

## GYPSY.

By MISS F. M. MUSGRAVE.

(Continued.)

"O papa, you can hear me, though I can't hear you, Uncle Bertrand says. Well I am going to speak to you now, *do* listen, papa. I do love you, papa, though I said I didn't wish to love you, because you had gone away and left me. I was so wicked, for I thought you could not love me, or you would not have gone away and left me. But I do love you darling; I can't help loving you, though I didn't wish to love you when I knew you had gone and left me."

Poor little Gypsy was already learning then, what we all have to learn sooner or later—that love is a very rebellious subject; and only too often it happens that it goes where we would not.

"Ask God to bless Uncle Bertrand" continued the child, "and to make him happy, and not to let me give him too much trouble; for he does not know anything about little girls. I only wish I could be quite sure you heard me, papa. Good-night papa; when I am asleep, come and kiss me on the eyes as when we were together. I will be good to Uncle Bertrand, and try to love him as you told me to love him once; but I can never, never love him as I love you darling, and will love you, though you have gone away where I cannot see or hear you."

And that invocation was ended by a sob.

Bertrand stole away quietly; and he felt as he went away that he did indeed know very little about little girls. He wondered if all little girls were like Gypsy. He felt that a great responsibility had been given to him; but he felt at the same time that it was a very sacred trust, and he did pray earnestly that he might be worthy of his trust. He prayed that when the time came that he should meet his friend, that he might meet him with the words—that all was well with his little daughter; that he had been true to the trust imparted to him.

## CHAPTER III.

Ten years had passed away swiftly, leaving behind in their flight the little wilful, winning Gypsy, and bringing instead a wilful, winning girl of fifteen.

With unremitting care Bertrand had watched over his little orphan-charge in those years. No devotion could have been more tender than his had been. A great change this little being had made in his life. For years he had been accustomed to the quiet, solitary life of a bachelor, surrounded by his books; but all that was changed when Gypsy entered his home. Quiet he hardly ever knew again; and as for being solitary, he was never alone if Gypsy was awake. Sometimes he looked back rather regretfully to past days, when he had been able to write steadily for a whole day without interruption; but he felt that was a luxury never again to be enjoyed by him. After that faint regret he was sure to be more tenderly indulgent than ever to Gypsy. He never knew what a slave he had become to her. Very imperious and domineering she became; sometimes treating Uncle Bertrand very much as if he were some big Newfoundland dog, brought up to fetch and carry what she wanted.

Bertrand did not deceive himself on one point; Gypsy had become strangely precious to him. But he told himself he cared for her as a father would care for some only daughter. He knew she had become all in all to him. The very apple of his eye. He could scarcely bear her out of his sight now; but he did deceive himself as to the kind of love he lavished on Gypsy till he could deceive himself no longer.

Gypsy had a habit when going downstairs of bounding down two steps at a time, for which unladylike proceeding Uncle Bertrand had never reproved her. Gypsy was skipping down lightly in this way one day, when suddenly she slipped and twisted her ankle. Bertrand was just behind her, progressing more slowly but surely. As Gypsy turned her face to him, white with the pain she was enduring, he sprang to her side; as he took her in his arms, he knew then in a moment all that he had given her. No father's tender unselfish love; but a man's strong passionate love with much that was selfish in it.

Nothing will so quickly and surely prove to us the depth of our love for some human being, as the sight of suffering in that human being's face. Then all our love suddenly wells up with an almost overpowering force. To see acute suffering in every line of that face dearer to us than life; and to feel that we dare not show the love burning within us, is an agony inexpressible. Strange the different shapes which suffering takes; all bitter and weary alike to the sufferer, though each believing there was hardly ever pain like his pain.

Poor Bertrand felt he had never suffered so keenly in all his life as he suffered at that moment; when all doubt in his mind was suddenly swept away. His love grew so strong and fierce within him as he held Gypsy unconscious in his arms. At the same time that love felt utterly hopeless as he looked down on the small face so white and unconscious. Before he knew it he had pressed his lips on her lips. The passionate fervor with which he kissed her showed him only too plainly his true feeling.

Then shame, love despair and fear, all struggled in his heart—shame that he should have taken advantage of that helplessness which had brought her so near to him—love intense for that little wayward creature, more to him now than aught else in this world—despair as he looked on that fair young face and thought of his own age and fast whitening hair—and then, fear of himself. How was he ever to hide his true feeling from Gypsy. And suppose she should love someone, someday; someone young and handsome; and the apprehensive imagination of love wandered far into the

future and saw his darling taken from him, and he left desolate and alone. Yes alone he saw himself, with nothing but his aching heart to bear. He almost groaned aloud. "God help me" he murmured, and placing Gypsy on a sofa, he tended her with trembling hands till she opened her eyes and the color returned to her face. Then he left her with her governess and went away to fight with his love.

"Oh, why had he learned to love her in this way?" almost piteously the strong man asked himself this question; it was a love that could only bring pain to him; and she—she would never even know it. She should never guess even all the suffering she had caused him. No word, no look must ever escape him. So God help him! Oh if—the thought would come in spite of himself—he had only been a little younger, and could have made her love him. He would have loved her so tenderly. He felt he had never wanted to be loved so wearily as he did now. When he was younger, he had rather laughed at and scorned that sort of affection; calling it sentimental, and had always boasted he could live without love. But now an intense yearning grew within him to be loved—to be cared for by loving hands. Yea, to be mourned for when taken from this world, to feel that some heart would miss him sorely. It might all be very selfish; he was afraid he was selfish; but nevertheless the longing was there and he could not stifle it.

Then he tried to think only of her; and he told himself if he could only see her happy, he would be contented. He looked at himself in the glass, and noted every change that age had made in him; every silver hair and every wrinkle he noted with a feeling akin to loathing. Bertrand was a true man in that respect; he attributed far more importance to outward appearance, to physical defects, than a woman ever does.

## CHAPTER IV.

"Uncle Bertrand, what do you most admire in a woman?" asked Gypsy one day rather suddenly.

"A gentle loving nature," answered Uncle Bertrand with all a man's promptitude about what he admired most in the other sex.

"Just a gentle, loving nature!" said Gypsy, a little scornfully. "I should say usefulness as well, in some way. A gentle, loving nature would be a very worthless thing after all, if that was not combined with some other useful mental quality. Just to love a man would not help him much. If I loved a man, I should like to feel I was useful to him. That the need was reciprocal," affirmed Gypsy, with all a girl's enthusiasm.

"For a true woman, a gentle, loving nature is all that is necessary," persisted Bertrand with decision. "That is what a true man admires most in a woman."

"Are you a true man then, Uncle Bertrand? as that is what you most admire in a woman." Gypsy put this question with a little twinkle in her brown eyes. "Well, I don't like your true men then; and I don't wish to be a true woman" she went on with a shrug of the shoulders.

Bertrand Germaine looked at his little charge anxiously.

"What are women's rights women?" asked Gypsy again, after a long pause.

"A bold class of women, who are always making a fuss about their rights, and who talk a great deal of nonsense," answered Bertrand very decidedly.

"But haven't women rights?"

"Certainly, and they get their rights. But they try to claim more rights. All the rights a man has they affirm they should have."

"Don't you think a woman has just as many rights as a man?" catechised Gypsy.

"Undoubtedly women have their rights," was the rather evasive answer. "I think they all get them. But a woman who goes in for women's rights is a woman who is never satisfied. She is generally a very masculine, disagreeable creature, who astonishes everybody."

"Why should the holding of some peculiar ideas make a woman masculine, I wonder?" mused Gypsy.

"I knew a woman once," continued Bertrand, waxing warm on the subject, "and really, I should be afraid to say what lengths that woman went to; she went so far as to say positively, that she did not see why a woman should not (this really, my dear, is strictly the truth, although you will hardly believe me) propose to a man. I believe she did try to extenuate her perverted ideas by saying that under certain circumstances, she could see nothing wrong in the reversing that order of affairs."

"How odd!" laughed Gypsy. "Why, she must have believed in the coming race."

"Odd! Gypsy, why there is nothing odd about it. It only shows what a woman can arrive at, when once her ideas become perverted on that subject. Some things should be impossible. It only proves to me how lost a woman can become to all sense of shame, when she actually avows freely that she can see no harm in such a proceeding." Bertrand spoke earnestly. He felt his trumpet should give no uncertain sound. And it did give no uncertain sound. He wanted his little Gypsy to be a true and really feminine woman; and there was sometimes just a shade of independence about her that troubled him not a little. He felt all this great responsibility about bringing up this girl.

"Well, Uncle Bertrand, as you only have had the bringing up of this troublesome little niece; and as there have never been any women's rights women near to instil any of their wicked, perverted ideas into my head, why, I ought to be all that a man admires and approves of, eh?"

Again Bertrand looked anxiously at Gypsy; that thought did not quite please him, although he confessed to himself the truth of the remark. So much for the consistency of human nature. But he felt he did not wish others to see the feminine perfections of his one little treasure. To see a thing was only too often to want it. His heart sank within him.