

MAY.

Through the smiling meadows
Wanders little May,
Flushing buds and blossoms
Lying in her way.

With the golden sunlight
Glittering on her hair;
Was earth born cherub ever
More exquisitely fair?

No thought has May of danger
And no care at all;
Home is close behind her,
Mother within call.

O Fate! what wrongs are hidden
In the veil of years:
Shall these wreathed smileings
Turn to bitter tears?

Shall this flood of sunshine
Change to stormy night;
Shall mists of sorrow gather,
Hiding home from sight?

Briers instead of blossoms,
Thorns for flowers be found;
Must her path be stony;
Dangers through her round?

Gambol on sweet innocent
In childhood's happy hours:
Life is not made of sunshine,
Meadow lands and flowers.

We all must eat of knowledge,
Of evil and of good:
To them alone the laughter
Who have passed through the wood.

NED P. MAH.

THE EASTER EGG.

It stood on the mantel-piece of the best parlor, in a little ornamental egg-cup of gilt filagree work. I noticed it as soon as I entered the room, and wondered what it was. A close scrutiny showed me that it was intended for an "Easter egg." There were the variegated hues unmistakably plain, and underneath, on a gold plate on the stand, were inscribed the words, "To Joseph Clarke, from A. C. and S. C., in remembrance of Easter, 1850." That settled the question as to its being an Easter egg at once; but, at the same time, it roused my curiosity to know what event this novel souvenir was intended to commemorate.

I had just taken up my quarters at the "Crown and Dolphin," with the intention of spending a few days of my Easter vacation at that venerable hotel, which was one of those old-fashioned country inns,—big, rambling, many gabled houses,—well known to travelers in the old stage-coaching days. A good many of them still exist up and down England, but their glory has departed, and there is an air of solitude and desolation about them like that which reigned in the halls of Balclutha, over which Ossian sang his melancholy dirge. Mine host was Joseph Clarke, a portly, red-faced, plethoric personage, whose natural irascibility was not softened by constant attacks of gout.

However, he was civil to me, his only guest and was rather a pleasant companion of an evening, when he and I smoked our long clays together beside the parlor fire. Every morning at breakfast that egg used to attract my attention, and every day I resolved that I would satisfy my curiosity by asking old Clarke the history of it; but, somehow, I felt diffident in his presence. It might be some family matter, into which a stranger had no right to pry; so I held my peace.

One morning—Easter Monday, in fact—I was sitting as usual in the best parlor, in solitary grandeur, when a knock came at the door, and then mine host and his wife entered. There was an appearance of confusion in their looks, which puzzled me. The mystery was soon solved by mine host, who blurted out; "Mr. Morley, sir, my old 'oman and me, sir, has made bold to come and ask a favor of ye. Fact is, sir, it's our weddin'-day, and we allers has a family party. There's only sons and darters, and sons and darters in law, and gran'-children,—a matter of a dozen, not more. And would ye mind takin' a bit o' dinner with us, sir?"

Before I had time to reply, Mrs. Clarke broke in: "Which, I know, sir, it's not for the likes o' you to dine with such as us in a general way; but to-day bein' our weddin'-day, and you bein' alone, sir, we made bold, to think you would not be above eatin' a bit o' dinner with us."

I very readily accepted the invitation, much to the delight of the worthy couple; and to cut matters short, a very good dinner we had. I insisted upon the whole party adjourning to the best parlor after dinner, when mine host produced some choice port from the cellar. It being Easter Monday, and I having been, so to speak, admitted into the bosom of the family, I ventured to broach the question of the egg. If not of a private nature, what did it relate to? A general laugh, and a husky chuckle from old Joseph himself, suggested that there was something amusing connected with the egg; and it didn't require much pressing to induce Mr. Clarke to tell the tale, which he did as follows:

"Let's see, it must be goin' on for fifteen years since that happened. Howsumever, I'll begin at the beginnin'. Ye've, maybe, notice! that big house opposite. Well, there a Dr. Carter lives. He's a widower—wife's been dead this ten years, I suppose; he has a couple of darters, but they're married and settled elsewhere. It's one of them as I'm goin' to tell ye of. Dear me! I remember when them darters of hisen was young girls, what romps they used to have! D'ye see that round hole in the big door there, close to the latch? Well that's where they used to

stand a tiptoe and peep through when they heard a gentleman drivin' or ridin' up here, and we used to have a power o' your college gents then—far more than now. But I'm gettin' off the line. Well, a matter o' fifteen years ago, there was a young chap stayin' here a learnin' medicine with Dr. Carter,—a Frenchman he was, Alfred Chabot they called him. He was fond o' comin' here of an evenin', and would bring his fiddle with him, and sing to it as sweet as a bird. And he was that amusin' with it all, that tell ye, I've many thought I'd ha' died with laughin' at him. I think he must ha' had some larks with the young ladies opposite, to, when the old man was away, for I've heard 'em laughin' in the garden like good 'uns, many a time. And my wife, she says to me one day,—

"I tell'ee what, Joe,—that young French chap 'll be spliced to one of them Miss Carters afore long, or my name ain't Bettv Clarke."

"D'ye think so, Betty?" says I. For, to tell the truth, I never cast a thought on the matter afore,—women is such sharper hands than men, ye see, at findin' out them sort o' things.

"Think!" says she, "I'm just certain of it; and what's more, 'tis Miss Susie, the younger one, he's after. Haven't I watched 'em lookin' at one another in church, so sly, when they thought nobody's eye was on 'em? La! bless yer, 'tis we women folks that have the eyes; you men are as blind as bats."

"Well, after what Betty said, I thought I'd look at my lady and gentleman at church the next Sunday I was there. But never a sign did I see, bless ye, pass between 'em; their eyes seemed glued to their prayer books, leastways hers were. What they were at in sermon time, I can't tell ye, for I generally listen to our parson with my eyes shut; it must, bother a man, ye know, when he's preachin' to see folks all staring at him with their eyes wide open; so I always shuts mine.

"This young Chabot, he lived in lodgings in the village, in the very house where our Lott lives now. Old Billy Hawes and his wife lived there then, and Billy says to me, when we was smokin' our pipes together one evenin' beside the club-room fire,—

"Joe," says he, "my old 'oman tells me Dr. Carter won't let that young French chap have his darter."

"Nonsense!" says I, "you don't mean to say young Chabot has asked for one of 'em!"

"Ay! that he has, Joe; and old Carter stormed and swore dreadful at him, so my Sally says; but how she come to hear on't, unless the young genelm'n to her hisself, I don't know."

"Which of 'em did he ask for,—did Sally say?" "Well, the young 'un I believe."

"Ah! then," says I, "ye may depend upon it, it's because he didn't choose t'other. Ye see, the young 'un is young, and can afford to wait; but the old 'un, she is gettin' on in years, and it'll be hard to get rid of her soon."

"Well, there's a deal of truth in that, Joe," says Billy. Just then my Missis came in, and Billy had to go a minute arter; so we didn't have any more talk about old Carter and his darter that night.

"Howsumever, young Chabot stayed on and seemed friendly with the old man as ever, so I began to think that Billy Hawes' missis had been gammonin' him with some cock-and-bull story as wasn't true.

"Well, time went on. Christmas came and went, and a mortal cold Christmas it was. Poor old Billy Hawes, he was laid up that bad with it that I never saw a sight of him for three months afterwards.

"On Easter Monday, old Carter went to Norfolk on some business or other. The day after he had gone, about six o'clock in the evenin', young Chabot comes into the bar, and says to me,—

"Mr. Clarke, I've got a friend here who has come to see me. We're going to travel up to London to night by the last train from Welbeach. I want to know if you'll drive us over to Welbeach in your shandry. I've got a couple of small portmanteaux, and that's all our baggage."

"What time d'ye want to start from this?" I asked.

"O, a little after ten,—say a quarter-past."

"Very well, then, sir," says I: "I've no objection to drive ye; but I hope ye'll not keep me waiting, for it's a cold night to let a horse stand about in harness."

"O, no fear of that. We'll be here punctually to the minute," says he, and without more words walks about his business.

"Ye see we had no line near r than Welbeach in those days, and that was a good five miles off. I had a rattlin' mare then, though, that could cover the distance easy in twenty minutes.

"Well, by ten minutes past the shandry was ready, and just on the minute of the quarter my young gentleman comes up with his friend and a boy carrying the portmanteaux. The horse bein' ready, and we three ready too, without more ado they hopped into the trap. Mr. Chabot sat in front with me, and his friend perched himself on the back seat, and off we drove.

"I hadn't much time to look at Mr. Chabot's friend, but he seemed about the same height as the young Frenchman, with a little more beard and mustachois. Mr. Chabot and me, we talked away pretty fast, but the gent behind didn't put in a word; though, for the matter o' that, it ain't comfortable to talk from the back seat to a party in front. Once Mr. Chabot turned round and said:—

"Have you any cigars there, Philip? I dare say Mr. Clarke would like one; and I'm sure I should!"

"O yes," says Mr. Philip, and hands over a case full. I took one, Mr. Chabot took one, and, as I heard Mr. Philip strike a match directly afterwards, I concluded he took one too.

"My old mare soon did the distance, and before we had been twenty minutes on the road the red lights of the station came in sight.

"We use to have a practice here, then—it's gone out mostly now—of takin' somethin' short at Easter time, out of the shell of an Easter egg. Mr. Chabot proposed that we should have somethin' short in this way; so I pulled up at a public house opposite the station, for we had ten minutes to spare. Mr. Chabot and I jumped down to go into the public house, but Mr. Philip he said he'd go on and get the tickets.

"I says: 'You'd better have a nip out of the Easter egg, sir; it's held lucky here to do that; and, anyway, it'll warm you.'

"He wanted a deal o' pressin', but at last he agreed; so we had an Easter egg-shell between us. Mr. Chabot drank first. Then Mr. Philip tried his hand. But, la! I saw he wasn't used to neat spirits, he made such a splutterin', and coughed till I thought he'd ha' choked.

"Gone the wrong way, sir," says I. He looked away, still coughin' and rubbin' his stomach.

"Burnt—my—inside—nearly to a cinder," I heard him burst out to Mr. Chabot. Then he rushed off to get the tickets.

"Friend ain't partial to a raw nip, sir," says I. Mr. Chabot laughed, and said:—

"No; that's a taste he hasn't acquired yet."

"In a few minutes we heard the train comin'. Mr. Chabot slipped a sovereign into my hand, and thanked me for drivin' him and his friend. I followed him to the platform; the two of 'em jumped into a first-class carriage, and the last I of 'em was the train was moving off. They both looked out of the window, laughin' and wavin' their hands at me. I waved my hand to 'em, and then the train went out in the darkness and I lost them.

"The next morning there was such a hubbub and to-do over younder as you never heard. Miss Susie wasn't to be found anywhere—hadn't slept in her bed all night, and was gone—nobody knew where. Ye see, they went so early they hadn't missed her over night. Well, d'ye know, I was that stupid that I never guessed what had happened, till my Betty she comes to me and says:—

"You're a nice sort o' fellow, Joe! A fine mess you've got yourself into; and you the father of a family, too!"

"Mess!" says I; "What d'ye mean?"

"What do you mean?" says she. "Why you ought to be ashamed o' yourself, not to know better than help a young girl like to run away from her home! Ye're nigh as big a villain as the man she's run away with."

"Will ye believe me, even then I didn't see what she was drivin' at, till she went on, with a face the color o' raw beef:—

"Don't tell me you know nothin' about it, don't stand there look so innocent. How would they ha' got away if it hadn't been for you drivin' them? Ah, get away with ye! it's enough to make an honest woman ashamed of her husband, so it is."

"Now I saw it plain enough. Mr. Chabot and his friend!—the drive to the station! It nearly took my breath away as the truth burst upon me. The young gentleman that sat behind had been—Miss Susie Carter! Well, of all the neat tricks ever played, there's none comes up to that," says I to myself. Then I turns to Betty and says:—

"I'll take my solemn oath, Betty, I never guessed what was up till this minute. As true as I'm standin' here, I had no more notion that that young fellow with Mr. Chabot was a lady, than I'd have now that you're Queen of England."

"It was a long time afore the old 'oman would believe me, but she came round at last; and when old Carter came to hear of it, my word, didn't he swear, and wasn't he mad! Didn't he pitch into me neither! But I gave him as good as I got; and when he told me I had helped his daughter to escape, I gave him the lie flat. He swore he'd have the law on me. But young Chabot wrote a letter exoneratin' me from all blame, and sayin' I was as innocent as a babe unborn, which was Gospel truth; and the old man came to me afterwards and said he was sorry for the hasty words he had spoken.

"I had a letter from the young scamp, too, thankin' me in the name of himself and his wife (they were married as soon as they got to London) for the kind service I had done them. He said Mr. Philip wished me to know that, though he was willing to forgive, he never could forget the agony and torture I had put him to by pressin' him into taking that dreadful hot brandy out of the lucky egg-shell, which he was afraid to refuse less he should rouse suspicion.

"After holdin' out against 'em desperate for six months or more, old Carter came round and gave in, and made the best of it; and it wasn't a bad thing, for young Chabot had money of his own. It was when they came down here, man and wife, to stay with the old man, that they gave me younder egg you asked about. It's a pretty thing, tho' I don't know what it's made of,—some kind of French plaster, I take it. They said it was a fitting token to recall that memorable night; and more especially Miss Susie,—Mrs. Chabot, that is,—said, to keep alive the remembrance of that awful egg-shell full o' brandy.

"Well, I was riled a bit, at first, at the trick they had played on me, and at the way they had made me their fool, but I have never regretted

doin' them the service. I believe it was a kindness to them after all; for they loved one another, and they'd only ha' been miserable, if they had been separated. And it's my belief, sir, that if there was a little more of that sort of love which made them two young folks run away, rather than be parted, between a many husbands and wives that gets married in a proper and respectable way, this world 'ud be a sight happier than it is."—Quiz.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

WE hear that Mr. Tennyson's charge for his "Charge" was £300.

IT is said that the receipts at the Lyceum since the production of "Romeo and Juliet" exceed £400 nightly.

THE lady cricketers who figured in the north last year intend to play a match in London this year. No doubt it will be a success, but not a succes d'estime.

THE tricycle is being used by some West-end tradesmen for business purposes. The machine they have selected is somewhat different to the ordinary one, as it is constructed to carry a man and a boy—the latter to mind the steed while the chief goes into houses to deliver parcels, &c.

THE Prince of Wales will preside at the regimental dinner of the 10th Hussars, which will be held at the Marlborough Rooms on the 25th of May. The Duke of Connaught will preside at the annual banquet of the Rifle Brigade, which will also take place at the Marlborough Rooms the next day.

THE "Tony Lumpkins" of the Stock Exchange have perpetrated a joke. It certainly is an elaborate and costly witticism, and only those who could pay the expense are capable of thoroughly enjoying it. The fun conceived was to prepare, print, and post to over three thousand or four thousand addresses, the prospectus of a company called the "Jumbo Enterprise Company, Limited." The offices are given as at Colney Hatch.

SUPPOSING the Speaker were to use unparliamentary language, what would happen? Could the House call him to order, or carry a motion for his expulsion, or lock him up in the Clock Tower, or what? This idea was started in the Strangers' gallery when the occupant of the chair characterized something Mr. Biggar had said as atrocious. "Scenes" are becoming monotonous—a Speaker "scene" would be simply splendid as a novelty.

A FIRM of advertising agents in the city has announced that they are prepared to sell the Times at 8 a.m. at a discount of 33½ per cent. (in short at 2d.), and the Daily Telegraph at a discount of fifty per cent. (in other words at a halfpenny). This reduction is to be effected by having recourse to a curious expedient. An advertisement interleaf is to be printed and circulated with each newspaper sold. By the help of the London Advertiser, therefore, the daily papers are to be disposed of at less than trade price.

A GENERAL officer writing from the Junior United Service Club proposes the formation of an Anti-Tunnel Society. He says: "Public meetings should be held, and energetic measures taken to rouse and elicit public opinion on this subject, so vital to our national safety. Let those who would laugh the nation out of its fears, and sneer at the warnings of her soldiers and sailors as mere professional gag, be told that the mere professional interests of the services would be best advanced by the tunnel, as its existence would soon be seen to necessitate an increase to our land and sea forces."

THE rage to see "Romeo and Juliet" at the Lyceum is extraordinary. People are trying to book seats for the month of June, and do not understand being refused. Theatrical progress would seem to be one of the startling facts of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Not only are there more theatres than ever there were before, and larger audiences to fill those theatres, but people make foresighted arrangements to go to see a good play with as much deliberation as they used to devote to a voyage to India.

MR. SPURGEON's "last" was addressed to Lord Shaftesbury the other night. "I am very glad indeed to meet you, my lord," said the minister to the noble chairman at a large public meeting, "and I have one request to make of your lordship. It is that your lordship will be good enough to keep out of heaven as long as it may be personally convenient for you to do so." The pulpit humor of the City Temple does not fail. A little while ago Dr. Parker had a collection, and he announced with deep pathos that widows and orphans would not be expected to contribute. On Sunday there was another collection. "This time," said the preacher, "widows and orphans will not be exempt; for no bloody battle ever made so many widows and orphans as the announcement issued on a previous Sunday."