

NELLY.

In May, when meads were studded with fair flowers,
Our baby came;
God's gift, an angel sent to cheer the hours;
Nelly her name.
Hearts throbb'd to greet the little stranger's birth;
All nature wore
A brighter aspect; and seemed round our hearth
A richer store.
Winter! his fingers held in icy grip
The wee white hand;
His obdurate breath passed o'er the rosy lip,
And the firm band
That knit three loving souls together snapped.
'Tis mine to tell
The blow Death dealt when in his robe he
wrapped
Our darling Nell.

UNDER THE BAN.

I shut my eyes—am I dreaming? I open them again. Oh, no, it is a bright reality. The close-cut grass stretching out from my window down to the overgrown plantations is the same across which my ancestors tripped in their high-heeled shoes before the red tide of the revolution swept them away. The old stone fountain, with its broken Triton and mouldering dolphin, then threw its silver spray far into the sunny air; now a few drops trickle among the mosses that fringe its edge.

Have you ever lived where there was not something that reminded you of the dead? This is the chair in which they were sitting long years before I was born. Yonder is the couch where they were lying when death opened for them the door of life. Their eyes saw what I am seeing; their ears heard the song of the birds as I hear them now. The blue periwinkle stars in the glass on my table—I gathered them this morning under the oaks in the plantation; and so, hands that have been dust for ages gathered them on some sweet spring morning in the past.

I am sitting in the little dark-panelled room where, one sunny morning, my grandmother sat with her child in her arms, when a courier arrived, panting, breathless: "The Queen is guillotined!" There was no more hope; my grandmother must fly. Clasp her babe to her heart, she arose; horses were saddled; a rapid flight to the coast; a tearful meeting with her husband, disguised as a fisherman; trembling haste; a crazy boat on a stormy sea; a landing on the shore of Scotland—poor, friendless, with aching hearts. Such was the story I had often heard from my grandmother's lips.

Left an orphan in my babyhood, she was all father, mother, all to me. Hour after hour I have sat at her feet, listening to tales of "beautiful France," of the gay court, the beautiful Queen, the old chateau where her happiest days were spent. "You were not born there, *ma pauvre petite*," she would say, softly. "Ah! that was wrong; but you may die there—I think you will. You will be thankful for that, Mignon?" And her eyes would wander over the bleak Scotch moor, seeing beyond them the blue sky and flowery fields of her sunny France. Does she know that her half-prophecy has been in part fulfilled? Does she know that at last my feet tread the grass-grown paths in the quaint old garden?—that for me the birds sing and the trees shake out their tender leaves? A new generation of leaves, but still the same her eyes saw and loved. There is little changed. A friend remembered us; the estates were saved, and I inherited them. Not much money; but the grey walls, the trees, the fields are mine. I look around; I say, "My own." Does she know all this? I believe she does. Her picture looks down upon me now, not as I remember her, with silvery hair shading her delicate high-born face, but young, with laughing eyes and ripe lips, just parted in a joyous smile.

In the long *salon* beyond are rows of haughty faces, blooming faces, stern, wicked, saintly faces. One after another they lifted the burden of life, bore it awhile, then laying it down crept away to the long, dreamless sleep, away under the stones in the little chapel. Now there is only one weak woman's hand to lift the banner of the name they bore so long and nobly. Stretch out your shadowy hands, that its folds trail not in the dust! Strengthen me, shades of the dead, that I bear it not unworthily!

The air is still with that stillness that speaks of life, not death. Somewhere in the distance Jean is drawing water. The creaking of the wheel becomes musical through faintness. In the farm-yard the busy hens are cackling, and one loud-voiced cock is crowing lustily. Lisette is clattering about her kitchen, singing a plaintive little song; the chorus roaches me—"Marie! Marie! je vous aime toujours." I am idly wondering who was Marie, and did the singer love her always?

Presently Lisette's heels click along the hall. "Mademoiselle's keys," she says, with a flash of her white teeth. Jean has found them among the periwinkle stars. I take them from her hand. One, smaller than the rest, has slipped off the ring. A little leather box, clasped with iron, stands before me on the window seat. A few days before her death my grandmother gave it into my keeping. "Take it, *mon enfant*, it contains the life secrets of many of your race.

There are stories, too, from other lips as they were told to me. You may like to read them. You will keep it for my sake." My life has been a busy one, and I have never opened it. Now, as I fit the key into the rusty lock and raise the lid, a cloud of dust salutes me, and a musty, mouldy smell. The papers are mildewed with age, the characters almost illegible. One is tied with a black ribbon; choosing this, I unroll the closely written sheets. One falls out; it is in my grandmother's clear, firm hand. Ah! how long ago was that written! The date is 17—

"A strange thing has occurred. I was ill—very ill—a year ago. Dear Henri begged the Moorish physician (so he is called) to see me. He came, tall and grave. I was frightened. He is always among the poor; he will receive nothing from any one. Henri offered him money; he refused. I gave him my hand; he touched it with his lips. No one knows whence he comes, or who he is. The poor bless his name. He never smiles. I was sure he had some great sorrow.

"One day a man came to me and handed me a letter:

"I am ill. Will you come?"
"I went with Henri. The room was hung with black. The physician was by a window, looking out upon the court; it was full of people—poor and many weeping. He stretched out his hands and smiled. 'I have sent for you, madame, to say "farewell," and to ask your husband to procure passports for my servant—he is to take me home."

"Not now," I cried, "you are ill."
"No, not now," he said, "to-morrow."
"I had flowers for him—roses, delicate fuchsias, and pure white lilies. He took them eagerly, inhaled their perfume, fondled them, and told me the legends of their birth.

"This is my flower," he said, lifting a lily from the rest. "It has returned to us." He held it close against his heart, saying, softly, "Is it an omen of good?" He sat musing a long time, gazing up at the blue sky.

"*Au revoir*," I said, as I bent over him. He looked up, brightly:

"No; *adieu*."
"At the door I turned again; he waved his hand, then raised the lily to his lips and smiled. In the morning his servant came and gave a packet; it contained the manuscript I enclose. On the outside was written:

"This is the story of my life. No one will know it but you. *Adieu*."
"The man was weeping. His master had died in the night."

I unrolled the yellow sheets. There was no heading to the story it contained. I looked at the end; there was no name. It commenced abruptly:

"I come of a doomed race. A curse hung over me from my birth. In consequence of a horrible crime committed by one of my ancestors, the good genius of our race deserted us, and a demon, fierce and cruel, shadowed us with his black wings.

"The first-born child of every generation was doomed, if a boy, to an early and violent death; if a girl, to a life of misery. Generation after generation the curse had fallen. By water, by fire, by the sword, the first-born son had perished; and a mother wept bitter tears when a girl was placed in her arms. There was a legend that the curse would cease when one was found bold enough to foil the demon; then, and then only, would the guardian of our race return.

"There is Moorish blood in our veins. In the third generation our remote ancestry shows itself. Men call me the Moorish physician." True to my instincts, I have devoted myself to the study of Eastern lore. The volume of the heavens has long been open to my gaze. Earth's deepest mysteries have yielded to my touch. The voices of the deep breathe mighty secrets to my ear, and in the war of the elements, the flash of the lightning, the roar and thunder of the waves, when man shrinks back appalled, my spirit finds its wings.

"I was the second son. My brother was assassinated by an unseen hand.

"I returned to my home and plunged deeper and deeper into the abstruse studies I delighted in. Why could they not suffice! Alas! I loved. Ah, fatal power! When we willed it our love must be returned. As I knelt before the altar I looked upon the fair creature who had yielded her pure heart to me, as the priest may look on the victim at whose throat he holds the knife. I was pressing the cup of anguish to those ruby lips; those sweet eyes would soon overflow with bitter tears. And yet, madman as I was, with eager heart I clasped the fair bosom closer to my heart, knowing that my fatal clasp must blight its bloom forever.

"For one short year, earth's fairest hues spread out before me; and then, in darkness and in tempest, our child was born. There were vague mutterings in the air as I took my infant daughter in my arms. Do you wonder that I could not answer back her mother's happy smile? My rose and its sweet bud grew day by day in loveliness. I suffered tortures. Oh, that she might be taken before her gentle heart should bleed for the sufferings of her child!

"Years passed. She began to fade—my beautiful flower. I watched her anxiously. The wind and the wave saw my sorrow; they reveal no secrets. Her sweet life ebbed so slowly—would it be too late? With a sigh of thankfulness I closed her beautiful eyes.

"I wandered from land to land, taking my child with me. I watched, her every step. In agony I waited the time when the doom of our dark race should fall on her innocent heart. In Madrid a Spanish nobleman saw her. Her

beauty charmed him. Rumors of my wealth had reached his ears. Artfully, selfishly, he wove his chain round her. How I hated him! From the first I knew him. The woe was ever worked by a human hand; and as I watched the baleful light in his hard eyes—the close pressure of his thin, cruel lips—I gnashed my teeth in impotent fury. My darling! can you not see how that strong, fierce hand will crush all the sweetness out of your fresh, young life? And she loved him. He would turn to me with a smile of scornful triumph when her innocent eyes told him this. Madly jealous, if she displeased him, he would cast a cold, hard look upon her, whispering harsh, cutting words of anger, till she paled and trembled, lifting pleading eyes to his. And I was powerless!

"I took her home. The Spaniard followed us. Our German winter chilled him, but he persevered. The spring came. Step by step he was forcing me back. In vain I nightly lifted despairing eyes to the proud stars; they smiled down coldly on me, but no voice came.

"Again I read the mouldering parchment which recorded the dire curse, and the mysterious words of prophecy regarding its fulfilment. By fasting and watching I strove to read their meaning.

"The red hand shall do, while the white hand shall fall."

"The cypress-crowned cup shall confer immortality."

"Both of these images foreshadowed death.

"Then followed a legend:

"A flower bloomed in the cleft of a rock. The fierce waves saw it; they coveted its beauty, but the rock laughed down on them as they surged and foamed at its feet. The tempest awoke, the waves arose, they dashed their spray far up the face of the rock. Then the rock cried, "O Azrael! take thou the flower, for I can shelter it no longer." Then Azrael heard, and stretching out his strong right hand he plucked the flower and bore it to sunny plains, where long it bloomed in peace and beauty."

"In the watches of the night the meaning was made clear to me. I knelt and cried, 'O Azrael! I give my flower unto thy keeping. See that thou bear her tenderly to sunny plains where angel hands shall welcome her.' Then I called my child. She came and laid her sunny head upon my shoulder. I gave the cup of death into her hand; I watched her drink it. I spoke playful words to her; I told her it was the elixir of life, and she smiled as she took it from my hand. I drew her to the casement; she lay in my arms, and I spoke to her of the things she loved—the flowers and stars, and of the heavenly plains where her mother wandered. She listened dreamily. I forced my lips to smile as she clasped her arms about my neck. Her breath fluttered a little, and her startled eyes sought mine. I turned away. Suddenly she said, 'My father, there is some one standing in the moonlight, holding out to me a fair, white lily.' Then I knew this guardian of our race had come for this, his child. I bowed my head.

"In the morning came the Spaniard. I bade him follow me. We stood beside her. He wrung his hands and wept. I had felled the demon.

"Do you wonder that while others smile my lips are grave? Do you marvel that I keep vigil by the couch of pain and sorrow? I have no remorse. I did no wrong. Her pure, white soul went up to God without one stain of earth to mar its loveliness. But oh, my child, my child! Faint voices call to me—a hand has beckoned from the stars—my time is short! My angel ones, I come!"

I laid down the manuscript with a shudder. Could this be? I looked around me fearfully. There in her dress of green God's beautiful earth smiled up at the sky. The birds were singing overhead; in the kitchen Jean and Lisette were laughing; the bees hummed in and out of the window. Life—busy, beautiful life—was all around me. Turning the key on the ghostly story, I went out into the sunshine.

THE SMUGGLER MALGRE LUI.

There is, perhaps, no more singular anomaly in the history of the human mind than the very different light in which a fraud is viewed according to the circumstances under which it is practised. The singular revelations made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer by a late deputation will probably be fresh in the remembrance of most of our readers. Even the learned gentleman himself could hardly maintain his professional gravity when informed of the ingenious contrivances adopted for defrauding the revenue. Advertisements floating through the air attached to balloons; French gloves making their way into the kingdom in separate detachments of right and left hands; mutilated clocks traveling without their wheels—such were some of the divers modes by which the law was declared to be evaded and the custom-house officers baffled. We are by no means disposed either to think or speak with levity of this system of things. However much a man may succeed in reconciling any fraud to his own conscience, or however leniently it may be viewed by his fellowmen, it will yet assuredly help to degrade his moral nature, and its repetition will slowly, but surely, deaden the silent monitor within his breast. All we affirm is the well-known fact that laws are in most cases ineffective except in so far as they harmonize with the innate moral convictions of mankind; and that many a man who would not for worlds cheat his next-door neighbor of a penny, will own without a blush, and perhaps even with a

smile of triumph, that he has cheated the government of thousands! It is not often, however, that so daring and successful a stroke of this nature is effected as that which we find related of a celebrated Swiss jeweler, who actually succeeded in making the French director-general of the customs act the part of a smuggler!

Geneva, as must be well-known to all our readers, supplies half Europe with her watches and her jewelry. Three thousand workmen are kept in continual employment by her master goldsmiths; while seventy-five thousand ounces of gold and fifty thousand marks of silver annually change their form and multiply their value beneath their skillful hands. The most fashionable jeweler's shop in Geneva is unquestionably that of Beautte; his trinkets are those which beyond all others excite the longing of the Parisian ladies. A high duty is charged upon these in crossing the French frontier; but, in consideration of a brokerage of five per cent., M. Beautte undertakes to forward them safely to their destination through contraband channels; and the bargain between the buyer and seller is concluded with this condition as openly appended and avowed as if there were no such personages as custom-house officers in the world.

All this went on smoothly for some years with M. Beautte; but at length it so happened that M. le Comte de Saint-Cricq, a gentleman of much ability and vigilance, was appointed director-general of the customs. He heard so much of the skill evinced by M. Beautte in eluding the vigilance of his agents, that he resolved personally to investigate the matter and prove for himself the truth of the reports. He consequently repaired to Geneva, presented himself at M. Beautte's shop, and purchased 30,000 francs worth of jewelry, on the express condition that they should be transmitted to him free of duty on his return to Paris. M. Beautte accepted the proposed condition with the air of a man who was perfectly accustomed to arrangements of this description. He, however, presented for signature to M. de Saint-Cricq a private deed, by which the purchaser pledged himself to pay the customary 5 per cent. smuggling dues, in addition to the 30,000 francs' purchase-money.

M. de Saint-Cricq smiled, and taking the pen from the jeweler's hand, affixed to the deed the following signature—"L. de Saint-Cricq, Director-General of the Customs in France." He then handed the document back to M. Beautte, who merely glanced at the signature, and replied, with a courteous bow, "*Monsieur le Directeur des Douanes*, I shall take care that the articles which you have done me the honor of purchasing shall be handed to you in Paris directly after your arrival." M. de Saint-Cricq, pleased by the man's cool daring and apparent defiance of his authority and professional skill, immediately ordered post-horses, and without the delay of a single hour set out with all speed on the road to Paris.

On reaching the frontier, the Director-General made himself known to the *employés* who came forward to examine his carriage—informed the chief officer of the incident which had just occurred, and begged of him to keep up the strictest surveillance along the whole of the frontier line, as he felt it to be a matter of the utmost importance to place some check upon the wholesale system of fraud which had for some years past been practised upon the revenue by the Geneva jewelers. He also promised a gratuity of fifty louis-d'or to whichever of the *employés* should be so fortunate as to seize the prohibited jewels—a promise which had the effect of keeping every officer on the line wide awake during the three succeeding days.

In the meanwhile M. de Saint-Cricq reached Paris, alighted at his own residence, and after having embraced his wife and children, and passed a few moments in their society, retired to his dressing-room, for the purpose of laying aside his traveling costume. The first thing which arrested his attention when he entered the apartment was a very elegant-looking casket, which stood upon the mantel-piece, and which he did not remember to have ever before seen. He approached to examine it; it was addressed in full to "M. le Comte de Saint-Cricq, Director-General of Customs." He accordingly opened it without hesitation, and his surprise and dismay may be conceived when, on examining the contents, he recognized at once the beautiful trinkets he had so recently purchased in Geneva!

The count rung for his valet and inquired from him whether he could throw any light upon this mysterious occurrence. The valet looked surprised, and replied, that on opening his master's portmanteau, the casket in question was one of the first articles which presented itself to his sight, and its elegant form and elaborate workmanship having led him to suppose that it contained articles of value, he had carefully laid it aside upon the mantel-piece. The count, who had full confidence in his valet, and felt assured that he was in no way concerned in the matter, derived but little satisfaction from this account, which only served to throw a fresh veil of mystery over the transaction; and it was only some time afterward, and after long investigation, that he succeeded in discovering the real cause of the case.

Beautte the jeweler had a secret understanding with one of the servants of the hotel at which the Comte de Saint-Cricq lodged in Geneva. This man, taking advantage of the hurried preparations for the count's departure, contrived to slip the casket unperceived into one of his portmanteaus, and the ingenious jeweler had thus succeeded in making the Director-General of Customs one of the most successful smugglers in the kingdom!