

# The Examiner

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF POLITICS, LITERATURE AND NEWS.

EDWARD WHELAN]

This is true Liberty, when Free-born Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free.—EURIPIDES.

[EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

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## MOON'S PHASES.—JULY, 1856.

New Moon 2d day, 4h. 51m. morning. E.  
First Quarter 10th day, 2h. 43m. morning. N.W.  
Full Moon 17th day, 4h. 51m. evening. E.  
Last Quarter 24th day, 10h. 22m. morning. S.W.  
New Moon 31st day, 4h. 23m. evening. W.

## Literature.

### A LEAP YEAR RHYME.

BY LILLIE LIGHTFOOT.

Alas! alas! I have no beau  
To take me out a sleighing,  
The one I had I lost last year  
About the time of haying.  
And so, as one year out of four  
Kind custom doth decree  
The ladies for themselves shall speak,  
Will any one take me?

Who'll buy! who'll buy! a heart as warm  
As ever beat for man?  
My character, I'm glad to say,  
I'm willing all should scan.  
My eyes are blue, and brown my hair,  
And five feet four am I;  
Complexion neither dark nor fair,  
Will any body buy?

My rank in life I'll tell to him  
Who says "I'll take you Lillie;"  
For should I put it all in print  
Perchance you'd call me silly;  
I have some friends, I'm very sure,  
And trust few foes have I;  
And this is all I'll tell you now—  
Will anybody buy?

The purchase money must be paid,  
Not in poor solid gold,  
But in true love and tenderness,  
That's neither bought nor sold.—  
Love that will cling through good and ill,  
Through sunshine and through shade—  
A love that grows as years roll on,  
When beauty's charms shall fade.

The requisites that I require  
I briefly thus express;  
He must be five foot ten, or higher,  
And pleasing in address.  
His age from thirty to two score,  
For I detest men younger,  
And never could look up to them,  
As the weaker to the stronger.

His character for truth and honor  
Of course must stand quite high,  
(For of that class they call "fast men"  
I must confess I'm shy.)  
A mind so much above my own  
That I to him could bend,  
And find in that dear single one  
My lover, master, friend.

And in return I'll give to him  
Affection firm and true,  
And ever try to yield to him  
The obedience that is due.  
A little corner in my heart  
Is waiting to be sold  
At auction on this pleasant day,  
For something more than gold.  
Who bids for this young lady's heart  
This sunny summer's morn?  
Quick, or you're late, good gentle-folks;  
Tis "going—going—gone."

## LENA GRANT.

It was an old brown house, standing about half a mile east of ours. I shut my eyes and I can see it almost as distinctly as I can see, by opening them, the butternut trees waving solemnly in the summer wind. Most old houses in the country are poems—or rather, old fashioned ballads; but this was none of them.

There was nothing picturesque about the building. It stood all alone, with the moss growing thick on its blackened roof, and the blinds creaking backward and forward whenever the wind blew. There was a background of green meadow land, and in front were broad rye fields, waving all summer in the sunshine; but for all that, the house had one of those dark, uninviting physiognomies which no sunshine can brighten. I was eleven years old that spring when the family which had long occupied the house, and which consisted of a coarse, uneducated man, his indolent, sickly wife, and half a dozen dirty faced, obstreperous boys, moved to the West. For several months the house remained unoccupied; but one day, Mrs. Miles, an intimate friend of my mother's, came over to pass the afternoon with her.

In a pause of the conversation, which had been animatedly kept up for the last two hours, Mrs. Miles remarked to my mother—

"And so, Mrs. White, you have some new neighbors?"

"New neighbors?" repeated mamma. "I didn't know it. Who are they?"

"Why, pray tell if you didn't know a family had just moved into the old brown house down here? They came last week. I can see them from our back windows. Nobody but an old woman and a little girl, however, seem to be around as yet. They, of course, can't be anybody, living in that old place," concluded Mrs. Miles, who had a penchant for wealth and high social position.

I sat there, turning over my drawings and listening to all this half indifferently, never dreaming what an influence the people of that old brown house were to exert over my future destiny.

One morning, about a week later, we had just taken our seats, and the school exercises were about commencing, when a little girl walked into the room. Every eye was riveted upon her as she went up awkwardly to the teacher's desk, for such another outlandish dressed Christian had never been seen in all Moss Farm. She wore a dress of large, flaming red flowers on a bright yellow ground—such as you may have seen covering the arm-chair in your grandmother's parlour. Her stockings were of a pair of high heeled, pointed shoes, such as our great aunts wore in their youth, and whose clumping contact with the floor was anything but musical. A large green silk bonnet, bearing in its shape a date of some ten years, completed this strange tout ensemble!

There was a deep silence throughout the whole room until I caught Jane Davis's roguish eyes, and then there was no

more control for my refractory risibles. I laughed outright. Miss Mervin gave me a reproachful glance as she put out her hand to the child.

"You are Mrs. Grant's granddaughter, Miranda, I suppose?" she said, in those soft tones of hers, which must have found their way to any child's heart. "Do you think you shall like to come to school here?"

"I don't know," answered Miranda, rather sullenly, twisting her bonnet string.

"Well, I suppose we must wait till you're better acquainted before you can decide about liking us. How old are you, Miranda?"

"Twelve next October."

Then followed several questions respecting the girl's previous studies, in which, though not far advanced, she evinced considerable intelligence. Miss Mervin assigned the new scholar her seat, and then requested her to hang her bonnet in the hall. Miranda's re-appearance well nigh upset my risibles again. Her thick, red-brown hair lay in bristling masses about her face. An effort had apparently been made to induce it to lie smooth, but its curling proclivity strongly rebelled against this—so it had assumed various sorts of nondescript forms. The girl saw my smile, for there flashed out from her dark, wild eyes a look of hatred and defiance as she took her seat.

There was little playing during recess, for the new scholar occupied all our thoughts that day. Harriet Morse, whose father was the richest man in all Moss Farm, declared, with a curl of her red lips, that she considered all the rest of the girls insulted by having such a creature admitted to the school. She should tease her father to send her to some seminary away from home, if she must be brought in contact with such persons.

All this time the object of these remarks stood at one corner of the school house, looking sullenly towards the green where we were assembled to pronounce her verdict.

Three days had passed. The new scholar had been punctual in her attendance at school, and evinced considerable intelligence in her recitations; but she had in nowise advanced on the good will of her companions.

"Now, girls, can't we find some name that'll just suit her—something real odd and funny?" asked Jane Davis, as we paused from our play in the late August forenoon, and sat down in the cool shades of the maple trees. "Maggie White, can't you think of something first rate?"

"How would Firebrand do?" I suggested. "I can never think of anything else when I see her flaming dress and red hair."

The girls shouted loudly, and Jane Davis cried, "Good! Good!" From that moment the cognomen was adopted.

"But where can she be?" I asked, looking at that side of the building where Miranda always stationed herself.

Suddenly I saw Jane Davis start at some object at the back of me. I looked round, and there stood the new scholar. She had heard all we had said. I knew this at the first glance into her wild, angry face. For a moment she stood still, glaring at us fiercely; then she started for the school-house, and as she hurried across the green, and the sunbeams fell on her red dress, she looked almost as if she were enveloped in a cloud of flame. And the girls shouted "Firebrand!" more in thoughtless merriment than malice; but I was silent, for I felt I had been doing wrong.

That night I went to sleep with swollen eyelids and a very heavy heart. The little golden head of Charlie, my baby brother, lay on a bed of sickness, which before the next morning was one of death. One day he sported under the trees of Moss Farm—the next under those greener ones whose boughs wave in the winds of the eternal summer. Ah me! What a blank there was in the house when the little curly head danced no more through the rooms, and the voice which was our daily joy was learning the songs which the angels teach the little children in the kingdom of Heaven! His death, however, was to my heart what the May rain is to the harvest, for the good seed came up afterward.

The memory of every unkind act of mine to Miranda Grant came back in that time of heart-melting, which the bereaved alone understand, to reproach me. I resolved to make ample amends to the despised child for all the wrong I had done her. Pity took the place of my former aversion—pity that almost grew to affection.

One night I had my head in my mother's lap, and told her all that had transpired between the new scholar and myself. She did not reproach me; she only strengthened my resolution to let the future atone for the past. I did not return to school for nearly two weeks. Aunt Lucy, my mother's sister, and Cousin Leonard came to visit us after Charlie was dead. Dear Cousin Leonard. He was almost eighteen, and not my cousin after all, for he was the son of Aunt Lucy's husband by a former wife, but I loved him just as well.

Thank Heaven, whatsoever may be the defects of my character, infirmity of purpose is not one of them! I had resolved to conciliate Miranda Grant, and through every obstacle I was pretty certain to achieve it. I found, on my return to school, her position there by no means improved; if it were possible the aversion to her had deepened in my absence, and she was now universally recognized by the unflattering cognomen which I had bestowed upon her.

It was "recess" again, and the girls gathered under the cool shadows on the green, for the day was very warm.

"There stands old Firebrand in that same corner," said Jane Davis. "I should think she'd get a pretty good scorching in this hot sun."

The girls laughed, but I looked grave and said: "Don't, Jane, don't make fun of the poor thing!" And when they looked up in surprise, I spoke further. I cannot remember what I said, but I know I was very earnest. I took most of the blame to myself in our relations with Miranda Grant. I pictured her unfortunate circumstances, with nobody to care for her old grandmother, her coming a stranger among us, only to be met with scorn and unkindness, and I concluded somewhat after this fashion: "Now, girls, I'm going to ask Miranda to come here and sit with us. I hope you'll all speak pleasantly to her, and not make fun about her any more."

School-girls' prejudices are the hardest in the world to overcome, for they are the result of feeling, not of reason; still, my remarks were not without effect. Harriet Morse only curled her lips and said, "If low people would stick themselves among their betters, they couldn't expect very good treatment."

I went to Miranda, and my schoolmates drew near the green railing to watch our interview. The new scholar greeted me with a defiant glance, of which I took no notice.

"Miranda," I said, gently as I could, "it's warm standing here in the sunshine; won't you go and sit under the trees with the girls?"

"No, I won't!" she answered, fiercely. "I know what you want me to do for; you want to make fun of me. Oh, I hate you, I do!" And she struck me by no means a light blow on the arm, and then disappeared round the school-house into the field behind it.

The girls raised an indignant shout, and were about following the offender to inflict summary punishment, I suppose, when I eagerly stopped them.

"Leave me to go alone," I said; "I can manage it the best so." And they complied.

I found Miranda had taken shelter under an immense oak tree, which grew in a pleasant little lane just beyond the field.

"Miranda," I said, coming suddenly upon her, "I'm sorry you're so angry with me, but I want us to be friends now. What made you strike me so?"

She sprang up quickly, for she had seated herself on the grass; and her large wild eyes beamed like sparks of fire through the tangled hair she pushed from her face.

"I don't believe you want to make friends with me," she answered. "You want to make fun of me with the girls. I know you and I hate you. I wish I'd killed you when I struck you just now."

"Miranda," I answered, calmly, "it would be very wicked of you to kill me, even if I meant to make fun of you, as you say I do; but why won't you try me this time, and see? You needn't come again, you know, if I don't tell you the truth."

"You can't cheat me so. Didn't you tell the girls to call me Firebrand because I wore a red dress? Oh, I hate them, too. I hate everybody and everything in the world, and I love to hate them. But I'll strike you again if you don't go off and leave me."

If you could have seen her inflamed visage, her small figure trembling with passion, and heard the angry words through her grated teeth, you would have pitied her, as most certainly I did; but I began to despair of success this time.

"Well, Miranda," I said, "if you won't believe me, I must leave you; for I don't want to be struck again. I know I called you Firebrand just for fun, and I've felt very sorry about it since. Won't you forgive me?"

The tears came into my eyes as I asked her. She looked on them, and an expression of wonder came into her face; the angry flush went out from it. Her features worked a few moments as though she were struggling with herself; and then, with a heavy sob, she sank down on the grass. I went up to her and put my arms around her, for I knew there was no more danger; and, to tell the truth, I had stood a little in fear of her. How she cried there! Sob after sob came up from her heart and shook her slight frame, and a fast torrent of tears rolled through her fingers. I laid her in my lap, and stroked back the hair from her forehead.

"We will be friends now, Miranda."

She clung tighter to me, and sobbed—sobbed, as if her heart was breaking.

At last the bell rang.

"No matter," I said. "I will tell Miss Mervin we couldn't get back any sooner, and she'll excuse us. I'll go and get some water from the brook in one of these mullen leaves, and you can wash your eyes."

She lifted her head.

"I'm sorry I struck you," she said. "I'm sorry I said I hated you."

"Well, we won't ever speak, ever think of it again. We're friends now, Miranda, you know."

She smiled, and her eyes shone softly through her tears; for the first time, I thought they were pretty. We went back to the school arm in arm. The girls stared at us—that was all.

That night Miranda Grant and I walked home together, for our dwellings lay in the same direction, and I had signified to the girls my wish to accompany her alone. She was very gentle, and really seemed to cling to me. We talked all the way, and I found she was quite intelligent.

"Don't call me Miranda," she said; "call me Lena. Mamma used to before she died," and her eyes brimmed with tears. "Grandma does sometimes; but she's old, you know, and forgets when I ask her."

"Well, Lena," I answered, "you see I'm your friend now, and I want the other girls to like you. If I were you I'd curl my hair, for they like to see curls; it would look so pretty, you know."

I had struck a chord that always vibrates in the heart of woman.

"Do you think so? Do you really think so?" she said, with a sudden outflowing of her deep eyes. "I thought it was such red awful hair!"

"No, it isn't; it is almost auburn; and if you would comb it out smooth, wet it, and then wind it just so round your fingers, it would curl beautifully."

"Yes," following my manipulations with her eyes, "I can do it. To-morrow I will come to school with it all curled."

We have now reached the point where our paths diverged. Lena flung her arms around my neck and kissed me very fondly.

"I shall love you always," she said; and I went home with a new song in my heart.

After supper that night I was sitting under our apple tree when Leonard opened the garden gate. He had been passing the day with Albert Morse, Harriet's brother; they were intimate friends, and expected to enter college together. Leonard came up to me and kissed me.

"You are a good girl, Maggie," he said.

"How do you know I am? Because I let you kiss me just now? I shouldn't if you weren't my cousin, you know."

"Then I'm a lucky fellow," and he flung himself on the grass by me. "Maggie," after a short pause, "how many yards does it take to make a girl's dress?"

"What an idea, cousin Leonard! What in the world has set you to thinking about girls' dresses?"

"Oh, several things! Information on all subjects is valuable, you know; and if I should ever have any girls' dresses to get, it would be well to know how much it would take."

"Well, couldn't you ask the merchant then? Of course the quantity would depend upon the fashion and the material."

He slapped me on the shoulder, and looked into my eyes with his dark roguish ones.

"Sure enough, Maggie, you've hit the right idea. I could ask the merchant; why didn't I think of it before?"

"So your mind is relieved at last, is it, on the subject of girls' dresses?" I said, laughing gleefully; and Leonard joined me, the echo in the glen caught up our mirth and rolled it off to the mountain.

The next day, Miranda Grant came to school with a complete metamorphosis effected in her appearance. The tangled mass of red-brown hair now lay in rich, heavy ringlets round her face and neck; she was really pretty. We began to discover this at last, and that her eyes could change from a soft, mellow brown into that deeper, warmer, darker splendor which is sometimes on the edges of sunset clouds. That day, Lena went with me to the green; several of the girls spoke kindly to her. I cannot tell whether the curls or my example had the greater influence, but I am inclined to give the laurels to the former. Every one knows a school-girl's passion for the outward and visible.

It was evening again, or rather it was that beautiful time when Day marries himself unto Night; it was a beautiful hour, too, as the bride of August days always are. Cousin Leonard and I stood watching the heaps of damask cloud piled up in a corner of the West, when I caught sight of Lena Grant coming up to the house; she carried a large bundle which almost concealed her figure. It was the first time she had been there, and, somewhat surprised, I went out to her.

"Oh, Maggie," she said, "I've had such a present! And I don't know who sent it, either; but I guess you do. I've brought it with me."

"Well, Lena, we'll go round to the back porch, where nobody'll see us, and look at it;" and I led the way.

It was indeed a handsome present! There were four new dresses, two of muslin and two of calico, two pair of morocco ties, some white aprons, and, Lena said, "the most beautiful bonnet at home, trimmed with white ribbon."

"And you don't know who sent them, Lena?" I said, after exhausting my admiration on every article.

"No. Grandma said it was a black man. The bundle was directed to me; and the man couldn't tell her a word, only said he was ordered to leave it at her house for her granddaughter."

"I thought you must be at the bottom, Maggie, so I came right over to see. Don't you know who sent them?"

"No, truly, truly, I don't; but only to think, Lena, how beautiful you will look! Miss Martell, the dressmaker, must fit them for you; she does all my dresses, and she has so much taste."

"Did you ever?" said Lena. "I'm just as grateful and happy as I can be; but I can't help crying ever since these things came, and she wiped away her tears. Isn't it funny?"

"I think not, Lena. Mamma says people may cry for joy as well as sorrow; but you won't forget Miss Martell?"

"No. Grandma will let me have her, I know. You see, Maggie, I shouldn't have worn these old dresses if mamma had lived; but grandmother thinks the old fashioned ones as good as any other."

Those new dresses were soon placed in the tasteful fingers of Miss Martell, and under that lady's supervision Lena Grant's personelle was entirely revolutionized. You would not have identified her with the strange, wild looking being who, two months before, had presented herself for the first time at Miss Mervin's desk.

Before the term closed she was quite a favorite with the girls. It was surprising how easily she jumped from class to class, proving that she possessed a mind of no ordinary character. The attachment which had commenced under such peculiar circumstances strengthened daily between us.

Mrs. Grant, too, proved to be a good sort of woman on acquaintance. She was a little singular and "notional," it is true, believing that in all things "the old was better than the new;" but, aside from this idiosyncrasy, she was a good hearted woman, and well nigh worshipped Miranda. Mrs. Grant was poor, and the snows of nearly seventy winters lay on her forehead; but her spirit was not "dead within her." She cultivated the land around her dwelling, and therefrom procured a comfortable subsistence for herself and Lena.

"I shall be a school teacher some day, and support grandma when she is old," said Lena, with an up lift of her earnest eyes. And then I knew the purpose that consecrated her studies.

"Maggie," said Hattie Morse, coming to me after school, "you know your cousin and Albert are always talking about some old tree where they pass the day together. Well, I've teased Al to tell me where this remarkable tree was; but he never would, and only laughed. To-day, when Leonard came for him, I resolved to find out; and, what do you think?—I followed him to that old oak tree that stands in the lane behind the field. There's just the nicest seat for two, made by a curve of one of the lower branches, and it's so cool and pleasant. Wasn't I smart to find it out?"

"Yes, very, Hattie, and we laughed together. But an after-thought flashed into my mind.

"Were they not there that day?—and had they not witnessed the scene that transpired between Lena Grant and me?"

Yes, they must have done it; and it was from Albert and Leonard the dresses had come! That was why Leonard had asked me how many yards it required to make a girl's dress. It was all unravelled now. How very stupid I was not to see it before! They had looked down from the green oak boughs, and been silent spectators of the whole! I buried my burning face in my hands as I thought of it, but from my heart I blessed the young men. I kept my secret, as they did theirs.

Eight years had passed.

It was August again. Cousin Leonard and Albert Morse had finished their collegiate and professional studies, and were at Moss Farm again. The latter came up one evening, with his mother and sisters, to see us. Lena Grant happened to be there—my noble, beautiful Lena. For three years she had supported herself and her grandmother, whom the infirmities of age had confined to her room, by teaching. Lena had developed into a beautiful girl-woman. Her auburn hair lay still in heavy curls about her fair, gentle face; her large eyes had gathered a deeper, fuller life into their wondrous depths; and the smiles that hovered about her lips were like the sunshine that comes to May flowers after the rain.

The "old brown house" was changed, too, almost as much as Lena; it had been painted white, and a portico added, up whose side climbed the honeysuckle every June.

I saw Albert Morse, spite of his gentlemanly self-possession start slightly when I presented Lena to him, and he glanced significantly towards Leonard, and I knew they were thinking of the old days and the oak boughs. Albert Morse remained by Lena's side nearly all the evening, to the apparent discomfiture of his sister. He accompanied her home—but I am so tired of telling love stories, reader! Suffice it, one day in the next October, Lena came to me and said, putting her arms about my neck and her blushing cheek to mine; "I have promised, next spring, Maggie, to be his wife."