

## SEA WEEDS.

I  
 Alone with the sea—  
 Is there never a voice  
 To return my heart's deep sigh?  
 Alone with the sea—  
 And the moon and the stars  
 That illuminate your lowering sky!

Alone with the sea—  
 Can no one tell  
 What the secret of her unrest?  
 Alone with the sea  
 I could throw myself  
 And weep on her heaving breast!

Alone with the sea—  
 I seem to hear  
 In her moan my soul's own lay  
 Like the cry of a child  
 That has lost its home  
 And asks but to know the way!

## II.

The tempest went from the ocean wave,  
 And passed along the white sand;  
 A gentle breeze awoke in the south,  
 And hastened across the land;  
 And kissed the tear from the restless wave,  
 And the sigh from the sounding deep,  
 And soothed with the softest lullaby  
 The ocean at last to sleep.

## III.

The stars are bright in the sky to-night,  
 And the moon looks over the sea;  
 But deeply impressed within my lone breast  
 Is a vision more lovely to me.

I hear the lave of the rippling wave,  
 And a whisper from every tree;  
 But over my soul a music doth roll,  
 That is sweeter than all to me.

On the mountain low lie the clouds like snow,  
 And a silence comes over the sea;  
 But a holier calm like some heavenly balm  
 Is falling to-night upon me.

How beautiful now is the heaven's pure brow,  
 And the glory on land and sea;  
 But the moonlight stream of my fancy's dream  
 Is dearer than all to me.

GOWAN LEA.

## "A BARROW OF PRIMROSES."

## I.

## HOW THE ROMANCE BEGAN.

Chancery Lane is not a very likely spot for a romance to have its beginning. There is no poetry about it. It is a long, unsightly, dreary street filled at certain times of the day with noise and bustle enough, as white-wigged barristers hurry along the narrow pavements, their hands filled with briefs and law papers, or business men run down on their way to Fleetstreet, or the traffic of carts, and cabs, and omnibuses, and such plebeian vehicles, wend along to the wider thoroughfare beyond.

A group of barristers were standing one Spring morning under the gloomy archway leading to Lincoln's Inn. They were wigged and gowned, and talking eagerly together of some case of peculiar interest which was occupying the public mind.

"Here comes Heron Archer," exclaimed one of the group. "Looks as if he had a power of work on hand, doesn't he?"

The young man alluded to was walking leisurely along. He saw the little knot of talkers, and recognising two with a careless nod was about to pass by.

"Stay, Archer," cried one. "Have you heard how Gray vs. Wood is going on? Your friend has not a leg to stand on."

"Have you turned him into a Greenwich pensioner already?" asked Archer with a smile, a haughty smile in the man who had addressed him. Heron Archer was a tall, well built young fellow of some six and twenty years, with nothing very remarkable about him save his powerful figure and a certain good-humoured expression of calmness and determination about the face. The clear gray eyes and short-cut hair and drooping moustache were just the characteristics of many an Englishman, and it is probable that in a crowd no one would have thought of singling him out as being in any way better looking or more remarkable than his fellow-men.

Yet he was so unlike most of his friends and associates as to have won the appellation of "eccentric," and almost everyone who knew him declared there was something about the young man odd and Quixotic, and queer, though he was a clever fellow enough all the same.

Even now, as he stood listening to the clatter of his friends, his eyes were roving to a barrow heaped up with masses of sweet pale primroses, and then to the face of the boy selling them and while he appeared to be listening to the intricacies of Gray vs. Wood his thoughts were speculating as to how many of those bunches the boy would sell in such an unlikely locality as this where men had no leisure to listen to nature's messages sent from mossy banks and dim green woods, but thought only of work and money getting.

"You should have heard Pullins' speech," said Herbert Gray, a rising young barrister. "It was first-rate—the nearest thing I ever listened to. There can be no question as to the issue of the case now. I wish you had been in court. You are such an idle dog. Why, bless the man!" he exclaimed in amazement, "where's he run off to?—by Jove—the boy's down!"

"What a plucky thing!—see, he's got him out!" exclaimed the aroused Pullins.

"See how that horse is kicking—he can't hold him. Let's go and help."

And regardless of dignity and wigs the four friends rushed to the scene of the accident.

How had it occurred? It was all so quick—so sudden. The boy had been standing by his barrow a moment before, a subject of speculation to Heron Archer's wandering thoughts. Some one had beckoned him across the street. Without looking right or left he darted across the street and the next instant was lying under the hoofs of a horse, quick as lightning Heron Archer had seen the danger and rushed to the rescue. His strong arm was on the reins. He forced the animal back on its haunches, to the imminent danger of occasioning a new catastrophe by the upsetting of the hansom cab to which it belonged, and he slipped like an eel through the plunging hoofs, and was safe on the pavement ere any one could recover presence of mind enough to give assistance. So far well. But the hansom cab had an occupant, and that occupant was a lady. When the horse was released it showed many signs of ill-temper, at the treatment it had received, and reared and snorted and shook its head, and altogether behaved in a manner quite unbecoming a well-broken London cab horse. Perhaps he was new to the business.

The lady became alarmed. She appealed to Heron Archer. "Ask the man to stop," she cried. "This is a horrible animal. I have been frightened to death all the time I have been in the cab."

Her face was very pale. Two frightened eyes met the calm glance of the young barrister. He needed no second bidding.

"Stop," he said sternly to the man. "You are a very careless driver. You had no business to come dashing down a street like this at the rate I saw you!"

The man made some sulky rejoinder, but he stopped his steed at that peremptory order, and Heron Archer assisted the lady to alight. She trembled very much.

"Allow me to pay the fare," he said gently, then sternly demanded the fare and settled it with another caution against such driving as had occasioned the catastrophe.

He then turned to his companion. She looked better now; the colour was returning to her cheeks.

"Thank you so much," she said gratefully, as she handed him the money he had paid. "Where is the boy? I am so sorry. I do hope he is not hurt."

"He is over there," said her companion, pointing to where the hero of the event was already the centre of a sympathizing and admiring crowd.

"I should so like to speak to him—to know he is not hurt," she said eagerly.

"I will bring him here," said Heron Archer. "The crowd is dispersing; you see. Ah! there comes a policeman now he is not wanted."

He crossed over to the boy.

"The lady wants to speak to you. She is afraid you were hurt," he said.

"No, sir, not a bit, thanks to you," said the lad gratefully. "I don't believe I've got as much as a bruise."

The crowd began to melt away as suddenly as it had risen.

The lad, with the dust and mud of the road on his torn clothes and bare arms and face, looked anything but an inviting object; but the lady's face was full of sweet compassion and sympathy as she questioned him and heard in course of time, many more of the events and troubles of his life than that one accident.

She got his address and bought as many of his primroses as would fill her basket, and paid him treble the value of her purchase.

Then, cutting short his thanks and blessings she turned to the spectator of her gentle charity, and with a grave bow was about to pass on. But Heron Archer was not so minded.

"Pardon me," he said abruptly. "This is a rough neighbourhood for a lady. Can I be of any further assistance to you?"

"No; I thank you," she said graciously but firmly. "I know my way, I am close to Lincoln's Inn Field, and I shall meet my father there."

He could not say more. He would have given anything to have detained her—to have heard the soft low voice—to have gazed again into the soft shy eyes, but he had no pretext to delay her. He could but return her bow and watch the graceful figure vanish through the gloomy archway, taking with it—for him—all the sunshine and brightness of the young spring day.

That was how the romance began.

Heron Archer went back to his chambers in the Temple, and then sat himself down and tried to bring his mind to the work he had to do, but sorely no work in the legal profession entails the perpetual drawing, on every available sheet of paper of a fair girlish profile, which was the sole use of time, fingers and brains that Heron Archer made that morning. And none of the drawings satisfied him. He tore them all up in disgust at last—all, save one sketch, which displeased him less than the others. That one he locked away in a drawer of his writing table, and then in a most unsettled frame of mind he put on his hat and went out to get some lunch.

"I wonder if I shall ever see her again?" he thought impatiently.

It was strange for a face to haunt him so. He was not a man who held women of much account, or ever troubled his head about them; but now, suddenly, he could not put this pale sweet face out of his mind, or cease to hear the

echo of that low voice. The voice in especial had pleased his rather exacting fancy, for if he had one weakness it was for a perfect sweet-toned woman's voice, and he had never heard one like this.

How it lingered on his ear all through that day! How many times he found himself gazing into vacancy, wrapped in a vague dream, yet always having that same soft music floating through the mists of imagination and thrilling his whole soul with its spell!

"Pooh, this is all nonsense, I shall forget her to-morrow," he said, with angry impatience, as he sought his couch that night. He had forgotten other women so easily—had cared for them so lightly, why should it not be the same now? Why? Well, he could not answer that question; he only knew as to to-morrow, and yet to-morrow passed on, and days came and went, and the busy hum and stir of life was about him, and he did his usual work, and tried to appear his usual self, that there was a difference somewhere in it all.

Nothing was the same quite. The flavor had gone out of life, and it was dull, insipid, commonplace.

One evening he bethought himself suddenly of the barrow of primroses, and remembered also that he had the boy's address. He resolved to go and see him; perhaps the girl had already done so; he might hear of her, learn where she lived. The thought was delightful. He put it into execution without loss of time.

It was about 6 o'clock when he left his chambers and went on his errand. Such visits were nothing new to him. He had a score of poor pensioners on his bounty, and did more good in his quiet unostentatious fashion than many a millionaire with his pompous donations. For there is so much more in charity than mere money—than the actual momentary relief of bodily necessities. A kind word, a token of sympathy, a smile of encouragement, an outspoken appreciation of manly efforts to fight against the ills and temptations of life—all these which cost little to the giver, linger longer in the mind of the recipient than the gold which is pompously offered and considered as more than equivalent for any other expression of sympathy.

After half an hour's walking he found the court he was in search of. It was dark and foul, and full of miserable tenements, at one of which he paused and knocked.

A thin slatternly woman came to the door. "Does Jack Murphy live here?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the woman, surveying her visitor with evident emotion.

"Is he in? Can I see him?" he continued.

The woman regarded him doubtfully.

"The lad hasn't been doing anything wrong, has he?" she questioned anxiously; "or maybe you're one of them School Board chaps again."

"No," he said with his pleasant smile. "Both your suppositions are wrong. I only want to see if Jack has got over the effects of his accident the other day. Are you his mother?"

"Yes. Are you the gentleman he told me of, who kept the horse from running over him?" she exclaimed with sudden eagerness.

"Yes."

"Oh, come in, sir, pray, if you do not mind our poor room. Jack has always been talking of you. He's all right, not a bit hurt. My! won't he be glad to see you!"

Heron Archer followed her into the close, dark room at once. He was accounted a fastidious man, and one whose artistic taste was rarely at fault, but there was no sign of disgust in his face as his eyes roved over the dirt and disorder around, and people who declared they hardly dared invite him to their tasteful, artistic rooms for fear of his cynical criticism, would have stared at him in amazement now.

The place seemed full of children, of all ages and sizes, and in various stages of dirt and raggedness. There was nothing around that was not wretched and hideous and unsightly; but Heron Archer spoke pleasantly to the wondering urchins, and seated himself on the rickety chair by the fireplace, and made himself so at home that they stood and gazed in wondering admiration, and Mrs. Murphy herself forgot to blush for her own neglect and untidiness. Heron Archer learned all about the family. The father worked as compositor at a printing-office in Fleet street; Jack, the eldest, a lad of thirteen, sold flowers and fruit in the streets; the intermediate-aged children went to school; the younger ones tumbled about in the dirty court at home. There was nothing pathetic or sad in the story; it was only one very commonplace, very dreary, and very often to be heard; hundreds and thousands, in the great city and its suburbs, lived similar lives, shared similar fates, told similar stories. Heron Archer knew that well.

These people had a roof to shelter them and enough food for the many mouths—that was enough for them. They drudged on in an aimless, indifferent fashion. They were neither happy nor unhappy, but somehow the utter barrenness and unloveliness of such an existence seemed to Heron Archer a more pitiable fate than the sharpness of utter poverty; the pathos of a bitter struggle.

There was nothing to do here, nothing to relieve, nothing to comfort. "They were well enough," the woman said.

Well enough! No wonder the visitor sighed, thinking how hopeless it seemed to urge her to make things a little better; to explain that to give cleanliness and tidiness to the home, and neatness one day, and stint and deprivation at other times, was good management. However,

he was too wise to urge anything at present. He sat there and chatted with them all, and made friends even with the dirty crying baby, and yet he could not summon up courage to ask Jack that one question burning on his tongue. He rose at last to go, and his eye fell upon a large bowl of primroses in the window. He bent over them for a moment.

"Have you ever seen that lady again?" he asked abruptly, with a curious wonder that his heart should throb in so odd a fashion, as he awaited for the answer.

"Oh, yes, sir!" exclaimed Jack eagerly. "She came round here the very next day. So kind was she too, and gave mother half a sovereign to buy some clothes for the baby, and spoke so nice to me, and wanted to know if she could do anything for me. I told her as how I should like to be errand-boy in a shop, and she said she would speak to her father about me; and I'm sure she won't forget, though she do seem a grand lady and was dressed so beautiful, and had lots of gold money in her purse."

"She told you her name, I suppose? questions the visitor with well assumed carelessness.

"No, sir; she didn't."

"Nor where she lived?"

"No, sir."

Heron Archer feels as if the world had grown suddenly dark and empty again. He took leave of the family, and with a bunch of primroses in his hand (the pretty yellow flowers seem always associated now with her,) goes away through the noisy, dirty court, and so home to his chambers once more.

Charity had brought him no reward this time.

## II.

## AN ECCENTRIC RESOLUTION.

Another week went by, but, despite the press of business and the fact that he was at last retained on a great and important case, Heron Archer could not get this fancy out of his mind.

The fair sweet face floated forever before his eyes and haunted his dreams. Such an experience was new to his life, and perplexed and worried him accordingly. He heard no more and saw no more of the girl, and gradually began to think it unlikely he should do so.

One evening, just as he was putting aside his papers and thinking of leaving off work for the day, a note was brought to him by a little ragged urchin. It contained a few hastily scrawled lines, but they evidently gave him deep concern, for he put on his hat, locked his room, and went out at once.

He hailed the first passing hansom and was driven rapidly to the north-west of London. In a small, mean looking street of this district he alighted and dismissed the cab.

A few steps up the street brought him to the house he sought.

A moment later, and he was bending over a slight young figure lying on a couch in a poor, ill-furnished room. In one corner stood a piano littered over with music, and the instrument, though plain, was solid and good of its kind, and looked singularly out of place among the shabby furniture of the room.

"So you are ill; suffering again," said Heron Archer gently, as he bent over the young man. "I am sorry to hear it."

The pale wan face lit up brightly at the sight of the welcome visitor; the young man made an effort to rise, but sank back directly, while a violent fit of coughing shook him from head to foot.

The strong man by his side looked with merciless compassion at the slight figure, the thin, pale face, and delicate, attenuated features.

"Hush! lie still," he said. "I see what it is; you have caught fresh cold again. You must take care of yourself for a day or two. You will be all right again then. What is it I can do for you?"

"It is so vexatious, so unfortunate," said the invalid faintly. "I had such a good engagement for to-night, and up to an hour ago I was in hopes I should be able to keep it. But I see it is no use. I wrote to you, I thought you might help me. I tried to get a deputy, and could not. I was to have two guineas. It is such a loss to me. But perhaps you know some one who can take my place; only it is such short notice. At 9 is the ball."

"What ball? Where?"

"It is a private subscription ball, and takes place at the Marlborough Rooms, not far from here. I was to play the piano. There are three other musicians—cornet, violin and double bass. It is most unfortunate. Someone must be got."

"Well, I'll see what I can do for you," said Heron Archer cheerfully. "And you shan't lose the two guineas if I can help it. Is this the music?"

"Yes; it's mostly waltzes. I have played with these men before. They are good fellows, and we get on very well. I know they'll be sorry for me."

"There's not much time certainly," said Heron Archer, looking at his watch. "Do you know what I've been thinking, Stanton? I'll take your place myself."

"You, sir!" and the young fellow raised himself upon his elbow, and stared at the visitor as if he thought he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"Yes, I," laughed Heron Archer, amusedly.