Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Hogg's Edinburgh Instructor.

AN EXHAUSTED TOPIC.

THE COQUETTE.

From a far longer time than I can well remember, till within two years past, the Cleveland family were our next-door neighbours. Florence, the eldest daughter of the house, was a dear friend of mine, and I would not for the world make her the heroine of this story to-day, were it not for the following fact: two years ago, the whole family migrated to Wisconsin, and now that they are gone so far out of the world, I think no blame should be attached to me for giving her 'experiences' to the good public. Sure am I, that, buried as she is in the backwoods, she will never hear that I have seized upon her as a subject whereon to expatiate unless some of our travelling people prove so forgetful of themselves, and what is due to Flora and me, as to touch upon this topic when they meet her in the West.

Everybody said that Florence was a 'coquette' and admitting, as a settled thing, the idea that 'what everybody says must be true,' I suppose she was; that is, she was 'a gay, airy girl, fond of admiration,' and I will not deny that she may have exerted herself the least bit in the world to obtain it; but most indignantly do I repel the assertion that she was artful or designing, or that she ever regularly 'set a trap' to ensnare any human heart.

Florence, when she went from us, was of middle height, very fair, and her cheeks were the bloom of roses, her hair was of a light, glossy brown, and, oh, those beautiful ringlets! I can vouch for the truth of it, they never emerged from curl papers, (and by the way, how refreshing and pleasant, now-a-days, it is to see anything natural, even a paltry curl!). Then her eyes, 'peeply, divinely blue,' sometimes filled with a sober, tranquil, holy light, and again, dancing, beaming, and overflowing with joy and happiness.

Though Florence was the admiration of all eyes, and the beaux seemed really to have no appreciation of the presence of we poor insignificants when she was by, yet to not many of us did the 'green eyed monster' even whisper one bad, ungracious thought of her. We all loved her, and a sadder set never waited in our depot the arrival of the eastern train, than gathered there the day Mr Cleveland and family were to leave for a home in the 'far-west.'

There were some, indeed, who invariably honoured Florence with the title of 'coquette;' they had a way of closing their eyes, and sighing very sanctimoniously, whenever they heard of her new conquests: particularly may this apply to old Widow Forbes, who rejoiced in the possession of four grown up daughters; 'fixtures' most decidedly they were in her household, for these four were not in any way remarkable for possessions of any kind, and two of them had well nigh passed the third stage of woman's unmarried life. But by far the greater part of the villagers rejoiced in the presence of Florence Cleveland, as they would in a sunbeam on a dull day—she was always so cheerful, so generous, and obliging.

None of those sunny curls of hers were visible the day Florence set out on her journey. Perhaps you think that was because ladies do not usually travel with such appendages in view, and that they were snugly packed away in the back of her travelling hat. But had Florence's head been uncovered then, I fear me it would have borne terrible witness to the desecrating hands which had been busy about it; for the fairy little ringlets which had so long adorned the beautiful head—full beautiful enough without them—were slumbering on the hearts of us, her miserable, weeping cronies; and I know not how many gentleman's purses were freighted with like treasure.

What a stupid, silent company we were, gathered there that day! It was a bright morning, there was not a cloud to be seen in all the sky, and Suey, the old fortune teller, said it was a day that augured well for their future prosperity but that did not help us any. Everybody seemed to think we were about to lose the choicest light of our village, and so, indeed, we were.

At last the odious depot-bell rung; soon after the 'fire demon' heaved in sight, followed by its long train of crowded cars. In ten minutes, the leave taking was over, our friends were seated, their worldly goods were stowed away, another ring of the bell, that never sounded half so remorselessly before, and away they went, over the road, across the bridge, past the burial ground, and on—on!

To my bosom I pressed a package Florence had given me that morning, which she bade me not open till they were fairly gone. I need not tell you how I hastened home when I had seen the last of her; how, with just one look at their old garden, which ran back of the house, through whose path we had wandered so often together; how, with one thought of my loneliness, I hied away to my room, that I might be alone with my sorrow. There, also, everything seemed determined to speak of her. Close by the window was the 'old arm chair,' her parting gift—a keepsake. Many a time had the broad, leather covered seat supported us both, and so, of course, the very sight of it gave me such a blue fit, that I threw myself into its open arms, and indulged in a most luxurious fit of weeping, the length thereof might be counted by hours. But when I had fairly cried it out (you know all things must have an end), I went to bed with the most dreadful headache conceivable, and opened then, with more of regret than curiosity, the last testament of dear Florence. It was in the shape of a long, long letter, filling many pages of paper; but I shall not indulge the reader with a glance even at all the contents; satisfy yourself with these few extracts, and oblige yours, &c.:—

Writing is not my forte, you know that very well (the epistle began), but I have been for a long time past determined to explain myself to you; and when father finally succeeded in convincing us all that the West is such a wonderful country, and that it is the best and only place in which to settle our troop of boys, I made up my mind to write you what I had intended to speak. Don't think me vain, but I am going to be my own heroine in these pages; I am going to give you the key which will make all clear before you that was aforetime unexplainable.

When I am gone, and the partial regret some will feel at first is worn away, and they begin with all earnestness to give me what they think my due, honouring me once more with the flattering titles they have already bestowed on me so freely, then do you, my friend, take up the gauntlet in my defence. If I should happen to die of those horrible fevers, into whose hands we are about to commit ourselves, 'Aunt Sally' may say it is a just 'dispensation of Providence' that has removed me; and that forlorn Juliet Baker might take it into her head to write my veritable history, under the title of 'The Coquette,' and so be published in one of the magazines, as a warning to all who shall come after me—an immortality to which, I assure you, I do not aspire. Or Tom Harding might be tempted to discourse more eloquently than ever on my respective demerits, drawing some of his most sage conclusions therefrom. So, dear, if such things do happen, remember to stand up valiantly for 'woman's rights' and me.

As I have mentioned Tom Harding's name, I may as well in these 'confessions' have done with him as speedily as possible. I know very well what the gossips said when it was rumoured that I had 'cut him dead,' after encouraging the poor fellow, who was really 'too good for me.' But it happened in this case that they were all wrong, as doth, unfortunately, sometimes happen even with gossipers. Tom, since time immemorial (you will bear me out in the truth of this statement), has been one of the most active of our village beaux; attaching himself, with all his canine characteristics, to every lady favoured with the least beauty, and making himself vastly useful in getting up all sorts of parties of pleasure in summer, and in winter also. It was very needful, was it not? that we should always be on good terms with him, and thus, as a body, you know very well we managed to do. As he had been in love with and offered himself up to at least a dozen girls of our acquaintance, I don't know why he should have thought that I would take up with him at last. Now, was it not presumption, Carry? To be sure, he did come to our house night after night, and sat often with us in church on Sundays, and it was rumoured we were engaged, but that, I fancy, did not make the case a clear one. The facts, I never for a moment thought of marrying Tom Harding; but I did suppose him a great deal better youth than he proved to be. When he foolishly proposed the subject to me, I dismissed it quietly as might be, convincing him that the thing was for ever impossible. And I kept his secret well. No one, till to-day, can say that I was ever guilty of speaking of his offer and its refusal, and you know why I now refer to it. Tom himself, by his ungentlemanly conduct, exposed all that ever was exposed, and his impudent silly behaviour towards me has made me heartily despise him. I sincerely hope that no damsel that I love will ever accept offers, which some dozens of women may yet have the honour to hear from him.

Harry Kirkland was indeed a fine fellow—at least I thought so once, for I was engaged to him within a time I well remember. Talented, too, was he not? But, oh, what an unreasonable mortal! When I engaged myself to Harry, I did love him truly, or what I thought was true, but you will not wonder that my love cooled before such evidences of tyranny as he gave, in a petty manner; they afforded me overpowering proof of what I might expect when the chains of Hymen should be flung around us. He went to his club and the lyceum, and became a member of the Odd Fellow's Society, so soon as there was one organised in the village; indeed, on all points acted his own will and pleasure, even as to the number of cigars he would smoke in a day. And I, like a reasonable woman, thinking this part and parcel of his own business, never thought of interfering. But no sooner had I in a kind of dumb way answered his pathetic appeals, by acknowledging that I loved him, than he at once, without questioning his right and title, proceeded to take the reins of government into his own hands. And then it was incessantly, 'Florence, why do you allow that coxcomb to visit you?' or, 'Why did you go to the party last night when I was away?' or, 'How can you endure that conceited fool?' or, 'Do, dear, manage your hair in some other style, curls are so common!' Or, at another time, when I had arranged myself with special thoughts of him and his particular taste, the unpropitious salutation would be, 'It is strange you will wear flounces; I cannot endure them, and they do not become you.' Well, I gave James Thompson, 'the coxcomb,' as Harry called him, leave to understand I was no more 'at home' to him; and stayed away from all places of amusement to which Harry would or could not go (which former I at least discovered was most frequently the case); and I did treat Charles Wood more coolly than my conscience approved, for nature gave him a good, kind heart, if she did not make him a genius; and I left off flounces, which my tasty little dressmaker thought 'such a pity;' and I braided my hair, which all the time cried out against the stiff bands put on the curly locks; and, in short, for six months I made a fool of myself, by giving way to all my exacting lover's whims. It makes me shudder when I think of what had been my fate if I had married him—I should have died a martyr long before this day. I knew that on most subjects Harry's opinion was worth having, his judgment being sound, so I resolved to try what might be done on this point, which concerned our happiness so much.

By degrees I went back to my old habits, saying never a word to him about the test I was intending to put to him. Perhaps you would have proceeded differently; you might have chosen to urge him not to distress himself about affairs far too trifling for his interference, about which no woman liked the dictation, even of a favoured lover. But such a course was not the one for me; and, in the end, a person acting on other reasoning than mine probably would have arrived at the climax I did. Wherever among my old friends I chose to go I went, without consulting the pleasure of his highness, who had led me about as a child quite long enough. What books I liked I read, considering my judgment in such a manner quite as good as his own. I dressed in what fashion I pleased, and wore my hair in the style nature intended. At one determined stroke, I broke the thread-like chains, which, from their very fineness, had been more galling than links of iron. I could read Harry's thoughts by his undisguised look of astonishment; and it was with anxiety, I do confess, that I awaited the result; for all this time I loved him well, though my attachment was not of a nature so selfish as was his love for me. One day I sent him a note, with a purse which I had knitted for him, requesting him to accompany me in the evening. There was to be a horseback party on the lake shore. Much astonished was I on the return of the messenger—he brought back an answer to my note, with the rejected gift! Harry declined the ride, saying he had a severe headache, (well might his head ache, when it contained a brain capable of conceiving such a note!) After some preliminaries, Harry proceeded to tell me that my gifts were altogether unacceptable, so long as my heart continued not right towards him; that I grieved him beyond all expression by the heartlessness I had exhibited in my disregard of all his wishes and opinions. This strange note ended my begging, that I would not join the party that night; he would visit me in the evening, and receive from me then any explanations I might be ready to make. In ten minutes more, the messenger was on his way back to Harry Kirkland's office, bearing with him a neat package which contained that young man's notes, miniature, gifts, &c., with an assurance, which I wrote with a most steady hand, that my evening ride would doubtless prove vastly agreeable; and that, as I had no apologies to offer or explanations to make, he need not be under the inconvenience of seeking me at home, or elsewhere. I will not speak of the manner in which that afternoon passed away after I had returned Harry's second note unanswered, unopened; nor what thoughts were busy in my mind; nor what feelings filled my heart. But I will tell you this—at tea time when father came home, he did not reject his daughter's kiss, nor the purse either; and now it is snugly resting in the bottom of his pocket well filled, as I hope it may ever be.

That moonlight ride, you remember it, perhaps you remember, also, that there was no gayer mortal among you than a certain Florence Cleveland. She may not have slept quite soundly that night, but it was not very long that Harry Kirkland's image disturbed her dreams. He was proud as I, doubtless thought himself the abused one; and I can readily believe that many times since he had blessed the day that saved him from marrying me. You know how suddenly Harry moved to New York that fall, and also how you wondered, in your ignorance, that we did not correspond!

And what of George Stephenson? Ha! ha! I always laugh when I think of him—do you, dear? What did we think of him, till we discovered one day, much to our amasement, that he was engaged to us both? I will leave the echo to answer what! Never shall I forget what that tableau presented—we being our own spectators—when, with head resting on my knee in the old summer-house, you, with trembling lips, told me of that delightful youth, and of your future prospects; and how when you approached the interesting climax, I chimed in and told my story too; and now, instead of becoming sworn foes from that hour, two more loving and light hearted beings seldom took pen in hand than we, when we wrote that joint letter that saved George from the fate of bigamists. Well, we must agree that there was never a more fascinating youth than he, if only to save ourselves from the obloquy of falling in love with such a rogue. Who'd have thought it? Those very stories of his early life and sorrows, which drew such earnest tears from my eyes, I suppose you, too, have wept as he told them. Ah me!

Then, there was the poet, Earnest Ward. I tolerated him, because his father was a college friend of my father, who wished us always to show the boy kindness, and make him feel that he was not quite without friends in the world. But you cannot believe that I loved him. Poor fellow, he is dead now. A long life seemed never to me to be his heritage; the fact is, he did not possess sufficient energy to keep him alive. And he was eternally railing against fate and his poverty—themes which no man must dwell on who wishes to gain favour in my eyes. His talents were not of that order which commands the ear of the public, and yet he seemed to think so, and in that thought centered his hope. There was nothing practical about Ernest. He belonged to that miserable class of dreamers (how many of them we see around us!) who are aptly described as having lost their way in the greatness of life—as having groped blindly past the stations they were designed to fill. Ernest had a good deal of fancy and ingenuity, more than should have been lavished on newspaper enigmas and verses descriptive of the color of my hair and eyes; he might have made a capital designer and manufacturer of toys. He was made, I am convinced, for some such purpose, and might have excelled in a kindred art; but least of all, you will acknowledge, was Ernest Ward fitted to be my husband; and well for us was it, that if he did not know it, I did.

Last of all of whom I will speak is Edward Graham; and thus I fancy I hear him lamented by some whom I will say, I am not sorry to have left behind me—'a fine fellow, but driven to desperation and to sea, by that worthless flirt Florence Cleveland.' Now, will I give you an opportunity, *ma chere*, to laugh in your sleeve, if you will, for, beyond the shadow of a doubt, I am engaged to this same Edward, and what is more, I mean to marry him. How shall I explain conduct that will appear strange as this to you? You know Ned almost as well as I do. As we have both known him from our childhood, it would be idle in me to speak of his fine, noble, generous character, and of his sensibleness—which is a far rarer component of the human character than many people seem to imagine. Our engagement was, I confess, an altogether unanticipated thing to me, though there was always a lingering thought in my mind that Ned approached a little nearer to my standard of manly perfection than any suitor I ever had. You and I have often admired the outward man, so I will not speak of these great black eyes of his, which seem to pierce you through and through, as though they would know all your secret thoughts, which, as far as regarded him, could be only thoughts of admiration and respect.

Neither will I now refer to that glorious voice, and the manly form that was never yet bent with the weight of a mean or sordid thought—that could not stoop to anything low or ignoble. Now, when I tell you that Ned hired himself to a sea-captain, whom his father has known from boyhood, for three years, that his wages, excepting a trifle, have been paid at Ned's request into his father's hands, to aid the old man in his embarrassment, you will certainly concur with me in thinking that my Edward Graham is the most noble and generous youth in the whole world! Only a week before his departure we made our arrangements; for before that time had never spoken to me of love. I never heard of his broaching the subject to any one else—did you? In three years he is coming back again—by that time we shall have become settled, and have learned to love our new home. What farmers we shall be. Then Ned will join us in Wisconsin; and who says we shall not be a happy family there? and that Florence will not prove quite tractable and human, although people have dared and presumed to call her a 'desperate flirt?'

So, my dearest, I have given you a true history of my coquetting (?) life, with the exception of these tragedies you are acquainted with already. Frank Blake died, it is true, but never for a moment have I reproached myself with his death. He was 'found drowned,' so the verdict of the coroner's jury ran; but have none others been found drowned than men who were in love? I am not jesting, or speaking lightly now. The subject is too fearful to jest about. Could they who have seemed to delight in calling me little better than a murderess, but know what bitter, bitter hours I have spent writhing under their scorpion tongues, they would, I think, be satisfied. I tell you again, my friend, Frank never treated me more kindly, or considerately, or justly, than he did that day when I told him I could not love him as he deserved to be loved, though I must ever bear towards him the utmost respect the kindliest feelings. And when Tom Harding made that incident a theme for newspaper gossip, I wondered the right hand that dared write such things was not blasted. You know afterwards I went to Frank's home—to his widowed mother. She, too, turned in horror from me, when I told her who I was, and why I had come so far from my home in search of her. Go to her now, my friend, and she will tell you that she attaches to me no blame. Even the agonised heart-broken mother believed me, when I told her all that had transpired between her son and me. She knows, as you know, and as I know, that I never won the affections of her son intentionally, for the mean purpose of adding one more name to my list of conquests.

And of that other, whose name I will not write—he who died in the convict's cell—had I aught to do with that man's crimes? The brutish madness with which he heard my refusal of his suit, his dreadful downward course afterwards; oh, can unreturned love be the instigator of such crimes? Had he not been a reckless youth ever; disliked of all the village boys, whose friendship even his weath and good family could not buy for him? If I would not wed a villain such as he, where rests the blame? Oh, surely, not with me. I did not make that festering, sinful heart of his, nor did I lure him on to hope that I would ever be his wife. If love is heaven, what were life with such a man? I cannot write more. 'I am not what I have been.' Yet the sun shines brightly still, as in my childhood, and the future is full of hope. If I have disproved that charge of folly and heartlessness laid against me, it is well; nevertheless, I cannot think my proceedings have been so very criminal, or sinful; they had no power to frighten honest-hearted, noble Ned Graham?

Hereafter, when you see a woman whose conduct is (as mine has been till now) to you quite unexplainable, and full of mystery, listen, dear friend, and bid those around you listen, a little more earnestly to the voice of human love and Christian charity; and, trust me, the number of those who have the power to act long in direct opposition to the better impulses of woman's nature is surprisingly small.

If your trust continues in me still unshaken, as in the days gone by (I know it does—that you have not seriously doubted me ever), come ere long to Wisconsin, and I will insure you a husband of the 'free soil,' who shall bear as little resemblence to our faithless George as my Enward does, and a home in the wilderness, the glorious wilderness. God bless you, love, good bye ——.'

I have not yet obeyed the call of my friend to the far west, now her happy home. Do you think it advisable for me to place myself in the hands of such a —— but first let me ask you, do you think Florence Cleveland was a coquette? And if so, is a coquette a heathen? And, is this once prolific topic yet exhausted?

From Dickens's Household Words.

WHAT SAND IS.

The Yarmouth fishermen's numeration-table is founded on a different principal to the decimal arithmetic commonly in use. The fishermen's tale is reckoned by fours instead of by fives or tens, both for green fish and for cured. The fish are counted by taking two in each hand, and throwing the four together in the heap. Thus:

Four herrings make a warp.

Thirty-three warp make a hunded—one hundred and thirty-two fish according to the Arabic notation.

A 'last' of herring is defined by measurement instead of by counting, but is estimated to contain about ten thousand Yarmouth herrings; so that a last of Baltic herring would contain more, and a last of Loch Fine herring fewer fish. At Yarmouth, the last is thus measured:—the fish are landed in certain convenient and quaintly-shaped baskets, called 'swills,' of definite capacity, Twenty swills, make a last; therefore the duty of each swill is to hold five hundred herrings and we may believe that it does not much fall short of, or exceed what is required of it. This is the established practice at Yarmouth, the metropolis of herrings. At other points of the coast, as at Sheringham, baskets used for the same purpose are called swills, but are different in size and shape.

The Yarmouth herring-boats, too, are of excellent contrivance. There are three different descriptions fitted out for this fishery; the smallest are open boats, or yawls. But the famous Yarmouth yawls are used rather for purposes of salvage, for giving aid to vessels in distress, and for rescuing life at the last extremity. Their crews are composed of men who are an honor, not merely to the town and to the country they belong to, but to the entire British nation. I have no room here to make any further allusion to their courage, generosity, and self-denial. The performance of the yawls is first-rate. One of them, the Reindeer, challenged the invincible yacht, the America, and it is believed would beat her. The America got out of it by refusing to sail for less than five thousand pounds—a sum which she knows Yarmouth beachmen are too wise to risk, even if they could raise it. It is said the Reindeer can go through the water at the rate of sixteen miles an hour.

The Yorkshire cobles, from Whitby and Scarborough, scarcely belong to this place. Their arrivals is announced by a copious importation of pickled mushrooms and live periwinkles, which latter are lying about the quay in