Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

WHO ARE THE GREAT OF EARTH?

Who are the mighty? sing.
The chiefs of old renown,
On some red field won the victor's crown
Of tears and triumphing?
The Northmen bold, who first o'er stormy seas,
Sent down the 'raven' banner on the breeze?
Not these—Oh, no—not these!

Who are the great of earth?
The mighty hunters? kings of ancient line,
For ages traced, half fable, half divine,
Whose stone-wrought lions guard in heathen pride
Their tomb-like palaces? where now we read,
They lived, and reigned, and died!
Who spoke, and millions rushed to toil and bleed?
Not these—not these, indeed!

Who are the mighty? they!
The builders of Egyptian pyramids?
The unknown kings, on whose stone-coffin lids,
Strange forms are scrolled? or men, whose awful sway
Wrought the rock-temple, reared the cromled gray,
Whose smoke, and fire, and incense darkened day,
Not they—Oh, no—not they?

Who are the great of earth?
Mark, where your prophet stands,
The load-star needle trembles in his hands,
O'er western seas he finds for mind a throne—
Or he on whose wrapt sight new wonders shone,
Where, heavenward turned, his glass made worlds his own?
Not he—not those alone!

Who are the mighty? see,
Where art's a wizard; where the marble rife
With grace and beauty quickens into life—
Or where, as danger's waves beat wild and free,
Some 'glorious arm' like Moses' parts the sea,
That a vexed people yet redeemed may be—
The statesman? sage—is't he?

Oh, no—not these the noblest triumphs prove,
Go, where forgiveness, turning like the dove,
Alights o'er life's dark flood on some lone heart—
Where men to men, truth, justice, peace impart,
As best interpreters of god-like love—
Where all life's noblest charities have birth:
There dwell the great, the kings of peerless worth,
They shall subdue the earth?

From the National Magazine.

A LOW MARRIAGE.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN," ETC.

MRS ROCHDALE stood a good while talking at the school-gate this morning—Mrs Rochdale, my mistress once, my friend now. My cousin, the village schoolmistress, was bemoaning over her lad George, now fighting in the Crimea, saying poor body, "that no one could understand her feeling but a mother—a mother with an only son."

Mrs Rochdale smiled—that peculiar smile of one who had bought peace through the 'constant anguish of patience'—a look which I can still trace in her face at times, and which I suppose will never wholly vanish thence. We changed the conversation, and she shortly afterwards departed.

—A mother with an only son. All the neighbourhood knew the story of our Mrs Rochdale and her son. But it had long ceased to be discussed at least openly; though still it was told under the seal of confidence to every new-comer in our village. And still every summer I used to see any strangers who occupied my cousin's lodgings staring with all their eyes when the manor house carriage passed by or peeping from over the blinds to catch a glimpse of Mrs Rochdale.

No wonder. She is, both to look at and to know, a woman among a thousand.

It can be no possible harm—it may do good—if I here write down her history.

First let me describe her, who even yet seems to me the fairest woman I ever knew.—And why should not a woman be fair at sixty? Because the beauty that lasts till then,—and it can last, for I have seen it,—must be of the noblest and satisfying kind, wholly independent of form or coloring;—a beauty such as a young woman can by no art attain, but which, once attained, no woman need ever fear to lose, till the coffin-lid, closing over its last and loveliest smile, makes of it 'a joy forever.'

Mrs Rochdale was tall—too tall in youth; but your well natured women have decidely the advantage after forty. Her features, more soft than strong looking—softer still under the smooth-banded gray hair—might have been good: I am no artist: I do not know. But it was not that; it was the intangible, nameless grace which surrounded her as with an atmosphere, making her presence in a room like light, and her absence like its loss; her soft but stately courtesy of mien, in word and motion alike harmonious. Silent, her gentle ease of manner made every one else at ease. Speaking, though she was by no means a great talker, she always seemed instinctively to say just the right thing, to the right person, at the right moment, in the right way. She stood out distinct from all your 'charming creatures,' 'most lady-like persons,' very talented women,' as that rarest species of the whole race—a gentlewoman.

At twenty-three she became Mr Rochdale's wife, at twenty-five his widow. From that her whole life was devoted to the son who, at a twelvemonth old, was already Lemuel Rochdale, Esquire, Lord of the Manor of Thrope and Stretton-Magna, owner of one of the largest estates in the country. Poor little baby!

He was the puniest, sickliest baby she ever saw. I have heard my mother say; but he grew up into a fine boy and a hadsome youth; not unlike Mrs Rochdale, except that a certain hereditary pride of manner, which in her was almost beautiful,—if any pride can be beautiful,—was in him exaggerated to self-assurance and haughtiness. He was the principal person in the establishment while he yet trundled hoops; and long before he discarded jackets, had assumed his position as sole master of the manor-house—allowing, however his mother to remain as sole mistress.

He loved her very much, I think—better than horses, dogs or guns; swore she was the kindest and dearest mother in England, and handsomer ten times over than any girl he knew.

At which the smiling mother would shake her head in credulous incredulousness. She rarely burdened him with caresses; perhaps she had found out early that boys dislike them—at least he did: to others she always spoke of him as 'my son,' or 'Mr Rochdale;' and her pride in him, or praise of him, was always more by implication than by open word. Yet all the house, all the village, knew quite well how things were. And though they were not often seen together, except on Sundays, when, year after year, she walked up the church aisle, holding her little on by the hand; then followed by the sturdy schoolboy; finally, leaning proudly on the proud youth's arm,—everybody said emphatically that the young squire was 'his mother's own son,' passionately beloved, after the fashion of women ever since young Eve smiled down on Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man from the Lord.'

So he grew up to be about twenty-one years old.

On that day Mrs Rochdale, for the first time since her widowhood, opened her house, and invited all the country round. The morning was devoted to the poorer guests: in the evening there was a dinner party and ball.

I dressed her, having since my girlhood been to her a sort of amateur milliner and lady's-maid. I may use the word 'amateur' in its strictest sense, since it was out of the great love and reverence I had for her that I had got into this habit of haunting the manor-house. And since love begets love, and we always feel kindly to those we have been kind to, Mrs Rochdale was fond of me. Through her means, and still more through herself, I gained a better education than I should have done as only her bailiff's daughter. But that is neither here nor there.

Mrs Rochdale was standing before the glass in her black velvet gown; she never wore anything but black, with sometimes a grey or lilac ribbon. She had taken out from that casket, and was clasping on her arms and neck, white and round even at five-and-forty, some long unworn family jewels.

I admired them very much.

'Yes, they are pretty. But I scarcely like to see myself in diamonds, Martha. I shall only wear them a few times, and then resign them to my daughter-in-law.'

'Your daughter-in-law? Has Mr Rochdale—'

'No,' (smiling) 'Mr Rochdale has not made his choice yet, but I hope he will ere long. A young man should marry early, especially a young man of family and fortune. I shall certainly be very glad when my son has chosen his wife.'

She spoke as if she thought he had nothing to do but to chose, after the fashion of kings and sultans.

I smiled. She misinterpreted my thought, saying with some little severity:

'Martha, you mistake. I repeat, I shall be altogether glad, even if such a chance were to happen to-day.

Ah, Mrs Rochdale, was ever any widowed mother of an only son 'altogether glad' when first startled into the knowledge that she herself was not his all in the world? That some strange women had risen up, for whose sake he was bound to 'leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife?' A righteous saying, but hard to be understood at first by the mothers.

It afterwards struck me as an odd coincidence, that what Mrs Rochdale had wished might happen did actually happen that same night.

The prettiest and beyond all question the 'sweetest' girl in all our county families,—among which alone it was probable or permissable that our young squire should 'throw the handkerchief.—was Miss Celandine Childe, niece and heiress of Sir John Childe. I was caught by her somewhat fanciful name,—after Wordsworth's flower,—which, as I overheard Mrs Rochdale say, admirably expressed her

I thought so too, when, peeping through the curtained ball-room door, I caught sight of her distinct among all the young ladies, as one's eye lights upon a celandine in a spring meadow. She was smaller than any lady in the room—very fair, with yellow hair, the only real gold hair I ever saw. Her head drooped like a flower-cup; and her motions, always soft and quiet, reminded one of the stirrings of a flower in the grass. Her dress—as if to humor the fancy or else Nature herself did so by making that color most suitable to the girl's complexion—was some gauzy stuff, of a soft pale green. Bright, delicate, innocent, and fair, you could hardly look at her without wishing to take her up in your bosom like a flower.

The ball was a great success. Mrs Rochdale came up to her dressing-room long after midnight, but with the bright glow of maternal pride still burning on her cheeks. She looked quite young again, forcing one to acknowledge the fact constantly avouched by the elder generation, that our mothers and grandmothers were a great deal handsomer than we. Certainly, not a belle in the ballroom could compare with Mrs Rochdale in my eyes. I should have liked to have told her so. In a vague manner I said something which slightly approximated to my thought.

Mrs Rochdale answered, innocent of the compliment, 'Yes, I have seen very lovely women in my youth. But to-night my son pointed out several whom he admired—one in particular.'

'Was it Miss Childe, madam?'

'How acute you are, little Martha! How could you see that?'

I answered rather deprecatingly, that, from the corner where I was serving ices, I had heard several people remark Mr Rochdale's great attention to Miss Childe.

'Indeed!' with a slight sharpness of accent. A moment or two after she added with some *hauteur* 'You mistake, my dear; Mr Rochdale could never be so uncourteous as to pay exclusive attention to any one of his guests; but Miss Childe is a stranger in the neighbourhood.' After a pause: 'She is a most sweet looking girl. My son said so to me, and—I perfectly agreed with him.'

I let the subject drop, nor did Mrs Rochdale resume it.

A month afterward I wondered if she knew what all the servants at the manor-house and all the villagers at Thorpe soon knew quite well, and discussed incessantly in butler's pantries and kitchens, over pots of ale and by cottage-doors—that our young squire from that day forward gave up his shooting, his otter-hunting, and even his coursing, and 'went a-courting' sedulously for a whole month to Ashen Dale.

Meanwhile Sir John and Miss Childe came twice to luncheon. I saw her, pretty creature! walking by Mrs Rochdale's side to feed the swans, and looking more like a flower than ever. And once, stately in the family-coach, which tumbled over the rough roads, two hours there and two hours back, shaking the poor old coachman almost to pieces, did Mrs and Mr Rochdale drive over to a formal dinner at Ashen Dale.

Finally, in the Christmas-week, after an interval of twenty lonely Christmases past and gone, did our lady of the manor prepare to pay to the same place a three-days' visit—such as is usual among county families—the 'rest-day, the pressed-day,' and the day of departure.

I was at the door when she came home.—Her usually bright and healthy cheeks were somewhat pale, and her eyes glittered; but her eyelids were heavy, as with long pressing back of tears. Mr Rochdale did not drive, but sat beside her; he too seemed rather grave.—He handed her out of the carriage carefully and tenderly. She responded with a fond smile Mother and son went up the broad staircase arm-in-arm.

That night the servants who had gone to Ashen Dale talked 'it' all over with the servants who had stayed at home; and every point was satisfactorily settled, down to the bride's fortune and pin-money, and whether she would be married in Brussels or Honiton lace.

Yet still Mrs Rochdale said nothing. She looked happy, but pale, constantly pale. The squire was in the gayest spirits imaginable.—He was, as I have said, a very handsome and winning young fellow; rather variable in his tastes, and easily guided, some people said—but then it was always the old who said it and nobody minded them. We thought Miss Calandine Childe was the happiest and luckiest girl imaginable.

She looked so when, after due time, the three-days' visit was returned; after which Sir John departed, and Miss Childe stayed behind.

That evening—it was just the time of year when 'evenings' begin to be perceptible, and in passing the drawing-room door I had heard the young master say something to Miss Childe about 'primroses in the woods'—that evening I was waiting on Mrs Rochdale's toilet. She herself stood at the oriel window. It was after dinner—she had come up to her room to rest.

'Is it so Mrs Rochdale?'

'Ay, Martha. What do you think of my—children?'

A few tears came to her eyes—a few quivers fluttered over and about her mouth; but she gazed still—she smiled still.

'Are you satisfied, madam?'

'Quite. It is the happiest thing in the world—for him. They will be married at Christmas.'

'And you—'

She put her hand softly on my lips, and said, smiling, 'Plenty of time to think of that—plenty of time.

'After this day she gradually grew less pale, and recovered entirely her healthy, cheerful tone of mind. It was evident that she soon began to love her daughter-elect very much—as indeed, who could help it?—and that by no means as a mere matter of form had she called them 'my children.'

For Celandine, who had never known a mother, it seemed as if Mrs Rochdale were almost as dear to her as her betrothed. The two ladies were constantly together: and in them the proverbially formidable and all but impossible possibility bade fair to be realized, of a mother and daughter-in law as united as if they were of the same flesh and blood.

The gossips shook their heads and said, 'it wouldn't last.' I think it would. Why should it not? They were two noble, tender, unselfish women. Either was ready to love anything he loved—to renounce anything to make him happy. In him, the lover and son, was their meeting-point; in him they learned to love one another.

Strange that women cannot always see this. Strange that a girl should not, above all but her own mother, cling to the mother of him she loves—the woman who has borne him, nursed him, cherished him, suffered for him more than any living creature can suffer, excepting—ay, sometimes not even excepting—his wife. Most strange, that a mother, who would be fond and kind to anything her boy cared for, his horse or his dog,—should not, above all love the creature he loves best in the world, on whom his happiness, honor, and peace, are staked for a lifetime.

Alas, that a bond so simple, natural, holy, should be found so hard as to be almost impossible—even among the good women of this world! Mothers, wives,—whose fault is it? Is it because each exacts too much for herself, and too little for the other,—one forgetting that she was ever young, the other that she will one day be old? Or that in the tenderest women's devotion lurks a something of jealousy, which blinds them to the truth—as true in love as in charity—that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive?' Perhaps I, Martha Stretton, spinster, has no right to discuss this question. But one thing I will say: that I can forgive much to an unloved daughter-in-law—to an unloving one, nothing.

And now, from this long digression, which is not so irrelevent as it at first may seem—let me return to my story.

(To be continued.)

THE KINGLY CROWN.

THERE is (says Dr Doran) no mention in Scripture of a Royal crown, as a kingly possession, till the time when the Amalekites are described as bringing Saul's crown to David. The first Roman who wore a crown was Tarquin, B. C 616. It was at first a mere fillet, then a garland, subsequently stuffs adorned with pearls. Alfred is said to have been the first English King who wore this symbol of authority, A. D. 872. Athelstan (A. D. 929) wore a modern earl's coronet. In 1053, Pope Damasius II., introduced the Papal cap. Thirteen years later, William the Conqueror added a coronet with points to his ducal cap. The Papal cap was not encircled with a crown till the era of John XIX (1276.) Nineteen years afterwards Boniface VIII. added a second crown. Benedict XII. completed the tiara, or triple crown, about the year 1334. In 1386, Richard II. pawned his crown and regalia to the City of London for £2,000. The crosses on the crown of England were introduced by Richard III., 1483. The arches date from Henry VII., 1485. The sceptre has undergone as many changes as the crown. Originally it was a staff intended for the support of the monarch; they who shortened it sometimes turned it into a club, to lay prostrate their people.

A WARNING TO BRIDEGROOMS.—A handsome young bride was observed to be in deep reflection on her wedding-day. One of her bridesmaids asked the subject of her meditations. 'I was thinking,' she replied, 'which of my old beaux I should marry in case I should become a widow.'

GENTLEMEN'S BOAS.—A garotte-robber has been defined by an alarming swell, a great Bo of the Constrictor species.