

## FLOATING.

BY CECILIA EDGAR.

Floating through the sunset blaze,  
Floating through the evening haze,  
Floating till the crimson sky  
In the water seems to lie.

Floating through the twilight hours,  
Perfumed with the breath of flowers,  
Floating till the moonbeams bright  
Silver o'er the stream with light.

Floating through the shadows deep,  
Where the water-lilies sleep,  
Floating through the whispering reeds,  
Through the tangled river weeds.

Floating too, oh, heart of mine,  
Back along the stream of time,  
Floating back to years of old,  
Golden days and hours untold.

Floating down the past so fleet,  
Scenes now vanish'd, sadly sweet,  
Scenes that now can scarce be seen,  
For the graves that lie between.

Floating out of busy life,  
Out of weary toil and strife,  
Out of glaring noon-tide heat,  
Into waters calmly sweet.

## "THAT LITTLE FRENCHMAN."

## CHAPTER VI.

## RIVIERE MAKES PLANS.

"Are you mad, Rivière?"

The question was asked by Pierre, as he stood holding the other by the wrists, and gazing fixedly in his eyes.

"Mad?—yes," was the reply, given at last, in a deep, hoarse voice. "It is enough to make me. But, there, let go—it is over now."

And with a sigh that was almost a groan, Rivière crept shivering away to the darkest corner of their cell, and sat there motionless till the coming of the gaoler with their morning meal.

The interval had been spent by Pierre with his eternal straw plait, which grew yard by yard, and was rolled in a neat coil as he went on.

"Breakfast," said Pierre, as soon as they were alone; and he laid his hand upon his companion's shoulder.

To his surprise, Rivière rose up, calm and thoughtful-looking, holding out his hand, which the other grasped with effusion.

"That is better," he said.

"Better?" replied Rivière, with a sad smile. "Well, yes—I think so. One must live; for there is much to do in the future. Pierre, I was mad all last night; but it is all past now, and I have begun to think out the future. I thank you for saving my life. But it will go hard with others."

Pierre looked searchingly at his fellow-prisoner, wondering whether a greater madness were not on him now; but it was only to see him sit and eat quietly of the bread, and drink the poor, thin coffee brought for their morning meal.

Days glided by, with Rivière turned thoughtful and silent. The restless pacing of the floor was at an end, and for hours he would not stir, but sat as if revolving some plan. The restless nights, too, ceased, and the prison seemed at times quite cheerful to Pierre, when his companion sat down and conversed with him quietly about some ordinary matter—the length of his straw plait, the quality of the food, or the gloom or brightness of the day.

"There is something to come of this," thought Pierre; and at times a shiver of apprehension ran through him.

Was this the calm that was to be succeeded by a storm—by a maniacal outbreak?

He watched Rivière nervously by day, and at night he never retired without a feeling of dread, lest, even if his fellow-prisoner refrained from attacking him, he should find him some morning dead by his own hand.

And yet all seemed very much altered. Rivière was, to all appearances, quiet and resigned to his fate; and by degrees the apprehensions of Pierre became lulled, till one morning they broke out afresh, for Rivière said to him, quietly—

"The sharpened nail, Pierre, that you took away from me that morning—you have it safe?"

"Safe?—yes. Hidden away where you could never find it," exclaimed Pierre, excitedly.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rivière, smiling sadly. "I shall not attempt suicide again. I was mad that morning, Pierre; but it is all past now, and I mean to live. There, do not look so suspiciously at me. I am not trying to deceive you. Only, keep that nail safely—we may require it."

No more passed that day nor the next; and straw plait after plait was made, and afterwards sold for a trifle by the gaolers of the prison; the money obtained being expended in some little attempt to alleviate the wretchedness of their fare. Pierre grew more and more satisfied with the behaviour of his companion; for Rivière began to plait straw by his side, working with tolerable neatness, till Pierre exclaimed one day—

"There, did I not tell you how this work would prove a relief?"

To his amazement, Rivière did not reply, but sat busily using his fingers; till, suddenly, he threw down the plait and said—

"Never mind the straw. Do you feel certain that this is La Peray?"

"Yes—certain," was the reply. "And this must be the Gironde passing by the walls."

"The Gironde? Yes—the river we crossed when they brought us in here. Do you think they mean to keep us here?"

"Who can say? See how we have been changed about already. There are far-off islands where we might be taken—Cayenne, Martinique; or perhaps they may keep us at home here, for are there not the galleys at Toulon?" said Pierre, bitterly.

And he sighed as he thought of the hard labor, and looked at his soft white hands.

"Even that would be better, out in the free air," exclaimed Rivière, with animation. "But," he continued, grimly, "there is escape from it all."

"Hush!" whispered Pierre, shuddering as he recalled how that morning he had arrested his companion's hand just as, in his mad despair, he was about to pierce his throat with a nail he had contrived to draw from their table, and had sharpened on the stone floor to a keen edge. "Hush! That will come in its own good time. It is not for us—"

"But I mean real escape," said Rivière, with animation—"escape from here, and, if needs be, fight for our liberty."

"Escape!" exclaimed Pierre, gazing with a startled aspect at the speaker, as if he doubted his sanity. "What! Get out—away from prison?"

"Yes; escape—freedom."

"But how?" said Pierre, excitedly.

"Let us think it out," was the reply. "But, first, how long have we been here?"

The little bag of pieces of straw was once more brought into requisition, and after counting, Pierre said—

"Six weeks to-day."

"Six weeks!—six weeks only! It seems like a year. But let us think it out. Don't speak to me now."

He went and sat down upon the edge of his bed, wrinkled up his face, and remained silent for quite an hour, during which Pierre looked up from his straw-plaiting from time to time, to scrutinize the earnest face before him.

Twice he essayed to draw Rivière into conversation upon the engrossing theme; but without further result than a sign to be silent.

And in this fashion ended the day.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE WATCHWORD.

The night passed without a sign from Rivière, and the younger man lay restless and feverish, the words he had heard having raised up exciting visions for the future. Towards morning, though, he dropped asleep, to dream of freedom; but his rest was brief, for at daybreak he was aroused by Rivière shaking him roughly.

"Up!" said the latter, sternly—"up, quickly. We have wasted time, and now we must work."

"What for?" said Pierre.

"What for? For liberty and justice. Now to work."

They sat down in the corner of the cell, talking for a while; then, rising, Rivière walked to the wall beneath the grated window of their cell, and leaned his arms against it, stooping so as to form of his body an incline, up which Pierre climbed, so that he could stand upon his companion's back, hold on by the bars, and gaze long and earnestly from the grating.

Now and again there came the slow, measured tramp of the sentry on duty, whose beat lay right beneath their window; and at such times Pierre would loose his hold upon the bars, and, merely steadying himself by resting his fingers upon the still, stoop down, and wait impatiently until the soldier had passed.

Three times this had occurred, and as often the inspection was resumed, Rivière always replying to his companion's query as to whether he was tired—

"Go on."

At last the sentry paused just in front of the grated window, and they heard him ground his musket upon the pavement. Pierre leaped lightly down, and together they retired to the cell corner.

"Well," said Rivière, in a whisper, "what's in the front?"

"High wall."

"And on the left?"

"A higher wall."

"The right?"

"Wall, whose top I cannot see."

"Could you see nothing more?" asked Rivière.

"Nothing but cruel, hard cold stones everywhere."

"But if you had stood higher?"

"My head touched the top of the opening as it was," said Pierre, gloomily; and then the prisoners sat thinking.

"We must escape, Pierre," said Rivière, after half an hour's silence.

"Yes; but how?" said the other, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

"By constant trying. The rat gnaws his way through where he will."

"Yes; but we are no rats," said Pierre, bitterly.

"And the bird beats at its wires, or the door, till the first grow loose, or the latter is unfastened," continued Rivière, without heeding his companion's words.

"Or wears its poor breast bare of feathers, and dies of a broken heart," cried Pierre, passionately. "Let it rest! What can we do in this stony tomb but write our epitaphs upon its walls, and then lie down quietly and die?"

"As you deserve to die," said Rivière, "for being a coward. You would have killed the King."

"No," said Pierre, eagerly, "I would not. I begged that he might be spared, though he had cruelly persecuted those who belonged to me. It was in a mad fit of revenge, mingled with what they called patriotism, that they were bent upon his destruction. What could I do? Would you have had me denounce—"

Rivière started as if he had been stung.

"Would you have had me give up those who were my relatives and friends? Was the King to be more to me than these?"

"But you countenanced the deed with your presence."

"Yes; but was I not forced? They knew that I was against the plot, so they would not trust me, lest I should betray them. So I was made to be a witness of it all."

Pierre shuddered as he spoke.

"It was a cowardly, cruel act," said Rivière; "and one for which others suffer. Look at me."

"I declared you were innocent a score of times," said Pierre, passionately; "but they would not hear me."

"Let that pass now," said Rivière. "We have other things to think of."

He rose from his seat, and slowly and carefully began to examine every stone in the floor and walls of the cell—tapping each with his knuckles, and testing the cement in the interstices with the tooth from a metal comb. Now he was in the dark corners, now reaching high up above his head; but every step was taken earnestly, and with an air of keen investigation which nothing escaped.

A word from Pierre arrested him, and in two steps he was at his seat, calmly picking his nails; for there was the sound of footsteps outside, gradually coming nearer. Then came a cessation of the steps, the rattling of bolts and keys; and then the gaoler appeared with their rations, which he placed upon their bench, whilst his two attendants looked round the place, examining wall and window.

Another minute, and the door was once more banged to, and bolted, and the steps heard to go echoing away.

"Eat," said Rivière, pushing the black bread to his companion. "We have only one thing to think of now—escape. Eat, and grow strong; for we shall need all our power."

The miserable meal was eaten in silence; and then, with his eyes glittering and his teeth set, Rivière rose up.

"Now, then," he said, "put away that straw plait. We must get to work, for I cannot sit down, and die here. I must meet her again, face to face."

"But, mind, I do not accuse her," said Pierre. "Nor I," said Rivière. "My wife—Madame Rivière—shall have her opportunities for defence. I am no foolish Othello in my passions; but, as the judge said to me at my trial, the case looks black against her; and as to Lemaire—"

He said those last words through his teeth, and then stopped, breathing hard, with an intensity in his expression of countenance that made Pierre shudder, as he thought over the possible result of a meeting between these men.

"Have patience," said Pierre. "Time works strange changes. Matters are, perhaps, not so bad as we have painted them."

And once more he took up the straw plait, and began to add to its length.

"Patience!" exclaimed Rivière, angrily.

"Life is too short for patience, and we have much to do, instead of waiting for it to be done. Life, Pierre, must henceforth for us be wild, exciting, feverish. We must work together for life, since the existence here is but death. And now, once more—escape! You hear that word? It is to be henceforth, till we are free, our watchword—our sole thought, our very life. Escape! You know what it means? It is a secret that we must penetrate. There will be obstacles and dangers, sleepless nights and restless days, pain and weariness, bitter suffering; but it will always cheer us on, and we must achieve our liberty, or die in the attempt. You understand—you are with me?"

"Yes," said Pierre, "to the end."

"Then we shall succeed," cried Rivière.

"Yes," said Pierre, with his face lighting up—"escape!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

## AN ARRIVAL.

It must have been the size of the house that made people in it given to yawn, for the houses in Grosvenor-square are of goodly proportions. In summer time, the very windows, half open, seem to be in the act of yawning, and the great door likewise, when "the family" are out at a dinner party, and the butler and gentlemen in uniform are cooling themselves, and yawning upon the whitened steps. As a rule, houses in Grosvenor-square are not taken by their inhabitants: they come to them by birth, inheritance—though generally, with the clog upon them of a yearly rental of no slight sum. In fact, the rent is stated in three figures, and those of goodly size.

Sir Richard Lawler only had to walk into possession of his house in Grosvenor-square when he came of age. In fact, his was not a

brain that would have achieved a mansion. He found it well-furnished, too, but yawning; and he yawned, till he woke up one day to the fact that the place was not completely furnished without a wife.

Even here he had no trouble, for his friends selected the lady for him; and one day, when he was weary of hunting, tired of throwing salmon flies, aching of foot with tramping the heather, and sick of the sea in his yacht, he proudly walked up the carpeted steps at St. George's, Hanover-square, and afterwards descended them, with the hand of that acknowledged beauty, Adelaide, Lady Lawler, upon his arm.

They were very happy—they must have been, for they told everybody that they were—and all friends congratulated themselves upon the accession to the visiting list.

Time glided on. They travelled on the Continent; returned to England; visited, and were visited. An heir was born, made much of; and then followed another visit to the Continent, ending with a stay at Paris, and the encounter with the Rivières.

Sir Richard Lawler was a very good-hearted man, and he really exerted himself strongly to procure Rivière's freedom. He would also have done anything possible to aid Madame Rivière; but, as we have seen, all advances were rejected, seeing that they came through Lady Lawler; and soon after the English milord returned to town, and after a few squabbles—an inelegant term this, but most apropos—with her ladyship, London life began again, the customary yawnings took place in the big mansion, and the Rivières were forgotten.

There had been festive proceedings in Grosvenor-square, for the Lawlers had given a dinner party. Dinner parties were not unusual there; but this had been an extra affair, wherein the aid of the florist and pastrycook was called, and Edgington had the task of forming one of his zebraic canopies from the kerbstone to the front door. Lady Lawler had been gorgeous in the family diamonds, and, at dessert-time, there had been a small procession:

Footman, bearing a high chair.  
Chief butler, with special dessert plate and d'oyley.  
Jane, bearing the heir, in white and scarlet.  
Rear-guard of Sarah.

The heir was greeted with a chorus of feminine raptures; and the bearer had to pause at chair-backs for the family hope to be kissed, with kisses loud and chirrupy—little liberties these, which he resented with dabs of his podgy fists. What time papa, at the foot of the table, smiled like an amiable aristocrat in wax; mamma shook her fan, and said, "Naughty Tivey"—a sweet, feminine, hissing formation of the baptismal name Clive; and Jane adjured her charge to "be a good boy, then," with the sole effect of the young monster making a dab at a dowager's front, and dragging it hugely askew.

Jane—a fresh-colored, plump nurse of five-and-twenty, glowing with health and pink ribbons—stayed behind his Heirship's chair when he was beside mamma, it being an acknowledged fact she was the only personage in the house who could subdue the young gentleman in times of mutiny; and matters went on tolerably satisfactorily, save that Master Clive upset a finger-glass over the black kerseymeres of the Right Honorable Randall Spavin, M. P. for Mowbray, and M. F. H., Hippoly county.

This little mishap, though to a guest, was quite balanced by the next display of a mercurial temperament, wherein the hope of the house swept a glass of port from the table to meander down the amber glories of Lady Lawler's moiré antique.

But in a lively child such trifles are easily forgiven; and who, as a guest, could refrain from an amused smile when the excited child stood up, regardless of remonstrance, in his chair, and then made a dart, and scrambled on to the table to achieve possession of the elephant-supported sugar temple? but only to be caught by one leg by Jane, and reseated in the high chair with a sponge cake in his fist.

"He was so full of life," Lady Lawler smilingly informed her guests.

Then Jane had to be busy for a few minutes picking up dessert forks, spoons, a plate and a wine glass in two pieces; and at last, at a signal from her master—a signal resented by a reproachful look from her ladyship—the girl had to seize upon her charge, and prepare to bear him out of the room.

But this attack was met furiously by the heir, who commenced his defence with a howl of rage, and was then borne out, kicking and screaming furiously, making, too, little snatches at Jane's hair, or the head-dress of any lady he passed.

He continued to make himself heard in a cheery diminuendo, lasting from the dining-room door to the nursery on the second floor, where the closing of a balze door resulted in peace to the house below.

"Very passionate, but a dear, affectionate child," said Lawler, apologetically, to the Honorable Randall.

"All the spirit in him for making a good country rider," said the master of fox-hounds.

"Sign of health—fine lungs," observed the family physician.

"Give way to him because he's so young," said Sir Richard, who was rather annoyed.

"Oh, dear me, yes," simpered her ladyship, rising with the other ladies, and departing for the drawing-room.