

POETRY.

A VALENTINE.

If only I might sing Like birds in spring— Robin, or thrush, or wren, In grove or glen.

If only I might suit To harp or lute, To chime in tender time Some touching rhyme,— Then I'd not hope in vain

These car to gain; But now—I halt—I quail— Ah! must I fail?

So small my skill to plead My earnest need, Love—Love is all the peal I bring to thee.

Clinton Scouler, in The Century

ELF SONG.

I twist the toes of the birds a-doz, I tinkle the dew bells bright; I chuck the chin of the dimpled rose Till she laughs in the stars dim light.

The glowworm's lamp I hide in the damp, I steal the wild bee's sting; I pinch the tadpole till his legs are a-cramp, And clip the beetle's wing.

O hey! O hey! My pranks I play With never a note of warning.

I set a snare for the moonbeams fair All wrought of spider-web twine; I tangle the naughty children's hair In a snarl of red design.

I fit through the honeysuckle without any noise, There's never an elf so shy; I break the toys of bad little boys And cross the little girls who cry.

O hey! O hey! I cross them too, Till crows the cock in the morning. —Samuel Maycock, in St. Nicholas for February.

SELECT STORY.

THE HIDDEN HAND

BY MRS. S. L. WILSON.

ARTHOUS OF "THE CURSE OF CLIFTON," "THE CHANGED BRIDES," ETC. ETC. CONTINUED FROM THE CAPITAL.

CHAPTER LIX.

PERSPECTS BRIGHTEN.

Thus far our fortune keeps an onward course, And we are graced with wreaths of victory.

SIX SPEAKERS.

Leaving Mrs. Le Noir, Traversé went down to the stable, saddled the horse that had been allotted to his use, and set off for a long day's journey to New Orleans, where late at night he arrived, and put up at the St. Charles.

He slept deeply from fatigue until late the next morning, when he was awakened by the sound of drums, trumpets and fifes, and by general rejoicing.

He arose and looked from his windows to ascertain the cause, and saw the equipage full of people in a state of the highest excitement, watching for a military procession coming up the street.

As they advanced, Traversé, eagerly upon the lookout, recognized his own regiment, and presently saw Major Greyson himself.

Traversé withdrew from the window, hurriedly completed his toilet, and hastened down stairs, where he soon found himself face to face with Herbert, who warmly grasping his hand, exclaimed: "You here, old friend? Why, I thought you were down in East Feliciana, with your interesting patient!"

"It is for the interest of that interesting patient that I am here, Herbert! Did I tell you, she was one of the victims of that demon, Le Noir?"

"No; but I know it from another source. I know as much, or more of her, perhaps than you do!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Traversé, in surprise. "Yes! I know, for instance, that she is Capito's mother, the long lost widow of Eugene Le Noir, the mistress of the Hidden House, and the ghost who drew forth the curtains there at night."

"Then you do know something about her, but how did you arrive at the knowledge?"

"By the last dying speech and confession," of Gabriel Le Noir, confided to me, to be used in restitution after his decease, said Herbert, taking the arm of his friend, as they followed the moving crowd into the breakfast parlour.

Herbert first related to Traversé all that had occurred from the time that the latter left the city of Mexico, including the arrival of Craven Le Noir at the dying bed of his father, the subsequent death and funeral of Colonel Le Noir, and the late emigration of Craven, who, to avoid the shame of the approaching revelation, joined a party of explorers bound for the recently discovered gold mines of Colombia.

Herbert took from his pocket the confession of Colonel Le Noir, which he said was now at liberty to use as he thought proper for the ends of justice. The confession may be briefly summed up as follows:

The first item was, that he had sought to win the affections of Major Roche, the supposed wife of Major Ira Warfield; he sedulously flattered and followed her with his suit during the whole summer; he had constantly reviled and avoided him; he, listening to his own evil passions, had bribed her maid to admit him in the dark to Marah's cabin, upon a certain night when her husband was to be absent; that the unexpected return of Major Warfield, who had tracked him to the house, had prevented the success of his evil project, but had not saved the reputation of the innocent wife, whose infuriated husband would not believe her ignorant of the presence of the villain in her house; that he, Gabriel Le Noir, in hatred as well as in shame, had fortune until now to make the explanation, which he hoped might now, late in life as it was, bring the long severed pair together, and established Marah Roche and her son in their legal and social rights.

The second item in the black list of crime was the death of his older brother, whom he declared he had not intended to kill. He said that, having contracted large debts which he was unable to pay, he had returned secretly from his distant quarters to demand the money from his brother who had often helped him; that meeting his brother in the woods, he made this request. Eugene reproached him for his extravagance and folly, and refused to aid him; an encounter ensued, in which Eugene fell. He, Gabriel Le Noir, fled, pursued by the curse of Cain, and reached his own quarters before even his absence had been suspected. His agency in the death of his brother was not suspected even by his accomplice in other crimes, the outlaw called Black Donald, who, thinking in gain an accomplice over one whom he called his patron, actually pretended to have made away with Eugene Le Noir for the sake of his younger brother!

The third item of confession was the abduction of the nurse and babe of the young widow of Eugene, the circumstances of which are already known to the reader. The fourth in the dreadful list comprised the deceptions, wrongs and persecutions practiced upon Madame Eugene Le Noir, and the final false imprisonment of that lady under the charge of insanity, in the private mad-house kept by Doctor Pierre St. Jean, in East Feliciana.

In conclusion, he spoke of the wrong done to Clara Day, whose pardon, with that of others, he begged. And he prayed

that in consideration of his son, as little publicity as was possible might be given to these crimes.

"During the reading of this confession, the eyes of Traversé were fixed in wonder and half incredulity upon the face of Herbert, and at its conclusion he said: "This, then, was the secret of my dear mother's long unhappiness! She was Major Warfield's forsaken wife!—Herbert! I feel as though I never, never, could forgive my father!"

"Traversé, if Major Warfield had willfully and wantonly forsaken your mother, I should say that your resentment was natural and right!—Who should be an honorable woman's champion if not her own son?—But Major Warfield, as well as his wife, was more sinned against than sinning! Your parents were both victims of a cruel conspiracy, and he suffered as much in his way, as she did in hers," said Herbert.

"I always thought, somehow, that my dear mother was a forsaken wife. She never told me so; but there was something about her circumstances and manner, her retired life, her concern, so much below her deserts, her never speaking of her husband's death which would have been natural for her to do, had she been the widow—all, somehow, went to give me the impression that my father had abandoned us. Lately I had suspected Major Warfield had something to do with the sad affair, though I never once suspected him to be my father!—so much for natural instincts," said Traversé, with a melancholy smile.

"Traversé," said Herbert, with the design of drawing him off from sad remembrance of his mother's early trials, "I would set out at midnight, and ride straight on for a week!"

"I will set out with you this very morning, if you wish, as I am on leave. What! to hasten the release of Capito's mother? I would set out at midnight, and ride straight on for a week!"

"Ah! there is no need of such extravagant feats of travel. It is now ten o'clock; if we start within an hour, we can reach the 'Calum Retreat' by eleven o'clock to-night!"

"En avant, then," exclaimed Herbert, rising and ringing the bell.

Traversé ordered horses, and in twenty minutes, the friends were on the road to East Feliciana.

They reached the 'Calum Retreat' so late that night, that there was none but the porter awake to admit them.

The next morning Traversé conducted his friend down to the breakfast-parlor, to introduce him to Doctor St. Jean, who, as soon as he perceived his young medical assistant, sprang forward, exclaiming: "Grand Heaven! Is it then you? Have you then returned? What for did you run away with my horse?"

"I went to New Orleans in great haste, upon very important business, sir."

"I did my errand with less trouble than I had anticipated, owing to the happy circumstance of meeting my friend here. Allow me to present him,—Major Herbert Greyson, of the—th Regiment of Cavalry!"

"But your business, so important and so hasty, which has brought this officer so illustrious down here—what is it, my friend?"

"We will have the honor of explaining to Monsieur le Docteur, over our coffee, if he will oblige us by ordering the servant to retire," said Traversé, who sometimes resorted to this expedient with the old Frenchman, his own formal style of politeness.

As soon as the man had gone, Traversé immediately commenced and related all that was necessary concerning the fraud practised upon the institution by introducing into it an unfortunate woman, represented to be mad, but really only sorrowful, nervous, and excitable. And to prove the truth of his words, Traversé desired Herbert to read from the confession the portion relating to this fraud, and to show the doctor the signature of the principal and the witness.

Our doctor, after staring at the confession, took hold of the top of his blue tassel night-cap, pulled it off his head, threw it violently upon the floor, and exclaimed: "Sweet! Diab!e!" and other ejaculations dreadful to translate, and others again, which it would be profane to set down in French or English.

Gabriel Le Noir was no longer an officer illustrious, a gentleman noble and distinguished, compassionate and tender; he was a robber, infamous a villain atrocious a crafty ruffian, and without remorse!

After breakfast, the doctor consented that his young hero, his little knight-errant, his dear son, should go to the distressed lady, and open the good news to her, while the great Major Greyson, the warrior invincible, should go around with himself to inspect the institution.

Traversé immediately repaired to the chamber of Mrs. Le Noir, whom he found sitting at the window, engaged in some little trifle of needlework, the same pale, sensitive woman, that she had first appeared to him.

"Ah, you have come! I read good news upon your smiling face, my friend! Tell it! I have borne the worst of sorrows! I shall not have strength to hear joy!"

Traversé told her all, and then ended by saying: "Now dear Madam, it is necessary that we leave this place within two hours, as Major Greyson's regiment leaves New Orleans for Washington to-morrow, and it is advisable that you go under our protection. We can get you a female attendant from that you know me. They were the emissaries of my enemy, the great Court Plaster Physician. They would have stopped our flight, but now we are safe and our union is assured. To-night you will be mine! mine! Those emerald eyes that glow like fire! that marble lip—all mine! The whole bench of bishops and the Pope of Rome are now waiting at St. Paul's to make us one, and the building is illuminated with electric cats-eye's. My cousin, the Emperor of the South, has promised to restore me to my kingdom, and he and I shall rule the universe, and our enemies shall be confounded. Beside the velvet throne is placed a dainty small one for you, my lady-love, and dragons fire shall do your bidding!"

I was almost sick with fright as his awful voice grew louder and wilder. I did not dare to scream; and even if the occupants of the next compartment heard me, they could render no assistance, and I should only enrage the maniac, and the next turn of the frenzied train might be toward murder. It was more than probable that he possessed some knife or dagger. My very life was at his mercy, and all depended on my presence of mind and discretion.

I had heard or read that that the best way to manage a lunatic was to conciliate and not oppose him. I breathed an inward prayer for success on my efforts, and then tried to humour him. I said, suggesting me almost in two; the other alternately fought the air and beat upon the seat, and made dives into the bread-basket of his coat, from whence I breathed each moment to see him draw some gleaming steel.

CHAPTER LX. CAPITO'S A CAPITAL. Truly painted with a cheerful look, Equally distant from proud insolence And sad dejection.—MARRIAGE.

Well, the trial of Donald Bayne, alias Black Donald, was over. Cap, of course, had been compelled to appear against him. During the whole course of the trial the court-room was crowded with a curious multitude, "from far and near," eager to get sight of the notorious outlaw.

Black Donald, through the whole ordeal, deported himself with a gallant and joyous dignity, that would have better become a triumph than a trial.

He was indicted upon several distinct counts, the most serious of which—the murder of the solitary widow and her daughter in the forest cabin, and the assassination of Eugene Le Noir in the woods near the Hidden House—were sustained only by circumstantial evidence. But the aggregate weight of all these, together with his very bad reputation, was sufficient to convict him, and Black-Donald was sentenced to death.

TO BE CONTINUED.

'A Mauvais Quatre d'Heure.'

Yes, we are just in time. "You have caught it." "Your luggage is in." "I have taken your ticket; here it is." "Where's my umbrella? and the sandwiches?"

"Remember the train stops at five places before you get out at Waterloo station when I will meet you." "One more kiss. Good-bye, Jim, Helen, Fanny."

"Write soon." "Give our love to Aunt Mary and the chicks.

Here our farewells were broken in upon by the lion of the guard, saying: "Now then, miss, take your place if you don't want to be left behind. Don't you see the train is beginning to move? This way; there's room here. Jump in—quick!"

And he half pushed me into a first class compartment and banged the door behind me, and we were off.

As long as possible I learned out of the window, waving extra farewells to the brother and sisters, but when I could no longer distinguish their figures, I drew in my head and took a survey of my fellow-passengers, three in number.

Opposite me sat a homely, middle-aged lady and her plain daughter; and, also on the opposite side, in the extreme corner, a red bearded gentleman was enjoying a nap, with his chin buried in his chest, and his hat over his eyes.

A most uninteresting I quickly decided, and settled myself down in my corner with the magazine Jim had given me, feeling rather important to be really travelling alone for the first time in my life, though the journey would only take three hours, and there were no change en route, and I had been put in by my friends at one end, and should be met by friends at the other.

The story I was reading was deeply interesting, and I was so absorbed in it that it seemed to me as if only five minutes had passed, when we reached the first halting-place, and I knew that in reality half an hour had elapsed.

After this the lady and her daughter began talking to each other in a half whispering tone that was most annoying. I could not help trying to catch the first halting-place, and I knew that in reality half an hour had elapsed.

The gentleman in the corner was still asleep, so I turned my head and again I settled myself to the undisturbed enjoyment of my story. In a few moments some movement on his part made me glance toward him; to all appearance he was still asleep as before, but I noticed that his hat had been pushed back.

I sincerely wished that he would continue to sleep, and this kept me perpetually looking across to ascertain whether he did. But was he asleep at all? The eye nearest me was still closed; but the other I discovered with a little uncomfortable thrill, was half open, and it appeared to me that, over the bridge of his nose, it was fixed on me with a glimmering and sinister expression.

Good-bye to all enjoyment in the magazine then, though I still tried to continue reading, and to my mind's eye I know no more uncomfortable sensation than that of being watched and scrutinized covertly by a perfect stranger.

Suddenly, and without any of the usual signs that accompany awaking from a deep sleep, he rose and walked up the carriage, and seated himself bolt upright exactly opposite to me, staring hard at me out of a pair of dark, blood-shot eyes.

It was evident that the man meant to be impertinent and was doing this to annoy me, so I kept my eye fixed on the page which trembled between my fingers, but I terminated to be dignified at all costs. But without looking at him I seemed to have a consciousness of every movement. With an effort at carelessness, which I was very far from feeling, I laid down my book and consulted my time-table, and found, to my dismay, that there was still a quarter of an hour between me and the next station, where I could rid myself of his annoyance, and ask the guard to put me in another carriage.

That quarter of an hour! How most awful in my life! I never know such another!

In about two minutes the man rose once more, and this time seated himself beside me, and began speaking rapidly and endeavoring to pass his hand round my waist.

"My darling," he said, "so you have come! I knew you would not fail me, and at last we are alone together!"

My terror knew no bounds. I could scarcely command my voice as I answered: "Sir, do you wish to insult me? Or do you take me for your own?"

The words were those of a tragical queen, but the voice was small and shaky. "Insult you! The apple of my eye! The star of my nose! But this is coyness, when we have been seeking this opportunity for flight all these dreary years; and now you pretend you do not know me. It is this disguise—away false beard!" he cried, tearing the red beard from his face and disclosing dark whiskers underneath.

"Now then, you know me for your own Maximilian!"

Yes, I knew him then, God help me. I knew by the rolling of the blood-shot eyes, and the incoherent words from the frothing mouth that I was alone—utterly alone, and past all human help for fifteen minutes with a raving lunatic!

"Did you not see them?" he continued. "Those women—I dared not make a sign while they were here. Ah, ah! the red beard served you well. They thought me, but did not know me. They were the emissaries of my enemy, the great Court Plaster Physician. They would have stopped our flight, but now we are safe and our union is assured. To-night you will be mine! mine! Those emerald eyes that glow like fire! that marble lip—all mine! The whole bench of bishops and the Pope of Rome are now waiting at St. Paul's to make us one, and the building is illuminated with electric cats-eye's. My cousin, the Emperor of the South, has promised to restore me to my kingdom, and he and I shall rule the universe, and our enemies shall be confounded. Beside the velvet throne is placed a dainty small one for you, my lady-love, and dragons fire shall do your bidding!"

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To gain possession of his hands was my object, so I asked my question! "Hush—hush!"

"Yes, Maximilian, you are right. We shall soon be safe, but we must be quiet, or there is danger even now. How can we tell where our enemies may spring from? Let us sit silent, and hold each other's hands, to be sure we are together."

"Right as ever, my queen! Hush—hush!" He sat opposite me once more. My two hands locked in with a pressure that tightened till the very bones felt crunched, and I could have yelled with pain. I could not move my eyes from his, which had an evil fascination for me, like the snake for the bird. We must have sat thus for six or seven terrible minutes, which were an eternity to me? What a situation! Picture it! Sitting locked hand-in-hand with a madman, his hot breath playing on my face, my hands almost paralyzed in his grasp, while from time to time he hoarsely echoed, "hush—hush—hush!" dreading each moment lest some fancy should seize him. Thus passed the land, past green field and happy peasant homes we sped, while the little ones ran out and cheered us on our way. It is all photographed on my mind, mixed with thoughts of home and prayers for rescue.

At last, at last, thank God! I became conscious that the train was slackening speed. This, I knew, was the time for prompt action; so I leaned forward and whispered to him in the same mysterious voice he was using: "The train will stop soon, and we must watch if our enemies are about. You must look from that window and I from this, and in a few minutes we shall be safe."

He seemed to like the plan, for a hoarse chuckle patted my cheek, repeating several times, "Clever child—clever child," and then went to take up his position at the window furthest from the platform.

When I was alone I was trembling with dread lest he should see the frantic signs I was making to the guard to come and open the door.

When it opened I fell rather than jumped from the compartment, and sunk down on the platform shrieking. "Help! Help! Save me! Save me!" I called.

And then, as in a dream, I was aware of all the passengers' heads popping out to look at me, and the demagogue tones of the lunatic as he yelled, "She-devil! you have escaped me!" blended with a man's voice saying, "So you are there, are you, my gentleman? A lot of trouble you have given the authorities, to be sure, since you got from Sidemore Asylum four days back. You're a deep 'un, you are! They've been sending telegrams up and down the line to keep a lookout for you ever since. Poor fellow!"

After that darkness closed in around me and I was conscious of nothing more till I woke up three weeks later, I am told, to find myself in bed in a strange room, with my hair cut short as a mouse's back, and scarcely strength to lift my finger. My mother and sisters were by me, and a strange gentleman was holding my wrist and saying in a kind voice, "Yes, it was a frightful shock, but with time and care I shall pull her through now."

And so he did, though my nerves were aching like in steady themselves, and while I live I will never let alone again, except in such cases where the directors are wise enough to copy the plan adopted by our clever cousins across the Atlantic, by which such dangers are rendered practically impossible.

WASHINGTON HORROR. A Helpless Girl Perishes in Sight of Friends.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3.—A terrible calamity visited the household of Secretary Tracy this morning, whereby three persons lost their lives, and three others were badly injured. It is impossible at this time to state the exact details. The house is three-story and basement, brick, on Ist street, and occupies a prominent position in the city.

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And so he did, though my nerves were aching like in steady themselves, and while I live I will never let alone again, except in such cases where the directors are wise enough to copy the plan adopted by our clever cousins across the Atlantic, by which such dangers are rendered practically impossible.

Later her body was found by Chief Justice Harris lying on the floor in the second floor hall, at the head of the stairs. The body was not greatly disfigured by fire; she evidently died from suffocation. The chief brought out the body. The body of the French maid was found, burned beyond recognition, in her room on the top floor.

Mrs. Wilmerding and daughter, Alice, occupied the second story front room. They jumped from the window to the grass terrace below. The bodies of Mrs. and Miss Tracy were brought to the White House about six o'clock by order of the president, who has taken charge of whatever arrangements