

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Dickens's Household Words.

SPRINGS IN THE DESERT.

I pace the long deserted rooms,
Still striving to recall
The sounds of footsteps on the stairs,
Or voices in the hall.

Along the walks and up the lawn,
I wander every day;
And sit beneath the mulberry's shade,
Where most we loved to play.

No stir of feet the stillness breaks,
No dear familiar tone;
Since, taking each her separate way,
They left me here alone.

To love them, and their love to share,
Was life and joy to me;
I was the eldest of the house;
My sisters they were three.

As one who marks the bud unfold,
A flower of radiant hue,
I marvelled day by day to find
How beautiful they grew.

I knew them pure, and fit for life,
If earthly life were given;
And O! I knew, if they should die,
They were as fit for Heaven.

Our childhood was a merry time;
And grief—if grief we knew—
Seemed only sent, like rain, to make
The flowers spring up anew.

We parted; one to lordly halls
In foreign climes was led;
Where love each day some new delight
O'er her life's pathway shed.

The other chose a lowlier lot;
A poor man's home to share,
To cheer him at his daily toil,
And soothe his daily care.

The last and youngest,—where is she?—
I thought she would have stayed
To talk with me of other days
Beneath the mulberry's shade.

I loved her, as a mother loves;
And nightly, on my breast
She laid her fair and gentle head,
And sung herself to rest.

I knew she could not find her peer
Among the sons of clay;
Yet how I wept, when Angels came
To take my flower away!

And years have passed—long silent years—
Since first I dwelt alone
Within the old deserted house,
Whence so much love was gone.

I was not, like my sisters, fair,
Nor light of heart as they;
I always knew that mine would be
A lowly, lonely way.

But they who deem my portion hard,
Knows not that wells are found
In deserts wild, whose silent stream
Make green the parched ground.

There's not a blade of grass—a leaf—
A breath of summer air—
But stirs my heart with love for Him
Who made this earth so fair.

And many a lowly friend have I,
Or sick, or sad of heart,
Who hail my coming steps with joy,
And sighs when I depart.

No day is ever long; and night,
Some gentle spirit brings,
To whisper thoughts of other worlds
And of diviner things.

And if, when evening shadows fall,
I sad or lonely feel,
I kneel me down in that same room
Where we four used to kneel.

And there I say the evening prayer
We four were wont to say;
The very place hath power to charm
All gloomier thoughts away.

I have a thousand memories dear,
And quiet joys untold;
For God but takes his gifts away,
To give them back tenfold.

From Chambers's Journal for November.
THE PHANTOM HORSE.

Du Foinvert was a handsome and fascinating man, of distinguished family and rank; the marchioness was young and a widow, and life at the chateau was somewhat lonely for her. Very soon after this, the marchioness found herself seized with a strong desire to proceed to Paris also.

As her carriage was proceeding along the Boulevards, she observed a glittering party of gentlemen on horseback approaching, riding on either side, and in the wake of a very sum-

ptuous chariot, drawn by four white ponies. In the chariot was seated a gentleman of a somewhat dissipated appearance, apparently beyond middle life, but still of a vivacious and lively temperament. This was the Duke of Orleans, cousin of the king, and afterwards celebrated as the Egalite of the Revolution. These, however, were the days of his luxury, pomp, and insouciant intrigues. On his right hand rode Du Foinvert, on his black and white horse, making about the finest and most interesting figure of the goodly company. The count raised his hat and bowed low as he caught sight of his charming country neighbour in the carriage. The marchioness smiled and blushed, and bowed in return.

'Hey! what is the meaning of this?' exclaimed the duke. 'Du Foinvert, what have you been about? Who is she?'

'The Marchioness de Beauvoisin—a neighbour of mine in the country, monsieur, answered the count.

'A country neighbour come to town,' returned the duke, looking up in the face of his young courtier with a scrutinising glance. 'What! Du Foinvert actually blushes!'

'Not I, monsieur. It is your fancy.'

'No, no; my eyes are still good; and did I not see that the lady, your country neighbour, blushes also? I take it you are well disposed towards each other.'

'It would become us to be so, monsieur, since our houses are but little better than a gun shot apart.'

'You are right; and it is well to obey the behests of our most holy religion, which commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves!—and especially when the neighbour happens to be a charming young marchioness. But my dear Du Foinvert, where is her husband all the while?—is he not accounted within the pale of neighbourhood?'

'The lady has not such a thing at present, monsieur,' said Du Foinvert. 'Her partner is deceased, and she is keeping the shop open on her own account.'

'My dear count, if she has capital, she would make an excellent sleeping partner—that, I warrant, has already had your due consideration. But I should like to see something more of this most amiable marchioness.'

'My lord, I beg that a passing salutation, sincerely respectful on my part, may not lead you to fancy that the lady is to be trifled with.'

'Oh, don't be frightened! You wrong me in your jealous terror, my dear young friend. So far from being inclined to play any tricks, I feel myself warmly disposed to behave like a father to you—like a father so you Foinvert.—I see how you are disposed, and will make inquiry into the illigibility of the affair; excuse me, *mon ami!* simply paternal—simply paternal. I am afraid my son, that, considering how you have been spending money lately, you must be near the bottom of the chest; and in that case the alliance may be advantageous.—Confess, Du Foinvert, you have nearly got through all?'

'Never fear, my lord; I can find plenty more where I found the rest,' returned Du Foinvert impatiently—the last words in a somewhat suppressed tone.

'Ah! but this is no reason why we should neglect this promising little affair,' continued the duke. 'In fact, I will send Madame the Marchioness an invitation for our little fete next Wednesday, and the Duchess de Blanverie shall be her chaperone.'

'I have reason to believe that the marchioness, since her widowhood, leads a strictly secluded life.'

'Only seeing a neighbour now and then, perhaps?'

'I mean to say, she never eges into society, and I am by no means of opinion that she would enjoy anything like the fete we are looking forward to at St. Cloud.'

'Be not alarmed, my friend; she shall be humoured most assiduously—not delicately: the sweet widow shall have her very whims respected. Be at rest, and confide in me, your paternal guardian.'

Du Foinvert did not look by any means pleased, notwithstanding the gracious interest the duke manifested in his affairs. In sooth, he knew his grace far too well to be unable to appreciate correctly the paternal attachment accorded him; and he by no means relished the idea of his versatile patron coming between him and the widow Beauvoisin. When a man begins to entertain a tender passion, he does not feel inclined to allow the interference of an accomplished and powerful *roue*, however fair sounding the offered countenance and encouragement of the latter. He does not want to be assisted in his love affair by another, especially when that other considers all the choicest of the sex as fair game, and was never known to be troubled or restricted by anything like a scruple. Du Foinvert, therefore, anatomised with his whole heart the chance that had brought the marchioness and his own acquaintance with her under the observation of the duke; for by this time he had many times cast over in his mind the numerous graces and charms of the young widow, and the solid and substantial assistance her ample fortune might afford in the way of retrieving his affairs, which, to say truth, were in a state of desperate embarrassment and confusion; and, in helping

him to begin life again with a clear course before him.

The duke was as good as his word. The marchioness received a polite and respectful invitation to honour the fete at St. Cloud with her presence, and the duke's experienced friend, the Duchess de Blanverie, herself conveyed it to her, with assurances that it would afford her a pleasant evening, and that she, the duchess, would take care that she should not want the countenance and assistance of a good chaperone. What wonder that our young, vivacious, and beautiful widow was dazzled, and that she at once took it for granted that she could make an excellent figure, even amidst the glittering court of the ex-regent!

The appointed evening arrived: the gardens and terraced walks of St. Cloud were splendidly illuminated, and the fine old chateau itself looked like the palace of a fairy tale—the radiance of myriad lights blazing from the windows. The carriage of the marchioness made one amidst the long train of equipages that were drawn up at the gates. The spirit of festivity was upon the place; the air was full of music, of the sound of gay and hilarious voices—of jest and laughter—of the dainty rustling of silks and satins—of the sparkling glitter of jewels and precious stones.

As soon as the marchioness entered the *salle d'entree*, the Duchess de Blanverie was by her side, all smiles and compliments. The young widow looked extremely handsome; her dress was unexceptionable. The presence of a new beauty in that sphere was always a theme for observation, gossip, and speculation. The marchioness found herself an object of attention, and in some quarters of admiration, and straight-woman as she was, began to felicitate herself upon her auspicious entrance into the highest society, and to feel interest and enjoyment in all that was going on all around her.

She had been a couple of hours in the house and was wondering whether she should see the Count du Foinvert there, as she had expected, he being one of the intimate associates of the duke; and whether, indeed, she should see the duke himself, for as yet he had not made his appearance in any of the groups through which she had passed. As she was still speculating on this probability, a voice at her shoulder pronounced her name in a low tone, and turning, she beheld the Duke of Orleans himself.

'You are thrice welcome, dear madame, to this house, and I am sorry to remember that we have never had the honour of your presence before,' he said, with a courtly smile and bow.

'Monsieur is very good!' exclaimed the marchioness.

'I am sorry to hear, my dear lady, of the sad repute into which your neighbourhood has fallen. I hope and trust you may never share the fate to which so many who pass your road have been exposed.'

'Monsieur, you alarm me!' exclaimed the marchioness, in astonishment. 'To what do you allude? What peril awaits those who pass along our road? I am very rarely in Paris—and thus do not hear the news.'

'It is sad work! six robberies on the highway between St. Germain and Paris within the past month, and as yet not the slightest clue to the perpetrator; who, according to all accounts, is a *cavalier seul* mounted on a black horse.'

The marchioness started and turned pale with terror as a wild suspicion darted through her mind.

'Ah! you may well be affrighted, my dear young lady,' said the duke. 'I hope providence may save you from the wretch, whoever he may be. I have pledged my word, that immediately upon discovery he shall expiate his crimes upon the scaffold. But what is the matter, my dear madame? are you faint? are you ill?'

'Excuse me,' said the marchioness, in great disorder. 'A black horse, did you say? and on the St. Germain road? Then there have been robberies? Did I not see that horse myself and did not Antoine see it twice, and did he not say it went straight to his door? Can it be possible?'

'What do you mean, my dear madame?' asked the duke, exceedingly astonished at the confusion and the agitated words of his fair visitor. 'What horse did you see? and to whose door did it go?'

'Excuse me monsieur; the news has so startled me I hardly know what I am saying,' answered the marchioness, seized now with a new terror. 'There were some idle stories of a horse being seen running past my house without a rider—perhaps it belonged to some one who had been robbed.'

'But to whose door it run, my dear madame? Did you not speak of its going straight to some person's door?' asked the duke with eager interest. 'Come, come! I am delighted by the hope that you may be able to give us some clue to the villain. Society will be beholden to you, my dear marchioness.'

'No, no! I know nothing whatever—I had heard of no robberies, before your grace informed me of this moment,' said the poor lady, in extreme perplexity and alarm. 'It is all fresh news to me.'

'Ay! but this about the horse without a rider which you have seen once, and which Antoine

has seen twice, and which Antoine says went straight to somebody's door,' persisted the duke impatiently. 'To whose door, madame?'

'I cannot tell, monsieur—the man himself was alarmed, and his statement is not to be trusted. My own inquiries have discovered that he was entirely mistaken—entirely mistaken. Excuse me, monsieur—I could not, for my life, say a word which might throw suspicion upon an innocent person.'

The duke looked round the salon with an eager glance. 'Why is Du Foinvert not here?' he muttered gravely.

The marchioness blushed amidst her agitation at the mention of that name, and became still more distressed. The duke observed the circumstance, and smiled mischievously. 'Take my arm, my dear madame. I will beg you to accompany me for a few moments.'

He conducted her to a retired apartment, motioning first the Duchesse de Blanverie to follow. When they were alone, he whispered some instructions in the ear of the latter, and she retired, leaving him with the marchioness.

'You have dropped some hints—some words, madame, which must be cleared up,' he said with judicial gravity. 'It is my belief you have it in your power to afford us a clue of importance: let me beg of you not to allow your timidity to impede the course of justice.'

'You frighten me, monsieur! What have I to do with the course of justice? All I know is that I saw a horse run past my house one night without a rider.'

'And Antoine saw it twice—and, pray, who is Antoine?'

'One of my servants.'

'Bien! he shall be arrested. Doubtless, he will be more communicative than his mistress.'

'Oh, monsieur, he is a gossiping noodle, and his statement is not to be trusted.'

'We can judge of that when we hear what it is, rejoined the duke drily.

Here the Duchess de Blanverie re-entered the room, followed by six gentlemen of various ages, but most of them young, and wearing the gallant, reckless, and high bred air of courtiers to the manner born.

'Behold, madame, the victims of the robber!' exclaimed the duke, waving his hand towards these gentlemen with a smile. 'These six gentlemen have all been robbed within the past month by the mysterious cavalier *seul*, who rides upon a black horse.'

'A horse that runs like the wind, and makes no more noise!' cried one. 'Four hundred louis the villain eased me of.'

'A horse whose hoofs you can hardly hear when he is galloping close at your side!' exclaimed another. 'A thousand louis am I the poorer, entirely because I could not hear the creature coming after me!'

'Plainly a horse out of the devil's stables,' added a fourth. 'It's my belief the brute has wings. Six hundred and fifty louis, my friends!—no joke to lose.'

And as the 'victims' proceeded thus with their complaints, the agitation of the marchioness increased, for the peculiarity they all alluded to established the identity of the phantom horse.

'Gentlemen,' said the duke, waving his hand with an inclination of his head towards the marchioness, 'this lady and her servant have, on three occasions, seen a horse running away without a rider, in the neighbourhood in which you were robbed. Her servant saw the horse go to a certain person's door. It is my belief that she may afford us some clue of importance, and I have called you to her presence in order that her pity may be excited, and induce her to reveal all she knows.'

'Did the horse run in a strange, silent manner?' asked one.

'It did—it did; but I know nothing about these robberies, and have never heard of them before,' exclaimed the marchioness, her affright greatly increased.

'To whose door did it go?' cried the chorus.

'His name—madame, his name!'

'I would not cast suspicion upon an innocent person for the world!' exclaimed the marchioness.

'No harm shall befall the innocent, depend upon it madame. His name, we pray you!'

'We must secure Antoine, the lady's servant,' said the duke, as the marchioness still hesitated. 'Him we will make more communicative.'

He rang the bell, and to the dismay of the marchioness, Antoine, apparently frightened out of his wits, was hurried into the room by a couple of Lackeys.

'I have sent for him; you see,' said the duke. 'Now we shall hear something.'

He then proceeded to question the wondering Antoine as to all he knew about the phantom horse; and at length drew forth the whole of his story—the company learning that the horse had stopped at the country-house of the Count Du Foinvert.

The name was echoed in a general shout, the moment Antoine mentioned it.

'Du Foinvert! the villain!'

'Du Foinvert! the traitor!'

'Du Foinvert! the cheat!'

'I suspected it must be some one always present at our play,' cried one; 'for whenever any one gained a lucky pull, he was sure to be robbed!'