

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines

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From the Dublin University Magazine.

THE WHITE LACE BONNET.

It is about two years since I was one of that strange and busy mob of some five hundred people, who were assembled on the platform in the Euston-square station a few minutes previous to the starting of the morning mail train for Birmingham. To the unoccupied observer the scene might have been an amusing one—the little domestic incidents of leave taking and embracing—the careful looking after luggage and parcels—the watchful anxieties for a lost cloak, or a stray carpet-bag, blending with the affectionate farewells of parting, are all curious, while the studious preparations for comfort of the old gentleman in the coupe, oddly contrast with similar arrangements on a more limited scale by the poor soldier's wife in the third class carriage.

Small as the segment of humanity is, it is a type of the great world to which it belongs.

I sauntered carelessly along the boarded terrace, investigating, by the light of the guard's lantern, the inmates of the different carriages, and, calling to my assistance my tact as a physiognomist as to what party I should select for my fellow-passengers—"not in there, assuredly," said I to myself, as I saw the aquiline noses and dark eyes of two Hamburgh Jews; "nor here, either—I cannot stand a day in a nursery; nor will this party suit me, that old gentleman is snoring already; and so I walked on until at last I bethought me of an empty carriage, as at least possessing negative benefits, since positive ones were denied me. Scarcely had the churlish determination seized me, when the glare of the light fell upon the side of a bonnet of white lace, through whose transparent texture a singularly lovely profile could be seen. Features, purely Greek in their character, tinged with a most delicate colour, were defined by a dark mass of hair, worn in a deep band along the cheek almost to the chin. There was a sweetness, a look of guileless innocence, in the character of the face which, even by the fitting light of the lantern, struck me strongly. I made the guard halt, and peeped into the carriage as if seeking for a friend. By the uncertain flickering, I could detect the figure of a man, apparently a young one, by the lady's side; the carriage had no other traveller.

"This will do," thought I, as I opened the door, and took my place on the opposite side. Every traveller knows that locomotive must precede conversation; the veriest commonplace cannot be hazarded, till the piston is in motion, or the paddles are flapping. The word "go on," is as much for the passengers as the vehicle, and the train and the tongues are set in movement together; as for myself, I have been long upon the road, and might travelest the words of our native poet, and say—

"My home is on the highway."

I have therefore cultivated, and I trust, with success, the tact of divining the characters, condition, and rank of my fellow travellers—the speculation on whose peculiarities, has often served to wile away the tediousness of many a wearisome road, and many an uninteresting journey.

The little lamp which hung aloft, gave me but slight opportunity of prosecuting my favourite study on this occasion. All that I could trace, was the outline of a young and delicately formed girl, enveloped in a cashmere shawl—a slight and inadequate muffling for the road in such a season. The gentleman at her side was attired in what seemed a dress coat, nor was he provided with any other defence against the cold of the morning.

Scarcely had I ascertained these two facts, when the lamp flared, flickered, and went out leaving me to speculate on these vague, but yet remarkable traits in the couple before me, "What can they be?" "who are they?" "where do they come from?" "where are they going?" were all questions which naturally presented themselves to me in turn; yet every inquiry resolved itself into one, "why has she not a cloak? why has not he got a Petersham?" Long and patiently did I discuss these points with myself, and framed numerous hypotheses to account for the circumstance—but still with comparatively little satisfaction, as objections presented themselves to each conclusion; and although, in turn, I had made him a runaway clerk from Court's, a Liverpool actor, a member of the swell-mob, and a bag-man—yet I could not, for the life of me, include her in the category of such an individual's companions. Neither spoke, so that from their voices, that best of all tests, nothing could be learned.

Wearied by my doubts, and worried by the interruption to my sleep the early rising necessitated, I fell soon into a sound doze, lulled by the soothing "strains" a locomotive so eminently is endowed with. The tremulous quavering of the carriage, the dull roll of the heavy wheels, the convulsive beating and heaving of the black monster itself, gave the tone to my sleeping thoughts, and my dreams were of the darkest. I thought that, in a gloomy silence, we were journeying over a wild and trackless plain, with no sign nor sound of man, save such as accompanied our sad procession; that dead and leafless trees were grouped about, and roofless dwellings and blackened walls marked the dreary earth; dark sluggish streams stole heavily past, with noisome weeds upon their surface, while along the sedge banks sat leopards and glossy reptiles, glaring with round eyes, upon us. Suddenly, it seemed as if our speed increased; the earth and sky flew

faster past, and objects became dim and indistinct; a misty maze of dark plain, and clouded heaven, were all I could discern; while straight in front, by the lurid glare of the fire, whose sparks flitted round and about, two dark shapes danced a wild and goblin measure, tossing a black limb with frantic gesture, while they brandished in their hands bars of seething iron; one, larger, and more dreadful than the other, sung in a "ranque" voice, that sounded like the clank of machinery, a rude song, beating time with his iron bar. The monotonous measure of the chant, which seldom varied in its note, sank deep into my chilled heart—and I think I hear it still.

THE SONG OF THE STOKER.

Rake, rake, rake,
Ashes, cinders, and coal;
The fire we make,
Must never slake,
Like the fire that roasts a soul.

Hurrah! my boys, 'tis a glorious noise,
To list to the stormy main;
But, nor wave-lash'd shore,
Nor lion's roar,
E'er equall'd a luggage train.

'Neath the panting sun, our course we run,
No water to slake our thirst;
Nor ever a pool,
Our tongue to cool,
Except the boiler burst.

The courser fast, the trumpet blast,
Sigh after us in vain;
And, even the wind,
We leave behind.

With the speed of a special train,
Swift we pass o'er the wild moor-
Tho' the night be starless and black;
Onward we go,
Where the snipe flies low,
Nor man dares follow our track.

A mile a minute, on we go,
Hurrah for my courser fast;
His coal black mane,
And his fiery train,
And his breath—a furnace blast.

On and on, till the day is gone,
We rush with a goblin scream;
And the cities, at night,
They start, with affright,
At the cry of escaping steam.

Bang, bang, bang!

Shake, shiver, and throb;
The sound of our feet,
Is the piston's beat,
And the opening valve our sob!

Our union jack is the smoke-train black,
That thick from the funnel rolls;
And our bounding bark,
Is a gloomy ark,
And our cargo—our human souls.

Rake, rake, rake;

Ashes, cinders, and coal;
The fire we make,
Must never slake,
Like the fire that roasts a soul.

"Bang, bang, bang," said I aloud, repeating this infernal "refrain," and with an energy that made my two fellow-passengers burst out laughing. This awakened me from my sleep, and enabled me to throw off the fearful incubus which rested on my bosom; so strongly, however, was the image of my dream—so vivid the picture my mind had conjured up—and stranger than all, so perfect was the memory of the demoniac song, that I could not help relating the whole vision, and repeating for my companions the words, as I have here done for the reader. As I had proceeded in my narrative, I had ample time to observe the couple before me. The lady, for it is but suitable to begin with her, was young, she could scarcely have been more than twenty—and looked, by the broad daylight, even handsomer than by the glare of the guard's lantern; she was slight, but as well as I could observe, her figure was very gracefully formed, and with a decided air of elegance, detectable even in the ease and repose of her attitude. Her dress was of pale blue silk, around the collar of which she wore a profusion of rich lace, of what peculiar loom, I am, unhappily, unable, to say—nor would I allude to the circumstance, save that it formed one of the most embarrassing problems in my efforts at divining her rank and condition; never was there such a travelling costume, and although it suited well the frail and delicate beauty of the wearer, it ill accorded with the dingy "convenience" in which we journeyed—even to her shoes and stockings, for I noticed these—the feet were perfect—and gloves; all the details of her dress had a freshness and propriety one rarely or ever sees encountering the wear and tear of the road. The young gentleman at her side—for he, too, was scarcely more than five and twenty, at most—was also attired in a costume as little like that of a traveller—a dress coat and evening waistcoat, over which a profusion of chains were festooned in that mode so popular in our day, showed that he certainly, in arranging his costume, had other thoughts than of waisting such attractions on the desert air of a railroad journey. He

was a good-looking young fellow, with that mixture of frankness and careless ease the youth of England so eminently possess, in contradistinction to the young men of other countries; his manner and voice both attested that he belonged to a good class; and the general courtesy of his demeanour showed one who had lived in society.

While he evinced an evident desire to enter into conversation and amuse his companion, there was still an appearance of agitation and uncertainty about him, which showed that his mind was wandering very far from the topic before him. More than once he checked himself, in the course of some casual merriment, and became suddenly grave—while, from time to time, he whispered to the young lady, with an appearance of anxiety and eagerness, all his endeavours could not effectually conceal. She, too, seemed agitated—but, I thought, less so than he; it might be, however, that from the habitual quietude of her manner, the traits of emotion were less detectable by a stranger. We had not journeyed far, when several new travellers entered the carriage, and thus broke up the little intercourse which had begun to be established between us. The new arrivals were amusing enough in their way—there was a hearty old Quaker from Leeds, who was full of a dinner party he had been at with Feargus O'Connor, the day before; there was an interesting young fellow who had obtained a fellowship at Cambridge, and was going down to visit his family; and lastly, a loud talking, loud laughing member of the tail, in the highest possible spirits at the prospect of Irish politics, and exulting in the festivities he was about to witness at Derrynane Abbey, whither he was then proceeding with some other Danadies, to visit, what Tom Steele calls, "his august leader." My young friends, however, partook little in the amusement the newly arrived travellers afforded; they neither relished the broad, quaint, common sense of the Quaker—the conversational cleverness of the Cambridge man—or the pungent, though somewhat coarse drollery of the "Emerald." They sat either totally silent or conversing in a low indistinct murmur, with their heads turned towards each other. The Quaker left us at Warwick—the "Fellow" took his leave soon after—and the O' somebody was left behind at a station; the last thing I heard of him, being his frantic shouting as the train moved off, while he was endeavoring to swallow a glass of hot brandy and water. We were alone then once more, but somehow the interval which had occurred had chilled the warm current of our intercourse; perhaps, too, the effects of a long day's journey were telling on us all, and we felt that indisposition to converse which steals over the most habitual traveller towards the close of a day on the road. Partly from these causes, and more strongly still from my dislike to obtrude conversation upon those whose minds were evidently pre-occupied, I too lay back in my seat, and indulged my own reflections in silence. I had sat for some time thus, I know not exactly how long, when the voice of the young lady struck on my ear; it was one of those sweet, silver sounds which somehow when heard, however slightly, have the effect at once to dissipate the dull routine of one's own thoughts, and suggest others more relative to the speaker.

"Had you not better ask him?" said she; "I am sure he can tell you." The youth apparently demurred, while she insisted the more, and at length, as if yielding to her entreaty, he turned suddenly towards me, and said, "I'm a perfect stranger here, and would feel obliged if you could inform me which is the best hotel in Liverpool." He made a slight pause, and added, "I mean a quiet family hotel." "I rarely stop in the town myself," replied I; "but when I do, to breakfast or dine, I take the Adelphi; I'm sure you'll find it very comfortable."

They again conversed for a few moments together, and the young man, with an appearance of some hesitation, said, "Do you mean to go there now, sir?"

"Yes," said I; "my intention is to take a hasty dinner before I start in the steamer for Ireland; I see by my watch I shall have ample time to do so, as we shall arrive full half an hour before our time."

Another pause, and another little discussion ensued, the only words of which I could learn from the young lady, being, "I'm certain he will have no objection." Conceiving that I referred to myself, and guessing the import, I immediately said, "If you will allow me to be your guide, I shall feel most happy to show you the way; we can obtain a carriage at the station, and proceed thither at once."

I was right in my surmise—both parties were profuse in their acknowledgments—the young man avowing that it was the very request he was about to make when I anticipated him. We arrived in due time at the station, and having assisted my new acquaintances to alight, I found little difficulty in placing them in a carriage, for luggage they had none, neither portmanteau nor carpet-bag—not even a dressing-case—a circumstance at which, however, I might have endeavored to avoid expressing my wonder, they seemed to feel required an explanation at their hands; both looked confused and abashed—nor was it until by busying myself in the details of my own baggage, that I was enabled to relieve them from the embarrassment the circumstance occurred.

"Here we are," said I; "this is the Adelphi," as we stopped at the comfortable and hospitable portal, through which fumes of brown gravy and ox-tail float with a savoury odour, as pleasant to him who enters with dinner intentions, as it is tantalizing to the listless wanderer without.

The lady thanked me with a smile, as I handed her into the house, and a very sweet

smile too, and one I could have fancied the young man would have felt a little jealous if I had not seen the ten times more fascinating one she bestowed on him.

The young man acknowledged my slight service with thanks, and made a half gesture shake hands at parting, which though a faint I rather liked an evidencing, even in its awkwardness, a kindness of disposition—for it is. Gratitude smacks poorly when expressed in a trim and measured phrase—it seems the natural coinage of the heart, when the expression betrays too clearly the mint of the mind.

"Good bye," said I, as I watched their tiring figures up the wide staircase. "She is devilish pretty—and what a good figure—I do not think that any other that a French woman could adjust her shawl in that fashion." As with these very soothing reflections I bent myself to the coffee room, and soon was in discussing the distinctive merits of mutton, tawny, mock-turtle, and mutton chops, or listening to that everlasting poem every man in England sings in praise of the "joint."

[To be continued.]

From the Dublin University Magazine.

WELCOME TO AUTUMN.

BY J. T. OUSELY.

Spring has departed, fair Summer has fled,
Autumn uplifts his luxuriant head;

With a wreath of green
And orange between
The thin leaves of gold,
And yellow, that fold
His bright auburn hair;
Whilst his breast so fair,
Like a hard pressed doe
Beateeth to and fro,

As his eyes, twin stars in a pale blue sky,
Twinkle and flash, and in brilliancy die;
And his scentless breath,
A calm, living death,
Doth fan, with a chill,
Each valley and hill;
And he sings his lay
In a cadence gay,

Though the last deep tone
Is a parting moan;
Yet looks he all life, and glitters as gay
As a pansy's breast in the month of May!

Now his robe is dim, and the gorgeous hue
Is a faded hope that the heart doth rue—
As glories appear
When viewed through a tear,
Or a blushing bride,
Subdued in her pride,
The fond moment past,
The brightest—the last!
See colours arise
In heavenly dyes—

Ha! now they dissolve like stars that expire,
And melt in the blaze of the Day-god's fire.
Like adolphin's throes,
When its life breath flows;
Or a meteor's flash,
Or a wavelet's dash;
Like a rainbow's span,
When the sun grows wan;
He's bright, and then gone
To his darksome home—

Yet is he more lovely in death to view,
Then Midsummer's zenith of gold and blue.
He is dying now!—shall we weep? Ah no!
Let's bury him deep in the taintless snow!

With warm, laughing eyes,
And melt with their light
Th' unstained shroud from sight;
And Summer come down
With her Iris crown,
To pant in her bowers,
Mid music from flowers;

Again, yes again, shall Autumn arise,
And flash his full robe of orient dyes.
In a pangsless sleep
To his grave he'll creep—
Like a sun-touched cloud,
Is his veily shroud;
Or an echo sweet,
In a pearl's retreat—
He fainteth with pain
To revive again;

Ha! ha! we rejoice—wherefore should we weep,
Or awaken his eyes from dreamless sleep?

From Ainsworth's Magazine.

THE MAN WITH A GRIEVANCE.

"Here he is. Come this way; turn about the corner—that will do; he's gone by." "Here he comes! But he doesn't go by; no, push on; all right—I breathe again." "By Jupiter, he is bearing down upon us with full sail—there's no avoiding this time. Here he comes, and it is all over with me."