

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

THE WILDING FLOWER.

BY CHARLES H. HITCHINGS.

Yes, lady, yes!—the flower you prize
Without the garden's culture grew;
No flattering gaze of fostering eyes
O'erwatched its draught of morning dew.
So rude the place it called its bed,
You scarce had deigned to wander there
No smooth-shorn turf to tempt the tread,
No fountain fresh, no rich parterre:

But cold bleak rocks on every side,
Where blustering winds exert their force;
And one bleak stream whose boisterous tide
Rolled on with murmurs deep and hoarse.
No welcome tree with outstretched boughs,
Gave shelter from the biting blast;
But darksome caves, and sunken sloughs
Beneath a low sky overcast.

Yet strong the hardy youngling grew;
Though nursed not by the hand of art,
Fed by the simple morning dew.
There in the waste land's wildest part;
Nor grown, nor plucked, nor prized in vain
If, lady, thou the gift receive;
And with the flower consent to gain
The healthful truth it aims to give.

Nature all aid of art disdains,
And vindicates her power divine
When thus, on rude and rugged plains,
She makes her fairest offspring shine;
Nor is there in the world so wide,
Search where thou wilt, a single spot,
Whate'er the garden's boastful pride,
In nature's love remembered not.

The storm may beat, the lightning rend,
Yet 'midst their very stir and strife,
It that her power kind Nature lend,
The rock-born flower may spring to life,
As in the painter's battle-scene,
Beside the blaze, her charm bestows
Of youthful red and healthful green,
A simple solitary rose.

And lady, learn a deeper truth—
No heart throughout creation beats,
Of hardened age or erring youth,
But deep within its close retreats,
In still seclusion, haply lie
Fair germs of many a gentle flower;
That lack but fostering sympathy
To spring the bright ones of the hour.

It was an erring sister's hand
The dying youth relieved, sustained—
Held back life's well-nigh ebbing sand,
When scarce the power of life remained—
Shut self from sigh! and gave its all,
While virtue passed uncaring by:
Angels forgot her woman's fall
That marked her woman's charity!

Ah, lady, lady! happy thou,
Whose blessed youth no stain hath known
The tablet of whose virgin brow
God's love hath marked for virtue's own!
Whose gentle bosom hour by hour
His watchful angels keep with care;
Warming to life each waking flower,
That each may blossom kindly there.

Scorn not thy fallen sister's heart,
Whose rocky soil, whose bitter clime—
Like yonder waste land's wildest part,
Cold 'e'en in summer's fostering prime—
Seems desert all. One seed may still,
Nursed in some sympathetic hour,
Spring up from that ungentle well,
As fair as this—thy Wilding Flower,

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

FANCHON.

'MICHEL,' said old Blaise Pastoror one day to his son, 'I wish I could see you lifting up your head a little, and thinking of taking another wife.'

Michael, instead of lifting up his head only shook it very sadly.

'I know well what a loss you experienced in Marguerite,' continued the father, 'and I understand your feelings. But it is now two years since she died, and it is time you began to arouse yourself from this unavailing grief. Your children are of an age to need a mother's care; my wife is growing old like myself, and she is not equal to the fatigue of looking after the young ones; and when they choose to run away from her to the edge of the pond, or under the horses' feet, she can't overtake them.'

'What you say is true enough, father,' answered Michel; 'but where shall I get a wife like Marguerite?'

'There is no telling till you try,' answered Blaise. 'Marguerite was a good wife, a good mother, and an excellent woman in every respect; but it would be hard to think there are no more such left in the world! And I am certain if she could speak to you from heaven, where no doubt she is, that she would give you the advice I am giving you. Suppose your mother were to die, who is to care of your children when you are out about the farm?'

'Well, father, I'll think of it,' said Michel. 'But I know no woman. Where am I to look for a wife? If you wish me to take one choose for me yourself.'

'Why,' said Blaise, 'there are several things to think of. First, you must not marry a very young woman; she will be thoughtless, and perhaps neglect your children.'

'And if she's older, she may illtreat them,' said Michel. 'For what I see they are as likely to suffer by my giving them a mother as by wanting one.'

'We must be cautious in our choice,' answered Blaise. 'But God be thanked good women are more plentiful than bad ones, everywhere.'

'That's true,' answered Michel. 'I dare say Pauline, or Louise Medoc, or little Catharine Sylvestre, would either of them do well enough.'

'Too young,' said the old man, shaking his head, 'and too poor.'

'Young they certainly are, and poor too,' said Michel; 'but I shouldn't like to marry an old woman, and where I'm to find a rich one that will have me don't know.'

'I wouldn't recommend an old woman,' said Blaise; 'but one about your own age—eight or nine and twenty say; and as for money, if there's none in this parish, there may be in the next. What would you say to old Gerard's daughter, Isabel?'

'I have never seen her,' answered Michel.

'It's a good while since I saw her either,' said Blaise; 'but she was a fine looking girl then; and being an only daughter she will have everything her father leaves. That will be no trifle; and as he wishes to see her married—for she's nearly as old as you are—there will be no objection on his part at all events.'

'What! have you spoken to him on the subject?'

'Well to say the truth I have,' answered Blaise. 'When you saw me talking to him at the fair last week, he was remarking it was time you shook off your grief for poor Marguerite, more especially as you had been such a good husband, and had nothing to reproach yourself with.'

'Thank God for that,' said Michel.

'And when I said I wished I could see you married again, he gave me hints that he should not be sorry were you to take a fancy to his girl.'

'Well, father, she is the same to me as another, for I can never love any woman again as I loved my Marguerite; so, since you wish it, I'll think about this marriage with Isabel.'

'Thinking about it won't do: you must make her think about it too,' said Blaise, 'or somebody may step in before you. You must go and see her.'

'That will be a day to go, and a day to come back, and a day there,' said Michel; 'and how can I be spared just now in harvest time?'

'We must mind a day or two when there's a good while to be got,' answered Blaise. 'Besides to-morrow's Saturday. If you take the brown mare and start to-morrow afternoon, you'll be at Grandpre before night; and as there's a moon, it won't signify if you are a little late.'

So it was settled that Michel should go on the following day to Grandpre, to try if he could love Isabel Gerrard; but it was with a heavy heart he made his preparations, for love so formally invited is apt to be shy: Cupid likes to pay his visits when he is least expected.

On the same evening that this conversation took place, when the children were in bed, and the rest of the family were sitting round the hearth, there came in an old woman called Barbette, who lived in a poor hut on the borders of Blaise Pastoror's farm. Twice a week they gave her broth, and she was now come for her usual allowance.

'Sit down for a while and rest yourself, Barbette,' said Margot, farmer Pastoror's wife, 'and let us hear how the world goes with you.'

'Not much worse than with other people I believe,' answered Barbette; 'but I'm going to loose my daughter Fanchon.'

'How? Is she going to be married?' asked Margot.

'Married! Poor child who would marry her?' said Barbette. 'No, no, but she's going to Grandpre. I've got a situation for her there at farmer Gerrard's. It's a hard thing to part with her; but she must go to service some time; and the winter will be here soon, and if she can earn a little money she will be able to help me through it.'

'She's such a little creature that we forget her age,' said Margot; 'but the truth is it is time she went to service. If she stays at home she may get habits of idleness.'

'No fear of that,' answered Barbette. 'I believe Fanchon would rather go down on her knees and scrub the stones in the high road than be doing nothing. She'll be a treasure to anybody that gets her I can tell you; and I only wish you could take her into your service.'

'Perhaps we may another year,' said Margot; 'but in the meantime it will be a good thing for her to go to Grandpre. Gerard keeps a good house, and she will improve herself there. When does she leave you?'

'She's to be there to-morrow,' answered Barbette; 'but it's a long way for a young woman to go alone.'

'She needn't go alone,' said Blaise. 'Michel is going to-morrow to Grandpre, and he shall take charge of her; and by the by, added he, as Fanchon is going to live with friend Gerard, she may do us a good turn; and thereupon he communicated to Barbette his hopes of bringing about a marriage between Michel and Isabel, begging that, as Fanchon was well acquainted with them all, she would say a good word for the family in general, and for his son in particular.'

'She may do that with a clear conscience,' said Barbette; 'for happy'll be the man that

calls Michel Pastoror husband. I'll speak to her about it, and, depend on it he won't miss his mark if they'll take Fanchon's bail for him.'

Michel who had been pacing up and down the orchard, thinking seriously of what was before him, now came in, and having learned the destination of Fanchon, he consented willingly to escort her. Accordingly, on the ensuing afternoon, the little damsel presented herself at the stable door with a small bundle in her hand ready for the road; and having mounted behind the young farmer, they started on their journey with the good wishes of the assembled family. It was the first time she left her poor home, and her old mother, and the young girls of her own age that she had grown up with; and whilst Michel jogged along, his mind absorbed in his own troubles, the tears were streaming down her face as she thought of those she was leaving, and the strangers she was going among. All at once Michel became aware that she was weeping.

'What's the matter, little Fanchon?' said he.

'I'm thinking of home and my poor mother,' said she, endeavoring to restrain the flowing tears.

'Ah,' said Michel, 'it makes one's heart sad to leave those we love if its only for a short time, for one never feels sure of seeing them again. Who could have thought, when I left my poor Marguerite to go to Rouen for two days, that she would be dead before my return. And that puts me in mind that I didn't see my little Lep when I came away: where could he be I wonder?'

'I saw him in the morning running along the high road,' said Fanchon: 'I thought you had sent him a message perhaps.'

'No, I didn't,' answered Michel; 'but my mother may, to keep him out of the way, for he wanted sadly to come with me to Grandpre.'

'And why not have brought him?' said Fanchon. 'He's no weight, and the mare could have carried us all three; besides I could walk a good part of the way. I love little Lep, and I should like to have him here with us.'

'Why, I wished to bring him, but my father said it wouldn't do to go courting with a child at my back. But I'm talking of what you know nothing about.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Fanchon, 'I know all about it. I know you're going to marry the rich farmer's daughter that's to be my mistress.'

'Then you know much more than I do,' answered Michel. 'She may not choose to have me.'

'Why shouldn't she have you?' said Fanchon. 'Didn't you make a good husband to Marguerite? You're well off too, and as young as she is.'

'But taen I have three children,' said Michel.

'So much the better; it will make the merrier home. Besides, an't they the prettiest children in the whole parish, and the best brought up? For my part I think the very sight of little Lep would have won her heart at once.'

'Aye, if she likes children; but suppose she doesn't?'

'Pooh, if she doesn't like children she won't like to marry you; so there will be an end to it. But they say she's rich and handsome, and I never heard an ill word spoken of her; so you're wrong to take up notions before you reason.'

'I tell you what, Fanchon,' said Michel, 'you are sharp and quick, and you are going to live at her father's house. After you have been there a week or two, you must tell me what you think of her.'

'No,' answered Fanchon, 'I can't promise that. I might make a mistake, and so do mischief! Just as she said this the mare shied.'

'What's that?' she asked.

'It's some animal in the bush,' answered Michel: 'a lamb perhaps.'

'It's a child,' said Fanchon. 'Why it's your little Lep, I declare, and he's fast asleep too.'

'So it is,' said Michel, alighting from the mare. 'To think of the child being here alone, so far from home!'

When the boy opened his large eyes he was amazed; for his father having refused to take him to Grandpre, he set off some hours before with the intention of watching on the road till Michel passed, and thus gaining his object; but weary with walking he sat down and fell asleep, and now being suddenly awakened he could not remember how he came there. Michel was angry, for he neither liked to leave the boy there nor take him to Grandpre, and while he scolded, Lep cried. However, Fanchon siding with Lep, the youngster carried the day, and Michel placing him on the saddle before him, on they went.

The child was so delighted at first that he forgot he had had no dinner, but they had not gone far before the jogging of the horse reminded him of his hunger.

'Didn't I tell you so,' said Michel impatiently. 'What's to be done now? I don't see a house where one could get a mouthful of bread for miles round.'

'Don't fret said Fanchon, quietly opening her bundle; I've got a bit of bread and cheese here. Take it, Lep, and eat it.'

Lep did not require to be twice invited; but Michel said, 'what will you do for yourself, Fanchon, without anything till we get to Grandpre? We have a long way to go yet.'

'Oh, said Fanchon, 'young stomachs can wait; besides grief at leaving my poor mother

has spoiled my appetite, and I do not want anything.'

The next thing that happened was, that as soon as Lep's stomach was full, he became so sleepy that he was like to fall off the mare, and Michel could not guide her, and at the same time hold the child and a bag of game, which his father had given him as a present to his intended; but Fanchon said:

'Give me the game bag, and I'll tie it to my bundle, and then you can sling them on before you while I carry little Lep in my arms.'

So on they jogged in this way some miles further, till they reached a wood they had to pass through; and by this time it was getting late, and though the moon was rising, there arose also such a thick mist, that they could not find their way, while the horse frequently stumbled over the broken branches and stumps of trees. After trying first one path and then another, and always finding they were wrong, Fanchon proposed that they should alight and walk.

'Being nearer the ground,' said she, 'we may perhaps make out where we are; and while you lead the mare, I'll take care of the child.'

As the wood was intersected here and there by ditches and ponds, they were in less danger on their feet than on horseback, and they got on for some time without accident; but on reaching at length a spot where the thicket terminated, they found themselves on the edge of a large marsh, which Michel knew to be in an opposite direction to the road should have gone. So they turned back again and made another attempt, but with no better success; and to add to their misfortunes, whilst Michel was seeking for his hat, which the branch of a tree knocked off his head, the mare slipped the bridle from his hand and ran off.

'What's to be done now?' cried he. 'The child can walk no further, and I'm afraid to leave you here while I go after the mare, lest I should not be able to find you again; and if we stay here all night the child will get his death, and you too, with the cold. Besides I'm by no means sure there may not be a wolf or two hereabouts.'

'We must light a fire,' said Fanchon. 'Here's a large oak which will keep off the rain, and I feel plenty of dry sticks crackling under my feet; and then we must make a bed for the boy, and let him sleep till the mist clears off.'

'That's easily said,' said Michel; 'but where are we to get fire? And the mare has run off with my saddle bags and everything we had to make a bed with.'

'I've my tinder box in my pocket,' said Fanchon, as she set briskly to work to gather sticks; and we must clear a dry spot and wrap him up in my cloak.'

'And what's to become of you without it?' cried Michel.

'The fire will warm me, and I can keep myself awake,' she answered; 'but the child can't, and he'll get his death if we don't take care of him.'

It is astonishing what resources there are in a well disposed, active, good tempered woman, and how helpless in certain emergencies a man is beside her. Fanchon had a good blazing fire and a bed of dry leaves under the oak ready for Lep in no time; when she wrapped him in her cloak and covered her own bundle had slipped off the mare as she kicked up her heels and ran off.

'You must keep up the fire,' said she, 'while I watch the child lest sparks should reach him.'

'Upon my word you're a capital little lass,' said Michel. 'You know how to take care of a child, and to make a fire in the wood, and do everything that's useful. I was beginning to feel cross, I can't tell you at the thought of passing the night here in the cold air.'

'And when one looses one's temper generally looses one's presence of mind too,' said Fanchon. 'For my part I've often been obliged to keep the sheep on the hills in cold weather, and I should have been badly off if I hadn't known how to make a fire.'

'What you say about loosing one's temper is true enough,' answered Michel; 'but how to help it when things go so perversely?'

'Just remember that losing your temper will only make them worse,' said Fanchon. 'My mother and I have had many a hard struggle, but we never lost heart until it came to the parting day; but your mother says she'll perhaps hire me next year if I learn to be a good servant at Grandpre; so I shall keep up my courage and live in hopes of seeing dear home again.'

'I wish she had hired you at once,' said Michel, 'instead of sending me this wild-goose chase after a wife. You could have taken care of my children as well as any wife.'

As Michel sat with his knees towards the fire opposite Fanchon, he now for the first time in his life, as the light shone on her face, made the discovery that she was a pretty girl.

'How old are you, Fanchon?' he asked her.

'Eighteen; but I'm so little nobody takes me to be so old.'

'Why, you are old enough to be married,' said Michel.

'Ha, ha,' laughed she, 'who'd marry me I wonder?'

'That remains to be seen. Have you ever thought of a husband yet?'

'Never,' answered she, 'I'll never marry till I have a hundred crowns to begin house-keeping with.'