

LITERARY.

Faint Heart.

She stood before him tall and fair
And gracious, on that summer day,
With June's first roses in her hair,
And on her cheeks the bloom of May.
But rosy cheeks and dimpled chin,
And raven lashes drooping low,
Conceal the answer he would win:
It might be yes, would it be no?

Ah, if 'twere no—his throbbing heart
Stood fairly still with sudden pain,
And if 'twere yes, the world so wide
His deep content could scarce contain.
So wondrous fair! how could she stoop
To such a one as he?
Ah, sweet suspense that still leaves hope!
Ah, pain of sad uncertainty!

He held her hand so white and small,
And moved to press it with his lips,
But changed his mind and let it fall,
With chilliest of finger tips,
And to look the seat she offered him
Upon the sofa by her side,
Nor made the space between them less
Which seemed so narrow, yet so wide.

Then gazing on the perfect face,
The dimpled mouth and serious eyes
And drinking in with eager ears
The music of her low replies,
He let the bright hours drift away,
Nor told the secret of his heart,
But when the shadows lengthened lay,
Rose, all reluctant to depart.

And stammered forth with blushing cheek
And eager, timorous request
That she, for old acquaintance sake,
Would grant the rosebud from her breast,
She gave it him with downcast eyes
And watched him leave her with a sigh.
'So good,' she said, 'so true, so wise:
Ah me, if he were not so shy!'

"BOREEN."

CHAPTER II.

(Continued.)

I have already mentioned that he was but four and twenty, and at four and twenty the appetite is in thoroughly good form. Walter applied himself vigorously to pheasant soup and chicken turbot, and although between entrees snatching gentle converse with his neighbour while toying with his dinner roll, his honest appetite bade him not lightly say no to any of the seductive offerings made by confidentially whispering servants.

Miss Branscombe had been taken down to dinner by a pink-faced, pink headed—for his yellow hair made no show young baronet; a heavy dragoon with ten thousand a year, whose staple commodity in the shape of small talk consisted in: 'Have you seen me on my black chawgaw? No, not seen me on my black chawgaw. Bless my spurs! you shall see me on my black chawgaw.'

This sort of thing very clever and entertaining in its way, failed to interest the banker's daughter, who relapsed into complete silence, only relieved by any occasional yawn delivered either behind her menu or her fan. Right opposite to her on the table stood a rare orchid, upon which she occasionally feasted her eyes, and further still in the same direction sat the individual whose ill favored cur had 'knocked sawdust' out of her little noices doll. This young gentleman was apparently upon the defensive for when ever his glance would fall in her direction he either instantly averted it or treated her to a haughty or defiant stare.

It was before the ladies rose that Miss Branscombe said to Nugent:

'You are acquainted with Miss Branscombe?'

'I have not the honor,' was his stiff reply.

'I heard her tell my brother just now that she had met you.'

'She is labouring under a mistake.'

'She is very pretty, is she not?'

'Yes, she's pretty,' sipping a glass of claret.'

'She's uncommonly wealthy. She has an estate in Devonshire, and another in Yorkshire. She's awfully peculiar—asks the queerest questions and the most brusque way. She offends a lot of people. I like her, because I know her. She's very truthful and as you gentlemen say, straight.'

'I hope your brother may find favor in her eyes, if he likes her.'

'We should be all very pleased. It would be a good thing for Bingham, and Promfret interest in the House of Commons is immensely strong. Have you been presented to her?'

'No, a most gruffly.'

'I shall present you with pleasure.'

'Thanks, no. I keep out of the way of heresses. The fierce light that beats from the three per cents dazzles me.'

At this moment Mrs. Durcombe nodded to a lady in ruby velvet with a bird of paradise, nest and all on her head, who responded by whisking off a glass of claret and then came the rustle of female drapery and the ladies passed out.

'I'm glad to hear that you are going in for Miss What-you-call-her, Duncombe,' said the barrister, applying himself to the Chateau Lafitte.

'Miss Branscombe?'

'Yes, nodding, and peeling the first peach of the season.'

'It would suit me admirably, Nugent if it would suit the young lady. With the Marquis of Pomfret at my back I'd hope for a junior secretaryship and then the government benches.'

'Then ask and have.'

'I can ask; but as to the having, *cela depend*. Half the swells in the peerage are *souperant*. She refused the Earl of Forsythe last week, and on dit the Duke of Char ton has shared the same fate. Forsythe told us at the club, plump y and plainly.'

The two young men chatted over souvenirs of the Viceregal court until coffee, and then arm-in-arm ascended to the drawing-room.

Duncombe lounged over to Miss Branscombe.

'Bring Mr. Nugent here and introduce him to me,' said that young lady, very much in the imperative mood.

'You're in luck, old man. Miss Branscombe wishes to know you.'

'How do you mean?' asked the barrister, reddening violently.

'I mean that she has just this moment of her own free will commanded me to bring you up for that purpose.'

'I don't want this thing Duncombe. She treated me like a cad this morning. And Nugent in a few words narrated the circumstances connected with Boreen the dol, and little Laly Ethel.'

'What a green twig you are to be sure!' laughed Duncombe. 'Do you mean to say that you refuse to be presented?'

'I do.'

'But my dear fellow, this will never do.'

'What shall I say to Miss Branscombe?'

'You may tell her the truth.' And Walter, feeling himself considerably aggrieved cast a defiant glance in the direction where stood Miss Hester Branscombe.

'With an amused yet perplexed expression upon his face Duncombe went back to the heiress, and laughingly told her how the land lay.

'What a boy!' she exclaimed shrugging her white shoulders.

Presently Miss Branscombe glided to the piano, and sweeping her finger over the keys played one of those marvellous bits of Chopin which dazzle the ears. Then, ere the brilliant flash of the music had passed away she sighed, as it were into the symphony of 'Savoureen Deelash' fill the melody came softly as the murmur of summer seas. She sang the song. She had not much voice, it is true, but it was exquisitely trained, and she sang with a tenderness and expression that brought the moisture into the honest eyes of Walter Nugent.

'I didn't think she could do that,' he said in a low, subdued tone to Miss Belle Duncombe.

At this moment the heiress approached to where the barrister stood, languidly drawing on a glove.

'So you refused to know me?' she exclaimed, her eyes on a refractory glove button.

This advance was so sudden, so utterly unexpected, that the barrister stammered, shifted his feet, grew very red, and made no reply.

'Sit down, Mr. Nugent,' she said, pointing to a gilt gimcrack that passed muster for a chair, while she drooped—

I have no other word to express the grace of the motion—into a caressing 'fauteuil.' 'What is your case against me? You are a barrister. You will please address the court,' gravely and earnestly.

'Suppose—that this—'

'Ah! I see; like many an Irish grievance, there is nothing but sentiment at the bottom of it,' she interrupted. 'You said to Mr. Duncombe that I treated you like a cad. In what way? You were a stranger; you—'

'But the dog' pleaded Walter.

'The dog was equally a stranger,' with a light laugh. 'It is not the habits for young ladies to be addressed in the parks by strangers. And you may not possibly be aware that, here she flushed a rosy red, 'I have been persistently tol'owed by a person who wanted to marry me.'

He was insane, and is now under surveillance.

'I suppose I am a fool,' said Nugent in an abject tone.

'Why, of course you are,' she exclaimed. 'You must be very young.'

'I am four-and-twenty.'

'Then you are very young for your age. This in the coolest and most dogmatic manner possible. There was something so unique in your refusal to be presented to me that it piqued my curiosity, how ever, that is all over, and on the part of my niece, little Ethel, let me thank you for the beautiful, blushing and exquisitely trousseaued bride that arrived today.'

'I hope it's all right,' growled Walter, very dissatisfied with himself.

'She's a down right beauty, and already have heart-burnings, recriminations, and jealousies sprung up amongst Ethel's friends anent Estelle Lafage. You see I have not forgotten her name.'

There is a subtlety in the thought that a young and lovely girl remembers some trifles uttered by you that you have totally forgotten.

Nugent blushed as he laughed. 'What a memory you have, Miss Branscombe!'

'*Quelques fois*.'

There was a silence, during which the heiress gazed calmly and complacently at the barrister.

'How gloriously you sing!' he blurted.

'I have no voice; the melodies seem to come to me, as they only require to be breathed.'

At this moment Mr. Duncombe, Sr., a pompous, bald-headed, double-chinned port y stomached, white waistcoated, hard breathing gentleman approached.

'My dear, I want you to sing me a song. If I dare urge a preference, I should—ahem!—ask for something—ahem!—French.'

'I never refuse you, Pere Duncombe,' laughed the girl, as, drawing off her gloves, she returned to the piano and warbled with delicious *naivete*:

'Dans un delire extreme
On veut fuir ce qu'on aime,
On pretend se venger,
On jure de changer,
On devient infidele,
On court de belle en belle,
Et—l'on revient toujours
A ses premieres amours.'

'Did you like that song?' she asked of the barrister.

'Not so well as the Irish melody.'

'Ah! tu revient toujours a ses premieres amours,' she laughed.

And the party broke up. Carriages were announced, and grave thanks for a delightful evening were solemnly uttered. In the hall Nugent encountered Miss Branscombe.

'Had you not better call and see your bride?' she said extending her hand as she spoke.

'I should be delighted murmured the barrister.'

TO BE CONTINUED.

Wit and Humor.

Woman's writes—Postscripts.

A Bear spot—The North Polar

Butcher shops are joint stock affairs.

Where there's smoke there's some fire, and very often a mighty poor cigar.

'Do unto others as you would be done by,' but take precious care that you are not 'done' by others.

If every person would be half as good as he expects his neighbour to be, what a heaven this world would be!

'Your son, madam, persists in doing nothing,' says the director. 'Then,' replies the woman, by no means disconcerted, 'you should give him the prize for perseverance.'

The son of a coffee and spice dealer was asked at school where coffee came from, and the reply was: 'Father said I mustn't tell, and he'll lick me if I do.'

A Maiden Speech: Proposing the health of the bridesmaids.

Americans manage to invent odd expressions. The other day a young American lady was at a London ball. Dancing heated her. 'I feel a little dewy,' she said to her partner, as she wiped the perspiration from her brow.

Village Doctor—to grave digger, who is given to whisky—'Ah, John, I am sorry to see you in this pitiable condition again.' Gravedigger: 'Toots, sir, you no let a'e little fau't o' mine gae by? It's mony a muckle ane o' yours I ha'e happit owre, an' said naething about.'

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