

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

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MY COUNTRY COUSIN.

BY MISS MARY E. THROPP.

CHAPTER I.

Though modest, on his unembarrassed brow Nature had written 'gentleman.'—BYRON.

'News, ladies, news!' said Frank Foster, putting his head into my parlor window, where a bevy of the young girls of the village had collected, one pleasant June morning, to discuss the events of the little party I had given them the evening before.

'What is it, Frank; what is it?' cried all in a breath. (Don't be shocked, my young fashionables, at this want of ceremony; remember, the young people of our village grew up together.)

'Why, there came a letter by mail, this morning, directed to ———, the distinguished American poet, at this place: besides, I heard through my cousin, Fred Foster, formerly his college chum, now his correspondent, that he intended spending a month in our village, a week ago; so you see we may expect him certainly—scarcely this week, as it is now Saturday, but soon, as he is already supposed to be here. Now ladies, I happen to know that he is young, single, good-looking, amiable; and, if I were not disposable myself, (a prize, as you all know, well worth securing), I should advise you to set your caps one and all without delay.'

'Come in Frank, do, and tell us all about him.'

'Not for the universe; I have but half a second left to reach the cars; I shall miss them if I remain here another moment. Oh, *les femmes! les femmes!* he who lingers is lost: let me resist temptation immediately. *Au revoir, ladies, au revoir!*' and, bowing gracefully, the gay young man turned away and walked down the street.

'Oh, Aunt Debbie,' said little Nell Thomson, 'what a pity we had our party so soon, if he had only come this week, instead of next!'

'Never mind, my dear; I will give you another.'

'You will! Oh girls! do you hear that? Aunt Debbie is going to give us another party.'

'Is she? Aro you Aunt Debbie? Oh, you darling woman! Thank you! thank you!' and they crowded around in their glee, thanking and caressing me.

'There, there, my children, that will do: Nelly my specs, dear, if you please; there, on that table. Thank you. Lucy will you gather up my sewing? you have overturned my work basket. See what you have done, Maggie; you have drawn the needles out of my stockings.'

'Oh, pardon, pardon, Aunt Debbie; but when shall we have the party?'

'When? week after next; we will decide on the evening, between this and that time.'

'You will invite the poet?'

'Oh, of course.'

'Let me see: I'll wear my salmon colored silk, it is so becoming to me,' said the handsome Helen Houston.

'I'll wear my blue barege,' said little Lucy Nelson; 'it's so delicate, it suits my complexion exactly.'

'We will order new dresses of pale pink satin,' said the elder of the two proud Sherwood sisters, 'and brother Tom will make the poet's acquaintance, and invite him home to dinner.'

'And what will the little Annie wear?' said I, bending down to the sweet but silent girl on the footstool at my feet; 'you will wish to captivate also?'

'As for clothes, my worldly effects are something like Ichabod Crane's, portable in a pocket handkerchief; and, as I have no means of enhancing their value at present, I must e'en make the best of matters: but as to captivating the poet, Aunt Debbie would you have me try?'

'I would have you try to fulfil your promise to spend a few weeks with me, now that I have this party to get up; besides, I have a country cousin coming to visit me next week, whom I should like you to help me entertain.'

'Oh, with pleasure; and I can come very well, now that my aunt is staying with us. Mother will not miss me while Aunt Ellison is with her.'

'That's a dear obliging girl! Now don't disappoint me; I shall depend on you.'

Soon after, the girls left, and after arranging the room, I set about taking up the dropped stitches of my unfortunate stocking, thinking the while of Annie Logan. You shall know more about her, my reader; but first I must premise that, although all the young folks of the village call me Aunt Debbie, I have no earthly right to that title, as I was an only child, and am now a 'maiden lady,' so far advanced in years that I do not like to publish them. I have a cousin, however, a young cousin, which is 'a host in himself.' Excuse me, my reader, that neither you nor my young friends in the village are to know more about him at present. I never boast, my reader, either of relations or acquaintances, never knowing that where boasting is used, it is needed; though I confess to being somewhat egotistical just now: so let me return from the snow of age to the

bloom of youth; to one elegant in manner, cultivated in intellect, noble in principle, and beautiful in thought, feeling, and expression—my little favorite, Annie Logan. She was poor, in the estimation of the world, being the only daughter of a widowed mother, who was obliged to keep a boarding house, and having to teach music for her own maintenance; nevertheless, in all that makes a woman intrinsically valuable, she was rich abundantly rich.

I had taken up all the stitches, folded up my nearly finished stocking, and run the needles through the ball of yarn, when I heard the long, shrill warning whistle of the returning cars. It reminded me of Mr Cutters' 'Song of Steam,' and, as I sat repeating to myself that most beautiful lyric, I felt a slight tap on my shoulder, and turning quickly round, beheld my cousin, carpet bag in hand. My only living relation! Did he ever appear so handsome to any one as he did to me that morning, when, the first greeting over, I had time to observe him! to watch the ever-varying expression of his fine eyes, and to admire the rich chestnut hair waving over the white, magnificently developed forehead! I had not seen him since my removal from the country to this village ten years ago, and he was then a quiet, diffident youth, preparing for college. Now, as I sat talking with him, I could not help mentally exclaiming, again and again—How much improved he is! and what a splendid specimen of manhood.

That evening, after he had drawn my easy chair to the centre table and placed a footstool under my feet, he seated himself opposite, remarking how homelike and peaceful my little parlour seemed, with its bright light and cheerful fire, to him, who had so long been deprived of the blessings and comforts of home. I sent for my knitting, and we spent a pleasant evening together, my cousin and I, enjoying a conversation frank in character, cheering in tone, and rich in old memories.

CHAPTER II.

She to heigher hopes

Was destined. AKENSIDE.

'Deborah,' said my aristocratic old friend, Mrs Featherstonough, at the conclusion of her last long letter, 'I have determined to let Florence remain one more winter at the north, in order to perfect herself in music and the languages; and, as it is neither pleasant nor desirable that she should come so far south in midsummer for a few weeks I should like to have her spend her vacation with you. You will take good care of my daughter, my true friend, and will be a watchful guardian, I trust. I do not wish to have her make any new acquaintances.—You know well that, although an American, I am no lover of democracy, and I particularly dislike the present levelling system of society. Besides, I have bestowed so much care and expense on Florence that I anticipate a brilliant *debut* for her next winter in our own city. I am confident that she will be the belle of the season. Pardon a mother's ambition, dear Deborah, and forgive me my 'illiberal views,' as you used to do in 'auld lang syne.' If, as Bulwer asserts, our opinions are the angel part of our nature, I fear you will not give much for mine. Nevertheless, I feel assured that, for the sake of our old friendship, you will regard the trust and value the attachment of

Your sincere friend,

FRANCES FEATHERSTONOUGH.

'P. S. Please insist upon Florence's wearing a sun bonnet whenever she goes out.'

'Poor Fanny I thought I, as I refolded the letter; as narrow minded and conservative as ever.' But there are excuses for her, my reader; though an American, as she says, by birth, she was of English parentage and education, and had married a wealthy friend and countryman of her father's, who was as strenuous a royalist as himself. I could not help smiling at the postscript: Did she wish the sun bonnet to protect her daughter's fair face from the sun or from the admiring gaze of our little village beaux?

This letter was soon followed by Miss Featherstonough, who came a few days after my cousin's arrival. I had never seen her before, and when she threw back the long thick green veil that almost enveloped her whole person, I could not but acknowledge that her appearance justified her mother's worldly expectations. She was tall, slender and stately in figure; *distingue*, and at the same time fascinating in manner; but when she removed the close travelling bonnet, and I saw the whole contour of her most perfect Grecian features, her large lustrous eyes, and her magnificent dark hair, parted smoothly on the centre of her forehead, brushed back, and gathered into soft shining folds at the back of her head, I stood looking at her like one entranced. Never in my life had I seen any one so beautiful, so superb! Recovering myself, I led the way to the apartment prepared for her, and, as she employed herself in various little matters, I could not help following her with my eyes. I was charmed. Well might her proud fond mother say, 'My Florence moves like a queen!' Miss Featherstonough was somewhat fatigued with her journey, and I left her to rest awhile previous to preparing for dinner. My cousin was out rambling in the woods when she came, but I had the pleasure of presenting him at dinner. I saw by his animated manner that he was as much pleased as myself with this new and delightful acquisition to our family.

Miss Featherstonough was rather reserved during the first and second days of her visit; but, owing partly to the simple unceremonious customs of my household, and much more

to the really polite and engaging deportment of my cousin, she began to unbend, and soon accommodated herself to our mode of living perfectly. Towards the close of the second evening I opened the piano, and requested her to play. She complied immediately, and played skillfully and well, with taste, beauty, and feeling. She sang too; and as the fine full tones of her voice floated through the apartment, my cousin joined in, and I, charmed and thrown off my guard by the softening influence of the music, commenced also; but as my poor old cracked voice did anything but add to the melody, I soon desisted, not a little discomfited. But my kind thoughtful cousin insisted upon my singing 'Home, Sweet Home' with them, and one or two other old tunes, before we retired.

Next morning, as I had an engagement, my cousin proposed a ride on horseback to Miss Featherstonough, which she accepted with pleasure, and soon made her appearance in an elegant blue riding habit, black velvet cap, and white plumes. Miss Featherstonough certainly understood the art of dressing well: she could not have selected a more becoming costume. I saw my cousin regard her with evident admiration when he entered to say that all was in readiness. I watched them mount from the piazza, and as they rode off, gracefully bowing their adieu, I could not help building an 'air castle' for them entirely at variance with friend Fanny's injunctions. During their absence, to my great delight, Annie Logan arrived. The sweet girl, there is such an undefinable charm about her that her presence is always desirable. I took great pleasure in presenting Miss Featherstonough and my cousin to my little favorite when they returned. While the girls were changing their dresses, my cousin embraced the opportunity to ask me a few questions concerning Annie, adding that he did not care how many more ladies came, if they were all as charming an agreeable as Miss Featherstonough. I was about to sound him farther when the door opened, and Annie and Miss Featherstonough entered. My cousin arose and offered chairs; but before they had time to accept the dinner bell rang. Never was there a pleasanter dinner party, and never was their a happier household than mine during the week following. The girls drew or embroidered while my cousin read to them, in the mornings; after dinner, we walked, rode, or sailed; and in the evenings we had music, conversation, games, and very often visitors. I felt almost young again; my heart warmed and expanded in the genial spring like influence around me, and there came back over the waste of my existence a breath from the far off morning time.

CHAPTER III.

Here was the brow in trials unperplexed, That cheered the sad, and tranquilized the vexed.

Young, innocent, on whose sweet forehead

The parted ringlets shone in simplest guise.

CAMPBELL.

After breakfast one morning, when I had sent my cousin to arrange a little matter of business for me, I left Miss Featherstonough promenading in the piazza, and seen Annie seated in the parlor at her drawing, I went up to my room to write a letter. The windows were all open; and as I sat at my desk in the corner between a front and side window, collecting and arranging my thoughts, my eyes resting at intervals on the lovely landscape below, and the blue river winding its solitary way afar off, I heard little feet ascending the steps of the piazza, and then a childish voice supplicating in pitiful tones for a few pennies to buy some bread.

'Run away,' said Miss Featherstonough, 'run off home, little ragamuffin; no one encourages beggars here.'

I hastened to the window to see who it was, for I knew from the boy's earnest sorrowful tone, that he was in distress; and I knew also that nothing but real necessity would induce any one to beg in our village; but he was gone. Just then I heard the side door open, and going to the other window, I saw Annie come out and go to the child, who was crouching down close to the side of the house crying bitterly.

'There, there, my little man, don't cry so: here's a shilling to buy some bread, run off and get it as fast as you can. But wait; does not your mother live in the cottage by the old mill?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'And how is it that you are in need of bread?'

'Cos daddy got drunk, and Mr Miller wouldn't give him any more work, and mother was so sick she couldn't do any more washin.'

'What's your name, my man?'

'Tommy Dale.'

'Very well, Tommy; run away now and get the bread and take it home to your mother.'

Poor Fanny, thought I, as I ruminated over this incident, I fear she has thought more of the external than the internal, in forming her child's character. I was sorry that this affair had occurred. To be sure it was trifling in itself, and Florence was recently from a large city where there are so many mendicants.—such a want of charity in one so young impressed me unfavorably. I finished my letter and went down stairs. Miss Featherstonough and my cousin were engaged in an animated argument on the propriety and impropriety of acting from impulse when I entered the parlor, but Annie was absent. Some time after she came in, and I knew, from the radiant expression of her ingenious face, that Annie had been acting from the impulse of her

own good heart, and that the family by the 'old mill' had been relieved and comforted.—Towards evening, as we wandered through the cool shaded walks of my beautiful garden (I am very proud of my garden, reader, and with reason), Miss Featherstonough praised its plan, admired the arrangement of the beds, arbors, and shrubbery in her own peculiarly happy and graphic manner, which lent a charm to everything described not entirely its own, till I was quite delighted, and I felt heartily ashamed of myself for having harbored a thought detrimental to the beautiful being before me. My cousin listened approvingly while he busied himself in gathering and arranging bouquets for us. I noticed in the one he gave to Annie white roses, violets, heart's ease, and forget me not; but in Miss Featherstonough's I saw, among other symbolical flowers, myrtle, heliotrope, and red roses. As the evening was so charming, and it wanted still an hour of tea time, we concluded to extend our walk, Annie and I leading the way towards the river, my cousin and Miss Featherstonough following. Indeed it always happened, I scarcely knew how, that my cousin was Miss Featherstonough's companion, whether in riding, sailing, or walking. As we sauntered slowly along the banks of the river, enjoying the refreshing breeze and admiring the sunset, we saw at a short distance in front of us two little boys, the one fishing, and the other watching him. They were standing with their backs toward us, and, as we neared them every word they uttered sounded distinctly over the still water.

'Oh, Harry,' said the little watcher, 'if I only had a line like that, I'd be happy!'

'Well, Jim, why don't you get one? I only gave a sixpence for this at Smith's.'

'How can I, when I haint got the money? I've been at mother to get me one for weeks, and she says she haint got the money to spare.'

'Won't your father?'

'He don't come back from work at farmer Ripley's till Saturday night; but I don't believe he'd give it to me if he was home. I must jist go without. I never get anything I want, anyhow.'

'Come hither, my boy,' said Miss Featherstonough.

The child turned quickly round, somewhat startled at the presence of strangers, blushed, and obeyed confusedly.

'Will you get me some of those white flowers on the bank there?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

The little fellow ran to comply, and in a few minutes returned with a quantity of the flowers indicated. Miss Featherstonough took them, and put the desired sixpence in his hand.

'Oh, thankee! thankee, ma'am!' and the delighted boy bounded away to his companion to show him his treasure.

'How easy it is to give happiness to a child!' said Miss Featherstonough, her beautiful face reflecting the pleasure she had bestowed; 'would it were as easy to obtain it for ourselves!'

(To be continued.)

THE OLD BACHELOR IN PROSPECTIVE.

OR, AUNT KATTY'S LECTURE TO YOUNG KATE.

You don't see the signs! I hardly fancied you would. I did not suppose that your seventeen summers would have so ripened your preceptive faculties. You do not discover that Ned Woodhouselee is chiseled out of that 'perdurable stuff' which old bachelors are made, and that old Father Time, day by day, and year by year, is bridging out a capital specimen of his art. Well, go on! Set his brow, his hawk-like nose, I mean 'eyes, his curls, in your heart's table' as fairly as ever the poor Helena did, but do not think that your 'bright, particular star' will shine on you more favourably than did hers. Sway your jimmy waist, run your lily fingers over the melody answering, half melt him with the welcoming glances of those dark eyes, touch his mental taste by the pure and classic beauty of your thoughts, and his palate by your dainty little cookery—he will be a friendly, brotherly, parallel line, that will run beside you for any number of ages, nor come to the angel of Love and Proposal. He may become somewhat warmer, a great deal more agreeable, considerate for you, and quite 'eprix' with your society (for you are one of the best listeners I know), but I say, I, that Mr Woodhouselee will remain a bachelor to his dying day.

Your father thinks well of Ned! Your father's good opinion is worth having, but your father thinks of him only as a student. Compare the two—I do not mean your father's reverend locks and his jetty curls, or the slim, erect figure of the one and the feeble bend of the other—but contrast the rich, generous nature, the unsuspecting simplicity, of your dear parent, with the prosaic worldliness of his young pupil. An excellent pious man is our gentle pastor, a faithful shepherd of his docile flock. And much more than he dreams, in eloquence and ripe scholarship made mention of, and well did Ned Woodhouselee know this, and calculate the advantages to be derived from his training, and connexion with his name, when he came to finish his studies under our lowly poisonage roof. I think he finds it very pleasant here. He said he half regretted to spend his vacation away. (I am sure I do not know what he should have done with him while we were cleaning house.) He knows how to appreciate your father's learning, and your simple kindness, and my good housekeeping; he has, it is true, a very