PARABLE SONNETS.

Upon the Subject of a father in commending his children to God as his daughter, on a daughter's coming to a dying father.

I.

Thus the prophet, lingering beneath the moon,
Heard from a tent a child's heart-witnessing wail;
Rose with the sorrow of the night-long gale,
And, entering, found one sunk in an mysterious swoon;
And, into maiden dreaming, there alone—
He babbled of her father's suffering pain:
Death's wings of Death—mid sights of sorrow and bane—
And pleaded for his life unpitied one.
"Peace, child," pleaded on," the succoring prophet saith.
While she, with eager lips, like one who tries
To kiss a dream, stretches her arms outwise.
To fling an for help—"Plead on; such pure love-breath,
Reaching the Throne, might stay the wings of Death,
That in the Desert, fan thy father's eyes."

II.

The drouth-stain camel-ribs on every hand;
Seven-score await the morning vultures' claws;
Mid empty water-skins and camel-maws
The father sits, the last of all the band.
He watches drowsing 'neath the moonlit sand;
"Sleep! foes—my brews; sleep makes us—all paths"
Or—the wings are Death's, why Azrael draws
A children's father from an empty land?"
"Nay," said an Voice, "the wind of Azrael's wings
A chilly sweet breath hath stilled; so, God decrees it—
A camel's bell comes tinkling on the breeze,
Filling the dozing brain with bubble of springs
And scents of flowers and shadow of wavering trees
Whence, from a tent, a maiden sings.

THEODORE WATTS.

CONCERNING A PRINCE.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

Annie Wilton, at twenty, had a pink and white skin and dark brown hair, which were the despair of young women, and the delight of young men. She went about a good deal, and generally took her mother with her. 'Mamma is easily managed, if I give her plenty of amusement,' this young lady observed to her acquaintances; 'I took her to Brighton last autumn, and she enjoyed herself immensely. She was always at the Aquarium; I used to leave her there, and go round with the Kennedys, and she was quite happy.'

One summer Mrs. Wilton and her daughter gave up gayety and tried a quiet place. Mrs. Wilton said society was quite cruel to her; she had done all she could to satisfy it, and how the strain was beginning to tell. Annie told people that mamma was quite worn out with rushing about, and wanted to tranquilize. The Miss Kennedys advised them to try their brother's parish, down south. Here they met a prince in disguise. He was only a foreign prince and his disguise was very unremarkable; he looked as fat and somewhat slow young man, in tweed clothes, just as like any other young man as possible; but as everyone was always astonished to hear he was a prince, it is probable that princes at home carry out the traditions of fairy story, and wear short velvet mantles, and plumed caps, to distinguish them from other men.

One hot afternoon in August, Kennedy and the prince were sitting under the veranda in exceedingly comfortable attitudes. Their feet were elevated on chairs, and between them was a table covered with books on the English language, and also with cigarettes and a certain cool beverage. In front of them a lawn sloped down to a belt of evergreens; beyond were the level tops of the cliffs, then came the sea. It was very hot, and the two men took things easily. The reading lesson had long been given up; Kennedy was getting drowsy. He liked the young fellow by his side well enough, but he found him heavy. Conversation between them reduced itself as a rule to question and answer, and these are not invigorating to the mind. So he spread a handkerchief over his face, and went to sleep. The prince fell to considering Kennedy's long legs. He wondered why some men should be so tough and wiry, and why others should be short and round, susceptible to heat and all that. This question, 'weakly asked' and proving unanswerable, weakly or otherwise, sent him oil dozing too.

Some time after, both men heard in their dreams a woman laughing, and a woman crying, and a great rustling of dresses on the gravel. Kennedy was conscious that he had something on his head he ought to remove, but for the moment was quite unable to do so. Then he heard a young voice saying distinctly:

'Oh, don't trouble yourself, we'll introduce ourselves. Oh, goodness!' the same voice began to laugh, 'for once you were right, mamma! We had better have gone round and done the correct thing.'

'Oh!' said the crying voice, 'you are so impossible! This was dangerous to be woke with a shock. Your poor dear papa can not be it. Only the last week of his life I remember him particularly cautioning Mary Ann to try to shut doors gently.'

Kennedy, much annoyed, flung off the handkerchief and rose to his feet. Two ladies, very fashionably dressed, were standing outside the veranda, looking in at him. He did not know them, and they had been guilty of seeing him in an undignified position; therefore his expression was unamiable. The prince, who the moment he had opened his handsome eyes had taken in the facts of the case, spring up with foreign self-possession, and was now executing a series of graceful bows that should have put Kennedy's somewhat sulky reception to the blush. The younger of the two ladies came forward a little.

'This is mamma,' she said, introducing the other lady, and smiling a great deal. 'Mrs. Wilton, you know, perhaps, your sisters told you. I am Annie Wilton. Perhaps I ought not to have come round this way, but your servant said you were in the garden, so we thought we might as well come. Calling in a room is so formal, isn't it?'

Kennedy gave the ladies chairs, and recovered his temper.

'It is very kind of you to come at all,' he answered. 'I have had the pleasure of hearing of you from my sisters. I should have called on you at once, had I known you had arrived.'

He addressed his words to the mother, but twice his eyes strayed to the daughter's ingenuous face. She and the prince were observing each other.

'Oh,' said Mrs. Wilton plaintively, 'Annie is so within and my health is so shattered. Dr. Garth sent me down here for rest. He was quite positive about it. He said to me: "My dear Mrs. Wilton, youth is an excitable nature and made for society, but positively you must take a respite;" and I really answer out.'

'We are very grateful to Dr. Garth,' Kennedy replied bowing. 'I hope you will stay some time. Our air here is famous for invalids. My friend,' he nodded toward the prince, 'is quite another man since he has been with me. I shall send him home a good walker, and altogether athletic.'

He laughed kindly as he spoke. Certainly the prince's figure did not suggest any great love of muscular exercise.

'I should think you find the hills very trying?' said Miss Wilton to the prince.

'Yes; they are very bad,' he admitted gravely. 'I have to go every day to the post, and there is a very stiff hill coming back.'

'That is a dreadful walk,' said the young girl demurely. 'Cannot you get someone else to go?'

'It is to my mother that I write every day, so I prefer to go myself.'

Miss Wilton studied his fine head, and his tutor's manly figure, and perhaps thought nature capricious in her gifts.

'I could be so happy in my own home-circle,' said Mrs. Wilton to Kennedy, 'quite content with my children's society. But they are the last people who care to be with one. I am sure I never see Tom, and Annie is always out or staying away. It is really quite gratifying the number of people who ask Annie; she could positively be in three different places at the present moment, only she would not leave me.'

The prince said he esteemed himself fortunate that she had refused these invitations, and it struck Kennedy that he was coming out very much on this occasion. He was a silent young man, mostly, with ceremonious manners, and a good heart, but hitherto the rustic English beauties he had come across had made but little impression on him. It was difficult for Kennedy to catch all he said to Mrs. Wilton. He used a rather monotonous undertone in speaking to ladies; but Kennedy observed that the young girl smiled a good deal, and showed little teeth and dimples, not conducive to the peace of mind of a man already touched by the grace of her features in repose.

'I hope I shall see you again,' said the prince to Annie; 'do you stay here long?'

'We shall stay as long as mamma likes the place. You must come and see us. Mamma is ordered quiet, and so we came down here where we know no one, and now our great endeavor is to make as many friends as we can.'

'We have some fine roses here,' said Kennedy; 'would you care to come and see them?'

He contrived that the prince should walk on with Mrs. Wilton. He thought that the young man had monopolized her daughter long enough. Kennedy's garden was pretty and well kept. He had some very good roses and was proud of them. He explained their different kinds, with some trouble, but he felt, in spite of her polite little 'ahs' and 'indeeds,' that she did not pay much attention.

'May I give you some flowers?' he said, breaking off a lovely yellow rose, and then some crimson-black one beside it. She took them graciously.

'I never refuse anything good,' she replied. 'I cannot reproach myself with having missed a single enjoyable dance these three years.'

'I suppose you go out very much in London?' he asked; and he wondered how she kept the roses fast in her corsage when she danced through a London season.

'We are carefully fended society, mamma and I,' she answered; 'we are always out. Delicate as we are, we never tired of amusement. We are very, very fashionable; it is quite the fashion.'

'I should have felt more disgusted had she been anything but pretty.

'I wish I could see you long in that case. We are very quiet people, because we are with some relatives, who are waiting for the elders, round games for themselves for the young people, sherry and sandwiches at half past 10, that is all we can offer you in the way of dissipation.'

She made an expressive little face, and they both laughed.

'No, but really mamma is unwell, and we want to be quiet this time,' she said. 'I wished you to see what a very worldly person I am.'

When Kennedy closed on this very worldly person, and saw the most delicious eyes and color in the world, he felt more kindly disposed to the than to poor old Lady Baker, with her eternal gossip and card-parties; or than a clergyman ought to feel to one concerned out of her own month of losing the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.

In front, the prince was piloting Mrs. Wilton from red rose to white, and speaking very little. There was, indeed, no occasion for she talked gently and unceasingly. Out of politeness she chose foreign subjects.

'I am very fond of France,' she said; 'so poetical, the vineyards and all that. You know Andrea is so clever, the Frenchman too—quite the most civilized people. We always have our gowns from Paris. And you really don't know Trouville? Oh, it is such a dear place; so delightful to stay at, you know. We spent such a happy time there last year. And we met a marquis there, such a charming person, but I forget his name. Annie will know, he paid her so much attention. What was the name, Annie, of that marquis we met at Trouville?'

'Never mind, mamma,' said Annie sweetly; 'he was a horrid old thing; I hated him. No, Mr. Kennedy, I really won't let you give me any more roses; you are quite spoiling your garden.'

'You must bring your very amiable young friend to see us,' said Mrs. Wilton, in an audible aside, as she shook hands with Kennedy. Both men went down to the gates with the ladies. The prince looked more animated than Kennedy had ever seen him look before. Certainly a pretty woman is a better spur to the intelligence than grammars and lexicons.

'I hoped I shall see you soon again,' he said, as he bowed almost reverentially to Miss Annie; but the young girl held out her hand with English freedom, and the prince blessed the nation that allowed him to hold a woman's hand in this own after half an hour's acquaintanceship.

After the ladies had gone away, both men took a silent walk round the lawn. Kennedy stopped mowing the grass trim with his penknife the rough stalks from which he had broken the roses. Without knowing why, he felt ill-tempered again. Perhaps, now the young girl was gone, he thought more of her worldliness and less of her face; perhaps he had remarked that her last words and smiles were for the prince. That young man, who had lighted a cigarette, apparently found his own company very enjoyable. At last he said:

'She is a charming woman.'

'Which?' asked Kennedy unsympathetically.

'Both,' said the prince, and smoked silently for a moment; 'but the daughter is more charming than any woman I know.'

'Charming fashion-plate,' growled Kennedy unamiably.

'What? what?' cried the prince, to whom fashion-plate was a new word.

But Kennedy was not in an instructing mood.

'She is just a specimen of the fashionable frivolity of our times,' he said; 'no head and no heart either, I should think. Well-dressed, perhaps, if well is synonymous with expensively, but utterly wanting in all a true woman's charm.'

The prince listened with mild denseness in his face. He did not attempt to understand Kennedy in his cynical or moralizing mood, but he caught at the word dress.

'Yes, they were both very well dressed,' he said; 'wish an air of conviction. 'Like Parisians.'

Kennedy burst out laughing, and his ill-humor vanished.

'My dear fellow,' he said, 'I am very glad for your sake they have come. I think they will suit you admirably.'

The prince thought a great deal in a slow and gentle way about Annie Wilton. There was something in the face that delighted him. In his own family, everyone had intermarried for generations, and at the present time the exact degrees of relationship were no longer discoverable, so that there was, as a consequence, but one type of face; of course eminently aristocratic, often handsome as in his own case, but too generally vacuous. There was a serene highness, supposed to be a fourth cousin once removed, waiting to be married to the prince himself when the proper time should have arrived, and her profile exactly resembled his own. New thoughts in man may be on the whole very well satisfied with his own and his family's physiognomy, he generally prefers to find a little variety in that of the woman he marries. Men of the prince's rank were kept in his country, long in leading-strings, and marriage was the last thing in which they had their way. Knowing all this quite well, the prince with human perversity, let himself think of the young English girl with a growing satisfaction. Of course he said nothing about her in his letter to his mother next day; he only made it shorter than usual, and walked down to post it, less occupied with the bore of coming up again in the heat than with the chance of meeting Miss Wilton. Near the post-office some worn stone steps lead down from the High-st. to 'The Walk.' As the prince reached the top, Annie Wilton was coming up.

'Good morning,' she cried gaily. 'Are you going to the sea? I'll come back with you. I left mamma there; we're so tired with being together, we were on the point of quarrelling.'

The prince listened to the young girl in admiring silence. There was never any need to make conversation with these ladies. Both talked a good deal; both had pleasant voices and pretty ways, that most men liked exceedingly.

As the prince and Annie turned into The Walk they saw Mrs. Wilton moving gracefully away in the far distance. There were but few people about; an old gentleman dozing on a beach in the sun, an elderly young lady walking sharply up and down for a constitutional, and a stout old young maid tripping along by her aged mother, and talking very loudly in a plaintive childish soprano.

'Do you like England?' Miss Wilton asked the prince; 'do you admire this part of the country?'

'Any country must be beautiful inhabited by Englishwomen,' he answered. They were at that moment passing the old young maid and her mother. Poor Lady Baker's yellow cadaverous face, and the daughter's flabby white one, gave laughable irony to the prince's compliment. They naturally stood still to speak with him, for neither they nor any of the natives would let slip an opportunity of improving their acquaintance with the good-looking foreigner about whose rank and riches such wild rumors were in circulation. He saw and accepted his fate with the urbanity that distinguished him. Miss Wilton stood apart, smiling, and drawing patterns on the gravel with the handle of her parasol. When the prince rejoined Annie Wilton she said:

'I am sure you find Englishwomen very kind to you. We are all so fond of rank and birth, you know. We Wiltons are a very good family, of course, only somehow the Queen doesn't take much notice of us. Once we knew the son of a real English duke. He was a delightful person, as mamma and granny would say. We spent a whole six months in his service, toiling from morning till night to please him, and then one evening we met him and his mother at a dance, and he never came near us. In return for all our dinners he might at least have introduced us to the duchess.'

'I hope you will give me the honor of introducing you to my people one day,' said the prince, and he showed his growing admiration very clearly in his eyes. The young girl raised her own calmly to his face.

'I think it is too far,' she answered; 'I do not care for travelling. But if you will introduce grandmamma to anyone, she will be delighted. Although she is seventy-four, she adores travelling. She is now in Switzerland, and last week she went up the Rigi, and to-morrow she rides from Lucerne to Interlachen.'

Mrs. Wilton had now turned back, and was coming to meet them.

'I will do anything you wish me to do,' said the prince; 'but I cannot give up the hope that you will one day visit my country.'

'I should so like to go to Chigdon Castle,' said Miss Wilton; 'I wonder if you and Mr. Kennedy would join us?' One must not idle away all one's time, and although I own to the delights of the dolce far niente in this dear little bay, it is my duty to show Annie the historical monuments of her country. And then we could go and hear the band on Chigdon Pier.'

The prince was warm in his approval of this project. As they went up the High-st. again, they met Kennedy strolling down. Mrs. Wilton begged him to come in and have tea. Miss Annie sat behind the lovely Chelsea tea-set, and handed round cups and little gold spoons.

'We always bring these things with us,' she explained to Kennedy; 'we are not like other people, we cannot drink out of ordinary china cups.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wilton, sighing, 'we are, as a family, over-sensitive to elegance. My dear mother would never suffer an ugly servant in her house; and after Annie's nurse had small-pox, I could never bring myself to have her back again, although she was quite the most faithful person I ever had.'

'Well,' said Annie, 'I am afraid I don't properly keep up the traditions of the family on that point. I often go to see nurse, and like her face as much as ever.'

'When shall we go to Chigdon?' asked the prince. He sat near Miss Wilton, and drank a great many cups of tea for the pleasure of receiving something from her hands.

'Could we not say to-morrow?' said the elder lady; 'the sooner these delightful little plans are carried out the better.'

She appealed to Kennedy; he saw no objection. He looked attentively from mother to daughter. Pale and pretty, with a high small nose and thin restless mouth, Mrs. Wilton lay back in her chair, fanning herself. She was gently fading under the hand of time, but from thoughts or grief or pain, she had gained and lost nothing. Kennedy turned his dissatisfied eyes upon the daughter. At eighteen the mother herself may have looked as ingenuous and candid. 'How pretty her eyes are,' thought he; and then he fell to admiring the rounded fullness of her throat and chin, and quite forgot his intention of discerning on her face the shallowness of her soul. He was conscious of a change in her appearance since yesterday, but was some time in finding out that it was due to her having replaced Worth's costume by a simple white washing dress trimmed with lace. He overlooked the fact that, however cheap the material, fashion, in its endowing Kennedy with a small personal charm, had given him, perhaps in compensation, a vague capacity for frowning.

'This is the spiteful way of keeping promises,' said Kennedy to himself. Then aloud:

'I must apologize for interrupting you but from something you said the other night you are the last person I should have expected to meet with Miss Wilton. However, I will go on; your conversation seemed interesting.' There was sneer in his voice he could not control.

The young girl, who alone retained her composure, was slowly pulling the petals of a big daisy.

'Pass in-tout,' she said, smiling up at Kennedy as she dropped the last leaf. Perhaps it was an answer to his ironical remarks. He gave her a look of such very evident disapproval, that her pretty eyes filled with tears. He was half sorry, but knew he was right. What business had she to go wandering about the fields at that hour in the evening?

'Good evening, Miss Wilton,' he said; 'let me advise you to go in, in fact, it is getting chilly.'

He went off in an undecisant frame of mind, and avoided the prince for the rest of the evening. The first thing he saw on the breakfast-table next morning was one of the well-known foreign letters, and he noted it with some amusement, as this was the letter to crown or crush the young man's love. His ill-humor vanished, however, when he saw its effect on the poor prince, who spoke in quite an altered voice.

'Here is a letter inclosed for you, sir. My mother does not approve.'

Kennedy took the document and read in silence.

'No; she most decidedly does not approve,' he said; 'what does she say to you?'

'She says, for one thing, that she could not think of letting me marry an English woman; and she says that the king wants to see me about an appointment he thinks of giving me. And she also says she is not at all well.' Kennedy concealed a smile. 'I hope it is nothing serious, you know,' said the poor prince, who was very fond of his mother.

'It's the shock that's upset her,' suggested Kennedy. 'She says to me that for the present your marriage is out of the question; and that to think of your ever marrying anyone but a country woman of your own rank is preposterous.'

'What am I to do?' said the prince piteously.

'Give up Miss Annie, and go home for a month or two.'

'I can never give up Miss Annie,' he replied with the courage that a rapidly conjured up vision of her delightful little face gave him. 'Besides, after you left us yesterday she promised to marry me,' he added, red and triumphant.

'Oh!' said Kennedy drily, and then was silent a long time. Then he said: 'You must take your own course. Write to your mother to-day, in any case, and I shall have a letter to send too.'

He read the princess's letter again when he was alone. The poor woman was in a dreadful state of mind, and in her anguish gave Kennedy himself some very hard hits, which he, understanding her feelings, freely forgave.

'Who was this young woman?' she wanted to know. 'Was she an adventuress? Had she the princess better come over herself to drag her son from the girl's clutches?' One thing was clear, the prince must be got home as soon as possible. What did Mr. Kennedy advise?'

Kennedy wrote back that things were not quite so bad as she thought. There was no danger of the prince being forced or tricked into a marriage; and then it is probable that he suggested working on the young man's filial affection a little. Meanwhile, the prince was composing an ardent epistle, descanting largely on the beauty and perfection of Miss Wilton, and leaving her position and family on one side. Indeed, he but dimly understood social grades in England, and saw no difference between one untitled name and another.

Fate willed that the two men should meet Miss Annie and her mother, exactly as they dropped their letters into the box. It was an awkward moment for Kennedy. He discerned a mixture of defiance and amusement in the young girl's face, and something else, too, that he found it impossible to believe in. They all went down to the sea, and of course Kennedy found himself with Mrs. Wilton.

'I am so delighted, dear Mr. Kennedy,' she began; 'dear Annie told me last night, and I'm sure it's quite time she married, at twenty. I had my first proposal at fifteen, and married her poor father on my eighteenth birthday, and he is such a delightful young man.'

'Do you know who he is?' remarked Kennedy dubiously.

'Yes, he told her everything. It is most delightful. I always thought there was some mystery about him, his manners are so very distinguished. Annie will be quite in her element; we are both made for society. I am sure I should have just faded away in a quiet circle, such as that of a clergyman's wife, for instance; you won't mind my saying that, I know, for you are so very kind.' I quite look forward to wintering at court with Annie, and he says it's so very gay. We have all had such good chances of marrying in our family; my dear mother had an offer from a baronet, but he wrote on ruled paper instead of coming himself, so she wouldn't accept him; and the month before I accepted Captain Wilton—he was only captain then, you know—his colonel proposed to me; such a very nice man, only so stout, and you know what silly romantic young things girls are at seventeen, Mr. Kennedy; and when I was staying at Bath some time before that, a confectioner fell in love with me; he used to send me presents of books and music by my little brother, and he let him eat as many tarts as he liked, so long as he would only talk to him about me; and he positively wrote to my uncle to propose, and poor Uncle Tom was so curious, he sent back all his presents by the gardener on a wheelbarrow! Still, of course, this is nothing compared to a prince.'

She stopped, out of breath, and Kennedy was relieved to see Miss Wilton and the prince returning to them; he always felt helpless when alone with Mrs. Wilton.

'You have not congratulated me,' said the young lady, smiling. 'I suppose you are very angry. I don't think I have seen you look pleased since I have been here. I am sure, if your sisters had told me what you were like, I should never have dared to come.'

'Oh, my dear Annie,' expostulated her mother, 'how can you say such things when you know you mean just the reverse. You are like your poor cousin Harriet West, who told the man she was passionately in love with that she hated him.'

'What a ridiculous old thing you are, mamma,' said Annie sweetly; 'your anecdotes are so inappropriate.'

'Well, really, Annie Wilton,' said her mother, 'you are the first person to accuse me of wandering. Your poor father would be sadly disappointed if you were not quite so clear-headed; but this is how we nourish vipers to sting us with ingratitude.'

'I think I am a very amiable viper,' said Annie; and Mrs. Wilton, who apparently attached but little meaning to her words, replied:

'Yes, dear, so you are; and if you could hold yours squashed a little more to the left I need not open mine.'

The prince paid the most respectful attention to everything the ladies said and did, and his gallantry quite touched the mother's heart.

'I could think it was the dear colonel over again,' she said, 'only, of course, he was so much older.'

The prince was constantly with the Wiltons now, and Kennedy did him the justice to believe he was very much in love indeed. When Kennedy went with him he was always graciously received, but his visits gave him less pleasure than pain. He followed, in fancy, the course of his letter to the princess, and amused himself by thanking, now and is at such a port, now crossing the sea, now at his frontier, or that town, until, on the sixth day after posting, he said, 'Now it has arrived; what will they do?'

He and the prince sat long over dinner that evening, and while they were drinking their coffee under the veranda a servant brought the prince a telegram.

'Good God! Kennedy, read that,' he cried, tossing it over, and Kennedy read:

'Your mother is very ill; the gravest fears are entertained. Come at once.'

When Kennedy saw the young man's despair, he felt they were using him badly. But there was no other way; besides, the poor lady might very possibly have worried herself into a fever on his account.

The prince was wildly collecting books, pipes and other litter which was scattered over the room, as though meditating an immediate departure.

'My dear boy,' said Kennedy, 'keep cool; you can't possibly start for another eight hours, so just turn in for the present and I'll see to your things, and drive you over to Rexminster myself.'

In the early morning the two men shook hands in Rexminster station.

'You will tell Miss Annie,' said the poor prince, 'about my mother. I am her only son, and she is very fond of me. But I shall write; please tell her that.'

Kennedy was quite remorseful to see how upset the poor fellow looked, and to know that he must bear his anxiety for at least twelve days' journey. He drove back with guilty feelings as to the part he had played, and much reluctance to be the bearer of the news to the Wiltons. But the young girl always took him by surprise. She laughed, and said she had thought the princess would prohibit, worse from the account she had heard of the last letter, and she did Kennedy the most come and assure her at least until she heard from the prince.

The young man wrote from Paris, and then on his arrival home, and his letters were those of a most adoring lover.

After the first, Annie got one every day. There was generally some message for Kennedy, which she went out of her way to give him. But these were a sop to the letters, and Kennedy watched the poor little victim with some anxiety, to see how she bore it. Generally as gay as ever, he fancied he detected, among other traces, a little pensiveness in her manner towards him.

'Poor child,' he thought; 'she would like to know what is going on.'

One day he met her just at the post-office. She had an air of having hurried, and was out of breath. She gave him a letter. She laughed, and asked him to walk back with her.

'I am going to take mamma back to London next week,' she said; 'we have had a tiresome time.'

The day before the ladies left, they came up to my cottage to tea.

'I've had a letter this morning,' said Annie, turning her fresh and charming face to Kennedy. 'I suppose you have had one, too?'

He was terribly disconcerted. He had received a letter from the princess, announcing the prince's return to his allegiance to his cousin, and her own perfect restoration to health.

Annie's coolness heartened him.

'You need not mind,' said the young girl, smiling; 'you remember meeting me at the post some days ago? I wrote to tell him I found that I did not care for him, and he must have received my letter the day before yesterday.'

Kennedy was thoroughly glad; he felt inclined to pat her on the back and say 'Well done.'

Mrs. Wilton spoke mildly as to the fickleness of princes; she had evidently been talked over by her daughter.

'After all,' she said, 'I would rather Annie married an Englishman. Our aristocracy takes the "pas" over any other; and I hear his country is very insalubrious for foreigners, and dreadfully hot half so gay as he tried to make out. Quite lately my mother met a country woman of his at Lausanne, and she writes that she is the stupidest woman she ever met, and quite the most ugly.'

'If you have any occasion to come to London, you must come and see us,' was the last thing Annie said; and Kennedy resolved that, whether or not, he would most decidedly go to London and see Annie Wilton again.

Kennedy felt very dull after the Wiltons' departure. Every evening he said he must certainly go up to town the next day; and every morning he felt that they would be surprised to see him so soon, and he had better wait.

At last he received a very friendly letter from the prince, regretting that he was not to return to England for the present, and referring him to the embassy in London for a settlement of accounts.

Here was the wished-for opportunity. Kennedy took the train one cold, gray morning in October, and reached town by noon. Having settled his business at the embassy, where he learned he had just missed the honor of seeing a certain great personage, then staying in London, he took a cabotel Kensington. He was shown into a pretty room looking on the Gardens, full of flowers, and china and indescribable knick-knacks.

There was no one in the room but through the looped-up curtains of a second doorway he could hear voices, and even distinguish a low, foreign accent, which for a moment gave him a very uncomfortable feeling, until he assured himself that its masculine tones could never belong to the poor prince.

The servant went through the curtains to announce him, and almost immediately Miss Wilton came out with most charming welcome in face and voice.

'Do come in, Mr. Kennedy,' she cried; 'I think you know our visitor.'

Kennedy followed her into the inner room. Mrs. Wilton, somewhat subdued by a cold, was lying back near the fire, enveloped in a pink wool wrapper. Opposite her sat a gentleman, stout and middle-aged, whom he had seen once before on the prince's affairs.

The great man favored Kennedy with two fingers. He was fair and close-shaven, and wore in his coat a ribbon and a flower.

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Annie moved about the room smiling.

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He seemed to be feeling his way a little. The young girl sat down and folded her little hands.

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He bowed again and smiled. She pulled toward her a small writing-desk, full of letters and papers in the utmost disorder. Kennedy was sorry to see she was not so neat as the ideal woman should be. Naturally she was some time finding what she wanted. At last she collected five or six letters in a boyish hand, and, crossed the room to the fireplace.

'I am going to do a more friendly thing than give them to you,' she said sweetly, and she dropped them into a little blaze, and held them down with the poker. Both men smiled at the promptitude of this very pretty young person.

'My dear young lady,' said the great man, going up to her, 'I am very glad to know you. I understand the prince's feelings. We have not, perhaps, always appreciated you over there, but now allow me to offer you, from the princess, a small token of her friendship and esteem.'

He took out a little case containing diamond earrings and pendant. Annie examined them with some attention.

'They are quite lovely,' she said gravely. 'I admire your taste. But I shall not accept them. I do not believe that the princess feels any affection for me. I suppose she has a notion of making it up to me in this way.'

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He was unconscious of the fervor with which he answered: 'I think you have behaved admirably, Miss Wilton.'

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And so he took his leave. Kennedy went down with him to the door.

'If you ever come over to our court,' said the great man, laughing, 'you will, both, be very warmly welcomed; we marry the prince to his cousin next month.'—[All the Year Round.

A PORCELAIN VILLANELLE.

"Ah me, but it might have been!
Was there ever so dismal a fate?"
Quoth the little blue mandarin,

Such a maid as was never seen!
She passed, she! I cried to her—"Wait!"
Ah me, but it might have been!

I cried, "O my Flower-ring Queen,
Hi, mine!" "Too precipitate,"
Quoth the little blue mandarin.

But then . . . she was just sixteen—
Long-eyed—as a lily straight—
Ah me, but it might have been!

As it was, from her palanquin
She laughed—"You're a week too late!"
(Quoth the little blue mandarin.)

That is why, in a mist of spleen
I mourn on this Nankin plate:
"Ah me, but it might have been!"
Quoth the little blue mandarin.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

ODDITIES OF THE ENGLISH NOBILITY.

From The London World.

The personality of the late Lord Huntingtower, whose memory has been revived by the disclosures of a *cause célèbre*, concluded last week, is not likely soon to fade from the minds of those who ever enjoyed the distinguished honor of his society, or who even knew him by sight. He was preeminently the peer of the pavement, and had graduated in almost every arte of eccentric blackguardism. Much was forgiven him by the multitude because a sinner in purple is only half a sinner in broadcloth. His follies and vices, it was charitably said, were hereditary, and therefore venial. Like the title, they were part of the family estate, and it would be as unreasonable to condemn the representative of an ancient race because he concentrated, in himself all the failings and iniquities of his forefathers, as because his physiognomy reproduced the combined features of a series of family portraits. Gout in these days is becoming a little common; and since the Reform bill of 1832 the middle classes have had the audacity to assert their claim to share in its agonies. But there are still some relics of prerogative which are severely limited to the very highest society. The members of one noble and titled house, which has supplied our with at least two Secretaries of State during the last twenty years, have a hereditary incapacity for eating roast mutton. One of their ancestors, probably, was seized with internal pangs after having dined, too copiously on that dish, in the days of the first crusade, and his descendants have been unable to tolerate it ever since. The odd thing is, they can eat, and condescend to like, boiled mutton, especially when served, with caper sauce, and turnips. Another family, which, though not titled, is of an antiquity greater than the proprietors of most coronets can boast, in the west of England, has been famous from father to son, during several centuries, for its instinctive dislike to boiled tongue. These are historic instances, and they might be multiplied with endless and entertaining variety.

Since the accession of Queen Victoria, absolute dementia has lost much of the patrician reputation which it enjoyed in the days of George III. But certain peculiar delusions are still a highly aristocratic appanage. Here is a peer who has a strong conviction that he is endowed with the gift of immortality. He has made his will as a matter of form, but he knows quite well that there will never be any practical use for the document. On all other subjects than this he is perfectly sane. His lordship in fact, is, except in reference to this particular matter, a shrewd, clear-headed, quick-witted man of the world, who thoroughly understands the management of his estates and improvement of his property. A patron of the arts, and a strong advocate of economic reform. His father firmly believed, and protested on his death-bed, that he was born seven years after a quinquennial of ten years. His grandfather was an apostle of the deanism of the transmigration of souls. In fact, there hardly has been a noble lordship for centuries who has not been remarkable for the oddity of his notions or of his behavior to the limit and the sequel of mundane existence.

There is another peer of the realm, who, following the hereditary usage of his house, suddenly, and without a word of warning, absents himself—nobody knows where, or how, or why—from his friends and relatives, for a week, a month, or a year. He has asked a party of friends to dine with him at the family mansion. The company arrive; but his Lordship has gone from home, and left no orders. That day next year he takes his place in the Upper Chamber of the legislature as if nothing had happened. There is another peer—very highly placed, indeed—who, like his ancestors before him, is gay as he tried to make out. Quite lately my mother met a country woman of his at Lausanne, and she writes that she is the stupidest woman she ever met, and quite the most ugly.'

'If you have any occasion to come to London, you must come and see us,' was the last thing Annie said; and Kennedy resolved that, whether or not, he would most decidedly go to London and see Annie Wilton again.

Kennedy felt very dull after the Wiltons' departure. Every evening he said he must certainly go up to town the next day; and every morning he felt that they would be surprised to see him so soon, and he had better wait.

At last he received a very friendly letter from the prince, regretting that he was not to return to England for the present, and referring him to the embassy in London for a settlement of accounts.

Here was the wished-for opportunity. Kennedy took the train one cold, gray morning in October, and reached town by noon. Having settled his business at the embassy, where he learned he had just missed the honor of seeing a certain great personage, then staying in London, he took a cabotel Kensington. He was shown into a pretty room looking on the Gardens, full of flowers, and china, and indescribable knick-knacks.

There was no one in the room but through the looped-up curtains of a second doorway he could hear voices, and even distinguish a low, foreign accent, which for a moment gave him a very uncomfortable feeling, until he assured himself that its masculine tones could never belong to the poor prince.

The servant went through the curtains to announce him, and almost immediately Miss Wilton came out with most charming welcome in face and voice.

'Do come in, Mr. Kennedy,' she cried; 'I think you know our visitor.'

Kennedy followed her into the inner room. Mrs. Wilton, somewhat subdued by a cold, was lying back near the fire, enveloped in a pink wool wrapper. Opposite her sat a gentleman, stout and middle-aged, whom he had seen once before on the prince's affairs.

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