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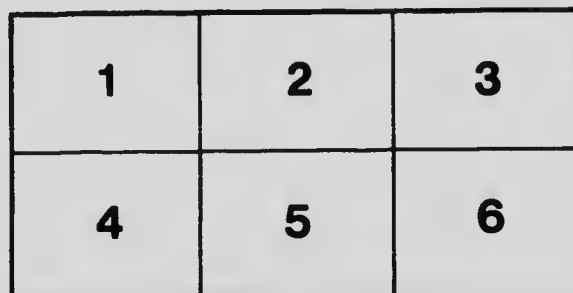
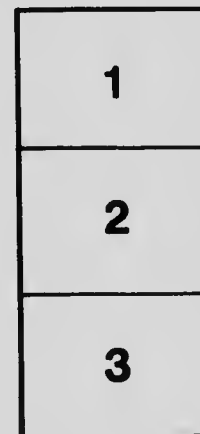
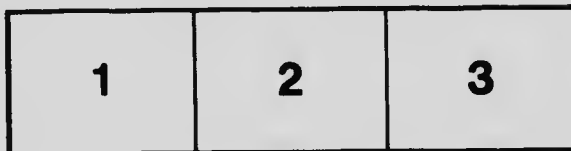
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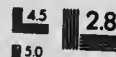
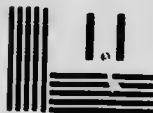
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**THE PORTER
OF BAGDAD**

And Other Fantasies

By

ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN



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Dedication

"THE PORTER OF BAGDAD"

TO

THE LADY OF MANY NAMES

B221



To the Reader:



*“When i was a beggarly boy,
I lived in a cellar damp;
I had neither a friend nor a toy,
But I had Aladdin’s Lamp.
When I could not sleep for cold,
I had fire enough in my brain:
And builded with roofs of gold,
My beautiful castles in Spain.”*

—LOWELL.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
DEDICATION - - - - -	III.
TO THE READER - - - - -	V.
THE PORTER OF BAGDAD - - - - -	I
TITANIA - - - - -	7
ALADDIN - - - - -	11
MADONNA - - - - -	14
IN THE CHERRY ORCHARD - - - - -	17
ANADYOMENE - - - - -	21
GHOSTS - - - - -	24
HEARTHA - - - - -	28
THE IDYLL OF A NORTHERN RIVER - - - - -	33
FANTASIA : IVORY - - - - -	38
MY OWN COUNTRY - - - - -	41
THE LAKE - - - - -	46
FANTASIA : RIDING - - - - -	49
THE FENCE-CORNER - - - - -	52
COMRADE WIND - - - - -	55
THE ALL-MOTHER - - - - -	58
THE GHOST OF A GARDEN - - - - -	65
A GREEN RIBBON - - - - -	71

	PAGE
BAISER - - - - -	78
BESS - - - - -	81
ON NAMES - - - - -	89
THE MISTRESS OF THE RED LAMP - - -	96
THE DIP IN THE ROAD - - - - -	100
MRS. LILY SWEETWICH'S COFFEE - - -	107
THREE PICTURES - - - - -	112
AN OPEN GATE - - - - -	117
ROSE COLOUR AND GREY - - - - -	120
ENTREVUES - - - - -	126
ON THE SELECTION OF EPITAPHS - - -	128
OASIS - - - - -	133
A DREAM - - - - -	136
FANDANGO - - - - -	138
CONCENTRATION - - - - -	141
THE MAN IN THE BLACK COAT - - - -	143
MORS TRIUMPHANS - - - - -	145
THE PARADISE OF VOICES - - - - -	148
ENVOY - - - - -	151

THE PORTER OF BAGDAD

HE was always to be seen at the same place, day after day, near the eastern entrance of the Great Bazaar, waiting for custom or marching quickly away with his bundle on his head. There was always the same look on his face; but it was in nowise significant; it was the look of a flag in the pavement or a stone in the wall, hundreds alike. His garments, too, were common and never changed to the slightest rag. He was so constant and serviceable that everyone in the Bazaar used him, though thinking of him no more than of the dust they trod on in the street. Not one of those who employed him daily could have said with certainty, that he was young or old, tall or little of stature, dark in the face or ruddy. And so he was busy the whole day long, bearing the goods of the shopkeepers to and fro in the city. Sometimes the merchants browbeat him, and the slave who took his burden from him at the door, cursed him roughly for very hardness. He was only a common porter. Some-

times he did his errand amiss and must retrace his way through many long and wearisome streets, before his error could be righted. Often, when his load was heavy and the sun hot, he was jostled in the narrow streets by the trains of camels, laden, too, like himself with great packs of silks and strange woods and spices, brought from India to pleasure the Commander of the Faithful. He was a good Mussulman, often in the mosque, and praying at every call of the muezzin. At sunset his work was always over, and after he had bathed and prayed, he was soon lost to sight in the crowds streaming over the bridges of the Tigris to the poor quarter in the south of the city.

There he lived alone in a large house of many tenants. He had neither wife, nor child, nor slave, nor any friend in the whole quarter. Indeed, few knew he lived there, so silent was his life. His room was always dark when he reached it; outwardly it was like other rooms, but as soon as the Porter crossed the threshold all was changed. In the gloom, he made his way to the divan where stood a hateful Djinn, enchanted and motionless, just as the great Chinese magician had fixed it by his power. It was dwarfish and humpbacked, with an evil face:

its body bent, its hands clasped behind, and its long thin legs, brown and shrivelled like a crane's, had grown together in one. As soon as the Porter touched the Djinn's single eye, the whole room was one flood of mellow light, like the Caliph's spice-garden when the thousand silver lamps are lighted at once. Then you could see how large the room was and how near it lay to the good Haroun's palace. The roof was so high and walls so wide that one would think it was a Sultan's audience-chamber. For there was room for busy slaves setting out a banquet in a wide portico that looked upon a garden of palms. They ever poured red wine from crystal goblets so thin, it was a marvel their delicate sides held in the precious liquor. There were trains and troops of dancing-girls, brown-skinned and white, with little tinkling bells at ankle and wrist, and seated choirs of women-singers, with sweet voices, that sang continually. Foreign princesses, in beauty like the full-blown lotus flower, knelt before the Porter's divan of silk tissue. But the great room seemed to have no walls, for the Porter could see, from the divan he lay on, far away where the great black and yellow cats played in their lair beneath the forest leaves, and farther, where the ocean gleamed blue beyond

the utmost land. As in a theatre, the heroes of old, in glancing mail, passed before him and, in shining robes, great priests that taught the people. As at a play, he saw the daring deeds that brave men do amid the clash of meeting armies; he heard the words of mighty captains and the shoutings of the men of war. He saw a thousand perils men pass through, urged by love or by mere pride in their own strength. The many lovers of song and story, who were faithful unto death, passed before him in long review: he saw them in their delights and in their despairs, and his ear caught their softest whispered word. The Porter was a part of it all: he taught with the priest, warred with the hero, worshipped with the lover. And all this flowed to and fro before him endlessly; one brightness and beauty melting into another; each in turn changing, passing and being replaced. The girls danced, the women sang, and the Porter, with the bright-eyed Djinn at his side, saw it all from his divan.

And up and down, through and among it all, floated and hovered a single rose-leaf from the gardens of Gâl, soft, creamy white, steeping the air with an enchanted perfume of its own. It seemed to be blown by the longing music or moved at the impulse of the sweet

sounds among the slender waving arms of the dancing-girls, sometimes almost falling to their bare soft feet; then rising, as a bird rises, it might poise against the gay robes of an Indian princess or the painted hide of a beast of prey. But it never quite settled; it might rest for a moment on the shining hair of a queen, or the helmet of a warrior, but only as a white butterfly alights. The impulse of the music or the wind of the swaying robes came upon it and away it flitted. Now it was near at hand, now a mere mote, a speck in the distance. Sometimes it broadened to a banner of white silk, fluttering in desert winds at the head of a black, steel-clad army; sometimes it was the sail of a king's galley on a distant sea, and again the rounded, gleaming snow-crest of the highest Himalay. And ever among the beauties of women, the strength of heroes, the deeds that live, the words that burn, the gorgeous colours of beasts of prey, mountain wastes, ivory cities, and lonely forests, floated and swayed that rare white rose-leaf, while its scent lay heavy on the air.

Last of all, the fairest of the women slaves came to him on the wide divan. She took his head upon her lap and shut his eyes to sleeping with her soft white hands so gently,

that the Porter could not know it was the magic white rose-leaf settling at last and falling there in coolness, perfume and unending rest. And darkness was over all.

At early morning he was at the eastern entrance of the Bazaar, waiting till some merchant should give him work to do. But none of those who hired him knew what things he had seen and lived through, since the day before.

TITANIA

*"And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go."*

LONG before the full truth of the poet's meaning dawned upon me, my childish thought had been, "How much the Athenian mechanic missed!" How could he have preferred existence as Nick Bottom, the weaver, in the Seven Dials of Athens, to be a dweller in that Elfin Land?

*"Where the sun never shone,
And the wind never blew . . .
A land of love and a land of light,
Withouten sun, or moon, or night."*

It seemed such a beautiful thing to be raised above the mean cares and the vulgar pains of this earthly life to a total exemption from the thousand ills of our common lot. But far more beautiful were the visions, vague but very sweet, of a promised freedom, a nimbleness in going, a lightness as of fancy itself, and an unembodied nameless purity. All these made his choice hard to understand. But is the reason far to seek? It was the preference of the ass's head. He

thought Titania and Fairyland were a dream, forsooth, and went back with a proud consciousness of wisdom, no doubt, to the world of realities—to the horse-play, and the common jest of his fellow-clowns. A dream! This is what he chose instead, to have many stories for his grandchildren of the famous doings on Duke Theseus' wedding-day, and to be soothed to his coffin by the comforting belief that the most tragical comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe was never so well performed as when Nick Bottom played the lover's part. He never knew what he lost; at the moment of choice he could not discern what turned upon his decision. In Fairyland, Bottom puts the very fays to clownish use; that is all he gains by his sojourn there. The pity of it is he is contented it should be so.

Once, and once only, in our life does our Titania offer us the choice — the clearer vision, the purer aims, the truer life. Her promise, too, is sure. With scrupulous exactness she will perform to the letter all that she has said. If we take her at her word she will thoroughly cleanse this mortal grossness,

“And teach high faith and honourable words,
And courtliness and the desire of fame,
And love of truth”

She comes to all. In all lives, there are enchanted moon-lit moments, when we stumble out of the society of our fellow-actors rehearsing their pitiful farce—to be rewarded with derisive laughter—into a world of wonder, into the presence of the Fairy Queen. Strayed from the clamour of rough voices and the friction of common ways, we find ourselves suddenly alone with velvet-clad silences and the pure floods of moonlight ;

“And here beginneth the new life.”

Ill for us if our eyes are so holden that we cannot see the Queen of all the Fairies in her supernal loveliness, slight or misuse her choice gifts and in our brute calm take for granted that pure idyll of the summer night. Like Bully Bottom, we see nothing strange or unusual in it all ; like him, we would send the nodding serviceable elves on our vulgar errands, Moth, for the hay, and Cobweb, for the red-hipped humble-bee. We make the choice of the ass's head. And it is our irredeemable mischance that we reject in our crass complacency the priceless offers of the Queen, and prefer to Fairyland, the contracted stage and mocking audience ; to Titania, Snug the joiner and Snout the tinker ;

“ For the choice goes by forever.”

Forever! Our eyes are not always darkened.
We awake sometimes to what we have lost.
What was that pitiful comedy we were pleased
with once, to what might have been ours?
But the one golden time of choice, first youth,
is irrevocably past and there is no cure for
remorse and vain regret.

But for the few, the clear-eyed souls that
choose aright, what of them? They bought
the power to discern at the supreme moment
by years of struggle with manifold falsity, by
hardness well endured; they knew there was
pure gold in the world and could not stoop to
treasure the common gilt that any man might
win. And so they find, in the fulfilment of
the Queen's gracious promise, their life and
their exceeding great reward.

ALADDIN

Thou standest reflectively upon the one long leg and round, flat foot, like a meditative crane, my Lamp.

On my study table, in the midst of scattered and heaped sheets of MS., open books and their gnarled, dark thoughts, thou standest and sheddest thy benignant light, illuming what is dark.

Thy luminous head lighteth my page. Thy soft, steady rays make thee a grateful and refreshing Presence,

Indeed a Friend.

I raise my eyes from these dreary . . . sks and contemplate thy shining familiar face. Companion! Friend!

Let others praise Nature, her delights and the wonders of her design. Thou art both Poetry and Nature and Science to me. I look into the manifest relationship and the subtle harmony of thy parts, and praise the cunning hands that made thee.

Thou art a Teacher as well—of Systematic Theology. I see design in the wise little re-

ceptacle for the absorption of superfluous oil, and the quaint device by which the columnar wick is fed.

Midway between thy shade of Porcelain and the parallel brightnesses of thy cylindrical reservoir, midway also, between thy Top and thy Bottom, is a globe of metal.

'There my eyes rest.

It glistens blackly like the drop of ink, in the palm of an Egyptian diviner.

It becomes clearer! It is opaque no longer; it is growing luminous, expanding more and more—it is the crystal of the astrologer, whereby the Dark Future is foretold.

And I see—

A little, dreary Studirstube, walled ceiling high with brown dusty volumes, an arm-chair by a table, littered with papers and books, upon which Thou, the kindly genius of Bachelor's Hall, radiatest light, the one bright spot in all the Desolation.

There is a figure in the chair; those old features certainly resemble mine—

It is—myself.

But stop—

Did I say books in a narrow study?

I was mistaken—

It is a wide cheerful room, bright-coloured

paper on the walls, pictures,—thou art still the centre, casting thy light on all.

Was I alone there? Why, there are children, cherub-cheeked and joyous—revolving satellites of a little round matronly figure ever busied in womanly ways, their sun. Thy light falls upon the happy group—she turns her face and I see—

But what nonsense this is! How absurd to talk to a Lamp as if it could understand!

MADONNA

A DREAM OF MY LADY'S TENDERNESS

"A child crying within my hearing!" said the Lady of All Delights, as she passed down the windy street and heard a feeble wailing noise. It was not loud; not one of the gay or busy passers-by even seemed to fancy that there could be such noises in their world. But the Lady's ears were quick to hear a sound like that. It came to her, through all the tumult of many feet and countless wheels. "That is not as it should be," she half thought, half spoke aloud. Pausing in her walk, she looked about her. There were houses new and old, little shops and comfortable homes standing close together on both sides of the way. Only one did not seem to have a human tenant. "It must come from that old house yonder, so gray and weather beaten," she said softly to herself. She crossed the narrow roadway, stooped in at the low entrance, and, ever following the sound up rickety stairs and along foul passages, came at last to a battered door, shaking on one broken hinge. She pushed it aside.

It was a gloomy attic she stood in, narrow but not low. Day entered by a single opening—a small, unglazed window, high up from the floor. The room was full of deep brown shadows in all parts but one. There in the farthest corner, the cold light of the North fell in a long pale ray upon something white. Something white and awfully still. It was an upturned face. The eyes were wide open, but they saw nothing, for all they gazed so steadily: and the cheeks were so wasted and hollow, you would never believe they had once been rosy-round,—

“One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she’s dead.”

By her side, lay a young babe that the thin arms had at last been too weak to lift to her breast. And there it lay by its mother, wailing in the cold. The face of the Gentle Lady turned white; as white almost as that of the other woman lying before her—as the pallor of white June roses is to that of drifted snow—her eyes were brighter than their wont, for they were wet with swift, unshed tears, and the soft lips parted slightly, though no word came through, only little trembling moans. All at once, she bent over her dead sister, caught up the crying child and laid it in her warm bosom. Then with her tender arms

folded close around the babe and her face bent down to its face, she hurried from the room. She was soon out again, in the bleak autumnal day, and the turmoil of the thronging street. The bitter wind cut her hands and face; sometimes the people pushed wildly against her in their haste; but she did not know it; for, from the first time it felt her gentle touch, the child had ceased to wail, and, soothed by her low, soft words, it soon fell fast asleep.

IN THE CHERRY ORCHARD

A DREAM OF HER DISDAIN

No one else was astir, for it was still early morning, when the Dreamer stole noiselessly out of the old farm-house and took the narrow path into the orchard. He was feverish for lack of sleep; his heavy head seemed filled with burning sand, his eyes ached and his hands were parched and dry. His heart had been too full of cursing and bitterness that night to let him rest, for even sweethearts can be cruel. He flung himself down by the black trunk of the oldest cherry tree and tried to cool his dry palms with the dewless grass. Carlo, the watch-dog saw him and came slowly across the grass, looking like some comely, black monster in the morning light. Glad to be spoken to and caressed, he lay down at the Dreamer's side and poked his black muzzle to the human face. Then he licked his master's hands, and even pretended to pinch them now and then, without, however, having the slightest intention of doing so. You want him to romp, Carlo, but he is in no mood for play.

The contact of the cool ground with the heated body was delicious. That strip of turf under the cherry tree was a pleasanter bed than the one on which he had tossed all night. It was easy for him to understand how the mere touch of Earth gave the wrestler, in the old world myth, strength to resist the grip of a Hercules. The sun was shining vaguely somewhere in the hot haze, and faint, tantalizing breezes wandered through the orchard, fanned his hot cheeks softly and then died away. He listened to the birds; they were singing by snatches, uttering calls and single notes, and then ceasing for a time. There are some things only to be seen by laying the head low on the lap of Earth. As the Dreamer looked upwards through the interlacing boughs to the grey sky, he seemed to be in a new world, made up of branches and cloud. Spring had come but lately; the leaves were not quite out yet, though the white clusters of blossoms were in full bloom, and the bees and great flies were busy with them. Their humming and buzzing sounded loud in the stillness of the morning. Nature sometimes seems to blunder; cherry blossoms always look awkward, like bouquets tied to the rough joints of some fantastic scaffolding—till the spreading leaves have grown full enough to

hide away the woody angles. The white of the flowers has the tinge of grey water, and the masses of soft colour are soothing to the eyes.

But the Dreamer's gaze was drawn away from the aerial world in the fruit-tree boughs to the wonder of the springing grass.

He turned on his side, and with half-shut eyes followed the long light streaming from the east, sliding through the bare branches, and as it fell on the grass in spots and patches, making a net-work of dark green shades and emerald lights. As his eyes were on a level with it, there seemed to be nothing but grass to the earth's centre: it was rooted in nothing; there was no foundation of soil for it. The spears of it stood close together and had grown evenly; they were fine pointed, but with no suggestion of keenness or sharpness. There could be no more fitting resting-place for Dame Venus' snowy limbs; on these she could lightly rest and they would not crush beneath her. But this aspect, the winning infancy of the grass, begins to last only for a few days in spring. It is lost as soon as the seed-stalks sprout, and no watered and shaven lawn can afterwards compare with it.

In the meantime, the morning breeze had risen and was blowing steadily, and the hot

mists were dissipated. The bird-song grew fuller and more certain. Little by little the light on the growing green, the grass, the freshness of the cherry blossoms and the silent friendship of the faithful brute wrought upon the Dreamer's soul. The magic of the morning charmed away his heavy thoughts; the pain at the heart grew less, and into its place stole a message of peace. The fever left him and he rose refreshed, like another Antaeus by the strengthening touch of our mother Earth.

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ANADYOMENE

Once have I beheld her, rising from the sea,
dazzling and pure, as erst off the delicious isle
of Paphos.

It was a bright July day on the English
Channel. The sails of all nations thronged
the wide expanse of blue water. We could
see the land of white cliffs, so long famous in
song and story. Our ship was forcing her
way along with difficulty; for the wind was
still contrary and a heavy sea running from
the gale of yesterday. The great iron thing
seemed instinct with life and will, as it drove
its ponderous bulk against the double obstacle
—wind like a wall and the barrier of hurling
wave. Progress, though checked, was never
stopped, but the billows swayed the ship up
and down like a huge see-saw. On the lofty
upper deck, I leaned over the rail and watched
the waves break against the sharp, black
bows; but not alone, the Beloved Lady was at
my side; or if she really was a thousand
leagues away, the thought of her seemed almost
tangible (the lover's doctrine of a Real Pres-
ence). Certain it is that the love she taught

me so unsealed my eyes that I saw what I saw.

A smooth, olive-colored hillock of water would be sheared through by the massive iron, in a shattering crash and roar. It parted this way and that, with unimaginable hissings and seethings. Tons of water struck the ship's side with heavy sound and the spray flew aloft in showers of finest mist, through which the perfect arch of the rainbow shone. The churned foam, transfigured by the strong sunlight, and flooding in ever-widening layers, overspread the sea with fold upon fold of milkiest whiteness. Beneath, millions of rising bubbles transformed the dull-hued ocean into solid deeps of glassy green, suffused with trembling light; and before the changing wonder had been effaced, lo! another wave, a second crash of sound, and again the miracle of the sunlight on the foam.

The continuous roar and hiss deadened the ear to all else, and the eye was willingly enchanted to this apparition of whiteness. What can there be so softly white as this, so even in texture and so fine? What except woman's breast? I look till the outside world vanishes, and in my dream, if it were a dream, the sea-born, laughter-loving queen arises. The green sea is a milk-veined step of malachite, worthy the station of her snow-flake foot. Iris, the

messenger of the gods, flies before her. But mortal eyes might not bear the sight of her irresistible, naked loveliness: the goddess appears shrouded in gauze of mist and fine-twined veil of orange and purple. Through this partial screen she gleams like lilies, not the colour of marble death, but of living purity. Thus she arises upon my sight, between sea and sky, white-armed and love-compelling.

But the glistening shape takes on the lips and eyes of the lady, whose name lies hid in my heart. She smiles—and in the light flashing from that sweet, kissing mouth and the mystery-coloured eyes, I read why Beauty came with whiteness as of new milk poured in the sun, and Love sprang from the cold purity of the sea.

GHOSTS

Colonel Ingersoll has lectured on them, and there is a learned society in London formed expressly for their detection, so no one can entertain any doubts as to their existence. That there are such things is indisputable, else how could *Blackwood* have "Open Doors" and "Houses by the River" in its columns? Yet, strange to say, no one has, up to the moment of writing this, even attempted an adequate classification of them. Let us, then, having demonstrated and settled the necessary preliminary fact of the existence of Ghosts, proceed to their classification.

They are roughly divided into—

(a) Dead Ghosts.

(b) Living Ghosts.

With the first class we have little concern. The attention of all writers on the subject has been exclusively bestowed upon it, and the ascertained facts in reference to them are generally known. The minor genera and species of Hobgoblins, Banshees, Wraiths, Imps, Spooks, etc., etc., show how far astray all previous writers on the subject have been.

No one seems to have dimly apprehended the almost impassable gulf between the two categories of our subject. Endless confusion has resulted from the failure to perceive this important distinction. The elucidation of the latter division is the main object of this paper.

A word, however, on Dead Ghosts in passing. Their clothing is usually long, flowing, and white. (N. B. Some German Ghosts show a partiality for red.) They are nocturnal in their habits, their habitat being churchyards and ruined castles, and their environment horror and ghastly dread. Their effect upon the human organism is decidedly unpleasant; they cause the hair to bristle, the young blood to freeze; in fact there is not a single argument to be urged in their favour. They are not to be encouraged. They possess, in addition, the peculiarity of having wills of their own, and consequently often inflict their company upon you, when it might most easily be dispensed with. At the most unseasonable hours, the clock then beating twelve, you awake in the haunted chamber, in a state of strong cerebral excitement, only to find that some Dead Ghost has intruded upon your privacy.

A long and careful examination of the subject has put us in possession of many facts

which differentiate Ghosts from Ghosts, and warrants us in making the two great divisions with which we set out. Living Ghosts are in many respects the very opposite of the dead. The first striking fact is their entire dependence upon you. You wish and they come at your call. Presto! they vanish, and you need turn to no genie ring to bring them back. Wish again, and, *les voilà, les revenants!* They are gentle mannered, companionable fellows besides.

It is twilight, in a velvet-hung drawing room, and the scents of summer flowers float in at the open door and window; fair white hands at a piano touch into life the sorrow and longing of a wordless song, and suddenly in the deep arm chair before me is a Living Ghost. Quietly IT sits there; the eyes do not regard me, the semblance of a white, short-sleeved arm is upon the dark green cushion. The music has changed to a sweet world-old waltz, the figure opposite rises, as with hands clasped lightly behind, and laughing face upturned, IT, dancing, moves slowly, slowly over the floor, into the gathering darkness.

One of the most disagreeable things in the world is to be a Living Ghost yourself. It often happens, and depresses the spirits dreadfully, and a Ghost in the blues is very bad in-

deed. The Humans do not know you, all faces are strange, you are dumb in a world of the dumb. You are of another world, the world of Ghosts living and dead. The Dead are in the greatest number at such a time, but they are so unsociable. They will have naught to do with you, because you are still in the flesh. They are dumb and with faces ever turned away no matter how much you crave for one, but one, of the countless kind looks and words they gave you in life. They haunt you, they are at your side when you see the place where you once lived together, now dwelt in by strangers—and still no word, not a single smile? Ah! the dreariness, the utter, bleak loneliness of it.

“Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what’s become of all the gold,
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly
and grown old.”

HEARTHA

The room I had last winter was the pleasantest one in that pleasant old Maryland homestead. It was in the second story, and the windows commanded a wide outlook to the south and the sun-rising. Instead of being papered, the walls had been whitewashed every spring for a hundred years, and time had softened the limy glare into a quiet cream colour. The furniture was old-fashioned; a snowy continent of a bed stood in the corner, and a wooden chimney-piece as high as my head surmounted the most noticeable feature of my modest chamber—the fire-place. It did not take long to fit myself into my new shell. My books soon made themselves at home; my pictures, my constant companions in travel, at once gave the new quarters a familiar air; and the faces of scattered friends looked down from nook and corner in perpetual levee. But in all this there would have been a something lacking, which not even the Queen Regnant with her pictured face, mutely eloquent of love and truth, could

have supplied—the bright, companionable spirit of the room, the fire on the hearth.

The hearth was simply a bricked recess in which stood two old-fashioned andirons to build the fire on. These andirons had brass tops; one was in good condition, and stood primly upright; the other was battered and bent rakishly on one side. They always reminded one of the proper elder brother and the reckless prodigal. The fire-place had been whitewashed, as well as the rest of the room, but long before spring, the inner part was black with soot, and stray wreaths of curling smoke had given the rest the rich browns of a well-seasoned meerschaum pipe. Whenever I came home, the fire was always burning; and, after the gloom and cold of the short winter's day, to open the room door upon this centre of ruddy light and warmth was like meeting the cheery welcome in the face of a loving, winsome wife. On fierce December nights, I would pile billet on log till the broad sheet of flame went rushing up the chimney with the roar of a blast furnace in miniature. The delight of basking in the blaze! and the dreamy pleasure of slumbering into sleeping, when it had died down to glowing coals and grey ashes, while lazily watch-

ing the fitful witchery of red light and leaping shadows on wall and ceiling!

What a time-waster it was and provoker of waking dreams! And the comfortable old-fashioned rocking-chair aided and abetted it. The high back, the foot-rest and the cushions were conducive to repose, and many an hour which should have been devoted to books was spent in the treacherous embrace of that insidious chair. What doing? Nothing but watching the blaze, or the moonlight slanting through the uncurtained window and mingling with the ruddy light upon the floor; or the many foolish sights to be seen within the fire itself—churches, fine castles in Spain, salamanders and salamandrines sporting there, and vistas opening in the embers into the past life and the future, not to speak of the continual drama of the devouring flame's attack and conquest of the fuel. All the while, the ear was filled with the crackle and roar of the flame.

And it was the visible link with the most distant past. Beside the fine old aristocratic contrivance of the wood fire, the device of incinerating black stones in an iron basket is contemptibly *parvenu*. Just as I gaze into the flame must my heathen ancestors have gazed in many a rude home, while the wo-

men wrought, the children played and the smoke curled through the roof. Then, as now, the bright fire was the natural centre of the home. Around it the family gathered, while the Sagamen and Skalds told of Beowulf the dragon-slayer, or Grettir the strong or Siegfrid the peerless. How often must the eyes of the young Alfreds and Charlemagnes have been caught and held by the wavering flame! How great the sum of their thoughts, burning as those fires and now as clean vanished as their ashes! Our forefathers brought the camp-fire of the wanderings into the house; we have moved it to the side of the room, where it will do less damage. That is all the improvement twenty centuries have brought about.

At last I became a sort of fire-worshipper. There seemed to be a living presence on the hearth. The changing brightness was like the train of expressions on a human face, and the crackle and roar of the flame like a voice, or the stirring of a living creature.

The fuel was constantly changing, the fire decayed and was ever again renewed from day to day. I knew that. But the aspect was the same and there was a something that lived on, like the soul in the ever-wasting, ever re-building body. It did not seem like

a human presence and yet it was but half divine. Now I had the key to Loke legends and Lar worship: Ghebirs and Vestal Virgins were no longer a riddle. Many other things I learnt from Goddess Heartha, whom I worshipped almost as my heathen forbears did. She was a benign, familiar and yet unearthly presence; and I needed no companion when I could have her. And so it grew upon me all winter in that pleasant room that looked to the south on the hills of Maryland. It grew so that I almost found it in my heart to regret the gentle message, which the first sunny spring-like morning wafted in at the open window, that I must lose my gentle companion, that the shrine of the goddess must be empty and her altar unhonoured till the changing season again brings winter's frost and rime.

THE IDYLL OF A NORTHERN RIVER

The morning is the brightest of the bright Canadian summer. A few fleecy clouds, carded thin by the strong, hot south wind, half veil the intense sunny blue of the upper sky. We are afloat, Castara and I, on the broad pool above the dams, which sluice the brown water of the subjugated river into the clattering mills of the busy town. The town itself is not in sight; only a spire or two mark the place of the human hive; but the wind carries up to us a deep humming roar, broken at regular intervals by the clank, clank, clank of trip-hammers. We are headed up stream.

Our gondola is a cedar canoe, which mimics the light grace and sinuosity of birch bark. The smooth sides are deep crimson and on the windless reaches, it floats double, like Wordsworth's swan. No argosy ever held more precious lading: for the freight is Castara, the Lady of All Delights. She sits facing me, a graceful cloud of white lawn; and, under the shady brim of her broad straw hat, shine the

eyes that are both compass and load-star to me. By them my every course has long been shaped; and they shall guide me to the end. The wind blows soft tendrils of brown hair about her temples in most admired confusion. Castara is goodly to look to, in a ball-room, or with her child in her arms, but she never looks lovelier than in her white frocks and afloat on the river she has always known, the river that day and night flows past her door. Other women have worn and do wear white; but it suits no one else so well as Castara. Is not that strange?

The paddle dips, and, with the gentlest motion conceivable, the canoe glides forward. The water dripping from the blade on the recovery tinkles like the highest trebles of a piano. In a few minutes, a curve of the river brings us to a new scene; and we lose the noise of the town. The musical drip from the paddle sounds loud in the stillness. We might be a thousand miles away from any town.

“Look at the Constable!” cries Castara, suddenly breaking the delicious silence, and her eyes brighten, as she points to the opposite bank. I stop the canoe in the cool shadow of the bluff which we are passing and we look across the brown water at Castara’s picture—a vast expanse of blue sky, wind-driven white

clouds, field after field of fertile land stretching to the distant horizon; in the foreground a little hillock sloping with a gradual curve to the water; rushes, golden-rod; in the centre, a sleek-hided cow white and brown, up to her knees in the stream, and other cattle seen more remote. The name of the picture is "Peace"; so, at least Castara and I read the title. As we look, the cow splashes heavily out of the water to the bank and the picture has vanished.

Our gondola glides on steadily up stream, against the current. The little river turns and winds in a bed of granite: and its waters are a clear brown like amber, free from the vulgarity of mud. It is not the same for any quarter of a mile. Now, it narrows into a tiny brook; and green boughs of oak and maple overhang the placid pools. Then it widens into long shallow reaches, where silky water-grasses, touched by the sun into greenish bronze and gold, wave like the hair of diving river-nymphs. Thousands of perch start away as the shadow of the canoe passes over them; but they do not swim far, so silent is our progress. We have passed the narrow circle of the Punchbowl, where they say bottom has never been found; we have thrust our argosy stoutly up through the Snappers,

the little rapid where the current is poured strongly between two rocks; we voyage steadily on and on. Now and then we pass under a railway bridge which spans the entire valley. It reminds us, not unpleasantly, of the jar and fret in the world of prose, which we have left behind and almost forgotten for this world of wonders.

The watery highway was bordered with the richest vegetation. Clumps of rank water-weeds with green leaves shaped like broad arrows, hid the outline of the shore. In the stream itself, we drove through acres on acres of white water-lilies, with yellow-centred cups and flapping leaves. The bright crimson spikes of the cardinal flower lighted up the shady places like torches: and all along the bank the lavish golden-rod of August rioted. The sight pleased Castara: she has a sister's love for flowers.

When the high banks became cliffs and the air in the narrow defile was hottest, we landed, and climbed to a little platform of turf a hundred feet above the river-bed. There we built our fire, made our coffee, and ate our lunch. Then we lay on the canoe cushions and watched dreamily the large landscape spread before us. When the shadows lengthened in the afternoon, we drifted down

through the lily-beds. Castara picked the whitest buds for her hair and her breast; she filled the canoe with them.

* * * * *

Up stream in the hot morning,—down stream in the placid afternoon,—night at the end of all,—what does it matter, so long as Castara and I are together?

FANTASIA : IVORY

Theme : "My Lady seems of Ivory"

The violin, the cello, and piano are weaving a three-ply magic web of rippling, floating sound. They have caught in their net the senses of the crowded drawing room, and hold them fast. Although it has entered into our souls as a king takes possession of conquered cities, the music is at no time arrogant. Now and then the piano almost ceases from those notes that are like large raindrops falling into still water at sunset, and the strings sink into moanings gentler than a dove's; but not a silk rustles. The people seem scarcely to breathe.

I do not know what the trio means to the other men and women; but to me it shifts and turns a hundred times, in endless variation of cadence about the simple theme,

"Beata, mea Domina!"

the old refrain that has sung itself all through my life, as it seems to me. There are many fair faces to fill up the pauses of the music; but I see only one,—the face of the Lady who has many names and whose dearest title is

Beata. From the other side of the room, I watch how her deep eyes and slight, change-ful smile give back the dreamlike vagaries of melody, as the mountain pool mirrors the pass- ing clouds. Where she sits, a shadow falls and half envelopes her; her dress, too, is black; and out of the double darkness, her neck and slender arms gleam white. The little face is white also; too white. It changes delicately, to rhyme with the music. The tiny vague shadow about the mouth shifts its place a trifle; or the sweet lips droop or draw together; or the eyes, instead of looking at me, look through me and beyond. Once, I thought I saw the gleam of a tear on the lashes. I wonder what the trio means to her.

The frame about this picture is not the usual one. A year ago, there were some rooms in a plain little house, which any one might rent, tables and chairs in different shops which any one might buy; but she came to these common things, and of them made something richer than the Escorial,—a home. In that home she is as a light. I can hardly think of her apart from the walls and poor household belongings she has glorified. But to-night there are strange pictures on the walls; there are laurel wreaths about, and statuettes, and other unfamiliar knick-knacks.

It has all a foreign look, and the foreign speech I hear now and then, is in keeping with the room. The little lady in black is no part of it. Nor is she alone, as usual. Beside her are two young girls in bright dresses. They look younger than my Lady, though that can hardly be. Their cheeks are tinted like the rose. Now that I bethink me, her little face is whiter than it should be; the eyes look hollowly, and a muscle of her neck betrays itself when she turns her head. She looks as if pain had not passed her by. And yet,—who could think those two fairer than she? How the music insists on according her the palm! Everyone must hear how plain it speaks!

“Beata, beata mea Domina!”

Does she hear?

Her white arms, as they lie in her lap, seem to twine about something which she would guard, if need be, with her life. It is no riddle. Instead of Schubert, you have heard only a cradle song, the homeliest of lullabies.

MY OWN COUNTRY

Yesterday and all last night, I was traveling by train through an alien country; at daybreak, I crossed the frontier, and awoke in my own. Yesterday was dreary: the road ran through a wilderness of rock and scrub and lingering snow, overhung by motionless grey cloud. But this May morning, the sun is shining brightly in a sky of fleckless, stainless blue. Through the car-window, I look out upon white villages and farm-houses dotting broad acres of cultivated land. Between yesterday and to-day the contrast is complete in weather and in landscape; but that alone does not account for the joy in the air, or for the song chanted by the noisy car-wheels.

Every feature of the peaceful landscape, I have seen a thousand times before. In little has it changed since the time that I can first remember it. Its aspect is as friendly and familiar as the face of my mother. It is the face of my mother. There is the tidy farmhouse just showing its roof and chimneys or a window and a bit of wall, from amid a tuft of filmy orchard boughs. The season is early as yet; but soon the clump of apple-trees will be

a cloud of white blossom, and then, a wall of green, around the homestead. At one side are the stables, the huge wooden barn and the stack-yard. One farm-house is much like another. All wear a look of thrift and comfort. From each a long green lane runs through the broad fields to the back of the farm. The fields are all divided by the same fantastic zig-zag fences of blackish-grey rails. The maples and elms in the lanes and fence-corners are not yet in leaf: but the grass is showing its first, most tender green. The strong sunlight shoots it through and through with yellow tinges, giving it the brilliant color of some strange gem. Most often the lanes are unbroken ribbons of green, dividing the dark loamy fields; but here and there the heavy wagon-wheels have passed and scored the ribbon, throughout its entire length, with two parallel earthy lines. The long fields show dark yellow and dark brown, almost black, rich in promise of harvest. This morning, they are stirring with men and horses; for this is May day, and the farmer goes a-planting. Sometimes it is the red-painted drill, which does the work; but more often, the man takes the place of the machine. The sower goes forth to sow, as he has these thousand years, in a hundred lands. With his

sowing-sheet on his shoulder, he strides across the furrows, and flings the grain broadcast on the mould, with a rapid spreading motion of his right hand. The jumping, twitching harrow follows, and the field is sown. Mile after mile is passed, and the scene, though perpetually changing is perpetually the same. The sight of it refreshes the eyes that have grown accustomed to another landscape; and the spirit of gladness so plain in earth and sky has touched my heart and stirred my pulses. In my ears is a new-old song, which never sounded so clear before.

The loud insistent clank and roar of the train shapes itself into a sort of never-ending chant; and clearer and clearer come words like these :

" My Country! Mine, mine, mine, my own! This land brought me forth, bred me, gives me the means of living. However poor, it is still mine. I am part of it and of no other. My country, mine !

" My country, mine! Within the shadow of a little church in the land, at rest under the sod, lie the bones of her that took the pains for me. She, who held me to her breast and saw her own eyes in my childish face, lies at rest in this land. It is my own by the graves within it. My dead are here, my country, mine !

“ My country, mine ! In this corner of the earth was my child's Eden, my paradise. Here I knew the days that were all sunshine, the years that were all summer. Here I knew the first true comrade hearts. In this land, the mother of my child grew to womanhood. In a home in this land, she nurses her baby at her breast. I cannot live my life again. By the joy that it has given me, as well as the sorrow, this land, this and no other, is mine and mine for ever. My country, mine ! ”

Over and over again do words like these sing themselves into my brain, in a roaring anvil chorus of iron wheel on iron rail. No one but a son of the soil knows the music of that chant, or the pride and love which it awakens in his heart, as he looks out upon the broad, bread-giving fields of the old province.

Nor is the song without its accompaniment and loveliest of *obbligatos*. The iron road is laid along the river bank. Beyond these happy fields, I catch glimpses now and then of the great, blue river. The music of its unheard rhythms is sweet ; I can read it, though I cannot hear. The noble river is meeting me : and I must travel by it, for half a day. Its presence is revealed now in a glimpse of blue water or torn white rapid ; now in a

broad sheet of glittering wavelets; again, only a line marks where the river bluffs stand high. It also is a friendly face. That very water that I see, has flowed past many a lakeport, past many a river town I know. It has flowed past the town in which She lives; it has flowed past Her door. She has looked out over it; the sun is shining on it before Her door, as it is shining here. And every turn of the wheels brings me nearer and nearer Her.

THE LAKE

Like Herr Diogenes Teufelsdroeckh or the Roof Philosopher, I have a watch tower overlooking a great city ; from its windows, I can see every hour of the day, if I choose to look, the waters of a mighty lake. I have looked so often, that I know it as a lover knows the face of his mistress, with its every fitting shadow, change of feature, phase of expression. I never weary.

“Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety.”

The clouds that hung about thee all yesterday, heavily even and grey, making thee but a dull-coloured ribbon on their skirts, have dropped down to-day and blotted out thy face in a mist of rain. Oftenest thou art a broad wall of deepest blue, rising against the last houses threateningly. All thy changes bring new delight. Once I looked and saw thee seething in a white fire, all thy waves molten and glowing, marble snow moved by a welling life within. The next day thou wert all one steely glitter, like unto transparent glass ; the next, the wall was down, thrown flat, and

thou lookedst the living troubled sea thou art,
long lines of white-caps rolling to the low
beach and breaking there so plainly in the
bright sunlight, I could almost hear their
thunderous roar.

I could not stay apart from thee, and so, in
midwinter, I made a pilgrimage to thee, across
long plains of snow, swept by fierce winds.
Nothing but drifted snow underfoot, hard and
white, moulded and carved in all manner of
curious devices by the sculptor-wind, that
came driving long snakes of snow athwart
the glaring levels. Still I could not see thee.
I came nearer and nearer, till the snow rose
in a huge drift before me. Crossing the
rounded hillock, I beheld thee, crisping dark,
green and mysterious, above the white snow.

Thalasse! Thalasse! Like the Grecian
vanguard, when from the summit of the lofty
hill, their land-wearied eyes first caught the
distant flash of their beloved sea, I stood and
feasted my eyes on the beauty of thy winter
waves, green under the fateful sky, and thy
mimic Greenland coast with its ice-bergs, its
glaciers and wave-eaten cliffs.

Then I had to say farewell; and I turned
from thee with a promise, a longing and a
dream of the days of summer. Then my
Lake, I shall bathe me in thy waters; in

stormy afternoons heaving shoreward on the back of some huge billow to the lonely beach of sand ; in the stillness of fresh mornings, when the spirits of the air as the old Greeks dreamed, caress the naked body ; in breathless noons, when all things quiver in the heat, plunging from the granite step of some little island, down, down into the transparent coolness, and leaving the hot day and the fevered earth-life behind.

FANTASIA : RIDING

*Theme: "Und wie ich reite, so reiten,
Mir die Gedanken voraus."*

As swift as thought,—what can there be of speedier flight? Before the ink of this first word is dry, the Puck of my brain has put his girdle round the earth. Why it is, I cannot know, but here in the stillness of my study the face of a friend rises, wearing the well-remembered quiet smile; the measured tones of his even voice seem sounding in my ears. It does not matter that at the present moment we are seated at the extremities of a continent, as at the ends of a Cyclopean seesaw. The thought of his face has brought back even the familiar aspect of every place his presence used to fill, our old haunts that we shall never see again. The thought of him unites us instantly. Rivers of a thousand miles, high mountain ridges, wide inland seas and prairies ocean-like, shrink in a lightning flash to a compass narrower than the slightest of these pen strokes. But I had another friend, not retained, alas, but lost, in days long gone by. Urged by the spell of this second name, Puck has skipped the

million waves of the blue Pacific, and reached an island under the Southern Cross, where there is a nameless grave. Here the wanderer in many lands found rest at last, and the sore heart peace. How different this resting-place from the home of his boyhood within the gray walls of that old-world town. There it stands like a city in a vision, its storied castle, its narrow rough-paved streets, and the pleasant meadows without the gates. How many tales he used to tell me of it, in this very room, seated in that very chair; and here the two ends of that girdle meet, and the ink of the first word is not yet dry.

All this has taken place between two ticks of the clock, in the quiet of my secluded study. No whip or spur is needed. But when I ride or feel the exciting effects of rapid motion of any kind, all this is intensified a thousand times. It is the glory of motion which De Quincy felt on the box of the English mail coach, when the vision of sudden death flashed before his eyes. Dashing through the water on a yacht, or whirling along in a railway carriage, I find my thoughts taking long, arrow-like dives into distance from the bowsprit, or out-stripping the winged words that flash past on the electric wires beside the iron rails. Not only do

they fly faster than when my body is at rest, but they multiply themselves in flying. They rise in myriads, as bees do, and take their flight far ahead in mathematical lines. It is not strange that they always choose one aerial path, nor any wonder that they cluster and swarm about one favourite spot. No marvel that they swarm about her:

“There’s kames o’ honey in my luv’s lips,——.”

Delight in every tint and fleeting shadow of her flower-face; music in every motion of her. About their Queen these true liegemen, these busy thoughts of mine, build their many-roomed palace, and store it with sweetness. Then I am awakened suddenly, by a dash of salt spray in my face, or by finding the carriage pane cold against my cheek, while without is the blackness of darkness.

Some time, who knows, but I may awake to find myself in the very audience chamber of the Queen herself? There it is perfumed and warm. Some time, who knows, but I may come to myself by feeling her regal eyes searching for mine to lift them up and meet hers, or by hearing my name flowing on the cadences of her sweet voice?

THE FENCE-CORNER

At a field corner, near the highway, two lines of snake-rail fencing meet in an ugly angle. The rails have weathered grayish black, and their abrupt zig-zags are somewhat bizarre, though they could not well be rougher or plainer. Even such deformity can be redeemed by surrounding and reflected beauty, such as winsome children lend to the bent and gray-haired grand-parents, when playing around their knees. First, there was the elderberry bush that grew in the triangle of grass left by the plough. In the winter, it was a loose faggot of stems and broken branches, as bare and dead-looking as the fence-rails themselves. But all through May it was changing daily; the buds sprouted, and then the pale green leaves came and dressed the naked branches, in shimmering silk tissue. The leaves grew thicker and darker, and then appeared the broad nose-gays of white, pungent-scented flowers; then the hard green fruit, and, last, the rich berries that crush so easily, with the purple juice that stains so deeply. The sere, withered grass of last year around the

elder-flower's feet was covered out of sight by the new growth of fresh haulms. And now the ugly fencing showed few of its hard lines and little of its wintry colours, through and above the elder-flower's robe. And it deserved a share in the glory and beauty of the living thing. Except for the ugly fence-corner, the whole field must have been given over to the plough and harrow.

And then there was the wheat. As soon as the snow went, it came up evenly over the rich brown earth, till it looked like the green-velvet cover of my mother's Bible, the one she kept in church. It grew higher and higher, till it veiled away the dark earth altogether. Very soon it would hide a rabbit; and one day it had grown so tall that the wind caught it and swayed it. After that, the shadows chased one another over the field, through many sunny days. All the time, the grain was rising like an inundation, till only the two topmost rails of the fence showed above the level, green flood. The elder-bush could still look over the heads of the wheat, but the grass could not. Then the soft wheat kernels formed at the blade-heads, and grew fuller and harder from the dews and rains, and the fat land. The straw-stems grew stiffer, and a clashing

murmur went softly through the field when the wind bent the grain. The wheat-ears swayed heavily now, and when they swung forward, thousands together, they recovered themselves with difficulty. They were never long at peace. The rich green of the wheat-field in the spring grew paler and paler as the summer advanced, faded into a neutral tint and then deepened into a wonderful gold colour. The grain was ripe. At a distance, the field looked white, close at hand it was yellow; and the tide had risen almost to the lowest branches of the island apple-tree. And the support of it all, the living, young beauty, the grass, the elder-tree with its blossoms and berries, and the gracious man-sustaining wheat, — was still the ugly, despised fence-corner of rough, gray rails.

COMRADE WIND.

Now that I have reached the top of the hill, and leave the city lights behind, you join me again to-night, you rough-handed mate. I am glad of your joyous company. The road is so lonely in the quiet nights. There is no one to talk to, and the stillness makes me home-sick and afraid to turn my head. You noisy comrade! your boisterous laughter and rude jesting please me. You push hard against me and jostle me, but there is no malice in it at all. I love you better for it than your soft-spoken brother Breeze, for all his quiet ways.

How long we have been comrades by land and water! How many the miles we have left behind on long, solitary wanderings and rambles, on headlong gallops, and over the flying scud of the stormy lake. How often your voice has called me out on dark nights, from the irksome four walls and the brain-trying books. I have heard you calling and calling, till I had to don hat and coat and join you. Then, as I stepped from the door and the lighted room into the darkness, how often

you have welcomed me with a dash of rain in
my face, that only made me laugh,

“ Art there, old true-penny ? ”

And an hour of your fellowship has sent me
back refreshed and almost reconciled to my
books. On many a stormy morning and
blustering afternoon, you have driven away
the disorders and sickly fancies from blood
and brain. You have cleansed me in your
ethereal, whirling bath till my flesh was as
the flesh of a little child. Heart-ache and
heaviness fly like fog-vapours or thin rain-
clouds from your presence.

There is no malice in you. I know, even
when you drive the rain and sleet in my face
till it stings like a whip, that it is only your
mirth. No malice, when you scatter the
handfuls of snowflakes upon me, till my limbs
are stiff and my eyes glazed and blinded. It
is only your sport. Even were my poor
senses dulled into quiet, you would still pelt
me, till I should be just a little drifted heap
above the white level. What an excellent
jest that would be! No malice, when you
push my sail over till it touches the foam,
and the sheet cuts my hand, and my arm
aches in the struggle with the tiller. And if
you had spread it on the green, dancing water,
and the waves dipped in over the side, that

would only have been your jesting too. Just one great frolic, part of the glancing sunlight, and blue sky, and drifting, white cloud.

You know I do not fear you and that I will never cease to struggle with you. For hours I have driven my frail shallop inch by inch and foot by foot against your power. Though you sent your armies of white-caps rolling against me, you could not change my purpose. I knew that a single error would be fatal and that you were waiting for me to make a slip; but for hours, I banded the jest with you.

Some time or other, perhaps at midnight and in storm, you will crush out the worm strength which has so long resisted you, but it will be merely a further jest, to show how strong you are.

THE ALL-MOTHER

*"To her fair works did nature link
The human soul that through me ran."*

What can be more prosaic than the aspect of a railway track? Two metal lines drawn hard and fast across half a country, rough wood, rigid steel, loose gravel, bare earth and all bounded by dull rows of ugly fencing. And yet the Dreamer, faint after a night of passion and parting in the morning, leaned his head against the open sash of the railway carriage, and, looking on these common things saw that they were not common. The train rolled slowly up a steep incline, beside the water and across the bridge. The summer mist, just brightening to sun-rise, was carried on the breeze like a cooling balm to the feverish eyes and throbbing temple. With his eyes so anointed, the Dreamer saw more clearly. He perceived that, in some measure, the ravages of man had been repaired. The huge, raw gashes of the cuttings had been healed by the tender far-spreading grass; green bushes and shrubs, tangled with wild

vines, crowned their summits and ran along the fences, shrouding their naked deformity, like some gay green cloth thrown across a cripple's twisted limbs. On the slopes were ranged, row over row, the armies of the clover; now a blurr of pink, now a flash of white as the train sped fast; and, when the rapid motion slackened, you could see each soldier, as he stood in the ranks, legion upon legion of them, dashed and dazzling with the heavy dew. The bright green leaves, they stood so deep in, seemed the glittering livery of a white or rosy face. Now and then, at the edge of little bridges, the sweet-brier's trailing sprays hung over the chasm, like a fair girl's loosened hair, when she throws back her head and her laughing face is turned upwards for a kiss. The pale yellow flowers glowed like stars against the vivid green of the small sharp-scented leaves.

The sweet-brier was queen; and there were hosts of others, common flowers that the people call weeds: many would grudge them the name of flower. But to the Dreamer, then, they were more precious than the rarest treasure of all the hot-houses and botanical gardens of the world; for he saw how they had fulfilled their Sovereign's behest to redeem a part of her realm from hatefulness and his

weary heart went out to these common things in love and gratitude, for their morning message of refreshing and sweet rest.

II.

The express-train crowded and whirling along through the blazing afternoon. It is the same scene that the Dreamer's eyes look upon; but with a difference. That was cool morning; this is the hottest time of the midsummer day. The wild roses, the troops of clover, the dandelions have all vanished, but the new change is into something even richer than they. The flowers in our city-gardens have withered in the heat; but here, even in this wildest domain of the Queen-mother, her children and subjects are strong and lusty. The bushes stand higher, are richer in colour and more rank in growth. Stretches of low plants with brown polished leaves ever succeed patches of buttercups, holding lightly upon slender branching stems, their myriad basins of thin smooth gold. But the buttercups could not catch as much of the largesse of August sunshine as the unordered, fleeing crowds of golden-rod. They have dressed themselves in cloth of gold and, in their prodigal lavishness, sprinkled themselves from head to heel with gold-dust, How they rejoice in

mere being! They press everywhere; along the levels and up the slope of the banks; they reach the top only to hurry down the opposite incline and, in their pride of life and strength, jostle one another close to the whirling, deathful wheels. Destruction is near you, but while ye live, it is like kings' sons; wherever ye come, the land is ablaze with your glowing faces and shining hair. This heat that makes the weak hang their heads only gives you a sturdier grace and an intenser bloom. And someone knows the proper home of your kindred; where they flaunt and riot all over a granite island, one of a thousand; and across the waveless river, in the dazzling sunlight, a skiff is gliding to the shore.

III.

It was the centre of those three memorable days, after the course of the year was changed. Spring had come at last. The river had risen suddenly in the night and carried the ice in huge masses over the dam; then, after grinding it small against the stone piers of the bridges, had borne it all down to the lake. The river was free. Ah! the delight of being free; free as the river after the long cold, the killing frost that went into the blood and into the brain and into the heart,

stiffened the joints and chilled the marrow in the bones. Free! from the bondage of four hateful walls, the rows of books and the sickly lamplight over it all. Free! free! after the long compelled Puritanism of the winter; free to bathe in the soft, voluptuous light and warmth, standing on the old red bridge by the hour, and watching the brown water, as it swirls around the mighty stone abutments. Free! to rejoice in the infinite changes of toppling, white clouds, drifting across the friendly blue. And the warm south wind from over the leafless hills caresses like a girl's soft hand upon the cheek. No wonder the sailor lad loved you so, south wind! But even the glories of the sky cannot hold the eye long away from the rushing water. Carelessly the moments slip by and the Dreamer's gaze is never lifted from the moving flood; and his ears hear nothing but its rejoicing volume of heavy sound. The people pass and re-pass behind him; but, with arms folded on the parapet, he sees and hears nothing but the river rushing down. And the spell grows upon him, till the blunt pier under his feet, seems the stem of some stout vessel ploughing her steady way against a mid-stream current. But the river did more. As the Dreamer stood there, lapped in soft airs and basking in

the pleasant sunshine, the outward world was suddenly removed to an immeasurable distance, and it seemed as if the brown water rose and laved every joint and limb, washed through every vein and searched its way to every crevice of brain and heart. Then it sank again and flowed calmly away in its rejoicing progress to the distant lake. It was like a bath of rose-leaves or an anointing with some grateful oil. The Dreamer turned lightly homewards, with a strange feeling of refreshment and renewed energy. Something had slipped from him in that bath in the flowing of the river, which was borne down to the lake and which the lake delivered to the sea.

IV.

The sun is warm on the top of this high bank, which slopes steeply down to the narrow beach. The waters of Ontario are glistening in the sunlight, blue, calm, limitless: no ocean can be more beautiful. Not a sail is in sight, not a cloud, not a wave: only at intervals a drowsy plashing on the pebbles rises from below. From this solitary pedestal, nothing is to be seen but the ever welcome comrades, water and the sky: this ledge of cliff projects itself between them, merely to serve as a resting-place for the Dreamer. All

earth has melted away except this piece of land floating with its human burden between that double mirror of the eternal, heaven and the sea. But close beside his head, introducing themselves across the blue field of vision, are haulms of grass, slender stalks, fine and feathery, jointed and tufted and swaying slowly in the pleasant breeze. What a mite the Dreamer seems amongst them! they tower above his head into curious tropic trees of unimagined height. How many they are! and how diverse! What tangled thickets and leagues of jungle! The Dreamer is but the veriest ant amidst it all. And yet,—it is only the grass, waving its green spears and tassels idly through the afternoon, over-against the great calm depths of sky. Tears rise unbidden; for what is man? Less than the grass, which to-day is in the field; to-morrow it is cut down and withereth.

THE GHOST OF A GARDEN

THERE is one street in our busy, beautiful city, into which I never turn, if I can, by any chance, avoid doing so. Yet it is a pretty street: the broad, formal bands of turf on each side of the roadway are green and fresh, even in August; the double row of maples touch bough-tips across it; and the neat little houses stand back modestly, amid their spacious flower-beds. It is a very pretty street, but, at one end of it, a large new brick mansion has recently taken the place of an old-fashioned house and garden. And because that little plot of ground is not as I once knew it, I would rather not see it again while I live. A trivial reason, is it not, for daily avoiding the shortest way between home and work?

Not very long ago this house and garden I speak of had an existence; now they are blotted out of being, poor things, as you and I shall be some day. They can no more come back than the snows of last year. No man in his senses will keep ground for flowers and fruit, which is available for building-lots, or leave a plain, old house standing, where he may have a bran new one, with all modern im-

provements, fine red brick without, and fresh white plaster within. An old garden is sadly out of place in the very heart of a thriving, modern city; so it vanishes. The one I speak of survives only as a spectral shadow of itself in that vast limbo of unforgotten dreams, to which I alone have the key,—my memory. So it is, in a way, imperishable. It is pleasant walking, even in a dream garden, and I sometimes wander about in mine for a day and a night together. My demesne is fenced with a phantom wall to keep the hands of thievish elves and fays from the golden ghosts of apples and pears. Though this apparition of a wall would seem to forbid all entrance, there is a cunningly made postern door that will open to you, if you have found favour in the eyes of the mistress of that Enchanted Ground. Once inside, you wonder to see how far it stretches to left and right, and how the wall that faces the noonday sun is hung with green arras of vine leaves, where the clusters turn black in the warm Septembers. They are not real, remember, but ghostly grapes, the most luscious of their kind. The long straight walk of seeming gravel fades away between spectre borders of blood-red and fiery yellow nasturtiums; on both sides of the path grow mazes of cherry and pear trees, and tangles of flow-

ers, as they please. It is a little journey from end to end, but you do not notice how often you turn, if the moon is shining high over the great elm by the garden wall (it is always moonlight in my garden); and at your side is pacing the tall, neat-footed mistress of the Joyous Guard. The white moonlight falls on the thin white scarf which she has thrown over her brown hair, and the frank brown eyes meet yours with quick confidence and kindly humour, as you walk and talk—

Only a garden in a dream: never, alas! can it be again anything but a dream.

And this is only an echo of a boy's romance,—a reminiscence of a mere love story? No. It is not love I celebrate, but something rarer and almost as sweet,—a perfect friendship. On the one side, a shy, awkward, country-bred young scholar. He has been brought up among books, and he loves them. The phantoms that have their being in the printed page are more to him than the men and women whom he meets every day. He fancies that the real world is peopled with such rare and beautiful forms, if not here, beyond the mountains. Like the heroes and heroines of the enchaining books, men are all brave and honourable, women all lovely and true. The books have beguiled him into new weaving romances of

his own, and have dowered him with what may be either a blessing or a curse, high hopes, aspirations and ambitions. He has lived so long in the cloud-land of his own fancies that he cannot pluck apart the real and the unreal, nor does he care to do so. What is there for such a dreamer but an inevitable, cruel awaking? A sudden, rough shaking would only paralyze all effort, and fling him from extreme of folly to the other. Only one thing can save him. To learn life as it really is, slowly, under the tutorship of a noble woman. And, for once, the stars are kind; the impossible thing happens. For on the other side is a pure woman of the same age, by virtue of finer instinct, richer experience and inborn wisdom, fitted to be his tutor. They were near akin, but had been strangers; they became friends, and so remained to the end, frank, joyous comrades. Why she should have troubled herself with the raw boy at all, and admitted him to such intercourse, I cannot imagine. There is no reason for it, but her own good heart, and that, perhaps, she discerned the possibilities of better things beneath the crudities of a mere bookish youth. At all events, it actually happened that she became his friend—an event of incalculable importance to him. Of course, the gossips put

their heads together and whispered, "Lovers." It was a long time before a chance wind brought the gossips' words to the ears of the two, and they only laughed to themselves and held their peace. They both knew that never did page serve lady more reverently, in all honour, and humility; and he knew, though she did not, that never was lady more worthy of service. Their calm happiness in each other was not ruffled even for a moment; much less did they heed the idly wagging tongues, and they had their reward. Common interests in the worlds of art and of books first drew them together; likeness of taste and temper held them. Her quick insight and perfect comprehension were new things to him (for he had never known a woman before), and delightful as they were new, and her spirit of comradeship and loyalty kept her from tiring of him. Delight as of children in the wonders of heaven at sun-set and moon-rise, in the wonders of earth at seed-time and harvest, in even the common wayside growths of shrub and wild weed gave them many memorable afternoons and evenings, along the fresh country side; days so full of light and warmth and woodland scents, that they have sweetened and cheered and brightened many an hour of black winter since. Many

were the merry meetings in the long, low rooms of the old house and in friends' parlours. They even framed a calendar of their own, which began with a certain home festival at the turn of the year, and contained movable feasts and holy-days which were punctiliously and regularly observed. Many were the long talks, grave and gay, in the blaze of the drawing-room fire; but the garden was the favourite meeting-place. By far the greater number of those hours of pleasant converse were spent under the shadow of the great elm, or in strolling along the gravelled paths, among the flowers and fruit trees. That is why I regret the loss of the garden most. The outcome of it all was that, unknown to them both, she taught him the fine essence of life, how to grasp the facts of the world as it appears without losing hold of the eternal, unseen things. So the years of peculiar danger were safely tided over; the boy passed through his nonage and grew to the stature of man. He had learned the meanness and misery of life without being debased by such knowledge.

And then, — she went away. The place was sold to strangers, who pulled down the old house and divided the garden. The pretty street has never looked the same since.

A GREEN RIBBON

THE old manse stood outside the town and near the road upon a little hill. In front of the creeper-covered porch lay the round flower-bed, with Bleeding-Heart in the centre. Behind, the land fell away ; and in the little valley nestled a tiny orchard. One of the apple-trees was always the first to blossom richly every spring in a cloud of tender pink and snowy white. Its leaves had a fresher green than all the others, because they were the first.

The orchard with its juicy harvest-apples, "water-cores" the boys called them, has vanished and the minister's sons who ate the apples and swung in the hammock between the maples, book in hand, through the long summer afternoons have gone their way into the wide world. One did not go far before he found rest in a grave ; and one is a black sheep. The eldest is a busy man with no time for hammocks on summer afternoons, who has forgotten what holiday meant, but he still keeps far down in his heart some little of that orchard's freshness and that orchard's peace.

And the youngest is a dreamer of dreams, who wandered into a far country following a dream, the mirage of love and fame which young feet are fain to follow.

* * * * *

The woman was young, she was indeed no more than a child; she was very fair and she meant no harm. A frank greeting, a wonderful, firm, living hand not churlishly withheld, a smile of both lips and eyes, as of sun and blue sky breaking through the light cloud of summer,—why should they have any meaning? The sun shines on the evil and the good, why not the sun of a young and radiant face? The Dreamer was no wiser than other men, nor more just, nor more evil; and he warmed his heart in the sunshine of that smile. And as the days went by, she grew dearer to him, against his will, and he thought "Surely she will see and understand." One night they were together in crowded rooms; but, for them, the gay, noisy throng were as distant shadows dimly seen. Some power they were scarcely conscious of drew heart nearer to heart. No caress was given, no word was spoken. The silence was more than any speech. It may have been the little troubled sigh escaping from the laughing lips that was

the interpreter between the two,—a little sigh, a little shrinking nearer, a far-off look of unwonted sadness in the clear blue eyes. And in the thrilling moment there fluttered with her quicker breathing, along the border of her mute's black dress, making the fairness of her neck more fair, a narrow band of silk, apple-green. The old tree in the old manse orchard, the twisted apple boughs, the fresh leaves against the clear blue of the spring sky, the sun in his strength shining through,—and the fresh beauty of girl at the Dreamer's side,—each was dearer for the thought of the other; the two were one. . . .

And then—their ways divided.

* * * * *

Then for days this vision was before the Dreamer's eyes, sleeping and waking,—a long, narrow, black ship breasting a long black hill of water, or shooting swiftly down the opposing slope. Hour after hour the ship climbed the unending ridges. The deck was always empty but for a tall, slim, girlish figure that stepped with a light, sure foot, or, swaying lightly to the swing of the ship, stood to gaze across the sunny sea, meeting the innumerable smile of the blue water with blue and smiling eyes. They did not often look back

over the way the ship had passed ; they rather searched the half-rim of horizon into which the bow was ever cutting. Her eyelids looked right on.

* * * * *

Then came those wonderful letters telling of southern skies without a cloud, and southern seas without a storm, and friendly southern air that was all balm. In the gloom and the loud winds and beating snows of the Northland, the Dreamer was glad at heart that the sun shone on her. The thought that she moved among flowers took the edge from the winter wind and turned the darkened northern day to light. A thousand leagues of land and sea is but a span for the winged thoughts of a lover. There is a town beside the sunny Midland sea that the Dreamer came to know as well as the one in which he was a prisoner,—a city of groves and flowers and sweeping walls, built in the ages when men knew how to build. In the morning the breeze blows pleasantly off the sea, the leaves keep up an endless, lispng song of countless tiny voices, and the broad waters show many a strange, bright sail. And there is one walk along the ramparts under the orange-trees which the Dreamer often paced in spirit. If

he had waked some morning to find himself one of the idle strollers along her favourite walk, he would not have thought it strange. The town she had forsaken was dull without her; and yet was not altogether emptied of her presence. There was her deserted window in the silent, vacant house; he passed it daily,—the window of her own room, which she had dressed with her own hands before she went away. The casket was empty now, but it had once held her. Is was her own nook with her shelf of favourite books upon the wall: perhaps her beribboned guitar still lay among the cushions heaped upon the window-seat. For she would not be long, he told himself over and over; she would come again, and soon; she would surely come again and bring back sunshine and fair weather to the bleak and stormy town. And there was a plain token and promise of her return, beyond all doubt or peradventure, plain for all to see, but for only one to understand. In her window, the filmy curtain of maiden white was looped back with a band of green ribbon, the ribbon she had worn that night, as green as the leaves of the harvest apple-tree in the old manse orchard, which was the first to put forth in spring. Every time he passed, he read the omen thus: "It is to tell

me that she will soon return." The ribbon had magic in it to tangle in its folds and knots so many scenes, and hopes and thoughts and dreams.

* * * * *

They change their skies but not their hearts, who cross the sea. The southern air must have poison in it as well as balm; it hurts as many as it heals. The fault was not hers, but of that cursed south, so bright, so fierce, so fickle. Little by little the tone of those rare letters changed. They were shorter, more hurried. Here the reader missed an emphasis; there the phrase was overwrought and seemed to say more than the writer meant. And then one would come, striving, without avail to make amends. But it was not the growing coldness alone that wrung the Dreamer's heart. Little by little, with many fierce denials on the part of the old loyalty, he was forced to see, that as she grew, hidden evil things came to light and grew also and took possession of her; and those the least likely faults. It did not seem possible that one so winsome, so frank, so fair, could really be so slight, could be so hard. The knowledge was bitter; but he grieved more for her sake than for his own. And

then, the news came that she would never return to the old town. The same day the magic ribbon of apple-green vanished from her window, for the house was let to strangers, It was no longer to the dreaming eyes an enchanted castle, with the gage of the Princess floating at the casement : it was but one house in a commonplace modern street. That night, he sat long beside his fire, reading her letters over one by one ; and as he read each, he put it in the flames.

* * * * *

For them both the episode was at an end. She soon forgot it altogether ; but he, the invincible believer in good dreams, sealed up in one of the many strange hiding-places of memory, a shred of spirit silk, the colour of the first apple-leaves in spring, the colour of hope.

BAISER

It is a brilliant concert hall, and at the upper end, beside a high, spindly desk, a woman is reading. She is tall and handsome; her coal black hair sweeps down low over her forehead; her heavy brows are black, and so are her great deep eyes. She has black lace on her arms and shoulders, but the rest of her dress is one rustling sunshine of corn-coloured silk. She is reading from the prince of dramatists, our English Shakespeare, and she reads well.

It is the famous courtship scene from *Henry the Fifth*, and as she reads on, it grows harder and harder to believe that she is alone there on the platform. Against a background of ancient arras, sown with white fleur-de-lis, stand out three figures at least,—the bluff soldier lover in his royal red, the French princess making broken music of the foreign speech, and the clever, quick soubrette. There they are, in that quaint, old-time room, playing their parts. Each in turn seems to fade into the swaying tapestry and grow out of it again when you turn away your eyes. The wooing goes on briskly, for the

Bold wooer is a king, and fresh from a great victory. The fair enemy makes but a half-hearted defence, and one by one the out-works are carried by assault. At last the bargain is struck, and he will seal it with a kiss, when,—no! the shy, convent-bred girl shrinks back, shamefacedly, and, dropping the unfamiliar medium of her lover's language, protests vehemently in her own voluble French. He is bewildered, and appeals to her maid:—

“Madam, my interpreter, what says she?”

“She says, *sauf votre honneur, zat eet ees not zee custom for zee maids in France to,—to,—I cannot tell what ‘baiser’ is.*”

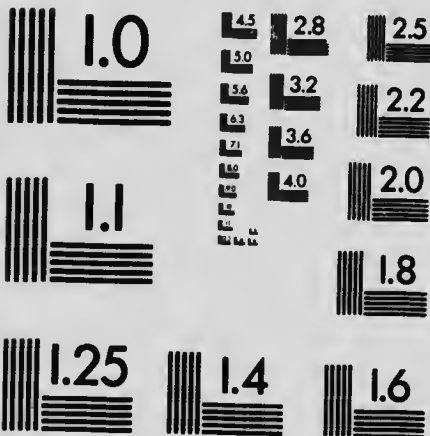
And, to help out her lack of words comes a swift, crisp chirrup, like a bird's, the first prelude note of a linked warble.

At that musical sound, the voice of the woman reading in black and gold grows thin and loses itself in remote distance, and all things seem to melt and flow together before my sight. Here is the audience and here am I; there is the reader beside her desk on the low platform: but in the place of the royal courtship scene is a London street on a July night. The reading still goes on, I suppose, but I only see a stretch of pavement and a bounding wall, which makes a long dark



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BESS

Her pet-name suits her exactly, because it suggests, to my mind at least, just such a rosy, rustic, unspoiled, little lass as she really is. But she has herself a curious fancy for her stately, old-fashioned, christened name; and when I said once that it was too grand for such a simple little maiden, that the Elizabeth was a queen, she retorted with quaint dignity: "Well, am not I a queen?" In spite of this bold declaration of right, she is not conscious of her power; but that the word was spoken in jest, makes it none the less true. Her sovereignty over us all, father, mother, sisters, summer boarders, is complete and undisputed. Never had monarch more devoted subjects; and never were subjects ruled with such beneficent sway. The secret of her power is that she has founded her queenship on the divine right of service. Like another Elizabeth,

"waiting still

On the turnings of your will,"

she is ready at any moment to do anything she is bid. She pervades the old homestead

like the light, doing her numberless errands in its quiet, cheering fashion. It is not always necessary to tell her what to do; she seems to know what you want before you are aware yourself and takes a quiet delight in forestalling your wishes. Old-fashioned people call her "biddable;" but never to her face. She is not praised, only loved; and so she has no notion that she is in any way different from other girls. This is her chief but not her only amiable quality. Is it any wonder that we all love her?

She is not a beautiful child in the usual sense of the term. She has grown too fast, is tall for her age and slim; but uncommonly graceful both in movement and in repose. Light, quick motions, as dancing and running, are natural to her and she delights in them. When I want a picture of Bess, it is the reed shaken in the wind that comes first before the inward eye; never at rest and never for a moment losing an atom of swaying grace, no matter how violent the agitation. Very few would call her even pretty. She lacks brilliant colour, her frocks are always of neutral-tinted stuff, grey or brown, to suit her eyes and hair. Her hair is without beauty of curl or gloss or special luxuriance; of that colour we call brown, for lack of a better

word; but, flying around her shoulders and low on her forehead, it seems the only fitting frame for her face. As I said, she is a country lass, too fond of gathering flowers in a land where flowers are plenty, and too prone to consider hats and veils as Sunday nuisances to have a complexion of roses and cream. She has not escaped freckles; but these sun-printed beauty-spots are only evidence of a fine textured skin. The contour of her face is evenly round, but not over full; and her cheeks are like the sides of softly rosy apples, in which the red fades into white by such subtle gradations that you can hardly be certain of line between the colours. When Bess plays, and she is fond of a hearty romp, her colour deepens but never changes into an unbecoming flush. Her eyes are only ordinary grey eyes; but they are large and very clear, and the eye-brows well-defined and high arched. Their habitual expression is frank, kindly and merry; they are very honest eyes, that always look straight into yours. Her mouth is not a rose-bud or a cupid's bow; but an ordinary well cut mouth that breaks readily into a smile. Her nose is of even length and has just enough piquant upward curve to give to the whole face a bright air of curiosity. In a word, it is just the sort of

face artists love in their models of rustic beauty, only not awkward or coarse. Birket Foster's girls are something like her. Bess is now what Perdita must have been at ten years of age, a nymph of the woodland rather than the flat fields.

It is simple justice to state that Bess possesses one physical charm that would go far to make a plainer child attractive,—a pleasing voice. It is clear, low-pitched and well modulated, and charged with a becoming quality of shyness. Her laugh is unusually pleasant to hear, rippling and bubbling up from a pure, happy heart. It is well worth the trouble of burdening your memory with stories to witness her merriment at them; and taking time to explain picture-books to her, to hear her confidential comments on them.

Bess likes books almost as much as flowers, pets and play; and one of her favourite nooks is the corner of the huge old sofa, nearest the window, whither she always resorts to read. Curled up in her nest, her face bent over her book and almost hidden by her veil of hair, she makes a picture I do not tire of watching. When I was first honoured with her friendship, we used to get much pleasure out of an illustrated

Shakespeare, she questioning and I explaining. I was amply repaid for the time and slight trouble expended. Bess had the habit of coming out to my big rocking-chair on the verandah, after dinner, every summer evening, and chatting till bed-time. We discussed all sorts of questions, flowers, the pointer puppy's education, her dolls' complexions (Bess laughing softly at the absurdity of this last debate), the state of the crops, or whatever came into our heads. These were pleasant conferences for both friends. One night after the *Shakespeare* expositions, Bess climbed up to her usual perch and said, without any preface:—

'I saw Romeo and Juliet to-day. Yes, I did. Charlie's white pigeon was up on the pigeon-house and the black one was on the ladder, talking to her. Just like the picture.'

And she laughed merrily in enjoyment of my surprise. Nothing is wasted on her.

She has a fashion of making speeches which are gently and unconsciously ironical. One night the family was gathered round the dining-room table, papa reading his newspaper, the girls busy with woman's work and the children at their lessons. There had been a long pause in the talk, in which Bess had been trying to solve some problem, not laid

down in her school-books. At last she broke the silence with : "Papa, doesn't everybody *have* to think before they speak?" There was a shout of laughter which puzzled but did not abash her, and she repeated the question. Bess thinks before she speaks, and was trying to arrive at a general law.

Poetry she likes, especially what she calls funny poetry. It was a genuine pleasure to read "Edward Gray" or "The Lord of Burleigh" to her, and to find how thoroughly she felt the charm of the musical words. Once, to gratify her, I tried "The Skipping-Rope," as verse that might be justly called funny. Bess made no comment for a moment, after her fashion of thinking before she speaks, then, lifting a smiling but puzzled face, queried : "That doesn't sound like grown-up people's poetry, does it?" Which seems to me the best possible critique on the unfortunate versicles.

It is no wonder that she can appreciate beautiful poems. Some fine instinct of sisterhood with them must guide her subtly and unconsciously, for she is herself a living poem. She has a faculty for doing graceful things artlessly ; for she is a perfect child. She likes to dress herself in the long pliant sprays of *Spiræa*, and manages to cover her

frock completely with the white flowers. Then, with a coronal of the snowy, star-like blossoms on her dark, flowing hair, she looks like a little South Sea Island princess on a festal day. One afternoon in spring when Bess had arrayed herself in this fantastic garb, we all went for a stroll through the grounds of our rich neighbour; the fence was down between and we had permission to go where we liked. In a clump of trees beside the drive were two or three statues, Flora, and Diana, if I remember rightly. What sudden fancy took possession of the child, I cannot say, but she went up to the marble woman, put her arms round the neck of stone and kissed the unbreathing lips; then taking the wreath from her own head, she placed it, in the prettiest way, upon the moveless, braided tresses of the chaste goddess! It was over in a minute, but the cool, green centre of the little grove into which the bright spring sunshine shot between the looped branches, the flower-clad girl before the eyeless marble made an ineffaceable picture in my memory. When she came back, leaving her wreath to wither on Diana's brow, she offered no explanation for her pagan rite. No one put any question to her, but I pondered over it and tried to

read the omens. And she was full of such unconscious poetry.

Few could live under the same roof without growing fond of such a child. There was one, at least, who could not, he who now dedicates with gratitude and humility this column to the memory of a flawless friendship.

ON NAMES

This is the first day of spring. All the doors and windows of the old farm-house are standing wide open; and the soft, warm breeze accepts the tacit invitation, comes in and wanders about at will, from room to room. In the tall elm beside the door, the birds are prophesying a time of thick leaves and green grass, when the cunning nests they are planning now shall have pretty blue eggs in them. The farmer is in the out-field ploughing. Everyone is busy about the house, except the lazy Visitor, who is sunning himself in a large arm-chair on the front piazza, and pretending to read. Spring has really come.

The farmer's little daughter, slim, rosy-cheeked, clear-eyed Bess, has been down in the patch of woodland for an hour or more, and now she is coming along the footpath, with her hands full of wild-flowers. The Visitor notes that she is walking slowly, for fear of dropping any of her sylvan spoil. In general, Bess never walks, unless she is tired, but dances or runs. Her eyes are shining and the red is brighter in her cheeks than usual.

"Look what I've got," she calls in a voice

like a bell, as she catches sight of the Visitor and hurries up to the piazza. The child has a passion for flowers; with a rare patience and steadiness of purpose she tends a little summer garden of her own, and all through the winter cares for a windowful of potted plants. She knows the haunts of the wild-flowers, and the season for every one. This foraging expedition of hers will only be the first of many in May and June. The Visitor often calls her *Perdita*, much to her bewilderment; but, in spite of his trick of bestowing such nicknames, the two are fast friends. So now she brings her treasure-trove to him to be admired.

"They are always the first to come," she goes on in her soft, cooing voice. "Don't you think they're pretty?"

This is a needless question, thinks the Visitor; there cannot be two opinions on the subject. He passes it by and Bess does not notice the omission.

"Won't you have them?" is the next question; for Bess is generous and likes to share her pleasures with her friends. This time there was no chance to reply. Before the lazy Visitor could thank her or put his delight into words, Bess had darted through the open door into the cool twilight of the

house. In another minute she was back with an old stone cup much chipped about the brim and full of water. In this rude vase she began arranging the flowers, putting the long stems carefully into the water, one by one, so that the small, delicate-hued petals just peeped over the edge and made another and lovelier brim. Bess talked as her nimble fingers worked, and her prattle was pleasant to hear; for one of her greatest charms is her soft, flute-like voice. The wood was just full of them, or would be in a few days,—there was so many buds,—weren't they pretty?—didn't they look like little faces?—didn't the Visitor want more of them?—she would get them if he did, and so on. Then her pretty task was done and both the friends admired her handiwork in silence. The battered old cup, gay now with its wild-flower wreath, had been transformed from a very commonplace piece of delf into an article of fairy furniture. Titania might not disdain it for her bath. The flowers were the first of the year; that was why they gave so much pleasure. It was a sort of miracle that these tender blossoms should be brought forth by the hard, rough earth. Though they had no perfume, the fragile bells were exquisitely pure

in their airy outlines; and the fresh, faint tints of purple, fading into pink and white at the petal tips, soothed the sense like a cool hand laid on the forehead and eyes.

"They seem so free from assoilment, from all earthly touch," thought the Man, "so like the Child whose soft hand lies in mine; surely the wild-flower must be the spirit of purity interpreted into the only form in which it could fittingly appear."

The Visitor was one of those misguided persons who spoil their eyesight poring over books. As a consequence he was very ignorant; he did not know the name of the flowers: but the child did, and told him with laughing surprise at his ignorance and delight at her own ability to give information to a grown man. Bess is very proud of her woodcraft and herb-lore. Her friend had learned enough from her, however, to pardon the little air of triumph with which she imparted her scrap of knowledge. He had himself gathered the flowers a score of times, and seen their names in books, but he had never before put the two together. Now, the little flowers had another beauty; for at the mention of their name a dozen lines of poetry out of those old books of his darted into his mind, and at the same instant an aureole or

halo settled like a crown upon the old cup, above its wreath of frail, fresh-coloured blooms which a breath would shatter like a bubble. Such sights do come to people sometimes who have hurt their eyes by reading,—poetry and such like.

Presently Bess tripped off to her play, leaving the Visitor to his book and the sunshine and Titania's bath. The book was interesting but it could not hold attention away from the cup with its wild-flower coronal. The eye could not be filled with seeing. And after the fashion of idle, lazy people, the Visitor fell into a muse.

“Why did I wish to discover the name to these woodland dainties?” he thought. “Could I not have been satisfied with their unnamed freshness? As the poet says of the sea-shell in my book, giving a long, learned name or any name could not add to their beauty. Granted. The fact remains that they took on a new glory in my eyes, when Bess-Perdita pronounced that homely name of theirs, that smacks so of the soil. That name was the spell by which the lines of verse were changed into the halo that is still hovering over the flowers. Besides, what a convenience it is to have a name to refer to! What a relief to Tityrus to make the

grove resound with "lovely Amaryllis," instead of "maid-who-causeth -all -my-care." Tityrus knows, as every lover knows, that the musical name is the most potent charm to summon up the absent face. The name is the closest thing except the life. If we could only know the names of all our friends. There are so many of them that are not only nameless but whom we shall never know. We walk along a crowded street and brush sleeves with a hundred men and women who really are our friends except for the slight accident that we have never been introduced. These people read the same books, laugh and cry over the same passages, admire the same leaders in politics, hold to the same form of faith or unfaith that we do; they have had like ambitions and losses; and yet, unless by happy chance we are cast away together on a desert island, we shall never come to know one another. Oftenest we pass one another by, unwotting. But not always. Now and then, some trifling accident reveals one of these unknown comrades: character cannot be hidden, it flashes out continually in unconscious self-betrayal. This potential comradeship may be revealed by a smile at some street scene, which we find mirth-provoking, but which,

for the crowd, does not exist. A common sense of humour is among the strongest of bonds. Or it may be a sentence heard in passing, a racy phrase, an accent on a word, some tone of a rich voice which tells the tale and reveals the possible but unknown friend. That fair woman who stood absorbed in the sight of a noble picture, that dashing young fellow who turned back to help the paralytic old negro over the crossing,—we know them as well as if we had lived under the same roof or had been children together. If, in addition, we only knew their names (suppose them to be Agatha or Alfred), what an advantage! how much easier to call them up! Even if the names were more prosaic, they would never sound commonplace again, such owners having ennobled them for ever. In most cases, we have to be content with the beauty of the person or the act, as I was with my flowers, before my child friend told me their names.

And so the Visitor mused over his gift, forgetting his book and the time. By telling him their name, the little maid had given him more than the flowers,—many thoughts. Henceforward, these first-born children of the spring will not be to him unknown friends.

THE MISTRESS OF THE RED LAMP

C(arlotta) R(egina)

*"But take it,—earnest wed to sport
And either sacred unto you."*

In a city of the South, there is a long, high room, in which a red lamp burns continually. By day and night in the rich, darkened room its flame never goes out; and, by its side, sits the Mistress of the Lamp. Her eyes and hair are the colour of night, and her ways are the ways of a queen-witch, who knows that her subjects cannot but obey her. Many are the slaves of the lamp and of its mistress. Even I who am of the North and not of the South have known her power and done homage to her queen-ship. I can bear witness that she is no tyrant; but of infinite condescension. She will unbend even to the meanest of her vassals. She has gone a-hunting in the forest, with a single page, like Schön-Rohtraut. But no page was ever so daring as was Schön-Rohtraut's; nor did all the leaves on the trees ever lisp and whisper the

pretty secret that he had looked longingly at her and had kissed her on the lips.

The red lamp was a centre of light in that city, and many were drawn by it into the presence-chamber of its mistress. Whether it was the lamp Aladdin found in the wonderful garden, and by merely touching it, the slaves came, I cannot tell. There was some white witchcraft about it, some sweet compulsion, which, after all, may have lain not in the lamp, but in the lady. Just without the circle of its red rays, between the light and the mysterious shadow, sat the Mistress of the Lamp enthroned; and it is in that pose that her liegemen remember her best. It was there that she received votive offerings of flowers; there she held her audiences; there was much incense burned, as before a shrine. Very often this audience-chamber would be thronged with levees of young men and maidens; and in place of courtly silence or decorous murmurs, there was the sound of many light voices talking, of clear laughter and of tinkling music. A hush would fall upon the gay assembly, when some one in the corner swept the plectern over the strings of a mandolin; or when a singer stood up to sing. The songs were quite unfashionable songs for they had pith and meaning; and

they wavered between smiles and tears. They were old ballads about hard-hearted Barbara Allen, or lays of Green Bushes, or tender, gallant, little preachments on the text, "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds." Their memory cannot wither.

The Mistress of the Lamp was the soul and centre of it all; but she did not sing nor deal with any instrument of music. The harmonies which she created were the visible and unheard rhythms of colour. With a deftness that had something of magic in it (I have called her a witch) she would change a blank square of canvas or white paper into a mirror of stream and sky, of wood and field. And excursions into the surrounding champaign were often needful to find nooks worthy the honour of Her Highness's portrayal. One spring day, with a single attendant, she visited for this purpose the old fortress which once defended the city. That was a borrowed day, a day to be marked in the calendar with white chalk. The May sun shone bright and warm on the earthen mounds and wide embrasures, through which the huge guns looked out on the broad, rippling water. The long grass waved high over the grim engines of destruction, and the spirit of gladness was

in the air. You sat in the deep-arched doorway of the inner citadel and, with your swift pencil, caught and fixed some of the beauty of the day. Children of some soldier, black-eyed and foreign-looking, strayed from the deserted barracks and came to you shyly, when you spoke. The moving picture of which you were the centre was even better worth looking at, than the one which grew so fast under your skilful fingers.

When we came back to the city, we became aware that we had been living, for some hours, far away from the work-a-day world and its briers. We promised ourselves many more such escapes. But the other days to be marked with white never came.

THE DIP IN THE ROAD

Our nature is so full of affection that if we cannot find a fellow-being to love, we will make close companions of the faithful, dumb brutes. Failing a dog or a horse, failing even the flower or the spider of the poor prisoner, we will love mere things. The sailor loves the ship which has been his restless home for years; the scholar, his lonely study, the very walls which seemed stained with the traces of intellectual conflict, triumph and joy. There is a sense of loss, a sort of homesickness when they are withdrawn; and a kindly, cherishing feeling whenever they are recalled to mind. Many feel this attachment to places of habitation; and not a few have gone further and know what it is to form a fondness for such a prosaic thing as a strip of road or a parcel of ground; not from pride of possession because it is part of our farm or estate; not from sentimental association, as we might have for the whispering grove, where we told our first passion; but solely from close acquaintance and long companionship. This may

seem strange, for what is a road but a levelled ribbon of hard, unflowering ground, bordered with grass between two shallow ditches and two fences? A moment ago I called it prosaic; but it is so, only to the careless wayfarer. To him, whose heart is not shut to the deep meanings of wayside flowers nor his eyes blind to the workings of God's rain and sunshine, it is a gallery of pictures and a constantly acting drama. If the road lies between home and your work, you will be abroad at almost all hours of the day and night, in all seasons and in all weathers. Day after day, at the same hour you pass along and almost unconsciously, learn every foot of the way; till you miss a pebble out of its place and know when a weed has its stem broken. And however commonplace it may seem by daylight, nothing can be more eerie than this fading track of ghostly dust in the noiseless, moonless summer night. The landscape on both sides of the way has sunk out of sight in impenetrable darkness; and you seem to be walking on the very rim of the world and rolling the round ball of it under your feet. Its aspect is changing continually,—in the rain, under the burning sun, when the snow comes and the earliest

flowering weeds. You understand the procession of Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, better for observing their march across something fixed, limited and having the mathematical quality of a straight line.

But Nature, even on the highway, will not yield her secrets to the hasty passer-by. You must plod along on foot if you are to learn any of this love for the road. There is compensation in the mere exercise, which becomes first unconscious, and then joyous, and leaves you free from personal considerations, to take note of all you see. Here and there will stand a brotherhood of primeval forest trees for shade; now and then you will find a grass-grown bank for rest, where the pink flowers of the burr silently ask you to look at them. As you pass, you see fruit-trees blossoming in gardens, fields of wheat or pasture-land with slow-moving cattle, knee-deep in the clover. Now you pass the stern gates that guard some rich man's possessions; and now a farm-house or cottage with children at play. Costly equipages whirl past in the pursuit of pleasure, and heavy-laden waggons rumble by. It is not pleasure *they* are seeking; they are on the road because the teamster's daily bread depends on it. Then there is sure to be a

sudden turn or crook, which you encounter with fresh surprise every time you come to it.

Of the many roads that I have grown familiar with by such constant, close companionship, there is a certain three-mile strip leading into a college town, for which I have a special fondness. As I think of it, it all comes so vividly before me that, in imagination, I am walking over it again. Leaving the old farm-house while the dew is on the grass, I strike into the shady lane and plunge down the small ravine, at the bottom of which the railway runs. Crossing the rails and climbing the opposite hill, I find myself on the clean, yellow turnpike. I have barely gone half a mile when the road makes a bend like a pot-hook or a capital S, to pass through a bit of woodland. For a few minutes I am as completely shut in on all sides as if I were miles from any human habitation. Presently I am out of the wood. On the right hand are the barred gates of a rich estate, and on the left, a group of gaily-painted villas. The next landmark is the toll-gate, a mile farther on, at the crossing of a wooded lane, with vistas tempting exploration whichever way I look. Then comes another long, level

stretch, at the end of which the road dips suddenly and then climbs a long, steep hill, from the top of which the traveller sees the city spread on the plain that slopes away like a great glacis from his point of vantage.

This valley is the strangest spot in that league of pleasance. It is not because of the clear stream that babbles at one side, nor the fresh turf where the city children come to gather the many wild flowers, which southern suns bring forth in such profusion. It is the configuration of the road and the wood that gives the glen its character. On the one hand, there is a park-like grove with some tall forest trees spreading above the rest; on the other four or five gigantic elms tower to the sky, and just where the broad road begins to dip down, the huge branches meet overhead in a wonderful triumphal arch. In this climate all growth is rapid; three days suffice to work the greatest changes. Here Spring comes with flying steps. In Winter, the woods seem empty and the landscape is open. You can see between the tree trunks in all directions, and the fine tracery of the topmost branches is outlined against grey cloud or etched on the cold silver of the after-sunset. No leafy screen shuts out

the distant hills. Then the rain drops down, the warm days come, and, in a week, the leaves are fully out. You feel the difference at once. The emptiness of the wood is gone. You are shut in, covered over; your outlook is narrowed; there is a sense of fulness and the distant views are hidden. In the Spring, I felt this most strongly at this point; for the green roof shut out the sky. When I reached it in the morning, the sun, although powerful on the unsheltered level, had not prevailed over the coolness of the little valley; for at that hour he had not risen high enough to cast his beams directly into the ravine. The overshot light caught only the green leafage that hung above the road and transfigured it. The whole glen was cool and full of shadow, so deep that one could walk through bareheaded. The grateful freshness felt like a breeze, and enclosed one round on every side.

It was like a long dive into clear, deep water. The old wooden jetty by the lakeside, the warm unmoving air, the water so transparent that you are afraid it will not buoy you up,—you can see every pebble on the bottom,—that is the beginning of it. Then comes the muscular effort of the leap,—the momentary shooting through the air,—the

noise of your own splash filling your ears,—
“the cool silver shock of the plunge,”—the
inverted feeling as you eke out the force
of your spring by swimming downwards;
then, opening your eyes on the clean, un-
disturbed sand, spread like a floor, you turn,
and, as you fight your way to the surface,
you see the green light, wavering through
the cool, watery masses piled above your
head.

The shady valley had that effect every
morning. Refreshed by that plunge, I went
on to the busy, dusty city, to my day's
work, and kept the freshness of the morning
far into the afternoon. It was only a bit
of road, and this was only one good thing
it did for me; but is it any wonder that its
dust cleaves to my shoes still?

MRS. LILY SWEETWICH'S COFFEE

Once my friend Mrs. Sweetwich was betrayed into the frank statement that she did not belong to that class of people, who resent being looked at. And since the implied permission was granted, I have availed myself of it without stint. It may be urged in my defence that the time might be less pleasantly employed. Mrs. Sweetwich is a perfect blonde, tall and slight and with a soft, peach-bloom complexion like a baby's. Her eyes are a clear deep blue, and her hair is the colour of ripe wheat. The huge, golden masses of it she builds up into a sort of coiled tiara on her head. There is a bewitching dent in her chin and more dimples in her face when she laughs. Her laughter comes readily and there is usually the dawn of a smile somewhere, I cannot say whether from dimples or lips or eyes. Her eyes can be serious and earnest at the right time and look as untroubled as the windless, cloudless blue of the sky. It seems only fitting that she should have scores of friends and a handsome young husband who adores her and gives her everything that

wealth and taste can supply. Her home is the House Beautiful, and an hour in Mrs. Sweetwich's daintily appointed library, with Mrs. Sweetwich lying back in her favourite arm-chair, doing you the honour of talking to you and letting you look at her, is an hour to be treasured by a poor youth with his heart full of reverence for women and a passionate love for beautiful things.

I think she is very happy. Once when we were talking of University education for women and how girl-students ran the risk of not caring for home and the duties of home, she defended them. She thought that great, wise Mother Nature would take care of that and set all right.

"Wait till love comes," she said. There was a wall-lamp above her head and the light falling downwards made dim yellow shadows round her eyes and she smiled, as if she had waited and knew.

She is fond of music, has been well taught, and plays well, though she thinks she does not. Her favourite compositions are soft and dreamy, speaking of consolation and peace out of pain. When she sits at her little, ebony piano, I almost forget to listen sometimes, as I watch her slender fingers and their white doubles in the polished wood.

She is even fonder of flowers than of music; has them about her, tends them, and knows legends of them, how the Master gave the forget-me-not its name and why the lily-of-the-valley is so white. She is even said to eat violets. This may be true for in violet-time she always has one between her lips, and it is no more unnatural or unfitting than seeing *any* two flowers together.

One evening Mrs. Sweetwich made up a party of young people to attend the great University affair, the annual *conversazione*, and chaperoned us herself. As usual, we listened to music in the great hall with its wonderful roof and carved wood, promenaded the long corridors and libraries, looked at the pretty girls and the odd people who always throng to such functions and whom you see no where else, watched curious experiments in dark rooms and finally came back to "The Witcheries," as their house is called, for a quiet evening. There were just a few friends; we talked, had some music, and amused ourselves with charades. Mrs. Sweetwich's clever little friend, Red-cap, kept us laughing with her vivacity and witty *impromptus*. She was an accomplished actress, and her black eyes danced

with fun. We had supper and Mrs. Sweet-wich poured out for me herself, that remarkable cup of coffee. I was sitting near her, but, as she was the hostess, she could not allow any one guest to engross her attention. I remember looking at the service as from a long distance. It was a pretty one; tiny cylindrical cups of a blue pattern, and toy silverware in chased work. I sat looking at it in dreamy wonderment, till it seemed to rise before me, a sublimed, spiritual coffee service, the universal of all coffee-services; and my fair friend was a beneficent Circe, or a gracious-eyed Medea busied in the mystic brewing of draughts, more potent than the Soma juice. The coffee itself was rich, and fragrant, and strong. I sipped it delicately, but even as I did so the prudent thought occurred that late coffee keeps awake. It did not, however, and that alone would prove its unusual quality. My sleep that night was sweet and sound; and the warm glow that cup of coffee diffused through me when I drank it seemed to last and wrap me round with a languorous Indian summer for days. The reality and dreaming of that time have never been disentangled. It was a time for weaving verses and fancies, for reveries and the

long, long, thoughts of youth. I passed acquaintances on the street without bowing, friends spoke twice before I answered, even college lectures turned to fairy-tales. What was the cause of it all? Was it the smile when she handed it to me, or the simple, courteous words she spoke, or her fingers touching the china, those white slender fingers that made of that cup of coffee, a philtre, a potion?

THREE PICTURES

I.

The envious streaks begin to lace the eastern clouds. The song of the nightingale has ended, the song of the lark has begun, and summons the new-made husband to leave his bride, or suffer death. His life is forfeit, if he remain. She will not let him go without one kiss more, and so they come out together to take a last farewell, not knowing it is the last. They stand there a few moments on the balcony, in faint light of morning. The soft breezes of the dawn bring them the heavy perfume of many flowers from the half-dark garden below. Youth, summer and love have met together,—it is so hard to say good-bye. He mans himself at last, urged by fear not for himself but for her. The parley is broken off. He swings himself half over the marble balustrade; one foot is on the ladder of ropes, and he is about to lower himself swiftly to the ground, when she comes again for one more embrace. How can she let him go? One strong arm encircles her convulsively as she crushes close to the beloved and worshipped

body. The light tinges her loose white robe with red and brightens his face, as he turns to hers for one more kiss. The beauty, that was too rich for earth, is softly pale; the tired eyelids droop over the wonder of her Southern eyes; the little mouth that was made for kisses, has given and got so many, and now it is almost passive and droops too. The dawn is brightening swiftly to the perfect day, but for them, the light of the sun is darkened, for they know they are standing under the shadow of death.

II.

Two lovers are standing by an ivy-grown wall in a sunshiny garden of old France. They love as man and woman can love only once in this world, but she belongs to the old faith, and he is an Huguenot. She has heard dark rumours of something terrible about to happen; something which concerns this very life that is dearer to her than her own, dearer than home and faith and all. Now she has learned the horrible certainty. To-morrow is St. Bartholomew's day, and before the sun sets, there shall not be a heretic alive in Paris town. The king and his mother have said it. None are to be spared. Nothing, not even her lover's rank will save him.

She knows it, and she has told him all. There is still one hope. No one who wears the Bourbon badge will be harmed. That is certain also. All good Catholics are to wear on the arm a scarf, the colour of the Bourbon lilies. And she will save him yet: she has even provided the scarf for him. Will he not wear it for her sake, if not for his own? It is a mere form,—he will not renounce his faith,—it is such a little thing, to wear a bit of white silk. So she pleads breathlessly, tearfully; and as she comes closer and closer, to add force to her entreaties, he takes her tenderly in his arms. In a moment her fine deft hands had almost knotted the scarf upon his arm, but his strong fingers interpose and catch the folds of shining silk, So they stand interlocked, a world of pleading in her fair, white face and loving eyes; iron resolve on his shadowed countenance and firm-pressed lips. So they stand; there is no hint of yielding in his demeanour. Love and life in the one scale, merely a form in the other. Yes, but that form means tacit renunciation of friends and faith; it means that to save his life, he must become a coward and a liar. No doubt how it ended. Next day in some dark narrow alley there was a pallid corpse with all its hideous wounds in the breast; and in a con-

vent cell, a weeping, grief-stricken woman, to whom every returning day-break is to bring its anguish of regret that she is still alive.

III.

Again two lovers, but of no country or time, unless it be that undying first season in Paradise which still blesses every union of true hearts. His bare brown limbs are sinewy and strong; his black curls are bound by a fillet, and over the white linen tunic, he wears the spotted pelt of the leopard his own keen hunting-spear has slain. She is draped from shoulder to sandal in finest, snowiest linen, and over that the rich fabric of crimson brocade, girt about the breasts with a broad band of blue, while her green mantle flows from her arm to the ground. White for purity, crimson for passion, blue for truth and green for hope; this is the gay and fitting clothing of young love. She has been standing in front, and with a sudden passionate motion, she has half turned herself to the strength on which she loves to lean. She cannot utter a word for rapture; it is enough to feel that he is near. Her head is on his shoulder, and he has caught up from behind both her hands in his, and is kissing, not her

face, but her hand, the left hand that wears the ring. The bright sunshine strikes along her neck and breast, making their whiteness like snow, and tingeing her brown hair with gold. He stands like a tower with his sun-browned face close to the fairness of hers. Over them and around them there is the strength of the arch, the strongest thing man's brain devises, or his hand fashions. At their back is the cloudless blue of heaven, and beyond, a glimpse of the sea with its restless power, and the living rock in its abiding majesty. They are bathed in sunshine, and there is no hint of change in themselves or their surroundings; the brightness is without a shadow. There is sadness enough in life, we all know, but still, thank God, it is sweetened from time to time by sights such as the artist has immortalised in this noble picture.

AN OPEN GATE.

An unlatched gate has swung outwards and no one has cared to shut it,—why should it be a melancholy sight? It is not like a ruin, bespeaking vain endeavour and the weakness of man's best work; nor is it like the empty house, no matter how mean, which once had a human tenant, for that suggests the tragedy of life. They are both grandiose, elaborate; but this is a small, simple, commonplace object. There is nothing in its make or shape to provoke sad thoughts; it is merely five upright slats on two cross pieces, swung from hinges. It stands ajar, and the level sunbeams make the double of it on the smooth, well-kept walk, in bars of shadow for bars of wood. That is all, and yet I can never look at it without a touch of strange, nameless, haunting despair, like that called up in the poet's heart by the sight of rich harvest fields and the thought of days gone by.

The feeling remains unaccountable. No theory of metaphysics can explain it, for the gate does not represent a gap in my life. If I had seen any one I loved pass through

some gate on a long journey, from which he never returned, from which there was no return, all would be clear. But I have never known such sorrow. Perhaps it is because the unclosed gate suggests the human actor: for it did not move itself. The swinging barrier has been pushed open in haste by hands that could not wait; feet that might not stay have hurried through. What was the errand, I wonder, of the latest passer-by? Was it sad or sweet? Was it my lady fluttering forth to keep her tryst? Was it a son parting from a loving father in anger, and flinging out to take the world for his pillow? Did two friends stroll through, lost in such close, sweet converse that the gate was forgotten, with all other earthly things? Or has some one gone out but a moment ago, thinking to return at once? The gate stands open, and I ask myself these questions in vain.

But apart altogether from any thought of man's doing or undoing, the unclosed gate has a meaning of its own. There is something pathetic in the lack of completeness that it betokens. The little home garth had been so carefully hedged in round about. Once, ages ago, the merely ornamental fence was a stockade, and the homestead a fortification.

It still carries with it the idea of protection ; it is still a symbolic safe-guard. Within the pale are the well-tilled gardens, full of flowers and herbs good for food ; within, the grass-plots, the shrubberies, the orchards. Without, is the vast wilderness of the world, all briars and thorns. The gate, seen against the sky, seems to open directly into this outer world ; the way may lead any whither or no whither, and this enforces the contrast between the greatness of the one and littleness of the other. Now a breach has been made, the enclosure impaired ; the gate has been opened, and through this neglected sallyport the joys of the sheltered home can flock out and all evils stream in. The little croft had been so heedfully guarded, so straitly shut in on every side. From every quarter it presented an unbroken front ; now there is a gap in the barricade. Something has gone amiss ; some harm will befall, you cannot tell what. It is as when you awake in the morning, wondering dumbly what it is that has gone wrong, before with a sob and a cry,—Ah ! now I remember !—the familiar pain returns to its old place in the heart.

This is the reason, if reason it can be called, why such a commonplace thing has always in it the power to make me grave.

ROSE COLOUR AND GREY.

One corner of my palette was covered with splashes of paint, a medley of random strokes of the brush. The prevailing tints were rose-colour and grey; and after some thought and labour they were shaped into pictures like these.

* * * * *

The great painting-room is silent and deserted. The flooding light enters only by the huge roof-window, and is shed evenly on the crowded easels, and chairs, and casts, and half-finished sketches. The room has an air of studied confusion which is chiefly the effect of chance. No murmur from the outside world intrudes or breaks the stillness. Quiet, silent light, and a forest of artist furniture possess the great room.

Directly under the broad sky-light, a girl is standing before an easel. On the canvas is a dream of summer, carnations red and white, mimicking the flowers scattered carelessly on a low table before her. She is look-

ing at her work and wondering whether it be good. She does not know that she is a part of it. The light changes in her blue eyes; and the carnations in her cheeks come and go. There is a faint aromatic odour in the air, like a breath from the Islands of Spice.

* * * * *

A heavy rain had fallen and the crossing was muddy. A tall girl stood on the farther side of the street, hesitating whether to cross or not and smiling at her own indecision. She has gathered up a fold or two of her modish gown in one hand; but still she hesitated. It was a very miry crossing.

Most men and women simply present aspects of clothes. But some rare creatures it is impossible to veil and mask. The God-given glory of strong limbs and well-knit body shines through the wrappages of convention and makes them transparent. And as this tall girl stood there, smiling, her head held high, she was for the moment anything but a mere common-place figure out of a Paris fashion-plate. For the moment she was not herself: but, in the eye that beheld her, a listening Oread strayed from Tempe,—Belphoebe “in gilden buskins” seeking the land of Ferie, — broad-limbed, laughing

Rosalind wandering out of Arden wood. And still she stood there, smiling, hesitating.

* * * * *

Two knots of promenaders met on a narrow street. At the head of one was a shabby little soldier in a shabby red coat. His tunic was blackened at the seams; he had no distinction, not even a good-conduct stripe on his sleeve. A more insignificant little man does not serve Her Majesty by land or sea. His companion was a woman of the town, a draggled, leering drab; and as the two knots of people met, he gave her his arm to assist her through the crowd.

A mere rough in uniform giving his arm to a poor harlot,—how can that be worth chronicling? That was not all. As he bent towards her, he offered his arm; he did not attempt to take hers. His face was grave; hers wore a loose smile. There was no mistaking his intention; it was written in his attitude, in every line of his face. He was showing his companion all the respect and courtesy in his power. Chesterfield could not have shown more to a duchess. Respect! courtesy! And for what? For a purchasable thing, that once might have been a woman. The incongruity of it! The royal

purple on a leper, violets on a dunghill could not be more ludicrously out of place. And yet, I who saw it, felt like anything but laughing.

* * * * *

The grey dusty road wound along between the hill and the water. On one hand were overhanging crags and green bushes; on the other a narrow beach and a broad lake of sparkling blue. At the narrowest pass, the way is barred by a troop of young girls. The tallest cannot be more than thirteen, and the heads of all the rest range one under the other, in a straggling line across the road. They have been gathering flowers and each one carries, not a nosegay, but a sheaf of bloom, about which she clasps her slender arms. The sheaf-tops nod beside the fresh cheeks and mingle with the unbound hair. The long stems are set thick with tiny bells of all colours, dark purple, snow-white and coral-red. I did not know that our bleak north land could bring forth wild flowers in such profusion. The apparition of the rosy-bosomed Hours on the common highway could not be fairer or more astonishing. The barrier of young Perditas lets me through in silence, when I see that the last and youngest is Bonnibel. Now, Bonnibel's eyes are a clear

brown; in the sun, her brown hair takes all colours of gold and bronze; her cheeks are round and rosy like harvest apples; and when she smiles the day is brighter for it. She stops me and gives me a purple bell for my coat: and we go our ways. That tiny purple bell has not faded all these years; and the bit of road where she gave it to me I remember better than any road I have ever travelled.

* * * * *

No sight in this world is more hideous than a modern cemetery. The ghostly white stones, the grotesque monuments, the worse than barbarous taste everywhere displayed, the formality of railed-off, fenced-in enclosures, add new horrors to the thought of death. But it is not so with an old graveyard; a graveyard that has witnessed the changes of at least a hundred years. The aspect of the old graveyard is venerable,—unterrifying,—even friendly. There are no proud, rigid enclosures; all tenants are on terms of perfect equality. There are no sheeted ghosts of marble head-stones; the old blue slates are overgrown with moss and lichen; the rain and snows of a hundred winters have made them black. They have left all formality of arrangement. Some

have fallen flat, the greater number lean towards the horizon at every possible angle. Very few stand upright. In some places the graves have sunk below the level ground; there are no new-made hillocks of bare earth with hard formal outlines.

You must not say that the old graveyard is neglected. Loving hands tended it once; but they have been dust for many years. No. It is not neglected. Mother Nature has taken the burial-plot back into her own keeping and is quietly effacing all signs of man's intrusion upon her domain. The branches of the trees sway low over the many mounds and the untroubled birds build in them. The grass grows high; it almost meets the bending boughs. In the Spring, a million dandelions made the place one yellow jungle. The sunlight filters through the leaves where the careless robins chirp and twitter. Golgotha is hidden with a veil of softest beauty.

The shadow of the church spire moves over the silent congregation day by day, with the solemn gesture of a priest at benediction. "It would make one almost in love with death to think he should be buried in so sweet a spot." Some day I shall ask you quiet sleepers to lie a little closer, to make room for me.

ENTREVUES.

The French have decidedly the advantage of us in subtlety and exactness of expression. Here is a word expressing a provokingly elusive and evanescent, but at the same time universal, phase of mental experience, of soul-life; and the closest English equivalent we have is some such clumsy periphrasis as "catching a glimpse of." It irresistibly suggests the thought of valley-mists, in which we walk, rifting for an instant, and through the rent permitting us to see the dazzling snow on the distant mountain top, against a blue and sunny sky. For there are seasons of spiritual exaltation, and moments of intuition, when the soul seems lifted above and out of itself, and discerns truths higher than the cold processes of reason ever show. With what heart-longings do we then yearn upwards to those pure heights we see so clearly! We would walk for ever in that clear, unclouded day. Sometimes these permitted glances are serene and holy visions, and then again, blinding bright revelations, as of a whole landscape lit up by a vivid flash

of lightning. But, alas! it is for a moment, and for a moment only, that they last; in one case and in the other we feel our inadequateness to them; baffled, inarticulate, helpless, we sink back to our old level of impotence, and the mists close around us once more.

ON THE SELECTION OF EPITAPHS.

The voices of the children at their play come to me through the open window; the birds are singing in the budding trees; the young grass is fresh after a week of showers, and the strong May sun brightens all it shines upon. This spring day seems the beginning of all things. Earth is created anew. What can be in closer accord with it than the dreams of one-and-twenty? What more natural occupation can there be for such a day than looking forward joyously into the coming years and planning them in hope and ambition? Amid such gladness, it is not a sad thought to remember that there must be a winter to follow the spring; that the dreams and hopes and plans and ambitions must all come to an end. That time seems very far off; and the natural horror at the thought of dissolution is lessened by the aspect of the earth this bright May morning. To die is, then, merely to have our dust laid in the bosom of this strong fertile mother, and become, in another way, a part of ever active

life. The day is too sunny to permit of gloom anywhere,—even in the Dreamer's brooding heart.

Still, after many or few such May days, there must be an end, a final scene; and a final spot where these limbs, now so full of warm blood, shall be laid at last, cold and inert. The custom is to mark the place by sculptured marble or graven brass; and words are carved to keep alive the memory of him who sleeps beneath. Sometimes we choose them for ourselves, wisely and humbly, or crying out wildly against God; more often we choose them for tablets and inscriptions we can never read aright for the falling tears. Often we err in our blind love, and, feeling how weak words are to tell our loss, perhaps our remorse, we deal our dead praise, which they whom we delight to honour would be the first to disclaim. Seeing, then, that those we leave behind may be in error regarding us, it seems much wiser that we should, each and all, choose our own epitaphs. No man can know another as he knows himself. It is also well that we should choose them early. Then living so that the chosen words shall sway every word and action, when the time comes for using the epitaph, we shall seem to have a special

right to those words. For when the time comes for the narrow house, built for each son of woman before he was born, and the white tablet to bear his name and year shall be set up, then the chosen words will come of themselves. No others will seem so fitting. They need not even be carved on tombstone or cenotaph. It will be enough if, when I vanish from this world of action, my name should always be coupled with those words; or if when those who knew me best think of their absent friend, the unseen inscription graven on the tables of memory shall rise to their lips.

The strongest reasons for choosing our epitaphs early in life is that only by so doing can we hope in any measure to deserve them. Only after long years of strenuous endeavour could we dare to have placed above our crumbling dust the legend of what we hoped and agonized to be and do. Only after long and severe trial could we deserve to have the painful story of failure and disappointment blotted out, and our small measure of actual attainment made enduring in stone or metal. It would be kindlier to record what we struggled to do than what we actually performed. But to merit remembrance we must have accomplished something of good.

That is the measure of us, as men; achievement for this world, that is the imperishable part of us. As the stern old Norse poet sang a thousand years ago, "Man dies, race dies; but one thing I know does not die, the fame of good deeds, well done."

There is no lack of noble words to choose from. Great men of old said and sang many sentences which serve. For a faithful soul in an unbelieving age, what could be more fitting than this:

" Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshak'n, uneduc'd, unterrifi'd
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal."

Or for one whose life had been made one perfect harmony by love for a worthy woman? Or for the man who has taken for his earthly love some great cause, some overpure ideal?

It is not even needful that the words should come from the trumpet tongue of a Milton. A homely phrase, such as friend uses in familiar talk with friend, will suffice. What are we that the words of a poet should consecrate our ashes? One who has seen him fall tells a woman of her young lover's death in battle. He ends gravely: "He was a good boy and brave boy, and he met his death

like a man." Read in its setting, in the simple tale from which it is taken, it moves the reader deeply, and must have taught not a few of us the divine worth of tears.

The voices of the children on the lawn ring joyously; the birdsong is as blithe as ever, and a soft mist has come between me and the May sun, which only adds a glory to the yellow-shot greensward and the faint crimson of the maple buds.

OASIS.

For weeks we had been voyaging steadily onward, hardly altering the set of a single sail. Watch succeeded watch, and duty followed duty without change and without relief. The same close quarters in the cramped forecastle held us in, when it was watch below; the same heaving breadth of sea and limitless sky met us, when it was watch on deck. Every morning there was the same labour under the captain's vigilant eye, and every night the same pacing of the look-out with the solitary stars. We all grew soured and strange with one another and there was small cheer when we sat at mess or pulled the same ropes together. We sickened of every familiar sight and sound; our whole life had become a stale, dreary thing.

But early one morning, we touched at a little island to fill our water-casks, and lay at anchor till sunset. The entire ship's company was given a whole, long day's liberty on shore. What a revel it was! To be at no man's command for hours! The joy of feeling

the firm, warm earth under foot, instead of the reeling, rolling deck! How eagerly we explored every nook and corner of wood and brake, of glen and hill! How we feasted on the lush, ripe fruits of the tropics, and washed away the jaded tastes of the palate in their juicy flesh! How we drank deep of the cool, rock springs under the overhanging shade! How we bathed in the broad, fresh pools of the little river, till the salty roughness was laved away from hair and skin! How, again, we bathed naked on the sandy shore, in the warm sunshine and the soft, perfumed air till every joint and muscle was lithe and flexile once more, and our renewed blood ran like warm wine through every vein! There we lay and watched, with dreamy eyes, the white clouds sailing across the blue, above the mountain-tops, the flashing scarlet and gold of the wild bird's wings, and the flaming butterflies weighting down the swaying white and purple flowers. The eternal roar of the waves, breaking slumberously on the beach, and the sea-fowls' discordant clang sounded far away; we almost forgot them, and thought we heard only the humming of insects, the swaying murmur of branches and the rustle of leaves.

And, then, the old ship life began again.

We weighed anchor, and, with all sail set, drew, every moment, faster and farther away from that happy island. It soon grew very dim, and was scarcely to be made out from the surrounding ocean. Last and longest seen, the orange colours of the sunset lingered around the highest peaks of the mountain. And, looking back, we strained our eyes to pierce the gathering darkness, for we knew we should never see that island again.

A DREAM.

"In great Eliza's golden time—"

Some men in ruffs are drinking round a table in an arbour.

The morning light filters through the clear green leaves. Within, it is like an emerald turned to air. Stray sunbeams find their way through the chinks of foliage, and flash on the gay silks and velvets and the golden Rhenish in the tall glasses.

The men are handsome, with pointed beards and large eyes. They call each other by their Christian names, and pledge healths.

Two men are disputing eagerly. The rest listen. One is a rough-hewn Silenus with a harsh, fighting face. The good wine has sent the blood flushing to the roots of his hair. He is soon angry and they call him Ben.

His opponent is a man of middle size, with auburn beard and hair. His eyes are hazel and his cheeks are fresh coloured. His high forehead is bald. He waits till the other is out of breath, then says something with a quiet smile, at which the rest laugh. In their applause they name him Will.

They are talking of one Peter Ronsard, a French poet, and his tale of the lady who flung her glove among the lions for her lover to fetch.

Ben vehemently denounces the lady. Will parries the fierce charges deftly; and urges many reasons in her defence.

In the heat of the debate, a tall girl of sixteen, in ruff and farthingale, enters the arbour, with two fresh bottles.

Her hair is auburn and her cheek is like a rose leaf. She looks like the man they call Will.

The men clamour, "Leave the question to Mistress Judith." "Let us hear Mistress Judith's censure of the matter."

And they ask her if the woman did wrong or right to send her lover into peril. "Would you have flung your glove?" they say.

The girl draws herself up.

"Can I tell?" she says. "This little hand is a free English hand. It never knew the straitness of a glove."

Her answer has all the inconsequence of an answer in a dream, but the men laugh and Ben brings his fist down on the table, so that the Rhenish flies from his beaker.

"Spoken like a right English lass," he cries. "Will, thou must make a sonnet on this."

Judith's father never did. But I know that this is true, for I, the Dreamer, was standing by and heard it all.

FANDANGO.

Someone is thrumming on a guitar in the next room. It is my new neighbour, the stout, blonde young man, practising I suppose. But the walls must be very thick, or else he is playing very softly. How far away and fine his music sounds! Farther and farther away into distance, it seems to recede. It hurries me along with it and carries me whither it will.

It has halted at last where the sun shines down hotly in a little, white square of a foreign city. Behind the girdling walls over which the broad vine-leaves run free, and trail, rise white, antique houses with slender pillars and light springing arches. There is a yellow flag, barred with red, drooping high aloft in the sultry air. At one side is a score of men and women; some sitting on the ground, some standing carelessly erect. It is an outlandish costume they wear and ragged, but they wear it in a stately fashion. I cannot tell what they are saying, but the words flow upon a rich, full melody. The music has taken on a slow, deliberate movement. A man and woman glide out from the little group and front each other in the white blot of sunshine. The man is swarthy and strong as a gladiator;

the woman is dressed in frayed red and yellow silks ; she has large, dark eyes and her arms and neck are bare and brown. They follow the music, advance, recede slowly as the stately music moves ; recede, advance, shift to and fro. The languorous notes seem to sway the dancers' motion ; the music and dancing are one.

But a change comes : there is a new, tense picking at the strings. The short, sharp notes crowd quicker and quicker ; faster and faster move the dancers, though never losing their balanced ease of posture. The music stings, as a scorpion stings, as fire stings. The woman has little spheres of metal in her hands which click rapidly as her arms wave about her like floating scarfs. They clash so swiftly that it sounds like the rattle of an angry serpent. The music grows fiercer : it seems to stab like those smooth, keen poniards the men wear in their sashes. The fire has struck up from the grey flags and down from the burning sky and entered into the dancers' blood. Their movements, their attitudes are freer, more unconstrained, answering to every mood of the urgent music. The hot passion of the South has kindled ; he moves his head haughtily, proudly ; he sues, she refuses, relents, and again repels. The men and

women at the side call out sonorous words of approval and applause, and through it, over it all, shrills the viperous rattle of the castanets. Still the dancers recede, advance with infinite moulded grace but their nimble feet move swifter and they seem to quiver like the heated air above the pavement; the woman's smooth brown bosom is rising and falling fast.

Suddenly the flame dies down quickly as a tropic sunset. The scorpion tones cease all at once and the same instant the force seems drawn from the dancers' limbs. The music has gone off into a musing tone of reverie half sad, half sweet; and the man and woman glide slowly up and down, change to and fro with the old, unfailing stateliness.

But the music has stopped.

CONCENTRATION.

You declare that the common fault of writers is that they are too diffuse. Is that your quarrel with them, Sir Critic? Mine is that those of to-day and of all times, have never written one tithe of what they should. What subject is treated sufficiently? Which one do your miraculous German doctors, your Neanders, Heynes, Rankes, with their tons of writing, mountains of folio, and acres of library, dare to say that they have exhausted: The glaring fault of one and all is their reckless bald concentration.

A case in point. A handsome young Englishman is travelling in Italy; he writes verse, and has letters in his pocket that admit him to the most cultured society of the day. The poet is in his first youth, with its countless visions and bursts of heart, its vivid intense living and endless precious thought. All this is quickened into a fire by the contact of equal minds taught how to flatter with southern courtesy. In the Eternal City, the goal of all artists in every age, he meets a young and lovely singer. Music's spell is on him. Its thousand thronging delights are enhanced by the liquid language of the south, glowing with

a passion warm as southern skies, poured forth from an eloquent Italian heart matched with a lovely face. If, still thrilling with such music, he writes a sonnet, good Elia calls it "almost profane." Is it at all adequate, think you? Then the author takes all this infinitude of life and feeling and thought, sets it down in ten lines of print, and says there is the story of Milton and Baroni.

With these ten lines, then, you would coldly put me off, and call in the history of a life dowered by its Maker, above all others when each successive thought of the commonest of earth's sons is an Apocalypse, a constant miracle that we do not dream of. Is not this concentration, as of the universe compressed into a cubic inch?

THE MAN IN THE BLACK COAT.

He was not a mysterious personage at all. About him was none of the awe that shrouds black dominoes, black masks, black gondolas, Black Art. No delicious thrill is felt in his name as in that of the gliding moon-lighted Woman in White. He was not at all like that other Man in Black whose pungent remarks and cross-grained benevolence so charmed the Citizen of the World. He had not even the slight disguise of an incognito. He was only an Irish carter, with whom I had often business to transact in the office. In person he was stumpy, red-faced, and red-haired, but remarkable for a certain apologetic politeness that was forthcoming on every occasion. Civility was not common in the office, but Dennis was different from all the other men. And I saw him last Sunday on his way to church, with a book in his hand, and the black coat whereof I speak on his back.

At first the shock of surprise at seeing him clothed otherwise than in the ragged, worn vesture of every-day made me think myself mistaken. But the red, rugged face, the fiery hair, the short, toil-stiffened frame could

belong to no one but my friend. As to the coat itself, though new and of good material, it was the most marvellously ill-fitting covering it was ever my fortune to behold. It would have given Poole a nightmare, but it was worn with such an air of decent pride! Why should my eyes fill up, and an involuntary "Poor fellow!" escape my lips? What can there be in the sight of an Irish carter in hideous broad-cloth to cry over?

Perhaps it was because the wearer was so utterly, so sublimely unconscious of incongruity or ugliness. Or was that coat the proof of a long pathetic struggle towards respectability, towards betterment, towards a position in life? It was the owner's protest against stagnation, the token of a laudable ambition to rise in the world. We honour the manfulness of it, but, Dennis did you ever think of the utter futility of the struggle after all? Will it ever satisfy you? Or was it futile? Perhaps the end of Dennis' existence was reached when he achieved that black coat, that outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Poor fellow! Poor fellow!

MORS TRIUMPHANS.

It is a chill rainy day in the city. The wooden sidewalk is water-soaked and brown with the earth trodden into by the many hurrying feet. Little pools stand in the worn hollows of the boards. The crossings are muddy; and, in the roadway, the liquid filth splashes from every passing wheel. It is not raining fiercely or very heavily; the drops fall in a steady, sullen, incessant fashion.

My way leads through the poor quarter. On both sides of the street are low squalid tenements, taverns and cheap shops, with tawdry wares displayed in the windows. Here live the pawn-brokers and second-hand dealers; it is the retreat of the pauper, the harlot, the rough and the criminal. An ugly sight even in pleasant weather, under the grey sky and the unceasing rain, its miserable aspect is rendered ten times sadder. There is no cloak for its hideousness. Yet here human beings spend their tale of years, starve slowly and die, while within a square are the rich magazines, and the warehouses, stored with food and fuel and clothing; while, but a little way through the park are

the many stately homes, supplied with every comfort. The poor must be very patient.

The human stream, that I am breasting, flows swiftly past me. Their lips do not move as they pass; or, if they do speak, any words they may utter are lost in the roar and clatter of countless wheels and hoofs. Mute and unspeaking, they flit by me like phantoms. Can it be that they are really living? Living! What a strange idea to come into my head! Living! when the only certain thing regarding them is that each and all are dead. The unalterable thing, the great fact is death. All else is wavering and unsettled. Ye creatures passing, I do not know your names, whence ye come or whither ye are going, or what errands have brought you out this desolate day. Of your homes, your hopes, your friends, your history, the present moment, I know nothing. But this one thing know, ye are dead. Ye are dead even as I am myself. That great, hulking mason in the splashed overalls, I see lying at rest. His rough, cold hands are crossed upon the rugged chest; they hold the crucifix; and he wears his best coat. Is this as he will lie or as he has lain? And yonder slight, old woman in black, with the ashen-grey face and hollow

eyes has clearly not much longer to walk about in the wet. That cloak droops from her shoulders like a shroud. There are so many of these dead! Such a procession of wan cheeks and hopeless eyes! The only bright spot amidst this black and grey are two-rosy faced young street-walkers, new to their trade, who pass by laughing. Their faces are pretty, and they do not heed the rain. But plainer on their brows than on the others is the sign-manual of death. The worm is busy with the lips, and the blue corruption is showing beneath the skin.

And how busy these dead are! how they haste along, as if each had an errand which must be done before the dreary afternoon closes down in night. It cannot be long before dark. How swift the tide rushes!

"Les morts vont vite, les mort vont vite!"

THE PARADISE OF VOICES.

It was in one of those strange moments when deep inward thought makes men as sleep walkers, and outward things become "a painted show . . . the shadow of a dream," or when the soul leaves the body to wander in the far shadow-lands of sleep that the Paradise of Voices was revealed. In none of the spheres through which the passionate Florentine and his beloved lady wandered, not in the upper world nor in the nether, is the cloudy, perfumed-smoke Paradise of Voices. It is for those souls who loved their kind supremely and who in life heard, of all sounds most willingly, those from the lips of men. This is a heaven of sound. It was not singing in choral unison, triumph or praise, nor the mysterious harping of the harpers on their harps, but murmurs many, varied, multitudinous as the voice of the sea. At first they were faint, confused and far away. Then, coming nearer, one could know they were voices speaking; the words no man could hear, but what was said touched the other life.

Wafted gently up and down in the heavy, incense air, the Dreamer learned to know by degrees the diverse tones that went to make

strange, unearthly harmony. Though nothing could be seen, by listening could be felt the sweet presence and the music of Human Lives. The sound first learnt was the faintest of all. It was the contented cooing of young babes and the hushes of mothers rocking them asleep upon their breasts. Clearer came the fresh voices of young girls mingled with happy laughter, theirs to enjoy, till "sorrow comes with years" to still it all. Ah! well-a-day!

More softly rose as a withered sound the voices of the Peaceful Aged as they sit and talk together of the children that have gone "from this room into the next" before they were grown too tall to be snatched up and kissed, and of the other children, "we thought would close our eyes." Stronger came the earnest voices of men, friends, and comrades tried, when they speak of those deepest things, —the woman, lost but still loved, and the heartache since. There, too, was the sound of prayer, when the bitterness of the first-born is awed to reverence before the inscrutable cruelties of a Father; the voices of young lovers whispering low, no time too long; the strong swell of triumph when a great work is done, and no tear falls for the hero, so worthy has been his life.

The welcome that is sighed not spoken, after

many years was there, and the tender words of the consoler heard through tears, single words of love dropped by chance to strangers, pet-names, and the names of home. All these and many more, infinitely varied as the leaves on a summer tree, blended from above, below, around, into such a harmony as is not in Earth nor yet in Heaven and drew the Dreamer, bore him, along, aloft, gently, softly, in the dark and heavy air.

ENVOY.

Though none regard these shadows of bright things,
I saw at sunrise,—these faint imagings
Of one dear woman's fairness, but the few,
Whose hearts have taught them how their dreams come
true,
And She, who gave me more than gems of price,
Herself,—and sweet thoughts of Her,—'twill suffice.

