

LITERATURE.

TRUTH AND RUMOUR.

BY LAMAN BLANCHARD.

As Truth once paus'd on her pilgrim way,
To rest by a hedge-side, thorny and sere,
Few wanderers there she charmed to stay,
Though her's were the tidings that all should hear.
She, whispering, sung, and her deep rich voice
Yet richer, deeper, each moment grew;
And still, though it bade the crowd rejoice,
Her strain but a scanty audience drew.

But Rumour, close by, as she pluck'd a reed
From a babbling brook, detained the throng;
With a hundred tongues that never agreed,
She gave to the winds a mocking song.
The crowd with delight its echoes caught,
And closer around her yet they drew.
So wondrous and wild the lore she taught,
They listen'd entranced, the long day thro'.

The sun went down; when he rose again,
And sleep had becalmed each listener's mind,
The voice of Rumour had rung in vain,
No echo had left a charm behind,
But Truth's pure note, ever whispering clear,
Wand'ring in air fresh sweetness caught;
Then all unnoticed, it touched the ear,
And filled with music the cells of thought.

WHAT CUPID SAW IN THE MISTLETOE BOUGH.

Young Love has a fancy inclined to vagaries,
Which, could we with form and with colour endow,
The show might resemble a mask of the Fairies
Which Cupid beheld in the Mistletoe Bough.

All under the leaves tiny couples were wooing;
What beating of bosoms, what heaving of sigh!
What kneeling and suing—what billing and cooing!
What breathing of vows, and what making of eyes!

With bride-cakes each spray thick as berries was cover'd,
And studded with rings, shedding flashes and sparks;
And legions of elves in the foliage there hover'd
That bore a resemblance to parsons and clerks.

And jewels were gleaming, and satins were glistening,
And orange-flowers blooming the branches between;
And many a marriage, and many a christening,
Appear'd going on in the Mistletoe green.

There shone a bright planet, beatitudes raining,
To gladden the union of husbands and wives;
The honey moon there, at the full, never waning,
Transported each pair for their natural lives.

And Forty and Fifty, reclined in the gloaming,
Were gazing aloft on Love's beautiful star;
And Sixty and Seventy by streamlets were roaming,
And Eighty to Ninety-five twang'd the guitar.

A matron of three-score and upwards was shopping;
Her elderly spouse held her shawl by her side;
An octogenarian the polka was hopping,
As brisk as a bee, with his agile old bride.

And husbands, unlike egotistical gluttons,
Were helping their wives to the prime of the joint;
And wives were attentively sewing on buttons—
Of conjugal duty a capital point.

In short, the whole scene was supremely Elysian;
And haply, if wedlock were true to its vow,
There might be a shadow of truth in the vision
Which Cupid beheld in the Mistletoe Bough.

THE RAT IN THE TRAP.

OR, THE CURE FOR LOVE.

Ellen Maclure, for some years, had held the situation of upper nurse at a lunatic asylum in the North of Ireland. She was tall, graceful, and with all good-looking; a number of suitors had at different times made overtures of matrimony to her, but were rejected; and it was not till after long intimacy that George Ferrance, a porter in the same establishment, ventured to sue for her hand, and was accepted. For some time, George had noticed that, when Ellen had returned after her walks, either of pleasure or business, her countenance wore an expression of anxiety, and at length resolved to question her upon the subject.

'My dear Ellen,' said he, addressing her one day, as she entered from the road, 'what can be the cause of that anxiety which I see depicted on your features every time you return to the house after a walk?'

'Oh, nothing,' replied Ellen shortly; 'what's the use of making a bother about nothing?'

'But I am sure it's more than nothing,' replied George, 'or it would not make you so unhappy.'

'Well, if I have a sacred annoyance, it would be no

use telling you,' replied Ellen; 'you men only make more disturbance than is necessary.'

'But it may be in my power to remove your troubles for aught you know.'

'Well, never mind, I dare say it will soon end,' answered Ellen.

'But I think it a great want of confidence on your part,' returned George, 'not to tell me; for what brings you pain must necessarily make you unhappy.'

'I am sure, my dear George, it is far from my thoughts to cause you the slightest inquietude, but really the circumstance is of so trivial a nature that it is scarcely worth mentioning; yet at the same time, it brings grief to me. Many girls would laugh, and think it capital sport.'

'Then tell me,' said George, earnestly.

After a good deal of persuading, alternately mixed up with vows and and sighs, Ellen informed him, that for some time past an individual had been in the habit of annoying her whenever he met her in the streets, and that lately he had carried his impertinence so far, that she could not step outside the door without being subject to insult, as he was always on the watch for her.

'Oh, that's it,' said George, when she had finished.

'I really dread to go outside the door,' continued Ellen.

'Only let me catch him,' said George, 'and I'll tell him my mind on the matter.'

'There,' cried Ellen. 'I thought you would go and make some dreadful disturbance.'

'Well,' said George calmly.

'Who knows but that he may stab you or something worse?'

'Pooh! nonsense!' returned her lover.

'You know,' continued Ellen, 'there are a set of horrid fellows about that don't mind what they do, and are ready to perpetrate any villainy, even murder itself.'

'Stuff! Burke and Hare are not come back to life.—Somebody has been frightening you.'

'Well, George, did you not read the horrid murder that was committed last week at——, I forget where, where a jealous lover poisoned his unfortunate rival, and after murdering fifteen of his relations, put an end to his unhappy existence by marrying a very rich heiress and dying in her arms.'

'Surely, Ellen, you don't give credence to such trash!' said George; 'if you do, I am sure you will soon become a candidate for one of our strait waistcoats.'

'If you must speak to him, for Heaven's sake, do it mildly. Who knows what may happen if you are rash?' cried Ellen, fearful of a rupture between the two men.

'Oh, yes,' replied George, 'I'll use him tenderly enough. I have just thought of a plan.'

'What is it?'

'Why, it requires your concurrence to carry it into execution, and afterwards I'll lay any money that he does not trouble you again.'

'Let me hear it,' said Ellen.

'Well, then, the next time he annoys you, pretend to listen to his proposals, and bring him in here.'

'But as you will open the gate,' continued Ellen, 'he will see you.'

'Never mind that,' said George; 'you must let him suppose that I believe him to be a patient; there is one coming to night or to-morrow morning, and we can easily mistake your tormentor for him, and take ample revenge for his behaviour.'

'What would you do to him?'

'Hand him over to one of the keepers by mistake, get him shaved and put in a straight waistcoat if he's troublesome.'

'But what will be the consequence?' cried Ellen.

'You must say to me when you bring him in, 'This is the gentleman Mr. Lucas spoke about.' He will not then suspect that I know anything about the matter, and when the trick is over he will not take revenge upon a woman.'

'But he will complain to Dr. Millman, the proprietor, and we shall lose our situations,' said Ellen in reply.

'Never mind that,' said George; 'I'll run the risk of that. We must apologise for the mistake in the best way we are able. Nobody will suspect it otherwise.—as for your tormentor, he will be too much ashamed to show his bald pate, and acknowledge that he has been duped by a woman, while you will have ample satisfaction.'

'That will do,' said Ellen; 'but I am half afraid;—and she retired to perform her daily duty in tending upon the numerous patients confined in the house.'

When the occupation of the day was done some business required the attendance of Ellen in town, and, having prepared herself for walking, she set out.—Scarcely had she proceeded beyond the precincts of the house before her tormentor, who was a Major in the Army, dressed in a military braided frock-coat made up to her.

'Good evening,' said he. 'By all that's lovely I have been waiting here these three hours in the anxious expectation of seeing your beautiful self.'

'You need not have waited so long; I am sure you give yourself a vast deal too much trouble; besides I have no time to spare; I am in a great hurry,' replied Ellen.

'Celestial being!' cried the Major, attempting to take her hand, 'the trouble in seeking your enchanting society is the greatest happiness of my existence.'

'I beg you will desist, Sir,' said Ellen, withdrawing her hand, 'these freedoms I dislike very much.'

'I swear never to cease to follow you until you promise to give me the pleasure of your company.'

'I cannot promise you any such thing,' replied Ellen.

'Are you engaged to another?' said the Major.

'Yes.'

'I will not believe it,' said he impassionately.

'I cannot help that,' said Ellen.

'And I will see you home.'

'You cannot.'

'But I will,' cried the Major.

'Now I must beg you to leave me,' said Ellen, as she reached the house where she was going.

'Do you return to-night?'

'I do not think I shall,' replied Ellen, hoping he would leave her to return alone, and willing, if possible, to avoid the practical joke that George had determined to play him.

'I shall wait,' said the Major, as Ellen parted with him.

Ellen delayed her visit as long as possible, and upon again coming into the street, saw the Major waiting for her.

'Now, Sir,' said she, 'I intend returning home, and wish to know, once for all, if you are determined to persecute me.'

'Lovely girl——'

'I do not want your company,' said Ellen.

'I will not live without you,' returned the Major.

'Are you determined to follow me home?'

'I am, my angel. Cannot you admit me into the asylum, where I can have the pleasure of your sweet company myself?'

'What do you think the people would say of me?' asked Ellen.

'I neither know nor care,' replied the Major, 'so that I possess yourself.'

'Really I think you are a fit candidate for the asylum,' responded Ellen, as she drew near home; 'will you leave me?'

'No; you must admit me. I know you could if you liked.'

'Well, then, if you will promise——'

'What? I will promise anything for your sake.'

'That you will do just as I tell you, to avoid suspicion.'

'I will.'

'Well, then,' replied Ellen, 'you are not totally indifferent to me, and I will grant you my company for the remainder of the evening.'

'Sweet girl!' cried the enraptured Major, 'I knew the god of love at last would move your heart to compassion.'

'But there will be some difficulty in getting you past the gate,' said Ellen.

'Why?'

'Because the porter George.'

'Can't you frame some plan to get him from his post for a minute?'

'Let me think,' said Ellen, appearing to be wrapt in thought; let me see—'yes, now I have it—there is a gentleman coming to the asylum to-night or to-morrow, and you must represent him.'

'I would represent the devil himself, if it were necessary, for an hour's pleasure in your company,' said the Major.

'And when the porter opens the gate you must throw yourself about as if insane. I will say, 'this is the gentleman Mr. Lucas spoke about; so he will let us pass without suspicion.'

'That's well planned, my charmer!' said the Major; 'a woman is never at a loss for a scheme. But who is Mr. Lucas?'

'Only one of the medical attendants.'

'Very well.'

By this time they reached the asylum, and Ellen knocked at the gate.

'Who have you with you?' said George, apparently unconscious of the affair, as he opened the gate.

'The gentleman Mr. Lucas spoke about,' replied Ellen; 'his malady is such that he is outrageous with everybody but a female.'

'Oh, indeed?' replied George, shutting the gate.

'You are a fine fellow—don't you think you are?'

said the Major to George, as he entered, at the same time aping the antics of a maniac.

'Very!' responded George, feigning to humour him.

'I'm King Nebuchadnezzar,' said the Major.

'Indeed!'

'And was at the battle of Seringapatam.'

'Very happy to hear it.'

'Killed eleven thousand and a-half with my own hand, and will fight you for a hap'orth of marbles.—Can you knuckle down well? Now, my man, come on,' continued the Major, pretending to throw off his coat as about to fight.

'Come, come,' whispered Ellen; 'follow me.'

'On the wings of love,' returned the Major, gallantly, wishing George to think that his quiet compliance to a female's voice was a feature of his malady, 'None but the brave!—none but the brave!—none but the brave deserve the fair.'

'Now, come along, and don't make so much noise, King Nebuchadnezzar,' said Ellen, aloud.

'This way, if you please,' said Ellen, entering a small door. 'There, step in there, and don't stir for