

IN THE SUMMER TIME.

Amid a witchery of flowers,
That awoke me with delight!
When calm suffused the fragrant hours,
And made the moments bright;
Amid the clover and the thyme,
I met her—in the summer time.

The glowing days, with beauty fraught,
Passed silently away,
And every hope and every thought
Were beautiful as they!
And so, amid the season's prime,
I wooed her—in the summer time.

And every hour that dawned so bright,
Was sweeter than the last;
Her smile the crowning ray of light
That summer o'er me cast;
And thus, amid the pleasant thyme,
I won her—in the summer time.

And all the woodlands had a voice
To thrill me with their lay,
And every echo said, Rejoice
Upon our bridal day;
And so, amid the church bells' chime,
We wedded—in the summer time.

And like the sweetness of a dream,
The changeless years have sped,
Her constant love, the truest beam
That summer days have shed;
Till heedless of all change of clime,
Our life is always summer time!

Forest Hill, July, 1878.

ISIDORE.

THE LOVES OF HERCULES.

BY FRANK BARRETT.

I.
IOLE.

Eurytus, King of Ecbalia, decided not to accept Hercules for a son-in-law. It would never do. He might as well cease to be king as take a man into his family who would rule him, making him do all the despicable work of governing a turbulent people, and taking to himself all the accruing credit and none of the blame. That Hercules would appropriate the glory Eurytus knew full well; for the son of Jupiter, who was a master of any weapon he used, excelled in the exercise of none more than the long bow and the hatchet; the former he drew, the latter he threw, to an unrivalled extent.

At that time Hercules was a name as common in Attica as Jones at a later day in these parts, and any deed of prowess done by one of his name was at once claimed as his own particular performance by the Theban Hercules. He was prodigiously strong and vastly clever, and he had a knack of compelling folk to do as he chose, Eurytus knew; but these were attributes not wanted in a son-in-law by a king who was constitutionally weak in the knees, who was not clever, and who, moreover, had himself a very great desire to do as he liked. And it struck him that, by refusing an alliance with so great a man, he should obtain a larger space in future classical dictionaries than by accepting him; so he said very blandly.

"No, my dear friend; proud as I should be to accept the honor you propose, I am bound by a sense of reverential duty to decline a match which would certainly be regarded as a *mésalliance* by your dear papa. And I wouldn't annoy Jupiter for worlds, that I wouldn't."

It was the first time Hercules had been rebuffed, and to be balked by a puny, insignificant, knock-kneed monarch was an indignity that he could not calmly receive. He flew into a desperate passion, and looking about for a means of revenge, he caught sight of Iphitus, the infant son of Eurytus, who, at that moment, was calmly imbibing nourishment from a pap-boat in the arms of his father. (It was washing-day, the queen was out, and Eurytus was "just holding baby for five minutes.") In an instant Hercules snatched the innocent child from his parent, dabbed it on the *chiffonier*, and deliberately sat upon it. The furniture was smashed, and so was the babe.

They were rather particular about princes in those days, although they seem to have been as plentiful as, and not much more useful than, at present; and the consequences of his rash act flashed across the mind of the Theban as he surveyed the battered Iphitus.

"I've made a pretty mess of it now," thought he. And the only way of escaping the penalty of his act that appeared to him was to feign madness. So he trimmed his hair with straws, sang snatches of comic songs, and gave up drinking spirits, openly declaring that he was mad for love of Iole. Of course the tribunal before which he was accused of murder acquitted him on the ground of insanity, and the king was charged to keep him under proper restraint, he having indirectly been the cause of the lunacy.

This was not gratifying to Eurytus; Hercules required so much restraint and food, and so many visitors came to see the unhappy lover. He broke all the furniture in the palace and the heads of every one he did not like; he howled all night, so that no one could get a wink of sleep; and he once threatened to murder Eurytus when cold mutton was served up for dinner.

These sleepless nights Eurytus employed in deep thought, taxing his ingenuity for a means of ridding himself of his intolerable charge. He tried poison, but to no purpose; Hercules had the digestion of an ostrich, and prussic acid merely sharpened his appetite. But after thinking no end for three weeks, the king devised a scheme.

"I have it," said he; "yes, that's it. I see a way to reimburse myself for this outlay and that babe; and, what is more, I'll sicken this joker of going mad at my expense."

So he called Mercury to his assistance, and between them they arranged matters for the disposal of the shackled Hercules.

II.
OMPHALE.

Omphale was a lovely widow, young, and sweetly sad. She had beautiful large eyes, where sorrow seemed to dwell on suffering, while the legitimate tenants, love and laughter, were absent. But sentimental sadness suited her face, just as a nightingale's song harmonizes with the still beauty of evening.

She was Queen of Lydia, and there was at her side a vacant throne, at which she never looked without a sigh. Was it for him who was gone, or for him who should fill it?

She sat inattentively listening to the stories of her women, when her prime minister—a managing old man, who kept the hall door, squared accounts with foreign powers, and tidied up the palace before breakfast—tapped at the door, and wished to know if her majesty would purchase a fine strong Theban slave.

"I have enough women already," sighed the queen.

"Beg your pardon, your gracious majesty, but this slave is of the other denomination."

"A man? Hem! Well, I don't mind looking at him. Bring him before us."

The old minister retired, and presently introduced a slave-dealer and the slave. The latter was of magnificent proportions, and the curls on the top of his magnificent head were nicely oiled. A murmur arose from the women as they regarded the handsome bondman. "What a duck!" "Quite too dreadfully nice!"

"Awfully charming!" were the classic phrases that caught Omphale's ear. She silenced the girls with a frown, and then leaning her cheek upon her hand, her elbow upon the arm of her throne, she gazed pensively at the slave. He, with a boldness not born of slavery, met her gaze, and they looked steadily into each other's eyes while the dealer eulogized his man. Two people cannot forever look at each other; if they be of opposite sexes, in nine cases out of ten they cannot do so for three minutes. One or other changes color, and the eyes drop. Omphale reddened. Sorrow seemed fluttering in her eyes, as if it had notice to quit, and was preparing to leave. The lids closed rapidly twice or thrice, as if they were ashamed of the eyes beneath, and would hide their tell-tale glance; the corners of her lips twitched, as though tired of their long laxation. She looked down for shame, and then looked up, ashamed of being ashamed, and hard she tried to restrain her glance, knitting her pretty brows in a frown, and tightening her lips. But, oh, it was impossible to look thus long. The man was so handsome and so audacious. She turned her head away, now quite angry, and stamping her little foot upon the ground; it was so shameful that she, a queen, should feel herself conquered by a slave. The dealer had been long expatiating upon the merits of his man; but Omphale had heard nothing. She tried to listen now.

"He has three years of servitude yet unexpired," the dealer said; "at the end of that time his freedom must be given him."

"Methink this slave of thine doth not wait for freedom to be given him; he takes it, with a witness to it."

"If your majesty knew to what uses his courage can be applied you would excuse his being a little bold. Behave yourself, sir."

"Is he very courageous?" asked Omphale.

"The most daring young man, I assure you. Is there anything you can suggest by way of testing his valor, anything you think would terrify him?"

"Robbers!" whispered Omphale, with bated breath.

"Oh, catching robbers in his ruling passion. I assure you he looks under all the beds every night with the hope of finding some one there."

"Oh, wouldn't it be nice to have him in the house?" murmured one of Omphale's women.

In truth, since the king's death no man had slept in the palace except the prime minister, and he was as timid as a kitten. Lydia was overrun with robbers, and the poor girls never went to bed without fear.

"If I buy you," said Omphale, addressing Hercules, "will you have any objection to examining every part of the rooms before we retire to rest?"

"There is nothing that I should like better," said he, with a look of determination.

The slave-dealer in consternation clapped his hand over the slave's mouth. At the same time Omphale put her hand to her mouth to suppress a cough, and all the young ladies of the court followed her example.

"Do you think you are strong enough for the situation?" asked the queen.

Hercules smiled, and, taking between his fingers the chain that held his wrists, he snapped it like a thread. Then he looked about, and, seeing the premier near, he caught him by the shoulder, turned him upside down, and balanced him on his extended hand.

"That will do," said the queen, a remark which was echoed by the disconcerted factotum.

"But I shall be almost afraid of one so powerful."

He fell upon his knees at her feet, and bowed his head. They were pretty little feet.

Omphale smiled to see this great monster humbled before her—quite a small woman.

"I think I will have him. You can leave him here. My prime minister will pay you."

The slave-dealer retired. The slave still knelt at the queen's feet. Oh, they were pretty feet!

"How shall I chastise you if you are naughty?" asked Omphale.

Hercules lifted up one of the little feet ever so gently, and, taking off the sandal, handed it to the queen. He kissed the pretty white foot before he put it down; and Omphale, to punish him, beat him with her sandal—tender little taps that a fly would have borne patiently. The slave liked it.

"What is your name?" asked Omphale.

"Hercules," replied the slave.

He certainly cleared the place of robbers effectively, so that there was scarcely a tradesman, a priest, a managing director, or a burglar to be found in the whole of Lydia. Omphale was very grateful for these services. He was clever at many things, and especially at charades; so was Omphale. But like most clever people who think they can act well, these two delighted to take the most unsuitable parts.

On one occasion Omphale dressed up in Hercules' lion-skin, etc., and he managed to bind himself up in her robes. Of course they were flattered greatly, every one declaring that the difference could not be detected; which certainly must have been a very great falsehood, when you come to think of it. However, they did not see through the flattery, and it was their great delight to assume each other's character.

Now one day there was a pic-nic, and, after dinner, Omphale, as usual, put on the lion's skin, and Hercules took the queen's head-dress, (1) and once more every one laughed and complimented them. Then the company broke up, and wandered about the woods in pairs. Omphale and Hercules were together. They had a very pleasant walk, and did not think of returning to their company until the evening was far advanced. Then they could not find their way, and wandered up all manner of turnings without seeing a soul, or even a body.

Poor Omphale began to cry with apprehension and alarm, and it took all the tenderness Hercules could command to console her. She grew weary, and he carried her; she grew sleepy and chill, he not getting a word from her for some time, growing tired of the monotony of walking out of one pit-fall into another, looked about for a resting-place. There was a cavern at hand, where lived a goatman named Pan, and into this cavern Hercules carried Omphale. There was moss there, and this Hercules divided, making a bed on one side for the queen and another in the opposite corner for himself. This he did with his foot, still carrying Omphale, who slept as quietly as an infant. Then he laid her gently down, and softly disengaged her arms that were twined about his neck.

Hercules could not help kissing her as he said good-night. Then he took his place in the other corner and fell asleep, not heeding the chill night air, though his robes were Omphale's and thin.

The moon shone full into the cave, and very late came Pan back to his cave. The first thing he saw was one asleep on his moss.

"Whom have we here?" bleated he, in a thin voice.

He caught sight of the lion's skin and club, and knowing them to belong to Hercules, he retreated quickly to the opposite side. There was another asleep; but this one had the soft tunic and toga of the queen.

"Ha, ha!" said Pan, and he bent down over the sleeper.

Hercules was awake by his sense of smell.

"What a smell of goats!" said he.

Opening his eyes he saw a hideous face bending down to kiss him. He planted his foot in the stomach of Pan, and shot him out through the opening of the cave—far, far away, and he was found in the middle of the next week. *Ex pede Herculem.*

But the noise frightened Omphale, and her terror and dread were not to be appeased by words from a distance.

After that they were married.

III.
DEIANIRA.

Omphale may have died, or Hercules may have made a mistake. That makes no difference to history; and the fact is to be told that he left Lydia and Omphale and married Deianira.

I do not think he would have done so had it not been that Acheus wished to get her. Well, having married her, he has to take her with him. But he was not very anxious about her; for when they came to the swollen Evenus, he left her to be carried across by Nessus, instead of taking her in his own arms. If any one could carry her over safely, it was Hercules; but the rational presumption is that he did not care for Deianira, and only wanted her when there was a chance of losing her. He sat down moodily on the bank, laving himself amid the stream, and watched Nessus with Deianira.

Now it happened that Nessus was an old admirer of Deianira; and no sooner was her husband's back turned than he began to talk to her; and as he spoke he artfully walked along the margin of the river instead of across it, every

(1) It is curious to remark that this strange freak is frequently observed at the present day.

moment increasing the distance between himself and Hercules.

"O, Deianira," said he, "do you remember me—Nessus, the son of Ixion?"

"What! the greedy little boy with the curly hair?"

"Yes; see what my greediness has brought me to. I wanted too much happiness, and I lost all. I wanted you, and without you I cared for nothing, so that my disregard for things in general made me accept this waterman's situation. I never thought I should hold you in these arms. How plump you are!"

"Leave off!"

"Deianira, I love you."

"Well, you mustn't. I'm married, and my husband's looking."

"Your husband! Bah!"

"What?"

"He cares for none save Iole."

"Iole! who is she?"

"The daughter of Eurytus."

"Hold me up."

"Do you feel faint, dearest?"

"No; but you are dragging my skirts in the water."

"Oh let me take you from here! Let me fly with you, or rather swim, to a subterraneous path, by which we may escape your husband."

"What! leave my husband when I know he loves another woman! Never! I'll stick to him."

"Nay, then, I will carry you off by force."

"I will kick."

"I will drop you in the water."

Deianira thought of her wedding robes, and shrieked at the prospect of their being spoiled. Hercules heard her scream; and seeing that there was a possibility of Deianira being taken from him, he became interested in securing her, dead or alive. He drew his bow and shot at the distant group. The bolt struck into Nessus.

"I am hit; I die," he cried.

"Don't die in the middle of the river, for heaven's sake. Get on to the shore, do."

"On one condition. Avenge my death upon Hercules."

Deianira thought of Iole.

"To oblige you I will."

Then Nessus carried her to shore, and died; and with his last breath he prescribed a punishment for Hercules.

IV.
IOLE AGAIN.

Eurytus gave a special *fête* and grand archery meeting in honor of his daughter's birthday.

Iole was eighteen, and the father declared that she should be the prize of the most skillful toxophilite. It was an arrangement that suited him well; for the entrance fee was high, and the number of suitors and shooters large. But Iole was not pleased; for in her memory still lingered a vision of Hercules. He was a man compared with whom all others were pigmies. She loved him, and could love none other. He was so handsome and so great; and these men she saw around her were so horribly ugly and undersized, with names that no one had ever heard of. He who was reputed the best shot had anything but winning ways, and the look of him made Iole feel unwell.

The archers were all assembled upon the lawn; and Iole, pale and sad, was seated upon a dais, whence she looked round disconsolately on her admirers. The numbers increased as the time for the contest approached. The king was in great glee, for his carpet-bag was full of collected fees. Presently a bell rang, and the king cried, in a joyous voice, "Fire away!"

The toxophilites rushed to the scratch, and Iole gave a sigh of relief as the crowd of ugly men left her. The next moment she heard her sigh echoed; and turning about she beheld at her elbow Hercules. With a little suppressed scream of delight she gave him her hand, then drew it back hastily, and looked at the groups of eager archers. They were all engaged upon business, and with them Eurytus who was keeping the score. All had their backs toward her; so she turned to Hercules, and held out her cheek to be kissed.

He looked very nice, for he was in full archery costume, which in those days was very like the becoming uniform worn by members of the Ancient Order of Foresters on *fête* days. He had a gorgeous hat, turned up at the sides, and studded with large brass nails; and feathers of all the primitive colors nodded in the breeze.

"Oh, what have you come here for?" asked Iole.

"You, dear," replied Hercules.

"But you know papa doesn't like you."

"That makes no difference so long as his daughter does not share his sentiments."

"And are you still single?"

"Quite," replied Hercules, with the most innocent smile.

"You are nice."

"Yes, the costume is rather tasty, isn't it?"

"Because you wear it. Have you had any refreshment?"

"One sip of nectar. But I thirst for more. Will you give me another taste?"

"They might see."

"Come into the shrubbery, and set up a little refreshment on your own account."

"You naughty darling."

They walked among the myrtles until a loud shout proclaimed that the victory was won—so far: then Hercules strolled down to the group and bent his bow, while Iole, who had slyly re-