously found under the smoking ruins, partly consumed by fire. Having been asked to make a gift of another manuscript to the Royal College of Music in Naples I have rewritten that score, and offer it with pleasure to the celebrated archives of that College. —London, 20th March, 1883—M. Costa."—Sir Michael Costa was born at Naples in 1810, and received his musical education in the college to which he has presented the autograph of *Malch Adel*. He came to England in 1829 (to the Birmingham Festival), and has remained in this country ever since.

DION BOUTICAULT gives us the following remarks relative to *Rip Van Winkle*:—"Jefferson was anxious to appear in London. All his pieces had been played there. The managers would not give him an appearance unless he could offer them a new play. He had played a piece called *Rip Van Winkle*, but when submitted to their perusal, they rejected it. Still he was so desirous of playing *Rip* that I took down Washington Irving's story and read it over. It was hopelessly undramatic. 'Jor,' I said, 'this old story is not a pleasant fiction. It lacks romance. I dare say you made a fine sketch of the old beast, but there is no interest in him. He may be picturesque, but he is not dramatic. I would prefer to start him in a play as a young scamp—thoughtless, gay, just such a curly-headed, good humoured fellow as all the village girls would love, and the children and dogs would run after.' Jefferson threw up his hands in despair. It was totally opposed to his artistic preconception. But I insisted, and he reluctantly conceded."