

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

OUR DAY DREAMS.

BY JOHN BOOKER.

As thought flows on its onward stream,
And brightly or more darkly gleams,
'Tis then we sit and fondly dream
Our wild day dreams.

Sweet to the sight those visions are,
How they enchant us for the while—
Wearing the brightness of a star,
But to beguile.

We build our castles in the air,
And revel in our loved ideal,
For this our dreaming bears us far
From life that's real.

With pleasure we feel all a glow,
As on the mystic tide we float;
How strange and volatile the flow
Of human thought!

Forgetting things around, we live
Beyond the sorrows of to-day;
'Tis well to dream if we can drive
Our cares away.

We dream of wealth too great to count,
Ambition honour, and a name;
And step by step exultant mount
The heights of fame.

Scenes of unspoken splendour rise
In fancy's sphere and classic clime,
And we can gaze with ravished eyes
On the sublime.

Or fanned by Love's ambrosial breath,
We trip with hours o'er the scene;
Or with sweet roses twine a wreath
For Beauty's queen.

Now visions of the days gone by
Come floating up before our sight;
Now feature scenes before us lie,
All fair and bright.

This our day-dreaming is not new;
A strange delight it ever seems
From youth to age to wander through
The land of dreams.

From the National Magazine.

A LOW MARRIAGE.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GEN-
TLEMAN," ETC.

THE ladies did not appear at lunch. Word was sent down stairs that Miss Childe was 'indisposed.' I could not by any means, get to see Mrs Rochdale, though I hung about the house all day. Near dark, I received a message that the mistress wanted me.

She was sitting in the dining-room, without lights. She sat as quiet, as motionless, as a carved figure. I dared not speak to her; I trembled to catch the first sound of her voice—my friend, my mistress, my dear Mrs Rochdale!

'Martha!
'Yes madam.
'I wish, Martha—and there the voice stopped.

I hardly know what prevented my saying or doing on the impulse, things that the commonest instinct told me, the moment afterwards, ought to be said and done by no one—certainly not by me—at this crisis—to Mrs Rochdale. So, with an effort, I stood silent in the dim light—as silent as motionless as herself.

'I wish, Martha—and her voice was steady now—I wish to send you on a message, which requires some one whom I can implicitly trust.

My heart was at my lips; but of course I only said, 'Yes madam'
'I want you to go down the village, to the young person at the baker's shop.'
'Nancy Hine.'

'Is that her name? Yes, I remember: Nancy Hine. Bring her here—to the manor-house; without observation, if you can.'

'To-night, madam?
'To-night. Make any excuse you choose; or rather, make no excuse at all. Say Mrs. Rochdale wishes to speak to her.'

'Any thing more? I asked softly, after a considerable pause.
'Nothing more. Go at once, Martha.'

I obeyed implicitly. Much as this my mission had surprised, nay startled me, I knew Mrs Rochdale always did what was wisest, best to do, under the circumstances. Also that her combined directness of purpose and strength of character often led her to do things utterly unthought of by a weaker or less single-hearted woman.

Through a misty September moonlight, I walked blindly on in search of Nancy Hine. She was having a lively gossip at the baker's door. The fire showed her figure plainly. Her large rosy arms, whitened with flour, were crossed over her decent working-gown. People allowed—even the most censorious—that Nancy was, in her own home, an active industrious lass, though too much given to dress

of Sundays, and holding herself rather above her station every day.

'Nancy Hine, I want to speak with you a minute.'

'O, do you, Martha Stretton? Speak out then. No secrets here.'

Her careless, not to say rude, manner irritated me. I just turned away and walked down the village. I had not gone many yards when Nancy's hand was on my shoulder; and with a loud laugh at my sudden start, she pulled me by a back door into the shop.

'Now then?'

The baker's daughter folded her arms in a rather defiant way. Her eyes were bright and open. There was in her manner some excitement, coarseness, and boldness; but nothing unvirtuous—nothing to mark the fallen girl whom her neighbors were pointing the finger at. I could not loathe her quite so much as I had intended.

'Now then?' she repeated.
I delivered Mrs Rochdale's message, word for word.

Nancy seemed a good deal surprised—not shocked, or alarmed, or ashamed—merely surprised.

'Wants me, does she? Why?'

'She did not say.'

'But you guess, of course. Well, who cares? Not I.'

Yet her brown handsome face changed color. Her hands nervously fidgeted about—taking off her apron, 'making herself decent,' as she called it. Suddenly she stopped.

'Has there been any letter—any news—from young Mr Rochdale?'

'I believe there has; but that is no business of—'

'Mine, you mean, eh? Come, don't be so sharp, Martha Stretton. I'll go with you, only let me put on my best bonnet first.'

'Nancy Hine, I burst out, do you think it can matter to Mrs Rochdale whether you go in a queen's gown or a beggar's rags, except that the rags might suit you best? Come just as you are.'

'I will,' cried Nancy, glaring in my face, 'and you, Martha, keep a civil tongue, will you? My father's daughter is as good as yours, or your mistress' either. Get out of the shop. I'll follow 'ee. I be'n't afeard.'

That broad accent—broadening as she got angry—those abrupt awkward gestures!—what could the young squire, his mother's son, who had lived with that dear mother all his days, have seen attractive in Nancy Hine?

But similar anomalies of taste have puzzled, and will puzzle, every body—especially women who in their attachments generally see clearer and deeper than men—to the end of time.

Nancy Hine walked in sullen taciturnity to the manor-house. It was already late—nearly all the household were gone to bed. I left the young woman in the hall, and went up to Mrs Rochdale.

She was sitting before her dressing-room fire, absorbed in thought. In the chamber close by—in the large state bed which Mrs Rochdale always occupied, where generations of Rochdales had been born and died—slept the gentle girl whose happiness had been so cruelly betrayed. For that the engagement was broken, and for sufficient cause, Mr Rochdale's answer, or rather non-answer, to his mother's plain letter made now certain, almost beyond a doubt.

'Hush; don't wake her,' whispered Mrs Rochdale, hurriedly. 'Well Martha?'

'The young woman shall I bring her, madam?'

'What, here?' words cannot describe the look of repulsion, hatred, horror, which for a moment darkened Mrs Rochdale's face. Perhaps the noblest human being, either man or woman, is born, not passionless, but with strong passions to be subjected to firm will. If at that moment—one passing moment—she could have crushed out of existence the girl who had led away her son—for Nancy was older than he, and no fool—I think Mrs Rochdale would have done it.

The next instant she would have done nothing of the kind; nothing that a generous Christian woman might not do.

She rose up, saying quietly, 'The Young person cannot come here, Martha. Bring her into—let me see—into the drawing room.'

There, entering a few minutes after, we found Mrs Rochdale seated on one of the velvet couches just in the light of the chandelier.

I do not suppose Nancy Hine had ever been in such a brilliant, beautiful room before. She was apparently quite stunned and dazzled by it; curtsied humbly, and stood with her arms wrapped up in her shawl, vacantly gazing about her.

Mrs Rochdale spoke. 'Nancy Hine I believe is your name?'

'Yes my lady. That is—um—yes ma'am, my name is Nancy.'

She came a little forwarder now, and lifted up her eyes more boldly to the sofa. In fact, they both regarded each other keenly and long—the lady of the manor and the village girl.

I observed that Mrs Rochdale had resumed her usual evening-dress, and that no trace of

mental disorder was visible in her apparel scarcely even in her countenance.

'I sent for you, Nancy Hine—(Martha, do not go away, I wish that there should be a witness of all that passes between this young woman any myself)—I sent for you on account of certain reports, more injurious to your character, if possible, than even to that of—the other person. Are you aware what reports I mean?'

'Yes, my lady, I be.'

'That is an honest answer, and I like honesty,' said Mrs Rochdale, after a prolonged gaze at the face, now scarlet with wholesome blushes of the baker's daughter. With a half sigh of relief, she went on.

'You must be also aware that I, as the mother of—that other person, can have but one motive in sending for you here—namely, to ask a question which I more than any one else have a right to ask, and to have answered. Do you understand me?'

'Someat.'

'Nancy,' she resumed, after another long gaze, as if struck by something in the young woman different from what she had expected, and led thereby to address her differently from what she had at first intended—'Nancy, I will be plain with you. It is not every lady—every mother who would have spoken with you as I speak now, without anger or blame—only wishing to get from you the truth. If I believed the worst—if you were a poor girl whom my son had—had wronged. I would still have pitied you. Knowing him and now looking at you, I do not believe it. I believe you may have been foolish, light of conduct; but not guilty. Tell me—do tell me—and the mother's agony broke through the lady's calm and dignified demeanor—'one word to assure me it is so!'

But Nancy Hine did not utter that word. She gave a little faint sob, and then dropped her head with a troubled awkward air, as if the presence of Lemuel's mother—speaking so kindly, and looking her through and through—was more than she could bear.

That poor mother, whom this last hope had failed, to whom her only son now appeared not only as a promise breaker, but the systematic seducer of a girl beneath his own rank—between whom and himself could exist no mental union no false gloss of sentiment to cover the foulness of mere sensual passion—that poor mother sank back, and put her hand over her eyes, as if she would fain henceforth shut out from her sight the whole world.

After a while, she forced herself to look at the girl once more—who, now recovering from her momentary remorse, was busy casting admiring glances, accompanied with one or two curious smiles, around the drawing-room.

'From your silence, young woman, I must conclude that I was mistaken; that—but I will spare you. You will have enough to suffer. There now remains only one question which I desire—which I am compelled—to ask: How long has this—this—this—she seemed to choke over the unuttered word—lasted?'

'Dunnot know what you mean.'

'I must speak plainer, then. How long, Nancy Hine, have you been my son's—Mr Rochdale's, mistress?'

'Not a day—not an hour,' cried Nancy, violently, coming closer to the sofa. 'Mind what you say Mrs Rochdale. I am an honest girl. I am as good as you. I'm Mr Rochdale's wife!'

Mr Rochdale's Mother sat mute, and watched the girl take from a ribbon round her neck an unmistakable wedding ring, and slip it with a determined push on her large working woman's finger. This done, she thrust it right into the lady's sight.

'Look'ee, what do'ee say to that? He put it there. All your anger cannot take it off. I am Mrs Lemuel Rochdale, your son's wife.'

'Ah!' shrinking from her. But the next minute the true womanly feeling came into the virtuous woman's heart. 'Better this—than what they said. Better a thousand times.—Thank God!'

With a sigh long and deep, she sat down, and again covered her eyes, as if trying to realize the amazing—impossible truth. Then she said slowly, 'Martha, I think this—she hesitated what name to give Nancy; finally gave no name at all—'I think she had better go away.'

Nancy, quite awed and moved, all her boldness gone, was creeping out of the room after me, when Mrs Rochdale called us back.

'Say! at this hour of the night it is not fitting that my son's wife—should be out alone. Martha, ask your father to see her safe home.'

The baker's daughter turned at the door, and said, 'Thank'ee, my lady; but omitted her curtsy this time.

And Mrs Rochdale had found her daughter-in-law!

Ere we well knew what had happened, the whole dynasty at the manor-house was changed. Mrs Rochdale was gone; she left before her son returned from Scotland, and did not once see him. Mrs Lemuel Rochdale, late Nancy Hine, was installed as lady of the manor.

Such a theme for gossip had not been vouchsafed our county for a hundred years. Of a surety they canvassed it over—talked it literally threadbare.

Mrs Rochdale escaped it, fortunately. She went abroad with Sir John and Miss Childe. All the popular voice was with her and against her son. They said he had killed that pretty gentle creature—who, however, did not die, but lived to suffer—perhaps, better still, to overcome suffering; that he had broken his noble mother's heart. Few of his old friends visited him; not one of their wives visited his wife. He had done that which many 'respectable people' are more shocked at than any species of profligacy—he had made a low marriage.

Society was hard upon him, harder than he deserved. At least they despised him and his marriage for the wrong cause. Not because his wife was, when he chose her, a woman thoroughly beneath him in education, tastes, and feeling,—because from this inferiority it was impossible he could have felt for her any save the lowest and most degrading kind of love,—but simply because she was a village girl,—a baker's daughter!

Sir John Childe said to Lemuel's mother, in a lofty compassion, the only time he was ever known to refer to the humiliating and miserable occurrence. 'Madam, whatever herself might have been, the disgrace would have been lightened had your son not married a person of such low origin. Shocking!—a bakers daughter!'

'Sir John,' said Mrs Rochdale with dignity 'if my son had chosen a woman suitable and worthy of being his wife, I would not have minded had she been a daughter of the meanest laborer in the land.'

'Miss Martha!' called out our rector's wife to me one day, 'is it true, that talk I hear of Mrs Rochdale's coming home?'

'Quite true, I believe.'

'And where will she come to! Not to the manor-house?'

'Certainly not.' I fear there was a bitterness in my tone, for the good old lady looked at me reprovingly.

'My dear, the right thing for us in this world is to make the very best of that which, having happened, was consequently ordained by Providence to happen. And we often find the worst things not so bad, after all. I was truly glad to-day to hear that Mrs Rochdale was coming home.'

'But not home to them,—not to the manor-house. She will take a house in the village.—She will never meet them, any more than when she was abroad.'

'But she will hear of them. That does great good sometimes.'

'When there is any good to be heard.'

'I have told you, Martha, and I hope you have told Mrs Rochdale, that there is good.—When first I called on Mrs Lemuel, it was simply in my character as the clergyman's wife, doing what I believed my duty. I found that duty easier than I had expected.'

'Because she remembered her position—(Her former position, my dear, corrected Mrs Wood)—because she showed off no airs and graces, but was quiet, humble and thankful, as became her, for the kindness you thus showed.'

'Because of that, and something more. Because the more I have seen of her the more I feel, that though not exactly to be liked, she is to be respected. She has sustained tolerably well a most difficult part, that of an ignorant person suddenly raised to wealth; envied and abused by her former class, utterly scouted and despised by her present one. She has had to learn to comport herself as mistress where she used to be an inferior. I can hardly imagine a greater trial, as regards social position.'

'Position? She has none. No ladies except yourself will visit her. Why should they?'

'My dear, why should they not? A woman who since her marriage has conducted herself with perfect propriety, be fitting the sphere to which she was raised; has lived retired, and forced herself into no one's notice; who is, whatever be her shortcomings in education and refinement of character, a good wife a kind mistress.'

'How do you know that?'

'Simply because her husband is rarely absent a day from home; because all her servants have remained with her, and spoken well of her these five years.'

I could not deny these facts. They were known to the whole neighbourhood. The proudest of our gentry were not wicked enough to shut their eyes to them, even when they contemptuously stared at Mrs Lemuel Rochdale driving cheerily about in long summer afternoons in her lonely carriage, with not a single female friend to pay a morning visit to, or suffer the like infection from;—not even at church, when quizzing her large figure and heavy gait,—for she had not become more sylph-like with added years,—they said she was growing crumby, like her father's loaves, and wondered she would persist in wearing the finest bonnets of all the congregation.

Nay, even I, bitter as I was, really pitied her, one sacrament-day, when she unwittingly advanced to the first 'rail' of communicants: upon which all the other 'respectable' Christians hung back till the second. After that the Rochdales were not seen again at the communion. Who could marvel?

It was noticed, by some to his credit, by others as a point for ridicule, that her husband