

LITERATURE.

SUMMER RAIN.

Gentle dew, not vainly art thou sent,
Oh! not alone to cheer the drooping flower
And thirsty land with its long yearnings spent,
But o'er a human heart that only grieves
Hast thou the greater and the nobler power.

Sweet spirit, stirring all the joyous leaves,
Thy tiny footsteps, like a Fairy train.
Go softly stealing by the lattice eaves,
Or lightly dash upon the casement pane,
Whispering the rose, in language she doth know,
For her fair face is turn'd to thee again.

A pleasant song thy wondrous music weaves,
For beauty's child, so lately faint and low,
Bless'd in thy coming she methinks doth rise
With mantling cheek and joy-inspiring eyes!
What is thy secret power, sweet Summer Rain?

Oh, art thou not the tear of Pity shed
From its pure fount within a mortal breast?
Life's truest balm the word of kindness spread
In darken'd homes where sorrow seeketh rest.
The dew of fond Affection deeply blest
Above its own, in lavish freedom pour'd,
Or Mercy's gift to prayer and thankfulness
When health and peace united are restored.

These, like heaven's moisture on the lifeless land,
Creation's flower the folded mind expand,
Till with the freshen'd herb we turn and bless
A power unseen, for happy days renewed
In our accepted songs of Gratitude.

THE FATAL BRIDE.

BEING A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE REMINISCENCES
OF A BACHELOR.

(Founded on an event which actually occurred.)
(Concluded.)

I was no sooner alone in my apartment, than I recollected the papers which had been entrusted to my care by Jennings. He had not only omitted to prohibit its perusal in my case, but had actually told me, in so many words, that I was at liberty to read it. There was, therefore, no impediment to the honourable gratification of my curiosity; and secure from interruption, I proceeded to examine the document.

It purported to be a statement of certain occurrences, in connexion with a clandestine visit made by the deponent, one 'Benjamin Cruise, clerk, resident next door to the Cow and Cleaver, in Smithfield, in the city of Dublin,' at the solicitation of Mrs. Martha Keating, at the house of Sir Arthur Chadleigh, in St. Stephen's green. The narrative was to the effect, that the reverend gentleman was applied to, on or about a certain day, nearly a year preceding the date of the document, in question, to attend at the back entrance of the said mansion; where, according to arrangement, he waited until about one o'clock, when he was admitted, and conveyed with great caution up a back stair, and into a chamber where was a young lady, as it seemed, in much agitation; and whom, as he was then and there informed by the old woman his conductress, he believed to have been Miss Mary Chadleigh; by which name he was afterwards directed to marry her to a certain young gentleman, whom he now knows to be Captain Jennings, and who shortly after his Cruise's arrival, joined the party in the said chamber, with like caution; and he, Cruise, had then, at the desire of the party, proceeded to unite Miss Chadleigh and Captain Jennings, according to the ritual of the Church of England; and that a noise in another part of the house having alarmed them, the ceremony was interrupted in the introductory part, and before the giving of the ring; and he and Captain Jennings were together hurried out from the house in the same way; and that he never before or since then saw Miss Mary Chadleigh, and knew not of her having been married by any other clergyman. This statement, which was given with great aggravation of detail, was fully dated, and signed in full, by the reverend gentleman; in those days a not very creditably-notorious personage.

The perusal of this document impressed me still more unfavourably respecting Jennings. There was something sinister and equivocal about the whole thing. The infamous character of the degraded man who signed it; the industrious detail with which it had been prepared; and, above all, the unaccountable precaution which had suggested the adoption of such a measure, filled me with painful misgivings, to the effect that some gross and horrible delusion had been practised upon poor Miss Chadleigh; and I could not bear regretting that I had suffered myself, under conditions of secrecy, to be made the depository of so suspicious a document.

I was pursuing this unsatisfactory train of reflection, when a note was placed in my hand; it was couched in the following terms:—

'Dear —, At seven o'clock to-morrow morning, on the Fifteen Acres.

Yours in haste,

FITZGERALD.

I spent a restless night, and was up long before dawn. Having completed my toilet, I walked some way into

town, in the grey twilight of coming morning; and when I had, as I calculated, consumed the greater part of the necessary interval, I got into a hackney-coach, and drove directly to the place of rendezvous. Availing myself of a screen of bushes, I stopped the carriage and got out, unobserved from the scene of action. As soon as I obtained a view of the ground, I observed there a little group of three persons, who were standing listlessly close beside it; two or three gentlemen on horseback—mere spectators, of course, like myself—were also on the ground. I walked as near as I decently could to the group I have mentioned, and saw that Chadleigh and Fitzgerald were two of the number. The latter looked at his watch, and mounted the coach-box to command a more extended view; shading his eyes with his hand, he looked along the skirting of wood which bounds the place, in the direction of the city, and at last his eye seemed to settle on a distant object. I followed the direction of the gaze, and saw the top of a carriage moving in the distance.

'Here,' I thought, 'comes Jennings; which of them is to leave the field unhurt, and which—I shrank from the inquiry, merely mental as it was, with something like a shudder.

'Poor Mary Chadleigh! whichever way it ends, its issue must be to her a tragedy.'

Fitzgerald had descended from his post of observation, and recognizing me, he walked up, and shook me by the hand. He looked pale and stern.

'They are coming,' said he, glancing towards the vehicle which was now rapidly approaching.

'Rather late—are they?' I asked—more from want of something to say than any other cause.

'No, no: a quarter past seven was fixed on, subsequently to my note, last night; we should scarcely have had light earlier,' he said.

'The weapons are pistols?' I asked.

'Yes,' he answered; 'and we may as well begin to make our preparations. Come with me; you'll not be in the way; I won't stand on ceremony when the time comes for you to withdraw and leave Major Gurney and myself to our deliberations.'

So saying, he drew me with him to the side of the carriage.

'Take out the case,' he said to the man who stood by the carriage door; 'not that—those are the instruments, leave it where Dr. — placed it—the flat case—that's right; just keep it in your hand; and when I beckon to you, bring it over to me quickly, there don't shake it.'

We now walked up to Chadleigh, who stood moodily and doggedly, with his surtout buttoned up to the chin; and exchanging, now and then, a brief word or two with his companion—a slim, pale-faced, young surgeon, who was evidently but one degree less frightened than if he had been himself a principal. Fitzgerald dropped my arm as he approached, and leaving me a little, observed, consulting his watch—

'Eight minutes before their time.'

Chadleigh nodded.

'They have brought advice, too,' suggested the little surgeon, timidly; 'there is a second carriage.'

'There's no need to waste time,' said Chadleigh; 'we had better walk on a little to meet them.'

The steps of the first carriage had by this time been let down; and Jennings, followed by a stiff elderly gentleman, with a red, important face, and a military air, descended upon the turf. After, as it seemed, a few directions to the servants, they began to walk towards us, briskly followed by an attendant, carrying a pistol-case; and with the carriage which carried their medical friend, a little in the rear.

My heart swelled within me as these two little groups approached one another, in great silence, over the smooth sward. Gracious God! what an awful account for eternity was to be closed ere they parted!

On they came, briskly and steadily, through the keen and misty morning air—nearer and nearer—until the interposing space became so limited that each party as it were, by mutual consent, slackening their pace, came slowly to a halt, at some dozen steps apart, and interchanged in silence, a stern and formal salutation. Fitzgerald stepped forward, and was met about half-way by the grim elderly gentleman whom I have described. After another salutation, as formal, they withdrew a little, and conducted a brief conference in short, decisive whispers. Meanwhile, those who, either accidentally or by design, had been spectators of the proceedings, began to gather about the spot on which the combatants were placed.

I had thought, once or twice, that Jennings perceived my presence, and now I was assured of it.

'Mr. —,' he said, in a low hurried tone, 'I have a request to make.'

'Pray, state it, sir,' I replied, approaching.

'It is just this—should I happen to fall, remain here for a moment, as I may feel it necessary to make a communication to you of the last importance, not to myself, but to others.'

I undertook to comply with this request, and withdrew.

There was not the slightest perceptible tremor, nor the least indication of excitement in his manner, voice or aspect, excepting that he was, perhaps, a little paler than usual, and his eyes were unusually dilated, with the restlessness of suspense. I walked to the spot where Chadleigh was standing, and almost at the same moment, Fitzgerald returned.

'What is the distance?' asked Chadleigh.

'Ten paces,' rejoined Fitzgerald.

'Too much,' said he, gruffly.

'It is the usual thing: you don't want to have us look blood-thirsty,' retorted Fitzgerald.

'And for that reason, I'd like to have it settled one way or other at the first shot.'

'It will be settled time enough,' said the second, and unlocking the pistol-case, he proceeded to load the weapons; a silence, hardly broken by a whisper, followed, during which the clink of ramrods and the cramming home of wadded bullets, were ominously audible.

'Are you ready, Mr. Fitzgerald?' inquired Jennings' second; 'if so, we had better place our men at once.'

A piece of money was thrown up for choice of ground; Jennings won.

'Luck's so far with us, sir; I hope it may not turn,' remarked the veteran, with a ghastly jocularity.

Chadleigh disincumbered himself of his surtout, and the combatants took their ground respectively.

'Gentlemen,' said the major, addressing the spectators, 'have the goodness to draw back a little; some of you may be hurt, else.'

The suggestion was complied with, and a breathless silence followed.

'Are you ready, gentlemen?' inquired the major.

Each answered in the affirmative.

After a brief pause the word 'fire' was given, each raised his weapon, but Chadleigh alone fired. Jennings must have had a narrow escape, for he shook his head, put his hand to his ear, as if a hornet had stung him, then quietly raising his pistol he fired into the air, threw the weapon up, and caught it by the muzzle as it descended.

'D—e, sir, that wont do,' exclaimed Chadleigh in a tone of bitter exasperation, 'you may throw away your shot if you will, but I'm cursed if you get out of the business on these terms; it is the act of a paltrion and a scoundrel to sneak out of a quarrel that way; I'll baulk your scheme, for you—'

'Don't say a word,' said Jennings sternly, interrupting Fitzgerald, who was about to interfere, 'I call you all to witness I have stood his fire, and without returning it—that's all; let him take the consequences of his vindictive obstinacy. I'll not stand to be shot at like a target; I've a right to defend myself, and by—I'll do it.'

'Certainly it is very just and sensible; and the very point I was going to put,' said the major, with a brisk approval, that strongly contrasted with the savage intensity of Jennings' tone.

It was plain that the angry and mortal passions of combat were, in Jennings, at last thoroughly roused. I heard him say to Major Gurney, once or twice, impatiently, 'make haste,' and saw him dart one or two lowering glances at Chadleigh. The preliminaries for a second exchange of shots were completed in a few moments—the signal was given—and both fired so exactly together, that, from the report, one would have believed the explosion a single one. Jennings' shot was well directed, though accident defeated its aim: it struck the trigger-guard of Chadleigh's pistol, which was nearly forced from his hand by the shock, and glancing off, the ball buried itself in the sod. Jennings, on the other hand, stood immovable, while one might slowly count three, then staggered a little, dropped his pistol, and fell suddenly to the ground. Chadleigh walked forward a few hesitating steps, checked himself, and, in an agitated voice, said to the surgeon who had accompanied him—

'You may be wanted here—by—he's hurt! Fitzgerald, come away—come, I say.'

Meanwhile, amid a babel of conflicting and exciting suggestions, the surgeon, ordering the crowd to stand back, had the wounded man raised a little on the carriage cushions, and was proceeding to examine the injury, but Jennings said, faintly—

'Don't—don't—it's all of no use.'

He invited me with a glance and a slight gesture to approach.

'One word,' he said, speaking with great difficulty. I stooped down, to bring my ear as near him as I could. 'It's all a lie—all that—the paper—see the man, and tell him I said so—poor Mary—I made him do it, but I could not help it—there's no use in maintaining the cheat any longer—I'm dying. Keep him away,' he continued, faintly turning his gaze for a moment on the surgeon, who was approaching, and then on me, 'he can do nothing for me—only listen to me—my last word—that paper is—a lie—we were married—I can—I can scarcely speak—don't—don't—are you going—hold me—oh God!'

I can never forget the look that Jennings fixed on me—the fearful, imploring gaze of his dilated eyes filled with the wild, deep, awful meaning of death; the strangling effort to speak—the ghastly pallor—and then, the dropping of the jaw, the mouth, through which the breath of life was never more to stir, helplessly agape, the eyes, with the deep earnestness of their awful meaning, fixed for ever—and the stern movelessness of the darkened brow. Was this the gay, vain, reckless Jennings? Was this mute but fearful monitor of death, propped-up before us, indeed the frivolous, light-hearted, sensual man of the world, among whose dreams and calculations the warning shadow of death had never glided?

'By—he is dead,' said one of the bystanders, breaking the breathless silence that had followed.