

ON THE NORTH SEA.

(From the Norwegian of Peter Jonas Collett.)

BY NED F. MAH.

The watery plain is now quiescent
And the storm is lulled to rest;
The pallid moon rears high her crescent
And builds, with glamour phosphorescent,
A silvery bridge o'er ocean's breast.

Newly, as if Heaven arraying
Ocean's bosom, wildly throbb'd
Before the universe maintaining
Its wrongs, with myriad mouths complaining,
With impious rage it shrieked and sobbed.

That its hour of wrath imposing,
Tired and tame is over its might;
The billows in the deep are dozing,
Even the ripples are reposing,
Nor dance their laughing dance to-night.

Oh! hallow not their peaceful sleeping;
Wake not ocean from its trance,
Think! The nights of wild, mad leaping
As though despair were vigil keeping—
Leave it its infrequent chance.

Let it forget its ever washes
In restless flood from land to land;
How from the fathomless deep it dashes
In cruel sport, storms forth, and crashes
In hideous wreckage on the strand.

Let it forget awhile the plunder
Hidden in its mysterious home;
How it seethes and writhes around
As if, from horrible caverns under,
Its fondest, dearest memories come.

Shadowy forms, like phantoms gleaming,
Float past in the moonlight night;
They are ocean's spectral drowning,
Cloud shapes, kind or hostile seeming,
Mirrored in the waters bright.

Our souls confess a weird attraction;
The still deep yields a placid balm,
Ocean, in its peace and action,
Is like the spirit's fierce distraction,
And its happy rest and calm.

"A BARROW OF PRIMROSES."

III.

HOW THE ROMANCE ENDED.

It would be impossible to describe the amount of self-tormenting which Heron Archer vigorously inflicted upon himself for the next few days. But he was too generous to let his invalid protégé know what his eccentric action had cost him, and so made light of his evening's adventure as he brought him the sum for which he had paid so dearly.

Yet the quick eye of the faithful youth soon discovered there was something amiss with his benefactor. Amidst his own pain and weariness he saw that there was gloom and shadow on the noble face he loved, and it distressed him. Heron Archer was wont to be as calm and cheerful as only frank, honest and untroubled natures can be, and he was not hypocrite enough to hide his uneasiness successfully.

"I knew you'd repent it," I felt certain of it," said the invalid, looking sadly up at his friend's face, for friend indeed had Heron Archer been to him in the truest sense of that much abused word. "You saw someone who knew you, it has troubled you; am I not right?"

Heron Archer looked away from the eager questioning face. "Yes," he said at last, "I did see someone; but it is no matter; there is no harm done that need vex you."

"What troubles you is my trouble also," answered the young man sadly. "I have no other friend in the world save yourself, and it would be strange indeed if my heart were not grateful for all the benefits you have bestowed on me."

Heron Archer silenced him with an impatient gesture. He hated thanks or outspoken gratitude, and would have always avoided them had it been possible.

That evening the longing had been in his heart through all these weary days since he had known where she lived—the longing to go himself to the street and trust to chance for another glimpse of her—came over him so strongly that he at last resolved to yield to it. He took the train to Elgare Road, and from there walked over to Maida Vale. He knew nothing of the neighbourhood, but by dint of searching and inquiries he found the street he wished at last; then so strange a reluctance came over him to traverse it that he was very nearly turning back without even setting foot within it.

While he still stood, looking with longing eyes down the street, yet not daring to venture through it, the door of one of the villas near was opened, a slight young figure came down the steps, and in another moment he was face to face with the object of his thoughts.

He started and coloured furiously. The girl gave him one rapid glance and then passed on. It was a moment into which the emotions and experiences of years seemed crowded. After a short indecision Heron Archer grew desperate. She was still in view, hurrying along up the road he had just traversed, and forthwith he started off in pursuit. A few moments brought him to her side. She moved close to the wall, as if for him to pass; perhaps she guessed to whom those eager, hurrying feet belonged.

Heron Archer hesitated, passed, looked back. Then, with the courage of despair, he raised his hat and spoke abruptly:

"Pardon me, I pray, but I have sought you so long. I—I have so much to explain. Do give me the favour of a few words with you."

She drew herself up with sudden stately hauteur.

"Sir!" she said quickly, "you have spoken more than a few words already. There can be nothing for you to explain which concerns me. Allow me to pass."

"I cannot. I will not. You must hear me!" he cried passionately, forgetting all prudence and reason in the fear that she might leave him now. "You think me other than I am. It was all a mistake. I can explain it—only listen."

She grew very pale.

"I have made a mistake," she said scornfully.

"I took you for a gentleman—once. If I had need of proof to convince me of my error your conduct to-night has given it to me. Once more will you allow me to pass, or must I return home for protection?"

The bronzed and manly face before her grew pale as death—his eyes looked at her with unspeakable reproach, but to such words there could be but one answer. He took off his hat and stepped aside, such shame and agony and humiliation in his heart as would have touched her now with an infinite compassion could she have read its meaning and its cause.

But she passed on without a look or word, yet in her own mind she seemed suddenly to feel what a poor and pitiful thing her pride was.

Heron Archer went home, his heart full of bitterness, yet aching with a fierce unsatisfied longing that had never been his lot before.

"It is no use. I can never set things straight in her eyes," he thought to himself. "I must try and forget her." How hard he tried, and how equally futile his efforts were, he alone knew. For love was never yet conquered by trying, if indeed it is love worth calling by the name.

He worked hard, and began to find his talents recognized, and to take a more prominent position in his profession than had yet been his lot. Yet even now the man's innate conscientiousness and impatience of the petty hypocrisies and simulations of all business life began to threaten his promised success.

One evening, at a dinner-party given by an eminent member of the legal profession, he made a speech that so overthrew all conventional rules and doctrines of legal life as to array his colleagues in indignant opposition against his boldly hazarded views.

"Allow solicitors to plead in court!" exclaimed an eminent Q.C. "Why, Archer, you must be mad! Such a thing is unheard of! It goes against all the tenets of our profession. You surely don't mean what you say?"

"Indeed I do," was the calm rejoinder. "There is a prejudice against the idea, I know, but the generality of people who are not barristers, think and agree that it is most desirable. Solicitors know their own cases much better than we do, and their information on legal points and technicalities is quite as correct. It is my opinion that ere long the present course of things will be quite changed."

"You are a traitor to your order!" smiled the great man good-humouredly.

He still thought it a joke. No member of the legal profession in his sane mind except a solicitor would have put forward such a startling opinion.

"You are cutting your own throat by advocating such heresy, Archer," said one of his companions, also a barrister. "Where would we be if your view of the case were taken and acted upon? Things are bad enough as it is, but we should be reduced to bread and cheese at that rate."

"No bad fare when we purchase it with clean hands and clear consciences," remarked the young man.

"It might suit you; besides, you have other means. You are not solely dependent on what you make. But as for me—No, thank you. Social martyrdom is not in my line. Human nature is all more or less selfish; I lay no claim to exemption from that great fault. As for you, Don Quixote and his windmills are nothing to the way in which you persistently fight against prejudice and impossibility."

Heron Archer laughed.

"You are wrong," he said; "I do not fight against impossibilities. I am wiser than that. But my warfare is very nearly as useless as if I did. There is nothing so stubborn as established rules, so unpracticable as prejudice."

"Why not leave them alone and take life as it is?" asked his friend. "You would be much more comfortable, and so much pleasanter to walk along the path of custom blindfolded than to have the bandage snatched from your eyes and be told, 'See, your path is full of holes and pitfalls, and your way lies beside a hundred precipices, and all behind you is misery and all before you danger!' That is the sort of thing you do, Archer."

"Well, I would rather suffer any hardship than know I was doing harm to others, or pursue blindfold a path that was strewn with victims to the Juggernaut of false custom," answered Heron Archer. "I like to have my eyes unbandaged, to see my way clear before me; to know where each footstep leads, and to what each motion tends."

"What a restless, unhappy being you must be, then," laughed the other. "I would not change consciences with you for something, old boy! But now, a truce to these grave subjects. I have something to tell you. Do you remember one day, some months ago now, when you rushed under a horse's hoofs to save a lad who was selling primroses?"

"Yes," exclaimed Heron Archer eagerly, as

he sat down the glass he had been in the act of raising to his lips.

"Well, then, I daresay you have not forgotten the lady who was in the han-ou?"

"What of her?" asked the young man with well assumed indifference, though the heart throbbed wildly at the mere mention of the idol of his dreams.

"It's a curious thing," said the other, who was no less a personage than the renowned Puffins. "But to begin at the beginning, I was asked out a few nights ago to an 'At home' given by Mrs. Trafford. Well, her rooms were crowded as usual, and among the guests was a young lady who sang divinely. I begged the favour of an introduction. We bowed—looked at each other, and behold! it was the heroine of the hansom! Eh—did you speak?"

Heron Archer's face was averted, his glass was lifted to his lips, but Mr. Puffins certainly thought he had caught an exclamation not quite so faintly from his friend's lips. However, he proceeded:

"She was as charming as her singing. We became great friends. I recalled to her mind the incident of the primroses. She remembered it quite well, but seemed embarrassed at the mention of the occurrence, so I changed the subject. I was introduced to her father—queer old chap—always going to law about something or other. I received an invitation to their house, and am going there to-morrow. What do you say to that?"

What Heron Archer thought of it was more to the purpose, but he did not acknowledge that, and changed the subject with what speed he could. Certainly Fate was against him, for here was this empty-headed prattler suddenly put forward into the very place he so coveted and that without an effort or desire to force circumstances to his will, while for himself was no hope of such good fortune.

As soon as dinner was over he took his leave, regardless of the fact that by so doing he was universally voted more unsocial and eccentric than ever. All that evening he passed his time in solitary musing and bitter regrets, inveighing against his luck in a manner the reverse of philosophical.

Early next morning, as he was busily engaged with his papers, a knock came at his office door, and in answer to his permission, in rushed Puffins.

"Look here; never say I don't do you a good turn," exclaimed that voluble pleader. "I got this letter this morning, and I thought of you immediately. See, I've brought it on at once."

"Is it another case?" questioned Archer coolly.

"Case! Well, I don't know about that. It depends on yourself, I should say," answered little Puffins, laughing over his joke. "Read it for yourself."

Heron Archer took the pretty little feminine note held out to him and began reading it with careless indifference. At the first line, however, he started and flushed nervously up to the very roots of his hair. Puffins watched him with no small amusement. His keen eyes had detected something the night before; his suspicion became certainty now as he observed the young barrister's evident agitation.

This was what Heron Archer read:

"Dear Mr. Puffins,—As we intend having a carpet-dance to-night after the music, I write to ask you if you will kindly bring a friend with you. We are rather short of gentlemen."

"With kind regards, very truly yours,"

"DORA MORRISON."

Heron Archer laid down the letter and looked up at his friend's face.

"Well," he said, with assumed carelessness. "Well!" mimicked Puffins. "And is that all your gratitude? Aren't you pleased at the chance of seeing your handsome heroine again? Don't you care to come?"

"I should like to very much," answered Heron Archer slowly "but—"

"Now don't pull any of your conscientious scruples in by the forelock," laughed Puffins. "It's all right. You're mutually interested in each other—renewal of acquaintance; topics of conversation, primroses and hansom horses, services rendered, gratitude, etc., etc. There's the case plainly stated. The concluding points I leave to you. Good morning; sharp; I shall be here."

Then he was gone, noisy and voluble to the last. But Heron Archer did little work that day, only young Staunton was astonished by the receipt of a five pound note sent him anonymously, and posted in the S. E. District of London.

It was there that Heron Archer's restlessness first had taken him, for his mind was too unsettled and perplexed to allow of his sitting in his chambers. "Would she be offended?" he thought. She must hear his explanation now—and then!

Well, then he dared not pursue the subject any farther. Fate must settle it for him in the time to come.

At 8 sharp, even as he had said, Puffins drove up to his friend's chamber in a hansom. Heron Archer had been ready since 7, but naturally he did not inform the lively barrister of that fact.

He was strangely nervous and agitated, though he strove to hide it by an unusual amount of coolness and indifference; and when he reached the house, and was ushered into the drawing-room, and heard his name announced in conjunction with that of Puffins, he absolutely trembled at his own temerity.

A moment, and a fair white-robed figure stood

before him, and his low bow and appealing look were met by a half-timid apologetic glance that filled his heart with wonder. He heard Puffins' introduction, and was conscious of being extolled as "a shining light in my own profession" by that well-intentioned individual, but her smile and glance were too much for his dazzled senses. The whole room seemed to swim round him, and he could find no words in which to answer her greeting.

With ready tact the young hostess drew the talkative Puffins away, and introduced him to a lady by whose side was a vacant chair. Then, to Heron Archer's amazement, she came to him again—a deepening flush on her cheek, a timid, shy anxiety in the eyes that had looked so proud and cold at their last meeting.

Proud and cold!—ah, surely not!—there was no such look within them now.

"I have an old acquaintance of yours to introduce you to, Mr. Archer," she said bashfully; "will you come with me?"

Like one in a dream he followed. Indeed, it seemed to him that this must all be a dream—that on some desolate to-morrow he would awake and find himself back in his chambers once more, feeling in his now throbbing heart the old fierce gnawing pain of that sudden and hopeless love of his.

She paused beside the piano, and there sat young Staunton, a radiant, contented look on his face, such as had not rested there for many a long day!

"There is no need to introduce you, I see," she said smiling, and Heron Archer, in whom no single grain of false shame ever found resting-place, shook hands warmly with the young musician, understanding at last that this was no dream.

His eyes turned appealingly to her. "You understand—now," he said in low earnest tones.

She flashed at him an exquisite look that more than repaid him for all he had endured, for the sake of which he felt he could have endured a hundred-fold more suffering.

"How did it come about?" he asked James Staunton later on, when she had left them, and was gliding to and fro among her guests.

"She heard of me—how I do not know," he said in a low voice that fell in like an accompaniment to the melody he was playing. "Then she came to me one day, and asked me to play to her, and was so full of praise, and so sweet and gracious—oh, I cannot tell you all—She is an angel!"

"She is!" agreed Heron Archer enthusiastically.

"And she said I ought to have better engagements and not play dance music, and she is going to speak to all her friends, and to night she gives this party that I may play as I can play, as I have never had the chance of playing yet. And only yesterday it all came out about you. I told her of that engagement at the Marlborough Rooms and how I should have lost it but for your kindness, and how that, gentleman as you were, you took my place, and sat with the band, and brought me the money next day; and, sir, when I told her this her eyes were full of tears, she grew strangely agitated, and she asked your name, and where you lived, and all about you, and told me how once you had done her a great service. And I saw by her manner to-night that she was glad to meet you again. And if, indeed, I have been of any use in the matter, or—"

"Use! Oh, Jim, you have done me the most inestimable service I have ever received from any human being!"

No wonder Jim Staunton looked up in amazement at those impulsive words. But he saw the light in the young man's eyes, the glory and gladness in his face, he seemed to read a meaning beyond what the words told him, and his grateful heart rejoiced that, for all the benefits he had received at Heron Archer's hands, he had been able to make one return at last.

Ere the evening was over Heron Archer had heard from her lips of the regret she had felt for her misjudgement. Ere the evening was over he had let her see, too, in some degree, the tenacity and devotion of that swift and sudden passion which had leaped up like flame in his heart on that spring morning when they had first met.

And afterward! Well, afterward the romance ended, as all such romances should end; and in the next spring Heron Archer led to the altar the girl he had wooed and won for his own.

There was one thing odd about the wedding, people said; and that was, that on the bride's dress and in her snowy bouquet, as well as along the path and aisles she trod, were scattered bunches of primroses.

Only two people knew what it meant, but they were the two for whom that marriage rite united hearts as well as hands, and before whom the future lay, a road of sweet and glorious promise, that they should henceforth tread together!—

All the Year Round.

Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Mackay, while on their recent tour through Northern Europe stopped for some days at the Hague. The landlord of the hotel at which they were staying asked Mr. Mackay's servant one day if his master was not a king in his own country. The man assured his questioner in great amusement that Mr. and Mrs. Mackay were simply citizens of the United States, and that no kings or queens were known in America. The honest Dutchman, however, persisted in his belief, and the next day sent to the papers an account of the arrival at his hotel of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Mackay, the King and Queen of the Bonanza Mountains of California!