

SIR PATRICK'S ROMANCE.

BY MISS F. HODGSON, AUTHOR OF "KATHLEEN'S LOVE-STORY."

"A STRANGE position, truly!" pondered Sir Patrick, with a touch of gravity in his tone; "and romantic enough, I suppose; and yet—" And there he stopped, and stirred the fire in the small parlor-grate of the house in Ward street, with as matter-of-fact an air as though he was not, in a modern way, going as far beyond Lord Burleigh as a modern gentleman could.

It was just three weeks since the day upon which his attention had been first attracted toward this house on Ward street, or rather toward its front window, in which hung the inevitable announcement, "Apartments to let." But it had not been the card in itself that had attracted his attention—he had read the cabalistic sentence too frequently in his rambles through shabby-gentility for that—it was the simple circumstance that just as he passed, the well-worn red curtains were pushed aside, and a girl's face appeared above the wire-gauze blind—the pretty, half-bitter, half-sad face of a girl of eighteen or nineteen, with great, dewy dark eyes, and dun golden hair rolled backward from her white brow in a careless, yet artistic fashion, at once modern and antique.

To be brief in explanation, I will say that Sir Patrick Redwolde, in a certain reserved fashion, was what his friends called "quietly eccentric." I will add further, that his passion for beauty, in all its forms, amounted almost to a monomania; and then, when I tell you that to his eyes, all the pictures he had criticised, all the fair faces he had silently admired, all the marble goddesses he had lingered near, in his pilgrimage, sunk into insignificance by comparison with the fresh loveliness of this rare girlish head, as it rose to his view from behind the dingy old Venetian blind, you will not wonder at the vein of romance in the story I am relating.

It is needless to enter into particulars. This was just three weeks ago, and here he was, pondering over possibilities in the shabby-genteel parlor, and known as John Redwolde, as utterly lost and beyond aristocratic ken in this poor corner of the world of London, as though he had known no other life from the day of his birth. Still he did not feel the strangeness of his position, as most men would have done.

It was one of the peculiarities of his character that he rarely considered the means to an end; and with him the romance of such a whimsical adventure partook strongly of the commonplace. He had chosen to see more of a beautiful face, and his position was a result of the choice. For the eccentricity of such a course he cared little, since the secret was his alone, for sudden and apparently unaccountable absences on his part were too common to cause any remark.

But he had not advanced much during the three weeks. He had only learnt that his landlady was a widow, and the golden-haired girl her only child. Some conjectures as to their antecedents he had been enabled to make, it is true, from observation.

In one corner of his room stood an ancient bookcase, whose shelves were filled with books of an antiquity and rare variety that surprised him, when, having got permission, he examined them; and it was by these books he was assisted in his conjectures. The Rev. Hugh Graeme (so read the fly-leaf inscriptions) had been a bookworm, and a gentleman, he was forced to believe; and he had evidently given his daughter the benefit of his knowledge, for here and there Sir Patrick came upon exercises and annotations written in a pretty, flourishing, girlish hand, and more than one book bore the inscription, "Papa to Berta." Looking through an old Greek Dictionary one day, he found a bright little bow of ribbon, that had been laid between the pages as a mark, and, after holding it almost tenderly in his hand for a few minutes, he could not make up his mind to return it to its place again, but laid it in his note-book, and kept it there. As for the relict of the Rev. Hugh, she was a pretty, faded, weak-minded woman, prone to shed tears upon the slightest provocation, and very evidently letting the family burdens of secret privation and anxiety fall upon her daughter's pretty girlish shoulders.

They were very poor, Sir Patrick had begun to find out. Berta never appeared to leave home; and though he rarely saw her, unless as he encountered her in the hall, or on the stair-case, he could not help observing the shabbiness of her girlish toilet, and the scant-

ness of comfort in the house; and he had passed the open door of the sitting-room, sometimes, on the chill winter days, where the poor mockery of a fire in the grate looked almost pitiful.

This particular evening, on which I open my story, as he sat in his parlor, the murmur of voices in the adjoining room broke upon him, and becoming more distinct, forced themselves upon his ear.

"It is no use, Roberta," said Mrs. Graeme, who was evidently shedding tears in the last stages of irritable weakness. "I don't know what we are to do. It seems utterly impossible for us to manage without Anne, and yet how we can keep her I don't know. I can't imagine where her wages are to come from; and it was only this morning that she was quite impertinent."

A book was shut with a decided sound, and somebody rose from a chair and crossed the room.

"We can't keep her," said Berta's voice, with a clear, emphatic ring in its tone. "And we won't, mamma. She shall go away, and I will take her place."

"My dear Berta," was Mrs. Graeme's feeble comment, "I don't think I understand you; you are so very energetic."

"Isn't it time I should be, mamma?" returned the girl, bitterly. "It is bad enough to be snubbed by one's rich relations, without being snubbed by one's maid-of-all-work. Let us be spared that, at least."

Sir Patrick found himself listening with a new interest, in spite of himself. He could easily imagine the spirit in her eyes as she spoke, and it touched him sadly. It was not a pleasant fancy, this, of a pretty girl of eighteen, stung by humiliation and disappointment, debarred of her right to youthful happiness, and feeling even the coldest, bitterest touches of deprivation, in the cold bitterness of that worst of poverty, shabby gentility.

There was a short silence, broken only by Mrs. Graeme's nervous sobs, and then Berta spoke again, with a softened, affectionate tenderness in her voice.

"Don't cry, mamma," she said. "We can't help it. Perhaps it will all come right in the end. We can only try to do what appears to be best. Mr. Redwolde's money will be some assistance, you know, and uncle Raymond has promised to provide for the rent, disagreeable as he is."

Mrs. Graeme's reply was given in a fresh burst of tears.

"That is the worst of it," she sobbed. "One

has to be patronized and tyrannized over so. Your uncle treats us as if we were troublesome beggars. And—and there are your shoes, Berta, they are so terribly shabby; and you have actually had nothing new for months. It seems almost cruel, when you are so pretty."

Being only a pretty, natural young creature, whose prettiness made the shabby shoes and shabby dresses a greater trial, it is quite probable Berta had felt something of this, too; for there was a deeper bitterness than before in her answer.

"It doesn't matter," she said. "Beggars have no more right to be pretty than they have to be proud. And what are we but beggars, after all; the worst and most troublesome of all beggars—shabby-genteel beggars. Do you remember what uncle Raymond said about my being pretty? He said it was a pity; and I am inclined to agree with him."

Their voices lowered after this, and Sir Patrick heard no more; but he had heard quite sufficient to explain to him how it was that a few days after Berta replied to the summons of his bell.

But she kept up all her reserve, in spite of the frequency of their meeting. She took his orders very much as the recreant Anne had done, only with a little gravity of dignified self-possession. Altogether, Sir Patrick did not find his romance progressing as favorably as he might have wished.

He was naturally reticent himself, almost to the extent of being slightly constrained; but his great eccentricities were governed by an equally great patience; so he waited for fortune with a most creditable endurance. People who knew him well, said that Sir Patrick Redwolde remained a bachelor because he had never met a modern goddess in a woman perfect enough to suit his curiously fastidious fancies—and there was some truth in the rumor. But men had been guilty of romantic escapades before, matter-of-fact as the world professed to be; and men would be guilty of romantic escapades again; so it was, that as Sir Patrick Redwolde had no weak society scruples, and no one to please but himself, he pleased himself by very complacently undertaking the role of Lord Burleigh.

But matters were going even less smoothly than before, he began to fancy. Mrs. Graeme looked more nervous and harassed; the proud endurance in Berta's eyes was deeper; and once, after a visit from a pompous, well-to-do looking individual, whom he judged to be the relative he had overheard them mention, there

were traces of hot, bitter tears on her scarlet cheeks when he saw her.

This was almost more than Sir Patrick could bear. But what was he to do? He could not offer them money, that was absurdly out of the question. He was sitting over his fire, pondering upon his helplessness, when, to his surprise, after a little tap of announcement, Berta opened the door and entered, evidently with a fixed purpose. She was paler than he had ever seen her, but there was something of decision and spirit in her manner as she announced her errand briefly.

She had come to request a favor of him, she said. Her mother had decided, had, indeed, found it necessary, (this with a proud, steady glance at him,) to dispose of some few surplus articles in her possession, and as they thought that their books could be most easily spared, they had decided upon parting with them.

"They are a remnant of papa's library," she said, "and he considered some of them valuable, from their rarity; and mamma fancied that you might possibly be able to give us some advice as to how we ought best to dispose of them."

She was paler than ever as she paused, and waited for his reply. It had been clearly a resolve wrung from desperation, hard enough to bear in itself, apart from such a bitter sacrifice of pride.

Sir Patrick felt the blood mounting to his forehead. The girlish dignity of her manner made him ashamed of his own duplicity, innocent as it was. He could not help feeling as if she had found him out. He acted his part well, however. He should feel himself honored, he told her, with grave deference, in being permitted to render Mrs. Graeme all the assistance in his power; and then he went to the bookcase and opened it, to give himself time. Some of the books were valuable—too valuable for nine purchasers out of ten, his own experience taught him; and the rest being mediocre, would bring the poorest of prices, or none at all, as they were second-hand. He turned over volume after volume, full of earnest pity for the proud, steady young figure at his side, and thus gained the opportunity to form a commonly reasonable plan.

"I think I can find you a purchaser," he said, turning to her, at last. "A distant relative of mine, Sir Patrick Redwolde, once commissioned me to secure him something of this kind, but as I was unable to meet with anything suitable, I gave up the search. If you would not object to waiting until I hear from him, I

should be under great obligations to you. He professes to be something of a connoisseur in matters of this sort—rarities are his hobby; and I know he would be disappointed to lose such an opportunity."

He did not trust himself to look at her as she answered him, but began to replace the volumes he had removed.

"I am very glad," she said, in an unsteady voice. "Mamma would rather part with them privately, if possible. We were afraid that we should be obliged to let them be sold by auction; and they were poor papa's books, and—"

She broke down here, and in his surprise, Sir Patrick turned upon her suddenly. The resolute spirit in her proud, young eyes had melted away, and as he turned to look at her, she gave him one swift, upward glance, half troubled, half timid, and then dropped her face upon her hands, and burst into tears.

To Sir Patrick, in spite of his intense pity, her emotion was a perfect godsend. So long as her girlish pride had guarded against his knowledge of their trouble and secret anxiety, he had been helpless; but here he felt himself gaining strength.

He drew her gently to the easy-chair, by the fire, and made her sit down; and then, having scarcely spoken a dozen words, waited for her to recover herself. Her distress was so sheerly natural and girlish, that every impulse of tenderness in his heart was stirred. The weary struggle with hidden humiliation and down-trodden pride, had been too much for her, and for the moment she had lost all self-control. Considering that he was that most emotionless of individuals, a thoroughly reserved English gentleman, Sir Patrick certainly felt very much excited. The pretty bowed head, and drooping face, were almost too much for him to endure. If such a thing had been within the bounds of reason, he would certainly have fallen upon his knees by the arm-chair, and made himself very absurd; but as that was out of the question, he was constrained to remain standing in sympathetic silence.

At last, Berta raised her face, looking decidedly more lovely for the softened sparkle of tears in her eyes.

"Don't think me foolish, please," she said, in a low, hesitant voice—a curious little agrieved remorse for her emotion showing itself in her upward glance at his face. "We have prized those books so much—mamma and I. I have had no other friends in the world, it seems to me now, when they must go,"

She faltered a little here, and the tears leaped to her eyes again, and seeing them standing upon her long lashes like great pearls, Sir Patrick could restrain himself no longer.

"Pray, believe that I can understand and sympathize with you," he said, with an earnestness almost tender. "But your relics will be in tender hands, Miss Graeme. Sir Patrick will regard them as reverently as even you could wish, I think." And with a recollection of the rose colored bow in his pocket-book, he flushed guiltily, as he added, "I will make a list of the books you wish to dispose of, and forward it to him at once, with your permission, and then there will be no delay."

She answered him quickly, with a curious sort of pretty timidity.

"I think I could help you," she said. "I used to help papa when he had a great many books, and I was very much younger then. I have read them nearly all, you know, and I might, perhaps, be able to make it less tiresome for you."

Less tiresome! It was more than he would have even dared to hope for, and his delight at this unexpected turn of fortune's wheel, elated him so that he almost surprised her by an exhibition of the pleasure he found it so difficult to conceal. He managed to control himself to a reasonable extent, and they applied themselves to their task together. To Sir Patrick, at least, it was the pleasantest of labors. The pretty, softly-outlined figure, bending over the table, now and then, to add a title to the list, was so bewildering, with the addition of the lamplight concentrating itself on the gold-dusted roll of hair, and the shining, curling lashes, that he found his attention distracted more than once. The shadow of her innocent, troubled tears had scarcely passed away yet, and their softening influence lingered in a certain half-sly, half-appealing frankness of manner, which was indescribably bewitching. It was evident, that she had been so long accustomed to being at once leader and adviser, that even the temporary presence of a calm manner and clear brain had its power over her.

I am not ashamed to say that Sir Patrick over-rated the value of the Reverend Hugh's books, most blushing, in making out his list. To the most mediocre he offered prices, that, to any one more experienced than his young assistant, would have rendered his deceit glaringly transparent; but Berta knew the volumes only as her father's dearest treasures, and, consequently, only brightened and gained spirits as the work went on.

When their task was ended, Sir Patrick felt that he had gained ground. The little piece of good fortune, in spite of its dark side, had lightened the shadow of bitterness on the pretty, young face; and the fact that she was freed from embarrassment, had touched the poor child's cold reserve, and melted it. She even recovered herself sufficiently to make two or three whimsical, willful speeches, whose piquant charm bewitched Sir Patrick more terribly than ever.

Having inclosed the list in a letter to his relative, he went out to post it, with the calmest of business-like demeanor. But, before he left the house, he had written another letter, again making an inclosure, and this time directing the missive to a confidential friend, in Edinburgh. It was a brief enough epistle, perhaps scarcely long enough to be termed a letter, for it contained only the following words:

"MY DEAR LORDACRE—If you will, anonymously, forward the inclosed bank-notes to Mrs. Hugh Graeme, 26 Ward street, London, and await my explanation of the little mystery, you will deeply oblige

"Your sincere friend,

"REDWOLDE."

This letter he posted during his absence. The other he lighted his segar with, and then quietly turned his steps homeward.

As he entered the house, the sitting-room door opened, and Berta came out, carrying a lighted candle, as though she was going to her bed-room. But, upon the first step of the staircase she stopped, and turning toward him, a trifle hesitatingly, as he came up the passage, held out her hand to him, as though from some whimsical little impulse of gratitude.

"Good-night, Mr. Redwolde," she said. "Mamma is— I am very much obliged to you. Thank you." And before he had time to do more than wonder at the pretty, impulsive emphasis upon the "I," and admire the bright picture she made in the candle-light, she had turned again, and was half-way up the staircase.

Of course, Sir Patrick's reply arrived as early as was consistent with his absence from home, and, of course, it was a favorable one. Sir Patrick was delighted, Mrs. Graeme's lodger reported. He had desired to possess this very collection for years, it would almost have appeared. He made no demur, whatever, at the price, and only made one condition. His present plans of travel would render his absence necessary for some time, possibly, for a year

or more, and he did not care to trust his treasures to careless hands; accordingly, if Mrs. Graeme had no objections, and his relative was willing to undertake the charge, he should prefer that his purchase remained where it was until his return. If this plan met with their approval and consent, the arrangement was concluded, and the money should be forwarded without delay.

It is needless to say that the money was forwarded, and that Mrs. Graeme's lodger rose in that estimable lady's esteem immeasurably. He was so chivalrous, so respectful, so dignified, so ready to sympathize with her, and listen to her mournings over Berta. The Reverend Hugh had been a refined, consumptive book-worm, and as Mrs. Graeme had married him against the wishes of her friends, when his death left her penniless, she had been regarded as a culprit, to be snubbed and patronized by turns. Berta herself had a touch of spirited pride, which made her girlishly sensitive to the enubbings and patronage, and was not apt to enlarge upon the subject of their trials; but Mrs. Graeme was, and often bewailed her daughter's fate most pathetically to Sir Patrick.

"She is so pretty," she would say; "and so proud; so like her father in that. Lord Stamford, who was poor, dear Mr. Graeme's patron, at Ingley, used to say that there was not a more perfect face than Berta's in any picture-gallery in Europe."

And certainly Sir Patrick agreed with Lord Stamford. The large, spirited, dark eyes, and abundant, rare-tinted hair, would have rendered any girlish face bewitching, without the almost singular perfection of form and feature with which nature had endowed this friendless young creature, in defiance of shabby gentility.

Quiet persistence, on Sir Patrick's part, melted Berta's reserve at last, and warmed it, in the natural course of events, into the prettiest of frankness. He was generous, scholarly, a gentleman, and, above all, as poor as themselves. This latter idea she had adopted, partly through her knowledge of his surroundings, and partly from the fact that he had left her to imagine that such was the case. It is more than probable that this was his strongest claim upon her friendship. As Sir Patrick Redwolde, he could never have won upon her, bristling as she was with her proud, little weapons of defence against patronage; but supposing that he also had shared the bitterness, she gradually slipped into the pretty,

natural fashion of sympathizing with, and being interested in him.

So, Sir Patrick's whimsical adventure ripened into a romance. The dingy, old parlor became a very bower, and the dingier sitting-room a fairy land, made so by the bright, glowing, young face and figure. But as I am only relating the history of the somewhat singular manner in which a pretty, penniless young creature became the wife of a somewhat eccentric gentleman, it is not necessary that I should particularize every event in connection with the circumstance. It is enough, that, in the daughter of his landlady, Sir Patrick Redwolde found the only woman he had ever loved; and that, in the poor gentleman, Berta Graeme learned to adore the man who was to raise her, unknown to herself, to one of the highest positions in the land.

The card of announcement had been absent from the front window nearly three months. Sir Patrick had pondered over possibilities, when first the beautiful face led him to the house on Ward street; but now his possibilities had become probable, and there must be a practical ending, even to a romance. He returned from his usual day's absence one evening, with a rather graver face than usual, Berta fancied. It was nothing more than the gravity of thought, but it was gravity, nevertheless; and when he took her hand to bid her good-night, she saw that it deepened.

"I shall have a story to tell you to-morrow evening," he said. "Will you promise to listen to it, and forgive me if it seems a strange one?"

She looked up, surprised a little by his earnestness, and then, as their eyes met, hers fell.

"Promise me," he said; "promise that you will forgive me, however strange a story it may be."

She answered him with perfect faith and frankness.

"I promise to forgive you, however strange a story it appears."

He thanked her, warmly. During the past weeks he had often fancied how she would receive the revelation. Whether, at first, it would not distress her a little, through the intensity of the surprise it would necessarily cause her. He had pleased himself, too, with the fancy of how far she would outshine the fairest of the fair women he knew, when he had the right to shower his wealth upon her. Her fresh, young beauty had set at such a bright defiance the shabby dresses and dingy surroundings, that,

on the long evenings, when the firelight had been dancing on her bright, glowing face, and softly outlined figure, he had lingered, tenderly, over a man-like dream of how fair a jewel she would seem, set in the midst of luxury befitting the wealth of her youth and loveliness.

Before going out, the next morning, he left a message for Mrs. Graeme, to the effect, that, upon his return, he wished to have an interview with her.

"Really," faltered Mrs. Graeme, in great nervous trepidation, when Berta delivered the message, "I hope nothing has occurred to make it necessary that he should leave us. What *should* we do, Berta? Just as we were beginning to feel so comfortable, too. But that is always the way," with a premonitory sob. "We are so unfortunate."

Berta, standing in the shadow of the mantel-piece, looking into the fire, colored a little, and then meeting her mother's eyes, colored more deeply than ever.

"I don't think that he is going to leave us, mamma." She hesitated confusedly; and then Mrs. Graeme's perceptive faculties being suddenly aroused to some recognition of the turn affairs were taking, that lady broke into a wild exclamation.

"My dear Berta!" she began, and in her astonishment could positively get no further.

It would be a difficult matter to describe the exact state of her feelings when she gathered the truth from Berta's silence.

"I don't know whether I am glad or sorry," she said, tearfully, after her usual fashion. "Mr. Redwolde is very nice, of course, and has been very kind, but he is as poor as we are, I am afraid—and you know what such a poverty is, Berta; and then he is not very young. Dear! Dear! I had hoped that you would marry well, some day; but I suppose it was not to be."

"He hasn't asked me to marry him yet, mamma," interposed Berta, a thought indignantly, and blushing even more brilliantly than before.

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Graeme, resignedly; "but he is going to ask you, and that is as bad, you know."

The shadow of the heavy London fog had darkened the city; the lamps were beginning to twinkle through it, and Berta and her mother were sitting together in the little, dingy back-room, when the roll of carriage-wheels sounded upon the stones in the street, and drew

up before the door, thereby throwing Mrs. Graeme into a nervous flutter of excitement.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "I wonder if it is your uncle Raymond, Berta. I do hope not."

But a sudden summons from the door-bell, gave Berta no time to reply.

She felt slightly nervous, it must be confessed, as she passed up the hall. She did not exactly like the idea of Mr. Raymond forming a party to the interview. But it was not Mr. Raymond. The vehicle that had stopped before the pavement was a quiet, dark, aristocratic-looking carriage, whose door a liveried servant was holding open for two gentlemen to alight, and in the first of these gentlemen, the flare of a street-lamp revealed her mother's lodger. The other one was a middle-aged gentleman, well dressed, quiet-faced, and of business-like appearance.

In her first surprise, Berta drew back hastily. Perhaps it was Sir Patrick Redwolde! But the next moment Mr. Redwolde was in the hall.

"My friend, Mr. Lindacre," he said, calmly, "Miss Graeme."

Certainly, gaslight never shone on a fairer face than the pure, dark-eyed one revealed to Mr. Lindacre, as he bowed to the pretty young creature in her shabby dress. Perhaps he thought so himself, for Berta found herself feeling slightly embarrassed under his keen gaze.

Could they see Mrs. Graeme, Mr. Redwolde asked; and commonplace as the question was, Berta imagined he looked a little paler than usual, as he spoke. Certainly they could see her. His message had been delivered in the morning, and Berta would tell her he had returned.

On receiving the information, Mrs. Graeme became more fluttered than ever. She was not prepared to see company. She had not even her best cap on. A state of affairs which nearly reduced her to tears again, as an enlivening resource in an extremity. But she went to the parlor, at last; and feeling some natural nervousness, Berta awaited her return in the sitting-room.

She heard the murmur of conversation, and once or twice an exclamation from her mother in the half-hour that followed; but that was all; and at length Mrs. Graeme made her appearance in such evident excitement and astonished delight, that she was fairly breathless.

"My dear Berta," she began, incoherently, the moment she entered the room. "Such a romance! I declare, I never heard of such a thing, unless in a poem, or something; and I

am sure Lord Burliegh— But, dear me! I forgot! I was not to tell you; and, besides, Sir Patrick is waiting, and his friend will explain all about it. Dear! Dear! How surprised I am!"

"I don't understand," said Berta. "Mamma, what do you mean? I thought the gentleman's name was Lindacre."

But Mrs. Graeme was inexorable. She would explain nothing. Berta must go into the parlor at once; and in spite of her reluctance, Berta was fain to go.

The strange gentleman was standing by the mantel, with an amused, yet kindly smile in his keen eyes, when she entered, and her mother's lodger stood near him, a curious glow on his usually quiet, reserved face. At her first glance at him, the bright color flew to Berta's forehead; but he did not give her time to utter a word, for he spoke himself, at once.

"Lindacre," he said, turning to his friend, "will you be kind enough to tell Miss Graeme the story you came here to tell her,"

Mr. Lindacre did not change his position, more than a motion of assent rendered necessary, but his keen eyes twinkled more than ever.

"I shall be happy to do so," he said, smiling, "though I scarcely know how to begin. I will begin at once. Miss Graeme, the story my friend wishes me to tell you, is a love story, and I will relate it as briefly as possible.

"Three months ago—was it three months ago, Redwolde?"

That gentleman looked at Berta's downcast eyes and glowing cheeks, and bowed in silence.

"Just three months ago, then," Mr. Lindacre went on, smiling still, "a certain well-known English baronet disappeared from London society. No one knew where he went, and no one knew why he went; and though such absences were not infrequent on his part, there was about this absence a vague essence of mystery. From the time of his disappearance, until a few days ago, the mystery of this absence was unexplained, and then an old friend of the absentee's, who was also his legal adviser, was surprised to receive a letter from him, bearing the post-mark of London, and requesting his immediate presence in that city. This individual, who was at that time in Edinburgh, obeyed the summons, at once. As I have said, the missing gentleman was an old friend, and he was always at his service. He had, at first, feared some trouble or danger; but on reaching London, he found to his amazement a romance waiting for him—a pleasant,

honest, old romance; re-acted in these unromantic modern days. His friend, who had waited until his youth was past, for a princess, had found one at last. He had seen a fair face, and it had touched his heart. He had flung aside the attributes of his rank, and followed the fair face, and found its loveliness the natural index to fresh, true girlishness. An innocent deception had been necessary to introduce himself; and for this reason he had absented himself from society. He had learned to love this fair face with the strong, deep passion of a man whose heart had been all untouched for years, and who, now he felt that the greatest boon fate could bestow upon him, would be the right to guard the young life from all of trial, or grief, that the truth and tenderness of an honorable gentleman could guard it from. He told his friend this, and he also told him, that he had thought it best that he, as his legal adviser and private confidant, should explain why, for the time, a deception, though an innocent and unavoidable one, had been practised. His friend agreed with him wholly, on this point, as on every other, and, in accordance with his wish, accompanied him to the scene of his romance, and told the story; and—and, as I have finished mine, Miss Graeme, I will introduce to you my friend and client, Sir Patrick Redwolde, and having done so, wish you good-evening."

His faint smile of amusement had died away during his relation, giving way to something of a touched warmth and earnestness, which was strongly evident in his manner, as he ended, and with a grave, kindly bow, left the room, and closed the door.

Sir Patrick did not make any effort to detain him. Perhaps the exit had been part of the friendly agreement. A moment more, and the carriage was rolling down the street: and then, turning to Berta, who stood bewildered and tremulous, Sir Patrick spoke.

"Let me tell my story," he said, gently. "Lindacre has told his, Berta, but that is not all. Old friend as he is, he cannot quite understand how my heart has been stirred. Dear child, I love you! Give me the right to make your young life brighter, if I can, than it has hitherto been."

In the first shock of her wonder, Berta had been silent, but now she came to him, touched to her girlish heart by his generous honor, actual, shining tears in her tender, happy eyes.

"And it was you who bought the books?" she said. "Was it you who sent the money

mamma so mysteriously received? Please tell me?"

"It was I," he answered; and he raised both her hands gently to his lips. "Is this Lady Redwolde?" he asked, with grave tenderness, the next moment.

There was a little pause, and then her bright young face dropped upon the strong hands so closely clasping hers.

"Yes," she whispered. "This is Lady Redwolde."

And they were happy. How could it be otherwise? Out of the little romance grew

the perfecting of two human lives. None of the men and women, who admired and envied Lady Redwolde, during the sensation she created in her first season, knew the truth of her story. There was a story, people said; but all that was known of it was, that the young bride's beauty had won her a higher fortune than that to which she had been born. But, for Sir Patrick, a new life had opened. His old, world-worn weariness had fled forever; and through his young wife's bright beauty, and tender, trustful pride in him, the freshness of his youth was regained for him once more.

THE FLOWER OF COLUMBIA.

BY A NEW CONTRIBUTOR.

In the vale where Connecticut flows,
O'er meadow-lands, blooming and wide,
In a cot hedged around by the beautiful rose,
Did the flower of Columbia reside.

Oh! fair, in the sweet month of June,
Was the green lawn, with primroses crowned;
But fairer the flower of Columbia bloomed,
Than the primroses, all the year round.

Like the Graces, through garden and bowor,
She glided at midsummer morn;
Like nightingale's note at the soft twilight hour,
Floated off her melodious song.

When flowers decayed on the lawn,
And pale, gloomy winter drew near,
Her presence, like vision of Spring's early dawn,
As she passed o'er the way, did appear.

Oh, youth! lovely, healthful, and fair,
To thee blessing's full cup is given;
Can earth's boasted majesty with thee compare,
Or aught 'neath the glory of heaven?

The princes of earth own thy sway—

Thine ever invincible charms;
The proud monarch oft at thy fair feet hath lain,
For the clasp of thy heart-tempting arms.

How oft, as fond memory strays,

Those peerless jet eyes on me beam,
And sweet smiles enlightening my dark, lonely days,
Of Columbia's scepterless queen.

Fair lawn, thou art hallowed for aye!

Which oft her light footsteps doth pace;
And thou, placid stream, which wast went on thy way,
To reflect her immaculate face.

Oh! if 'neath the heavenly dome,

There's pleasure unmixed and divine,
'Tis his who can say, though all other huth frown,
There's a heart beats responsive to mine.

And, oh! trebly happy his hour.

And crowned his life's portion with bliss,
If the heart of Columbia's beautiful flower
Be the one which responds unto his.

THE BABY.

BY MRS. HELEN A. MANVILLE.

VIOLET eyes blinking
So sleepily here;
Of what are you thinking,
You sweet, little dear?

You very demurely
Can look in my eyes,
An angel you're surely,
Affecting disguise.

One week, little mortal—
One week and a day,
Since through Heaven's portal
You wandered earth-way.

Our hearts were so lonely,
No charm could beguile;
But now if you only
Will tarry awhile—

Will list to our pleading
To stay in the nest,
Our hearts in the Eden
Of rapture shall rest.

Hopes, many, are centered,
The fair casket in—
The baby just entered
Earth's valley of sin.

Oh, when God is counting
His flock, in the end!
When up to the mountain
Of life they ascend,

May the feet find the portal,
The soul 'scaped the morn;
This little, wee mortal,
Our baby was born.