[FOR THE RECORD-UNION.]

SET IN A SILVER SEA!

A ROMANCE BY B. L. FARJEON.

AUTHOR OF "BLADE O' GRASS," "BREAD AND CHEESE AND KISSES," "JOSHUA MARVEL" "KING OF NO-LAND," "THE BELLS OF PENRAVEN," ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

MARGARET AND CLARICE.

"The girl she described must have been wondrously beautiful, and could scarcely have been seen and forgotten. I had not met with her, and I told Margaret so, and having heard so much, I easily prevailed upon her to relate to me all the particulars of her trouble. The girl of whom she was in search was her twin-sister, but, as she said, resembling her only in the shape and form of her features. Their father, Margaret said, led such a life as I and Paul were leading; he was an educated man, but poor, and fond of wandering. He traveled—his wife being dead—for years through many countries, accompanied by his children.

"'He loved us devotedly,' said Margaret, 'and we were most happy with him. He taught us to play comedies, and indeed wrote pieces to suit us, and we acted them to simple people in villages and small towns. We did not perform in large cities. My father seemed to avoid them purposely, and when it was necessary for us to pass through them in our travels, he made a point of shunning observation. Ah! how happy was our life! We never felt the pinch of poverty, and scarcely knew what care was. Clarice, my darling sister, Clarice, was the flower of our little garden. Perhaps it was because she was so much smaller than I, and looked so much younger, although there were only a few minutes difference in our ages, that I looked upon her as a child, and upon myself as a woman. Indeed, I was the mother of the family, and Clarice, I believed and believe, loved me as truly and faithfully as I loved her. I was not jealous of her, although she was always the favorite; she deserved to be, for she was beautiful and gentle, while I—well, I have a temper, a little too quick at times, but not bad, indeed not bad! And I am better now, since I have lost Clarice. I have to suffer without repining, or I may never find her.'

"My heart was moved to deep tenderness by Margaret's plaintive words, which expressed a world of inherent goodness and unselfish love. Shortly before her father's death they were joined by the man who was now Margaret's companion and master, the man I had seen that day in the forest. Her father's health was breaking, and this man, by smooth and cunning ways, and by pretended tenderness towards his girls, obtained so complete a dominion over him that before his death, which happened three years before I met Margaret, he gave, by written legal document, the control of his children into the hands of the villain.

"A villain, indeed, he proved. The orphan girls were among strangers; there was not one friend in all the wide world to whom they could turn; they had no relatives, and no native land they could call their own, for they did not even know where they had been born; they were utterly alone, in the power of a man whom they could neither love nor respect, and who, as the result proved, brought desolation into their young lives. He drove them hither and thither, and made them work and dance for his profit, at all hours and in all seasons, and ruled them with a rod of iron.

"I will give you the rest of Margaret's story in her own words. I wrote it as she in after times narrated it to me, and I have the paper now in my possession; fancying that you hear Margaret speak you will be able to form a better idea of the nature of the woman I was glad to see my son marry, and whom I now declare to be worthy of your friendship and regard."

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"As for me," said Margaret, "I could stand such a life; I am strong and hardy; but it was different with Clarice. She was delicate and fragile, and the work distressed and fatigued her. While our father lived she had been our pet lamb, and had never received harsh word or look. She had now to endure such hardship as we never supposed would have fallen to her lot; for we had mapped out a fair future for her, and had indulged in bright dreams of a happy wedded life, with a husband who loved her as we loved her, and children as fair and sweet as our own dear girl. We lived in the sunlight then; now every hour was dark. Clarice did not complain to me, but who should know her strength, or more correct to say, her weakness, and of what she was capable, better than I? and I knew that the life she was now compelled to live would kill her in a few years. I did what I could to lighten her work, and when our master was not watching us, endeavored to repair the mischief he was doing. I planned a scheme of escape, whither I knew not, for we were driven from place to place, from fair to fair, from show to show, without our being aware in what part of the country, and sometimes in what country, we were making crowds of rough people laugh and applaud. They liked to see Clarice dance, and then called for her again and again, and she had no choice but to comply with their cruel demandss, until she sank from exhaustion on the stage—and even then, so pretty did she look as she lay panting before them, with my arms around her, and my lips whispering comfort to her, they made the place ring with their cheers in praise of her acting; for it is all acting on the stage, is it not? There is nothing real! Ah! if people only knew.

"The night selected for our flight arrived, and Clarice and I stole away at an hour past midnight, when our master and all in the village were asleep. We had no money, no experience, no knowledge of the world. The only idea in my mind was to escape by a road we had not hitherto traversed, and to trust to fortune for the rest. That the scheme was wild and certain of failure did not occur to me; the one thing to be accomplished was to fly from the tyrant who had brought wretchedness and misery into our lives.

"The night was chosen for its darkness, so that there should be less chance of our being seen, and my plan was defeated in its outset by this precaution. For in my agitation and confusion, and having no light to guide us, I missed my way, and we had walked a mile in the wrong direction before I discovered my error. We retraced our steps cautiously, for Clarice was frightened, and cried out every moment that we were being followed, and she wept and trembled so that I reproached myself bitterly for having made so mad an attempt. At length Clarice declared she could walk no farther, and I saw that it would be cruelty to urge her. We sat down mournfully by the roadside, where, cradled in my arms, Clarice fell asleep. We were not half a mile from the village we had left, and it was inevitable that we should be discovered. Some villagers who had seen us perform, going early to their work, caught sight of us, and questioned us, and with the cruel joy that all men feel when helpless creatures are being hunted down, they carried the news to our master that his two dancing girls were running away. He hastened to us in a furious passion and dragged us before a magistrate, threatening us on the way with the most dreadful penalties.

"For my own part, I think I should have the courage to defy him, but Clarice took all the strength out of me; the wild beating of her heart as I pressed her to my side was torture to me.

"To the magistrate our master related a smooth and plausible story, telling of the obligations our father was under to him, of the friendship that existed between them, of the pain and annoyance we systematically caused that kindest of men, of being appointed guardian to us until we were 21 years of age, with detailed accounts of our acts of ingratitude—all of which inventions made me quiver with indignation. His story was conclusive, my denial of its truth was received with contempt, and the magistrate treated us to a homily upon our monstrous conduct, telling us that we could be put into prison for our disobedience and rebellion; nay, he assisted the case against us by saying that he doubted not the very clothes in which we ran away were the property of our master, and that we could be severely punished for the theft. Our master replied, it was true he could charge us with theft, but he would not do so out of consideration for our youth, and because he intended to fulfill, to the best of his poor ability, the trust reposed in him by his dear dead friend, our father. He did not say that it would not suit his purpose that we should be imprisoned—although I knew it well enough—and he begged for our discharge; so we were released, with warnings and admonitions from the magistrate, in whom we should rather have found a friend than an enemy.

"There was no help for us; we had been given into slavery, and by a dear father who would have shed his heart's blood for us. But it cannot last forever, I thought; when Clarice and I are women we shall be free; the villain will no longer have power over us; till then we must submit. So I schooled myself to patience. We were worked harder than ever, and we must have earned a great deal of money, for our performances found favor wherever we went. He was cunning, this master of ours; if we performed to his satisfaction the hard tasks he set for us, he gave us better food and fine promises; if we did not please him, or if money did not flow in plentifully, he placed the coarsest food before us, with blows for a sauce.

"'Cannot you see,' he said to me one day, 'what fools you are to thwart me? Do as I bid you, and your lives will be easy and comfortable. All I want is to make money out of you.'

"The villain had no regard for us as human creatures; he and humanity were strangers, and he used us as though we were chattels, devoid of heart or feeling.

"He had one consuming passion—he was a gambler, and all our earnings were squandered at the gaming tables. That is why we were always poor, and why he never let us rest. Despite the hard life we lead, Clarice grew daily more beautiful; to see her once, was to remember her always; she seemed to belong more to heaven than to earth, and I used to gaze upon her with a kind of worship. No wonder she was admired by the common people we played to in the villages; they had never looked upon a fairer face and form. Our master had the same distaste for large cities as our father had; he avoided them most carefully, and we wandered in out-of-the-way places for eight or nine months until Clarice fell ill, and, much against our master's wish, we were compelled to rest until she recovered.

"During this time it was that I began to sing to Clarice, and our master discovered I had a musical voice which could be turned to profitable account. It was a discovery to us as well as to him; the parts I played in our little comedies were speaking parts, and no opportunity had been afforded me of using my chief gift. Coming in one night while I was singing, our master bade Clarice dance to my voice. She obeyed him, and as I sang she moved gracefully about, in accordance with the suggestion of the melody, now slowly, now with spirit, and now with a sweet and innocent abandon that captivated him as well as me. The child had nearly recovered from her sickness, and she was grateful for returning health; her disposition was naturally gay, and her slavery had not yet lasted long enough to crush all joyousness out of her. There was something spiritual in her movements; the room was but dimly lighted, and, as she glided in and out of the shadows, I was overtaken by a fear that she might fade from our sight, and that we should see her no more.

"'Clarice!" I cried, in alarm.

"She sprang towards me, but before she could reach me our master seized her in his arms.

"'You are beautiful,' he said, in a thick voice. 'I have been blind! You are beautiful, Clarice!'

"He pressed his lips to hers, and Clarice shrieked to me for protection. A sudden fury animated me; a knife lay near to my hand; I snatched it from the table and flew upon the villain. In a moment Clarice was free, and I was striking at him with the knife; he seized my wrist, and the knife fell to the ground; and then with all my force I struck at his face with the hand that was free. He pushed me violently from him, and without a word left the room. Then Clarice fell into my arms, and sobbed as though her heart were breaking.

"I think it was during those few agitating moments that I became a woman. I was but sixteen years of age, but my girlhood was over forever, and the map of a woman's life was spread before me; I understood it, and prepared to battle with the base and bitter reality. After I put Clarice to bed I picked up the knife; there was blood upon it.

"Our master did not appear again that night; the next morning he said that, Clarice being better, we must be on the move again. We owed him much, he informed us, for our weeks of idleness. I glanced at his hand; it was bandaged, and there was a mark on his face. I was both glad and afraid, but I was careful not to exhibit the slightest symptom of fear or regret. I seemed to be suddenly possessed of a truer knowledge of the character of the man we were bound to. No reference was made to the occurrence until the evening, when my master said, striving to impart lightness to his voice:

"'You are strong, Margaret.'

"I replied, 'Thank God for it! I shall know how to use my strength. Be careful not to provoke me.'

"That was all that passed between us, and when next he spoke to Clarice it was in his usual tone, that of a master to his servant.

"He did not deceive me nor throw me off my guard, and I think he was not aware how often I detected him looking at Clarice with a certain thoughtfulness in his face I could not rightly interpret at the time. I did not let Clarice out of my sight, and a little story my father used to read to us of a wolf, a lamb and a faithful watchdog sometimes crossed my mind in relation to ourselves. I was determined the wolf should not hurt my lamb; he would have to tear me to pieces first.

"I had need of all my wits. Keeping watch as I did upon our master's movements, I regarded every new and unusual thing he did with suspicion. He was most careful in his behavior to Clarice, and seldom addressed her, making me the medium of communication between them, saying, 'Tell Clarice this or that.' A day or two after her convalesence, he remarked that her illness had left her somewhat weak, and that she required nourishment; and he gave us wine with our dinner. We drank only a little, for the wine was strong, and mounted to our heads. Under its influence we both laughed and talked too freely, and our master appeared to be pleased with our gayety, and encouraged us to drink more, filling our glasses for us with merry words. But I happened to look at him as he poured out the wine, and the expression of devilish exultation in his face chilled and warned me. I pushed the full glasses away.

"'Come, Clarice,' I said, and we walked from the room.

"We drank no more; we were saved.

"For a week, wine was placed on the table at every meal, but we never touched it.

"'You are grateful, you girls,' our master said, with a surly look, 'you deserve kindness. Why don't you drink your wine?'

"'We prefer water,' I replied; 'save your money, master. You will not persuade us to love wine.'

"'Have your way,' he muttered, in a brutal tone, and raised his hand as though he would have liked to strike me. But he dared not; he saw that I would no longer tamely submit to his blows. We suffered in other ways for our rebellious conduct, but we bore all patiently.

"One night, at the end of a long day's journey, we saw in the distance the lights of a larger town than we were in the habit of stopping at. To our inexperienced eyes it looked like a fairy illumination; in some parts the houses were very numerous, and quite close together; hills and terraces were dotted with tiny stars, and as we approached near the town I saw a sheet of silver water in which the lights were reflected. It was a beautiful sight. I was filled with curiosity, and wondered to myself what our master's purpose could be. Clarice's eyes sparkled.

"'Are we going to stop in that place?' she asked.

"'Yes,' said our master, 'we are going to play there. We shall remain a week; if you please me you shall have new dresses.'

"The news set me thinking, but I saw no reason to suspect anything wrong. It was good news, I decided; to play in a town meant better lodgment and better food for Clarice; and, I don't know how it was, but I had a vague idea that in a large city some one who had known our father might see us and take pity on us. It never happened. Something more terrible did.

"The hall we were engaged to sing and dance in was situated in the worst part of the town, and was frequented by fast men, and by women it made me blush to come in contact. The first night's experiences were a sufficient indication of the kind of theater our master had sold our services to, and I was careful that Clarice should not exchange a word with a soul but myself. I was curious to know what particular reason had induced our master to depart from his usual practice of exhibiting our talents only in small places, and I learned that the town was celebrated for its gambling saloons. Here, then, was a reason which I could understand, and my great hope was he would meet with the gambler's usual luck, and, having lost all, would leave the town in disgust. The common people before whom he had been in the habit of performing pleased me best; they were uncultivated, it was true, but in the place of their ignorance and rough admiration we now to submit to the polished gaze and insidious compliments of a set of men who seemed to be educated in just those ways which are an offense to modest natures. That they met with no encouragement from us aroused the anger of our master.

"'The place is not good enough for you, eh?' he cried to me, on the third night of our appearance at the hall.

"'Not quite,' I replied.

"'It will pay you to be civil to my friends,' he said, threateningly.

"'Your friends do not suit us,' I answered, looking him full in the face, 'and if you force them upon us we shall refuse to work for you. We may obtain a better kind of justice here than we have hitherto met with. We may meet with tender hearts that will pity us and release us from a hateful bondage.'

"'Tender hearts!" he sneered; 'gentlemen, eh?'

"'Yes,' I said; 'true gentlemen; not lackeys.'

"A dark look clouded the face of the wolf.

"'I will tame you yet,' he said.

"It was our misfortune that we were talked about in the town, and that Clarice's beauty became the theme of general admiration. Before the week was out a better class of men—and women, too—leveled their opera-glasses at us, and on the last night of our engagement our master bade us pack up at once. I was surprised, for the proprietor of the hall wished us to continue to perform, and offered our master a larger sum of money for the renewal of our services than had been agreed upon between them. Our master told me as much, and took credit to himself for refusing the offer.

"'This place is too common for such delicate creatures,' he said; 'you shall have better lodgment.'

"We did not leave the town; he conveyed us to a more fashionable quarter, where, to my further surprise, new dresses were given to us, finer than we had ever worn. Everything seemed to be prepared for us, for the dresses fitted us to perfection. The misgivings I felt as we decked ourselves out in this finery were dispelled by the delight which Clarice's exquisite appearance afforded me. Her dancing dress was white, with silver trimmings, and was festooned with small blue flowers. My dress was by no means so handsome, and was designed as a foil to Clarice's, but I looked fairly well in it, and was happily contented that Clarice should bear the palm of grace and loveliness. When we were dressed, our master came and criticised us, and I could not find fault with him for openly admiring Clarice.

"'These pretty clothes become you, Clarice,' he said; 'you seem to be born to wear them. Would you like to be always dreesed as daintily?'

"'O, yes,' replied Clarice.

"'Well,' he said, 'stranger things have happened. Do your best to-night, both of you. You are going to dance before real gentlemen, true gentlemen, Margaret, who have seen the world. We have done with lackeys. You cannot now say that I have not tried to please you. Be prepared; I will come for you when it is time.'

"I observed as he left the room that he was attired in a better fashion than usual.

"It was nearly an hour before we were called. Our conversation turned upon our father, of his kind ways, of the happy life we had lived with him; and I told Clarice how often he and I used to speak of her, and told her also something of the happy future we had hoped would be hers.

"'It may come yet, Clarice,' I said, fondly, 'it may come yet my dear sister. If I were a prince I should make you my princess, and challenge the world with you. Ah! if some kind heart would purchase our liberty from our master, or if heaven were to set us free, I should fear nothing. We should be able to live—I see the way; I am wiser than I was—and we would wander hand-in-hand from village to town, from town to village, now playing to simple folk, now to great, until the prince came—your prince, Clarice, and claimed my treasure.'

"'And you, Marguerite,' said Clarice; she always called me so, 'you must have your prince as well as I.'

"'No,' I replied, 'I should never leave you, Clarice—never, never! How could I live without you? You are my heart, my soul, my life!'

"She gave me back words as tender as my own, and asked me to sing to her. We sat in the dark, with our arms around each other, and I sang my heart out to her. Ah, if the good God had struck us dead as we sat there, breast to breast, how merciful would have been the deed! The harsh voice of our master broke the happy spell."

"'Come,' he said, 'they are waiting for you.'

"We went to him, and he threw large cloaks over our fine dresses, and led us to the theater in which we were to perform. It was part of the hotel in which we were staying; our rooms were at the top of the house, and having been brought there in the dark night, I had had no opportunity of observing how grand a building it was. It filled me now with wonder and admiration. As we descended the noble staircases and traversed the broad passages, many persons stopped to gaze at us, but our master hurried us on, as though anxious to avoid observation. We passed great saloons, and heard from within the sound of laughter and music, and saw ladies and gentlemen, fashionably dressed, passing in and out. Presently we entered a dark passage, at the end of which was the stage door of the theater, and soon we were on the stage.

"It was a small stage, and the curtain was down. A scene was set representing a rural landscape, with trees and water and cattle, most exquisitely painted. In the background was a bridge which we were to cross, I first, playing the castanets, with which I was very skillful, and Clarice afterwards. Then I was to sing one of my lullaby songs, and Clarice was to dance to it. We had rehearsed the entertainment in our room at the top of the house, under the direction of our master, but we were so accustomed to each other that we could have performed any of our numerous little sketches at a moment's notice, without preparation.

"When, the curtain being drawn, I crossed the bridge, and faced the audience, I was so overpowered by the novelty of the scene before me that all power of self-control deserted me. The body of the theater was scarcely larger than an ordinary drawing-room, and was furnished with the utmost elegance. The paintings on the walls and ceilings; the velvet chairs framed in gold, the numberless wax candles which shed a soft and mellow light around, the delicious soothing sound of falling water from a perfumed fountain on each side of the stage, made it a theater fit for a king. How different from the barns we had been in the habit of playing in! How coarse and common they became as I stood upon this lovely stage surrounded by this fairy splendor! I was like one in an enchanted dream; enveloped in a voluptuous mist, which beguiled my senses from all that was real and true in life.

"I saw that there were but few persons present—not more than twenty or thirty, and all gentlemen—but so dazzled was I that I could not distinguish a face. A murmer of applause recalled me to my duty, and then I knew that Clarice was on the stage, and was moving gracefully to the cadence of the song which I was almost constantly singing. It was over in a moment, as it seemed, and the curtain was down, and Clarice was lying in my arms, palpitating with pleasure and excitement. A soft, dreamy look was in her eyes, a transparent color on her cheeks, a tender smile upon her lips. More delicate and spiritual in her nature than I, she was less able to resist the impressions which had beguiled my senses as well as hers.

"'Is it real, Marguerite, is it real?' she whispered.

"The answer was given by the audience, who were calling loudly for Clarice. Not a voice asked for Margaret.

"'Clarice! Clarice! Clarice!' was all we heard.

"The curtain was drawn aside, and I led Clarice forward. Then came calls fer a repetition of the sketch, and without leaving the stage I commenced my song and Clarice her dance, amid rapt and earnest attention. 'Beautiful! Bewitching!' cried the gentlemen as the curtain fell, and again we were called; and then it rained roses, which Clarice gathered, and I for her, with smiles and tears. Our master, who stood in the side scenes, said,

"'You have done well. On with your cloaks—closer, closer—over your heads, girls! If they want to see your faces, they must pay for it.'

"When we were in our room, he said,

"'Margaret, if fortune favors me to-night, we will make the world sing the praises of our pretty Clarice.'

"I did not ask him the meaning of his words. Between him and ourselves there was nothing in common, and I took no interest in his doings so long as they did not affect us. Clarice and I were excited and overwrought, and as we prepared to retire to rest we spoke but few words to each other.

"'Let us dream of it, Marguerite,' said Clarice; 'I want it to happen all over again.'

"I enfolded her in my arms.

"'God bless you, Clarice,' I said.

"'God bless you, dear sister,' murmured she; and so we fell asleep.

"My heart bleeds as I recall what followed during that never-to-be-forgotten, terrible night.

[To be continued.]

OUR LETTER-BOX.

CURIOUS AND STATISTICAL QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED.

[Correspondents will write upon but one side of the sheet and make their questions as concise as possible. Replies by contributors to questions by correspondents will be given when accompanied by the name and address of the writer.]

LOCOMOTIVE DRIVING.—Will you please inform us on the following: The fastest time made by a locomotive, and the time on the New York and Albany Railroad?

SUBSCRIBER.

Answer.—We cannot answer "Subscriber" definitely. There is no register of locomotive time, and the claims of fast time all depend upon statements of which no accurate account has been made, and nearly all are in dispute. It is claimed that on a Scotch road a locomotive, two or three years ago, made nine miles in seven minutes and two seconds.

SEVERAL QUESTIONS.—Please answer the following in the RECORD-UNION: 1. What makes the ocean so salt? 2. In what part of England is Cornwall? 3. In what part of England was Lord Byron born, and when did he die?

Placerville, January, 1889. J. G.

Answer.—1. The ocean holds in solution a variety of saline matters. The greatest presence is chloride of sodium (common salt), which, with small quantities of sulphate of magnesia, sulphate and carbonate of lime, iodine and bromide of magnesium, forms about one-thirtieth of the total weight of the aqueous solution. The proportion of salt varies in different places. The saline elements may be derived from geological formations, but strata of this character always bear evidence of being deposited from ancient oceans, so that this derivation throws no light upon the real source of the salt, which is as yet a matter of theory. There are, no doubt, beneath the sea saline strata and mineral springs.

2. It forms the southwest extremity of the island of Great Britain, and is bounded east by Devonshire, and on all other sides by the ocean.

3. In London, January 22, 1788; died at Missolonghi, Greece, April 19, 1824.

MARKS.—Will you be so kind as to settle a question (1) as to the correct use of the quotation marks within quotations? Also, (2) the correct use of the dash? L. D.

Visalia, February 10th.

Answer.—Marks of quotation ["] are placed before and after words, phrases or sentences, and indicate that the language is borrowed from another. They are used also to signify distinct disavowal of adoption of the term or word used where its origin is not well known and its use not considered good writing—the quotation being in such cases from custom, slang or peculiar use by a class of people. Examples:

1. He, speaking next, replied: "I have no fear of death." 2. This "cracksman" is a dangerous fellow.

Single quotation points mark a quotation within a quotation. If, however, a quotation is made from still a third source, the double marks are again used. Example:

"This friend of humanity says, 'When I consider their lives I seem to see the "golden age" beginning again.'"

Titles of books or of periodicals, and names of vessels usually require marks of quotation, unless they are italicized, as,

"Waverley" was reviewed in "The Edinburgh."

But this rule is not deemed essential by very many good writers and by many newspapers.

The dash [—], either alone or combined with other signs is used where the construction or the sense, is suddenly changed or suspended, as:

This world, 'tis true, was made for Cæsar—but for Titus, too.

When the sentence terminates abruptly:

"I looked and prayed, like thee—but now—" He hung his head.

To set off a parenthesis, especially when emphatic, as when there are other points within it, as,

He was dressed—and, indeed, so were they nearly all—in coarse homespun.

Before echoes, or where *that is* or *namely* is understood, as:

All the rest was mere flourish—mere palaver.

Between a title and the subject-matter, or the subject-matter and the authority for it, when both are in the same paragraph, the above are the chief and most essential uses of the dash. It may be added that no mark of punctuation is more abused in its use.

From Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston, we have received specimens of their February publications, as follows: "The Midshipmite," a jolly sailor song, by Stephen Adams; "Little Bird in the Forest" (with German and English words), by Taubert; "Just Because You Kissed Me," one of Christie's famous ballads; "Tulip," an easy piano piece, by Lichner; a "Minuet," from Boccaccio, and a beautiful song without words, by Merkel, called "The Wanderer." Also a sparkling number of the *Weekly Musical Record;* a musical journal of excellence and much value, and well supplied with new music clearly printed.

MANHATTANISMS.

FEBRUARY'S GAUDS AND GAYETIES IN NEW YORK.

The Self-Content and Salaries of French Cooks—The Connubial Market—The Romance of Ole Bull's Career.

NEW YORK, February 7, 1880.

February's gayeties are not less numerous or brilliant than were the gayeties of January, especially as to balls, of which there have been many, public and private, among the native and foreign population during the week. This is the merriest winter we have had for years. Everybody is in lively humor, owing to the general revival of trade and the apparent guarantee of future prosperity throughout the country. How much the lightness of a man's heart depends on the heaviness, actual or prospective, of his purse! Idealistic as our disposition may be, we cannot help seeing and admitting that what is considered materialism plays a very active part in our contentment, not less than in our comfort. Are we not such stuff as money makes us, and is not our weary life assuaged by incomes? The Leiderkranz masquerade has been

THE LEADING ENTERTAINMENT OF THE WEEK,

And the most agreeable and successful, on the whole, the society has ever had. None of those unpleasant incidents, such as confusion inside and out, excess of hilarity, over-indulgence in wine, which have sometimes occurred in the past, were witnessed on Thursday evening, and the costumes and procession and decorations were more varied and striking than they have been before. Our German fellow-citizens were running over with exhilaration and jollity, and with eating and drinking—these are, to them, always indispensable—talking, laughing and dancing, they carried enjoyment to its highest capacity. I could not help noting the contrast between them and my own countrymen as they moved together or danced side by side on the floor of the Academy. The Germans surrendered themselves entirely to the spirit of fun; they acted as if they had no troublesome recollections, and I doubt if they had then and there; as if all time were condensed into those few giddy hours. They were the incarnation of pleasure-seeking and pleasure-finding, of jubilation and jollity. I envied them their perfect joyousness; I wondered how they could sustain it. So did other Americans no doubt. These tried to be merry; tried very hard, and their effort was palpable enough. But they were balked. They had not the easy indifference, the mercurial temperament, the emotional facility, the ability to live in the moment which the Germans showed themselves abundantly possessed of. The Americans looked wearied, bored, out of place like, when they struggled to be gay. The blood, the mood of the true pleasurer was not in them, and could not gain access to them.

I am very fond of my countrymen—probably I have a warm prejudice in their favor—I know how many sterling virtues they own; but capacity for enjoyment is not among these. They are never so dismal as when they labor to be gay. They are prone to carry with them some mysterious spiritual weight which they cannot under any circumstances throw off. They are unquestionably

THE MOST MELANCHOLY PEOPLE UNDER THE SUN.

I was strengthened in the impression when I looked on at the charity ball in Brooklyn the same evening. The throng there was called very animated, and it was, considering its nationality; but comparing, or rather contrasting it with the German mask this side of the river, it seemed somber enough. Americans are, as a rule, failures at a ball. In the counting-room, in great enterprises, in building railways, towns, telegraph lines, in surmounting obstacles of any sort, their patience, energy and courage count; but in merely social relations they are less than zeros.

THE FRENCH COOKS' BALL,

Also given this week, furnished another opportunity to compare Europeans with our people. The French cooks and their friends of the same blood exceeded the Germans in mirth and joviality. They fairly effervesced with vivacity, as they always do at their annual festival. It is pleasant to attend this ball, to see how men and women of another nation can enjoy themselves, and then their exhibitions of culinary skill are extraordinary. They exhaust ingenuity on the occasion, and always produce something novel and attractive as well as toothsome.

I have seen a great deal of French cooks on their own and foreign soil, and they appear to be the best satisfied of mortals. We Anglo-Saxons are prone to regard a cook as a menial. The French look upon him as an artist—an artist worthy to rank with poets, composers, painters, sculptors, actors, and the cook himself is apt to hold himself a trifle higher, since they but copy men, while he sustains, and in a sense, creates them. They feel a pride, a pride of the most exalted kind, in their vocation—they would be offended to hear it called business—and they are ever delighted to talk of it, discuss it, explain it. A little judicious flattery goes further with a Gallic cook than money. Tickle his vanity beforehand, and you may be sure of a good breakfast, dinner or supper. I have tried this more than once abroad, and have found my palatal advantage in it. He is invariably a very vain, notional, grotesquely sensitive, ultra professional creature. Wound his self-consciousness in the slightest, and he will revenge himself on your appetite.

French cooks—who, under the name, include a number of Swiss and Italians, speaking French of course—are plenty here now, not only at hotels, restaurants and clubs, but at many private houses. But a small proportion belong to the Culinary Philanthropic Society, whose members mainly represent the great hotels and some of the most fashionable clubs. French cooks generally consider themselves as specially granted to the world by Nature, in her most benignant mood, for the benefit of mankind. They cannot conceive how civilization can endure without them. Indeed, they do not think the thing possible; for before them, as they hold, there was no true civilization. They thrive here, and well they may. They are far better paid than most accountants, salesmen, journalists, authors, physicians or clergymen. They receive salaries of from $2,000 to $5,000 and even $6,000 a year, and they do little more than superintend. I refer, of course, to the chefs de cuisine. The Windsor Hotel gives its chef, I understand, $5,000; Delmonico gives $4,500; the Hotel Brunswick, $5,000; the Fifth Avenue, $5,000; the Brevoort, $4,000; the Buckingham, $4,000; the Clarendon, $4,500; the Union Club, $6,000; the Knickerbocker Club, $5,500; the Lotos Club, $3,500; the Hoffman, $4,300; the Union League Club, $4,500; the Manhattan Club, $4,700; the Metropolitan, $4,000; the Astor, $4,200; the St. James, $3,800; the New York Club, $4,000; the St. Nicholas, $4,000; the Bristol, $4,300, and the same prices are paid elsewhere. This has been

AN EXTRAORDINARY WINTER

For weddings. They were active in December, more active in January, and are most active thus far in February. I heard a very sweet girl say, the other evening, in Park avenue, "O dear, everybody is getting married. I don't feel safe at all. I am not in love with anybody; but my turn may come any moment—who knows?" Gallantry demanded a reply, and this was an instance in which truth could be flattering. So I said, "I would not insure you at any premium against matrimony, my child, for fifteen minutes. You may not be in love with anybody, but most men of taste must be in love with you."

"O, no, they are not—I assure you they are not," she exclaimed, with a vehement ingenuousness, which made me laugh; whereupon she colored and cast down her brown eyes, looking exceedingly lovely.

I have heard since that she has been engaged three months, and that she is to be led to the altar within a fortnight. She is a charming young woman—charming means a great deal with me. She is barely twenty; has been finely educated; has traveled abroad; is highly accomplished, not a bit spoiled; is an only daughter, with five generations of cultured ancestors, and her papa is worth at least a million. Her lover is to be envied, isn't he? He is a dull, commonplace fellow of forty-five or thereabout, with a handsome income. How did he win her? many persons are asking. Perhaps he did not win her. She may simply have fallen to his financial lot. Her remark to me may have been a confession. But husbands and wives in our best society are not expected to be in love with one another. If she is not fond of him, I pity her. I wonder if she pities herself? The number of weddings is

AN EVIDENCE OF COMMERCIAL PROSPERITY;

For marriage and the price of corn are, according to political economists, related to one another, as effect and cause. The matrimonial briskness this month may be significant. May is usually regarded as the love month; June as the connubial month; but the winter months are apt to be conjugally neglected, perhaps because they are cold and dreary, and unfit for the journeys which the newly-espoused are in the habit of making. February, however, is named after Februus (the surname of Luperculus), the god of fertility, and it may be that they who are now marrying wish to invoke his good will and assistance, as the Roman women did at the Lupercalia, by desiring to be struck by the thongs of the priests, under the impression that the stroke averted sterility. Our women may want to be mothers oftener than they have been. If they do it is an indication that the financial future is more promising, for thoughtful people are prone to regulate the size of their families by the material means. As I have said, the frequency of February marriages may be significant.

Ole Bull, whose seventieth birthday was marked this week by a surprise party at Cambridge, Mass., has led

AN EVENTFUL LIFE,

And it seems odd that in his old age he should have settled down in that quiet New England town as the husband of an American woman young enough to be his granddaughter. Born at Bergen, Norway, his father, a chemist, destined him for the Church, for which he had no liking, and did all he could to repress the boy's conspicuous passion for music. At eighteen he was sent to the University at Christiania, where his skill on the violin did not help him with the Professors, but clogged his collegiate course. He went wherever he could hear music, and having taken charge of the orchestra of one of the theaters during the leader's illness, his fortune was decided. He removed to Cassel to study with Spohr, who was then chapel-master to the Duke, but was so discouraged by his reception that he hurried off to Gottingen to embrace the law. His love of music returned, however, and he went to Minden, where he gave a concert with no little success. Having fought a duel with a brother artist and mortally wounded his antagonist, he was obliged to fly from Hanover. He arrived in Paris poor, friendless, unknown, and for months led a precarious and miserable life. To crown his misery, he was robbed of the very little he had, including his violin, which so distressed him that he leaped into the Seine. He was rescued, and a wealthy woman, who had just lost her son, traced in Ole's face a resemblance to her boy, became deeply interested in him, took him to her house and enabled him to give a concert. The public was delighted; his fortune was made. During the next seven years he traveled over Europe, and was everywhere successful. Having become rich at 28, he married a Parisian, returned to Norway and settled upon an estate he had bought near Bergen. At the end of five years he came here professionally, made a great deal of money, went back to Europe, gave concerts, campaigned with General Yusef in Algiers against the Kabyles; erected a theater at Bergen and tried to establish national schools of literature and art. His liberal sentiments brought him into collision with the Government. He had many troubles, including lawsuits, which wasted his wealth; his wife died from the rigors of the climate, and he came here again in his forty-second year. He purchased 120,000 acres of land in Potter county, Pennsylvania, and a number of families to whom land was sold at a nominal price settled on it and prospered for a while. But Oleand, as it was named after its generous founder, had dissensions and embarrassments, and the colony was finally disbanded. He lost heavily, and to repair his losses resumed his concerts. At the completion of the Academy of Music here (1854) he leased it, intending to manage Italian opera. The enterprise proved disastrous, and he once more crossed the sea. He now expects to reside in this country permanently; he has a handsome independence, and any number of American friends. He is a genial, whole-souled, unpractical man, in whose heart seventy winters have not chilled the perennial spring of romance. He is still a boy in his feelings and sympathies, and always will be. CHAUBERT.

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