

Select Tale.

THE RAG-PICKER'S DAUGHTER.

The *Chiffonier* is one of the institutions of Paris. His rags; his hooked stick; his fiery, twinkling eyes; his basket hung over one shoulder, and receiving the various offal, from the sale of which the gatherer derives his daily crust—all these are too well known, in these days of travel, to need description. The chiffonier's profession—for they distinguish it as a profession—is the general resort of strangers from the provinces, who find themselves in the great city with little money, and no means of earning more. The requisite basket and hooked stick are easily procured. Certain streets are free to new-comers, and here the neophyte practices till, by some act of good-fellowship, some display of eminent shrewdness, or some unusual piece of good luck, he obtains regular admission to the brotherhood of chiffoniers, and establishes a kind of squatter sovereignty over a certain district.

Twenty-five years ago Thomas Bertol left his native village, in the pleasant Auvergne, and came to Paris to seek his fortune. But fortunes do not come even to the seekers in Paris, and Thomas, after wandering about the streets looking for honest work, at last laid out his remaining few sous in the purchase of a decrepit chiffonier's route, basket and stick, and took regularly to the streets.

Thomas was thirty, sober, shrewd, and not bad-looking. He found no gold nor jewelry among his nightly collections of offal. But coming home to his garret one morning, he found there what proved to him a pearl of great price—a young girl from his native village, also adventuring in Paris, and willing to share his fortunes.

Of course there was a wedding, in which the neighbors of Thomas took a lively part; and shortly thereafter—two having saved more than one, as often happens in the houses of the poor—Master Thomas Bertol, by that time the happy father of a curly-headed little girl, blessed with bright eyes, and many rags, quitted his garret and his nocturnal wanderings, hired a roomy vault, and became the purchaser of the rags and scraps picked up by his companions and neighbours.

The quarter of Paris frequented by the chiffonier fraternity is remarkable for the extremely rickety, tumble-down condition of the tenements, the narrowness of the streets, and the generally dilapidated appearance of all the accessories. Master Thomas was no aristocrat. He chose his new place in the darkest, uncomeliest street of the quarter, and in the most rickety house in the street. His vault was some ten feet beneath the level of the filthy pavement, with which it was connected by a steep ladder. Here, by the dim light of a small lamp, the quondam chiffonier and his wife busied themselves in sorting and packing the rags, broken glass, old iron, brass, pewter, nails, and what not, which made up their queer miscellaneous assortment. Here the little Marie grew, from a curly-headed child, tumbling about among the rags, and only catching an occasional glimpse of the bright sunlight above, into a gentle, slender-waisted, graceful maiden, with great wistful blue eyes, and subdued, yet serene smile.

Here, too, the mother—unable to live without her native trees and flowers—gradually fading away—was lost to the father ere his little child could feel the loss; and so the old man—for he grew early old—quietly went on sorting his queer goods, now buying, now selling; ever counting up his small gains, and casting loving glances the while at the beautiful girl, who was now his house-keeper, as well as his book-keeper, and sole companion.

It was one bright day last June, when my friend George Le Vere, and I had occasion to take a ramble through the chiffonier's quarter, and were struck by the modest beauty of a young girl who was sitting at the head of a steep and rickety ladder, knitting, humming a tune to herself, and looking wistfully out at the small ray of sunshine, which made its way between the nearly-meeting house-tops, and played at her feet.

"What a beautifully innocent face to meet in such a place as this!" was my exclamation, as we touched our hats (it is not an insult to do such homage to unknown beauty in Paris,) and went on our way.

A few words on the queerness of the incident, and George changed the subject. We were to start for the country the following morning. Late that evening, when all my preparations were completed, I received a note from my friend, expressive of regret that he would be prevented from accompanying me, but asking me, as a favour, to proceed on my journey, and promising perhaps to join me ere its completion.

I had to go off alone, which, to a stranger in France, was not so pleasant. But, after all, it

mattered little. Your true Yankee is at home under all circumstances—and I profess to be of the truest Yankee blue.

George did not join me. I loitered away the summer and autumn pleasantly enough, and returned to Paris but a few weeks before Christmas.—The first news I heard when once more established in my student chambers, in the *Quartier Latin*, was that my old friend George Le Vere had married, and that the bride was an heiress.

I lost no time in hunting him up, to learn the particulars of so unexpected an affair.

It appears that George was struck with the lovely face we had met on our promenade, and had determined to make its acquaintance. He returned the next day to the dark street, and not finding the fair Marie at the head of the stairs, incontinently picked his way down the steps toward the glimmering lamp, where he found the object of his search arranging her father's accounts. The old man had gone out. George made some excuse for his intrusion, and having stumbled over a heap of broken glass at the entrance to this cave, found his curiosity greatly excited as to the nature of the traffic carried on by its occupants.

Marie answered his questions with an ingenuous modesty which completely charmed my friend.—When he had exhausted his powers of questioning, and felt impelled to take his leave, he expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of Marie's father, and announced to the blushing maiden his intention of calling on the morrow for that purpose.—What need of further detail? George called on the morrow, and made the acquaintance of the rag-seller; called the next day to talk to Marie; the day after on some other excuse; and was shortly established as a regular visitor at this warehouse of rags. The old man gave little heed to his visitor, and Marie was left alone to entertain him—a labor of love which she did by no means seem to object to.

Until one day, as George was picking his way across the floor towards the steps, the old man walked up to him with the abrupt query, "What was the aim of all his visits?"

To this George made answer that he loved Marie, and desired to make her his wife, if her father had no objection.

"I have no objections to make," was the answer; "but you have parents, and must immediately acquaint them with your wishes."

Now George's parents were wealthy, and looked to their son's making an alliance "suitable to his condition and prospects in life." Imagine their consternation when Master George, one morning after breakfast, communicated to him the story of his love. The father broke out into unmistakable anger, and the mother declared herself too much outraged even to faint. But George had all the obstinacy of an only child; and having vowed to marry Marie, consent or no consent, at last brought his parents to at least think of the matter as a possibility. In secret, however, both father and mother were determined to prevent by every means so disgraceful a match.

The best way to do this seemed to the old folks to be, to invite the proposed bride and her father to their house to meet a party of friends. Here, thought they, George will see the folly of uniting himself to people whose appearance must inevitably bring ridicule upon him. Accordingly, at the appointed time, Marie and her father made their appearance. A select party of George's friends had been invited. Among these the queer velvet jacket and knee-breeches of the Auvergnese rag-seller excited no little amusement; but the sweet, innocent countenance of his daughter caused also no little surprise and remark.

The party were shortly seated at table; and now the host began his before-concerted play upon the old man's ignorance of civilized life. He however made up in shrewd mother-wit and a discreet taciturnity for any possible ignorance, and on several occasions turned the laugh against his host.

"This will never do," thought Madame Le Vere. So, with the dessert, she opened what she intended for the final battery upon the old man.

"You do indeed intend to bring your daughter into our family, Monsieur?" said she.

"With your kind consent, madame, it would give me great pleasure," was the answer.

"You see, however, the propriety of making some inquiries respecting the bride's dower, sir.—It is not usual for people to let their only child marry without looking a little to his future."

"True," answered the old man quietly; "it is well to think about that in time."

Poor George was upon needles.

"Pray let this matter rest, *ma mere*," said he; "it can be talked over another time."

"By no means," said Marie's father. "Your mother is quite right. It is the duty of parents to look out for the material interests of their children. I shall very readily do all that can be expected

of a poor old man like myself. Let me know, madame, what you intend to give your son, and I will endeavor to give my daughter an equal sum on her marriage-day!"

The guests looked up in half-comical surprise at the audacity of the old man in the velvet jacket. Madame fixed herself bolt upright in her seat, and announced, in measured terms,

"We will give our son, on his marriage-day, 50,000 francs."

"Hem!" ejaculated the old man, "that seems to me not so good as I had reckoned upon. If I did know that these young people loved each other sincerely, I should be tempted to break off the match. But let it go. My daughter will receive upon her wedding-day the sum of 400,000 francs; and I will besides see to the furnishing of the bride's house."

It is not necessary to describe the astonishment of the guests at these words. The subject of dower was incontinently dropped, and the Cræsus in velvet jacket and knee-breeches at once became an object of the kindest attention.

Even now, however, the matter was not quite so quickly settled as had been thought; for Madame Le Vere, anxious to appear well before her guests, had named as George's "dot" a much larger sum of money than her husband could raise without mortgaging a portion of his property.

So the young people had impatiently to wait; till one day George's father received from Mr. Bertol an envelope containing fifty-thousand-francs, and the following words:

"It is not worth while to make our young ones wait for such a bagatelle as this. I inclose what is needed. You will, of course, keep the matter quiet. But another time do not judge too much by appearances. Let the wedding be on the 15th."

—THOMAS BERTOL, Rag-Seller.

So George was married, and the old Auvergnat, having lost his book-keeper, was obliged to close his vault and sell his precious assortment of chiffonier's findings.

When I visited George and Marie last May at their country-seat not far from Paris, I found the old man tending flowers in a garden specially devoted to him. The habit of work is upon him, and he must labor to be happy. As I sat by him, upon a garden-seat, listening to some stories of his earlier days, he suddenly stopped, and pointing to Marie, who was leaning upon her husband's arm, and admiring some flowers, said:

"When my little girl makes me a grand-father, I shall have enough to make me happy;" and then, with a sigh,

"If only mother could see her now!"

Agriculture.

SANDY LAND—AMALGAMATION.—Any soil which is found upon analysis to contain more than eighty parts in a hundred of siliceous matter, is denominated *sandy soil*. Soils so constituted are rarely found to be productive, unless improved by amalgamation, or mixture. Rye and buckwheat are the only grains which can be cultivated on them with any degree of success, in their natural state, and even these are not by any means sure of producing a remunerating crop, except in favorable seasons. Potatoes sometimes do well on this kind of soil, provided it be liberally manured; and the tubers grown on it are generally of an excellent quality, dry and mealy, and much superior for table use to those produced on heavier and more affluent soil.

By allowing such land a period of repose, or laying it down to perennial pasture—which admits of the accumulation of humus—it rapidly recovers, and on being again subject to tillage, will produce one or two excellent crops of rye, buckwheat, or potatoes, without the stimulation of manurial applications.

It may be laid down as an axiom, that all arenaceous or sandy soils lose one part in a hundred of their positive value, for productive purposes, by the increase of a hundredth part in the proportion of siliceous matter. When the soil is so light as to be blown by the winds, it possesses but a mere negative value, and can only be reclaimed and rendered suitable for cultivation by an admixture of argillaceous or clayey matter.

In many sandy soils, beside the pure native siliceous matter, we find other matters, such for instance as carbonate of lime. This usually manifests itself in the form of calcareous sand—containing a portion of lime—which is far less insoluble than the siliceous, and exerts in all cases, an invigorating and healthful influence, both upon the soil and crops.

Of the fifty three varieties of soil produced by the artificial combination of elements, experimented on by Tillet, that which appeared to be the most congenial to the cereals, was composed of three-eighths potter's clay, one half shell or fossil marl, and one eighth of siliceous, or common sand.

Where a soil is found to contain a too profuse quantity of per centum of siliceous matter—a fact easily ascertained by visual inspection without the assistance of chemical tests—the remedy is to be found in amalgamation, or mixing with it a sufficient quantity of good clay, to bring it to the required consistence.

All sandy soils when ameliorated in this way, are found to possess a high value, and as they lose their original character, become permanently productive and rich in proportion to the thoroughness or completeness with which the modification of texture and character is effected.

Sandy lands, thus improved, produce Indian corn, and the several kinds of grain, more bountifully, oftentimes, than some of the best conditioned natural soils: they are also excellent for pasturage. For carrots, beets, swedes, mangles, and parsnips, they are among the best lands we have. They will produce fine crops of grass for two or three years, but will not continue them like the clayey, loam, soils, or soils of a granite formation.

The expense in effecting this change is considerable, but when the improvement is effected, it is a permanent one. We know of some examples of the kind which continue to give great satisfaction.—N. E. Farmer.

That's right—that's right; encourage the mixture of sand with clay, and of clay with sand, on soils, which in the first case are too stiff, or in the last too free, and our word for it, this will be the surest and richest way of manuring your grounds. An improvement thus made is "a thing forever."

This Spring we had occasion to dig a basement cellar for a barn on our premises. The spot was in alluvial soil resting on an unknown depth of quick-sand. A neighbor who has a piece of clayey ground, quite too stiff for a garden, set his man at work hauling the sand off and spreading it several inches thick all over his garden. It was worth more, cord for cord, than manure, to such land.—Already the vegetables, corn, &c., laugh outright as they thrust their hungry roots down, and their verdant heads up through the sandy dressing. It will be a benefit to the land forever.

Some years ago, we served a portion of our grounds in the same way. It is now as strong and productive a soil as lies out doors in any State.—Drew's Rural.

When meat is tainted, the taint may be removed by covering it a few hours with common charcoal, or by putting a few pieces of charcoal into the water in which the tainted meat is boiled.

Miscellaneous.

BURNING OF THE STEAMER MONTREAL.

ABOUT TWO HUNDRED LIVES LOST.

It is our painful duty to state that intelligence of this deplorable loss was received in town about eight o'clock last evening, and that, on repairing to the alleged scene of the disaster, our reporter found that, unhappily, the rumour of the calamitous occurrence was but too true. The *Montreal* was one of the steamers of the mail line between this and Montreal, and left Quebec yesterday afternoon at four o'clock, with about four hundred on board. From all the information as yet gathered relating to her destruction there appears to be an opinion that the fire arose from accident,—some say from sparks falling on the after part of the boat. The opinion entertained by others is that the wood-work had, by being too near the furnace, got dried, and having frequently heated, eventually burst into flame. The fire was first discovered about five o'clock, when the steamer was passing Caprouge, and attention being called to the circumstance, the passengers got acquainted with the fact, and naturally evinced much alarm. The boats were got ready in case of emergency, while every effort was made to extinguish the flames.—The *Montreal* was then at the upper end of Caprouge, and the smoke and heat, increasing ten fold, indicated too clearly that the fire was gaining rapidly, and becoming intolerable. All steam was now put on for the land, and the steamer was soon run ashore at a place about fifteen miles distant from Quebec, between Caprouge and St. Augustin. A scene of the wildest confusion and despair was here witnessed, and the passengers recklessly threw themselves overboard, to escape what they conceived the more imminent danger. Signals of distress were made, and in a short time the steamer *Napoleon*, also bound for Montreal, came back to the burning boat. The moment she arrived, seeing the perilous condition of the *Montreal*, as soon as possible the passengers were transferred to her. The Capt. and Purser were compelled to swim from the vessel, and seek refuge on board the steamer *Alliance*, which was passing with barges in tow, and bore down to render assistance. The *Montreal* now