

LITERATURE.

[FOR THE CARLETON SENTINEL.]

AUTUMN.

BY FLORENCE.

Wide o'er each mountain, plain and dell,
Each forest's leafy dome,
The golden shade of Autumn's touch
Has sought its yearly home.
A sweet decay its tints pervade,
A mournful tone it breathes;
As passing o'er the joyous earth,
Its withering impress leaves.

The leaves matured in showers are swept
By breezes fresh and free,
Till o'er the earth is wildly flung
The covering from each tree:
Each leaflet sadly withered lies
Within its open tomb,
And multitudes thus sepulchred
Receive their falling doom.

Each spear of grass has lost its hue
Of brightly shaded green;
And faded flowers sleep on the banks
Where buds so late were seen;
And lily gems of silvery frost
Bedeck the dying stem,
Where forth in beauty sprang the dew—
Sweet Flora's diadem.

Oh! leaves and flowers so wondrous fair,
In your gorgeous beauty blest,
With your tissued forms all sadly crush'd,
And your life-cords rudely rent:
Sweet types are ye in your lowly rest
Of perishing dying man,
Who press'd by the kiss of the death winds lip,
Scarce measures out his span.

October 25, 1882.

THE SECRET.

(Concluded.)

Edouard le Blanc made a step or two towards the door, and then, as if overwhelmed with a sense of the hopelessness of further concealment, turned round, threw himself with a cry of terror and despair at M. de Veron's feet, and poured forth a wild, sobbing, scarcely intelligible confession of the fault or crime of which he had been guilty, through the solicitations of M. Eugene, who had, he averred, received every farthing of the amount in which he, Edouard le Blanc, acknowledged himself to be a defaulter.

"Yes!—yes!" exclaimed the son; "Edouard gave the money into my hands, and if there is any blame, it is mine alone."

M. de Veron listened with a stolid, stony apathy to all this, save for a slight glimmer of triumph that, spite of himself, shone out at the corners of his half closed eyes. When the young man had ceased sobbing and exclaiming, he said—"You admit, Edouard le Blanc, that you have robbed me of nearly two thousand francs; at you say, the solicitation of my son—an excuse, you must be aware, of not the slightest legal weight; no more than if your pretty sister, Mademoiselle Adeline, who, I must be permitted to observe, is not altogether, I suspect, a stranger to this affair—Hear me out, Messieurs, if you please: I say your excuse has no more legal validity, than if your sister had counselled you to commit this felony. Now, mark me, young man; it is just upon five o'clock. At half-past seven precisely, I shall go before a magistrate, and cause a warrant to be issued for your apprehension. To-morrow morning, consequently, the brother of Mademoiselle le Blanc will either be an incarcerated felon, or, which will suit me just as well, a proclaimed fugitive from justice."

"One moment—one word, for the love of Heaven, before you go!" exclaimed Eugene. "Is there any mode, any means whereby Edouard may be rescued from this frightful, this unmerited calamity—this irretrievable ruin?"

"Yes," rejoined M. de Veron, pausing for an instant on the outer threshold, "there is one mode, Eugene, and only one. What it is, you do not require to be told. I shall dine in town to-day; at seven, I shall look in at the church of Notre Dame, and remain there precisely twenty minutes. After that, repentance will be too late."

Eugene was in despair, for it was quite clear that Adeline must be given up—Adeline whose myriad charms and graces rose upon his indignation in tenfold greater lustre than before, now that he was about to lose her for ever! But there was plainly no help for it; and after a brief, agitated consultation, the young men left the office to join Madame and Mademoiselle le Blanc at the Widow Carson's, in the

Grand Rue, or Rue de Paris, as the only decent street in Havre-de-Grace was at that time indifferently named, both for the purpose of communicating the untoward state of affairs, and that Eugene might take a lingering last farewell of Adeline.

Before accompanying them thither, it is necessary to say a few words of this Madame Carson, who is about to play a very singular part in this little drama. She was a gay, well-looking, symmetrically-shaped young widow, who kept a confectioner's shop in the said Grand Rue, and officiated as her own *dame du comptoir*. Her good looks, coquettishly-gracious smiles, and unvarying good temper, rendered her establishment much more attractive—it was by no means a brilliant affair in itself—than it would otherwise have been. Madame Carson was, in a tacit, quiet kind of way, engaged to Edouard le Blanc—that is to say, she intended marrying him as soon as their mutual savings should justify such a step; and provided also, that no more eligible offer wooed her acceptance in the meantime. M. de Veron himself was frequently in the habit of calling, on his way to or from Mon Sejour, for a pate and a little lively badinage with the comely widow; and so frequently, at one time, that Edouard le Blanc was half-inclined—to Madame Carson's infinite amusement—to be jealous of the rich, though elderly merchant's formal and elaborate courtesies. It was on leaving her shop that he had slipped and sprained his ankle. M. de Veron fainted with the extreme pain, was carried in that state into the little parlor behind the shop, and had not yet recovered consciousness when the apothecary, whom Madame Carson had dispatched her little waiting-maid-of-all work in quest of, entered to tender his assistance. This is all, I think, that need be said, in a preliminary way, of Madame Carson.

Of course, the tidings brought by Eugene and Edouard very painfully affected Mademoiselle le Blanc; but being a very sensible, as well as remarkably handsome young person, she soon rallied, and insisted, quite as warmly as her mother did, that the sacrifice necessary to relieve Edouard from the peril which environed him—painful, heart-breaking as that sacrifice might be—must be submitted to without reserve or delay. In other words, that M. de Veron, junior, must consent to espouse Mademoiselle de Merode, and forthwith inform his father that he was ready to sign the nuptial contract that moment, if necessary. Poor Eugene, who was really over head and ears in love, and more so just then than ever, piteously lamented his own cruel fate, and passionately denounced the tiger-heartedness of his barbarian father; but as tears and reproaches could avail nothing in such a strait, he finally submitted to the general award, and agreed to announce his submission to M. de Veron at the church of Notre Dame, not a moment later, both ladies insisted, than five minutes past seven.

Madame Carson was not at home all this while. She had gone to church, and after devotions, called on her way back on one or two friends, for a little gossip, so that it wanted only about a quarter to seven when she reappeared. Of course the lamentable story had to be told over again, with all its dismal accompaniments of tears, sighs and plaintive ejaculations; and it was serious to observe, as the narrative proceeded, how the widow's charming eyes flashed and sparkled, and her cheeks glowed with indignation, till she looked, to use Edouard le Blanc's expression, "ferociously" handsome. "Le monstre!" she exclaimed, as Eugene terminated the sad history, gathering up as she spoke the shawl and gloves she had just put off; "but I shall see him at once: I have influence with this Monsieur de Veron."

"Nonsense, Emilie," said Madame le Blanc. "You possess influence over Monsieur de Veron!"

"Certainly I do. And is that such a miracle?" replied Madame Carson, with a demure glance at Edouard le Blanc. Edouard looked somewhat scared, but managed to say—"Not at all, certainly not; but this man's heart is iron—steel."

"We shall see," said the fair widow, as she finished drawing on her gloves. "La grande

passion is sometimes stronger than iron or steel; is it not, Monsieur Eugene? At all events I shall try. He is in the church, you say. Very well, if I fail—but I am sure I shall not fail—I return in ten minutes, and that will leave Mademoiselle Adeline's despairing lover plenty of time to make his submission, if better may not be; and so au revoir, Mesdames et Messieurs."

"What can she mean?" said Madame le Blanc, as the door closed. "I have noticed once or twice during the last fortnight, that she has made use of strange half-hints relative to Monsieur de Veron."

"I don't know what she can mean," said Edouard le Blanc, seizing his hat and hurrying off, "but I shall follow, and strive to ascertain."

He was just in time to catch a glimpse of Madame Carson's skirts, as they whisked round the corner of the Rue Saint Jacques, and by quickening his speed, he saw her enter the church from the Rue St. Jacques, and by quickening his speed, he saw her enter the church from that street. Notre Dame was crowded; but Edouard le Blanc had no difficulty in singling out M. de Veron, who was sitting in his accustomed chair, somewhat removed from the mass of worshippers on the left of the high altar; and presently he discerned Madame Carson gently and adroitly making her way through the crowd towards him. The instant she was near enough, she tapped him slightly on the shoulder. He turned quickly, and stared with a haughty, questioning glance at the smiling confectioner. There was no *grande passion* in that look, Edouard felt quite satisfied, and Madame Carson's conduct seemed more than ever unintelligible. She appeared to say something, which was replied to by an impatient gesture of refusal, and M. de Veron turned again towards the altar. Madame Carson next approached close to his chair, and bending down, whispered in his ear, for perhaps a minute. As she did so, M. de Veron's body rose slowly up, involuntarily as it were, and stiffened into rigidity, as if under the influence of some frightful spell. Forcing himself, at last, it seemed, to confront the whisperer, he no sooner caught her eye than he reeled, like one struck by a heavy blow, against the pedestal of a saint, whose stony features looked less white and bloodless than his own. Madame Carson contemplated the effect she had produced with a kind of pride, for a few moments, and then, with a slight but peremptory waive of her hand, motioned him to follow her out of the sacred edifice. M. de Veron hastily, though with staggering steps, obeyed; Edouard le Blanc crossing the church and reaching the street just soon enough to see them both driven off in M. de Veron's carriage.

Edouard hurried back to the Grand Rue to report what he had witnessed; and what could be the interpretation of the inexplicable scene, engrossed the inventive faculties of all there, till they were thoroughly tired of their wild and aimless guesses. Eight o'clock chimed, —nine—ten—and they were all, Edouard especially, working themselves into a complete panic of undefinable apprehension, when to their great relief, M. de Veron's carriage drew up before the door. The first person to alight was M. Bourdon, a notary of eminence; next M. de Veron, who handed out Madame Carson; and all three walked through the shop into the back apartment. The notary wore his usual business aspect, and had in his hands two rolls of thickly-written parchment, which he placed upon the table, and at once began to spread out. M. de Veron had the air of a man walking in a dream, and subdued; mastered by some overpowering, nameless terror; while Madame Carson, though pale with excitement, was evidently highly elated, and to use a French phrase, completely "mistress of the situation." She was the first to break silence.

"Monsieur de Veron has been kind enough, Edouard, to explain, in the presence of Monsieur Bourdon, the mistake in the accounts he was disposed to charge you with to-day. He quite remembers, now, having received two thousand francs from you, for which, in his hurry at the time, he gave you no voucher. Is not that so, Monsieur de Veron?" she added, again fixing on the merchant the same menacing look that Le Blanc had noticed in the church.

"Yes, yes," was the quick reply of M. de

Veron, who vainly attempted to look the astounded clerk in the face. "The mistake was mine. Your accounts are quite correct, Monsieur le Blanc; and—and I shall be glad, of course, to see you at the office as usual."

"That is well," said Madame Carson; "and now, Monsieur Bourdon, to business if you please. Those documents will not take so long to read as they did to write."

The notary smiled, and immediately began reading a marriage-contract between Eugene de Veron and Adeline le Blanc, by which it appeared that the union of those young persons was joyfully acceded to by Jean Baptiste de Veron and Marie le Blanc, their parents—the said Jean Baptiste de Veron binding himself formally to endow the bride and bridegroom jointly, on the day of marriage, with the sum of 300,000 francs, and moreover, to admit his son as a partner in the business, thenceforth to be carried on under the name of De Veron & Son.

This contract was written in duplicate, and as soon as the notary had finished reading, Madame Carson handed a pen to M. de Veron, saying in the same light, coquettish, but peremptory tone as before—"Now, Monsieur, quick, if you please; yours is the most important signature." The merchant signed and sealed both parchments, and the other interested parties did the same, in silent, dumb bewilderment, broken only by the scratching of the pens and the legal words repeated after the notary. "We need not detain you longer, Messieurs, I believe," said Madame Carson. "Bon soir, Monsieur de Veron," she added, extending an ungloved hand to that gentleman, who faintly touched it with his lips; "you will hear from me to-morrow."

"What is the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Eugene de Veron, the instant his father and the notary disappeared. "I positively feel as if standing upon my head!" A chorus of like interrogatories from the Le Blancs assailed Madame Carson, whose ringing bursts of mirth mocked for a time their impatience.

"Meaning, *parbleu*!" she at last replied, after pausing to catch breath. "That is plain enough, surely. Did you not all see with *empressment* the poor man kissed my hand?—There, don't look so wretched, Edouard," she added with a renewed outburst—"perhaps I may have the caprice to prefer you after all to an elderly millionaire, who knows? But come, let us try to be a little calm and sensible. What I have done, good folks, I can as easily undo; and that being the case, Monsieur Eugene must sign me a bond to-morrow morning for fifty thousand francs, payable three days after his marriage. Is it agreed? Very well; then I keep these two parchments till the said bond is executed; and now, my friends, good-night, for I, as you may believe, am completely tired after all this benevolent fairy-work."

The wedding took place on the next day but one, to the great astonishment of every one acquainted with the two families. It was positively rumored that M. de Veron had proposed marriage to Madame Carson, and been refused! Be it true or not, it was soon apparent that, from some cause or other, M. de Veron's health and spirits were irretrievably broken down, and after lingering out a mopish, secluded life of scarcely a twelvemonth's duration, that gentleman died suddenly at Mon Sejour. A clause in his will bequeathed 20,000 francs to Madame Carson, with an intimated hope that it would be accepted as a pledge by that lady to respect, as she hitherto had done, the honor of an ancient family.

This pledge to secrecy would no doubt have been kept, but that rumors of poisoning and suicide, in connection with De Veron's death, having got abroad, the Procureur General ordered an investigation to take place. The suspicion proved groundless; but the *procès-verbal* set forth, that on examining the body of the deceased, there were discovered the letters "I. de B." "T. F." branded on the front of the left shoulder; the two last initials of "Tranquill Forcé" (forced labor) being large and very distinct. There could be no doubt, therefore, that the proud M. de Veron was an escaped *forçat*; and subsequent investigation, which was not, however, very strongly pressed, sufficiently proved that Jean Baptiste de Veron, the young