

BALLADE OF THE PUG-DOG.

BY NELLIE BOOTH SIMMONS.



DIGNIFIED pug on the cushioned seat
Of Mrs. Du Plieth-
orie's grand
coupe
Just chanced to ob-
serve in the
crowded street
A poor little deso-
late girl one
day;
And he cocked his eye
in a scornful
way

From the perfumed
depths of his braided rug.

And she almost fancied she heard him say:

"Ah, ha! don't you wish you were born a pug?"

"I'm stupefied," he continued, "with things to eat,
And coddled and pampered the livelong day,
And I'm bathed and combed by a maid so neat,
Who brushes my coat in the neatest way;

And when I'm too weary to walk or play—

My mistress is ready her pet to lug—

She's always so frightened lest I should stray—

Ah, ha! don't you wish you were born a pug?"

"You wander about with your naked feet,
And pick up a morsel just where you may,
And you regale on the whitest meat,
And daintily wrapped in a blanket gay;

And, while no one questions where you can
stay.

My bed is downy and soft and snug—

They never neglect me, you know, not they—

Ah, ha! don't you wish you were born a pug?"

ENVOI.

"Yes, if you could only, without delay,
Turn into a dog with a crumpled mug,
You'd soon comprehend why I laugh and say:

Ah, ha! don't you wish you were born a pug?"

A TALE OF TWO WOMEN

"Come to me, I am dying. JUNE."

Don Eastern's brow was knit, and he muttered a very impatient imprecation under his breath, as he stood studying the telegram which had just been put in his hand.

"I thought that was all over and done with. Must we go through with it again, I wonder?"

And then he took up a time-table and studied it attentively for a moment.

"Of course a thousand miles in this beastly cold is a mere nothing for a busy man! That's understood. A woman's caprice must be gratified at all hazards. My arch enchantress isn't dying any more than I am, but I suppose I must go."

Glancing hurriedly through the mail on his desk, he then picked up, from the midst of commonplace, practical, business-like looking letters, a slim, satiny envelope of palest pink, with a faint perfume clinging to it. His whole face softened, and his hand shook for a moment as he eagerly opened and read the few lines.

"My little Mignon!" he said, gently.

But his little Mignon did not keep him from taking a journey of a thousand miles to see June Heatherton, to whom he had been engaged a year ago; with whom he had quarreled fiercely over some palpable flirtation on her part; from whom he had parted in bitterness and pain, and yet with a half-relieved feeling in a corner of his heart.

Six months he had been reckless, as a man sometimes will when a woman has been false and untrue in any particular; and then she had written him, proudly, tenderly, saying, that, as she had sinned, so she must be the supplicant—in her anger she had said she did not love him, but now she knew better; she would never love any one else—would he not come back to her?

But this, he had declined, politely and firmly. Now that it was all over, he knew that he had never loved her, and that it was a most fortunate thing he had found it out in time.

Her grace, her beauty, her wonderful fascination, had thrilled his blood with a rapture that he thought then was love, but it was only her false twin-sister. Love had come to him, indeed, but it was a later guest, and then a sweet face leaned to him through the shadows, and its purity and tenderness blotted out the wan summer beauty of June Heatherton from before his vision.

Yet a week later he was in her presence. "She evidently still lives!" he murmured, sardonically, as he entered the magnificent hall of Heatherton, *pater*, in which no signs of mourning flitted.

A moment later June entered the drawing-room, where he waited.

"Ah, yes, she could stir even his unbelieving, cold heart."

"My love! my love!" she murmured, softly.

And certainly Don Eastern was not the kind of a man to let the memory of little Mignon prevent him from holding a beautiful, yielding form closely in his arms, and returning clinging kisses with interest, when such a rare opportunity offered.

But for all this propitious beginning, Don Eastern went back to his own home, a week later, as free as when he left it. He alone knew the full power of June Heatherton's siren charms, for he was the only man she had ever loved. He alone knew of the tears she had shed; he alone knew that she had thrown herself at his feet in all her exquisite, gleaming beauty, and begged him to take her back to his heart, with all the despairing passion that a woman like her can feel when she sees the man that was once her abject slave beyond her reach.

What was her pride compared to the desolation that swept over her when she realized that the heart she had trifled with was hers no longer, when she had learned to prize it most? And so he went back to his little Mignon, whose calm, pale face was, continually before him through all his journey in the bitter winter cold.

A dainty little missive would be awaiting him—the last week or two would drop away from him then. But to his intense disappointment, no letter was there; he only waited to grasp this fact fully, and to freshen up after his tiresome trip, when once more he started out.

It was a very different woman from June Heatherton that greeted him at the end of his journey. Not tall, nor voluptuous, nor passionate; but flower-sweet and fragile, with dreamy eyes, a sad mouth, and a radiant smile.

A faint flush stole into her cheeks as she came quietly to him and laid her hands in his outstretched ones for a brief moment—she did not even see the love and longing in his eyes—and then he took her in his arms.

"Mignon, I can wait no longer. Say you love me."

She looked up into his face, a little startled, and trembled like a bud the wind has shaken too roughly; but she did not strive to leave her prison, and, after a pause which was breathless and terrible to Don Eastern, she said, gravely and sweetly:

"I love you."

"My angel!" he said, passionately. "I am not worthy of you—not worthy to touch your hand; but I love you so, little Mignon, I shall make you happy."

And she laid her cheek against his, perfectly happy and trusting and content.

Staggered enough, he told her all about June Heatherton. He bid nothing—not even his long journey last week—and Mignon's face was shadowed for a moment.

"Did you ever love her?"

"No, my darling; I thought I did, but I know better now."

"She is very beautiful?"

"And she loves you?"

He bent down and kissed her, but did not answer.

"Are you sure—quite sure—that you love me?"

"My blossom!" he murmured, with infinite tenderness, "if you are not the other half of my soul, I pray God I may go to my grave bereft."

"But you would have married her," she said, after a little.

"I don't think fate would have been so cruel, knowing my little unknown Mignon was my rightful portion. Remember, dear, I did not know you then."

Three months later Don brought her June's wedding-cards.

"You see, dear," he said, "that she did not love me."

But in a day or two came a mad letter to him, written by June on her wedding-day. And Don Eastern was sorry, indeed; for June Heatherton, despite her coquetry, was a girl with a really fine nature. She was good and noble in most things, but this unromantic love seemed to have overwhelmed her and swept her off her feet.

He said nothing to Mignon. He destroyed the letter and did not answer it.

He was beginning to hope she found a new love to fill her heart, when another letter came. She had tried to love her husband; she had imagined, if she were married to some good man, she could forget her wild love for him. But it was in vain, and she was the most miserable woman on the face of the earth.

He said nothing to Mignon. It would only grieve her, and she was too white and innocent to know anything of such stormy passions.

A third letter came, and a fourth, and he began to be seriously annoyed, when one day a little note came from June—Mrs. Langdon—saying she was to be in town visiting her sister; would he not call?

In his perplexity (men are such stupids) he went to Mignon.

He told her Mrs. Langdon was in town; that she had written to him to call. Should he do so? And then to her questions? No, she was not happy, and she had not yet learned to love her husband, whom she had married in one of her freaks, but in time, perhaps—

And poor little Mignon, with a very sore heart and a calm face, told him to go if he wished. It would only be courtesy.

She had seen June's picture, and the beautiful sorceress face was something to remember—the sweet, smiling lips, the languid, dark eyes, the pearl softness and fairness. Often, when she was nestled in her lover's arms, the thought would steal to her that that beautiful head had lain where hers was now; that his kisses had been pressed upon other, redder lips, and she felt a little pang, as a loving, jealous heart will, for there is little love in this world that does not walk hand in hand with jealousy. It is all very well to talk about a perfect trust, a noble confidence, but this is the nineteenth century, and one must be vain, and arrogant, and self-sufficient indeed, when no doubt ever creeps in of one's own power and fascination when pitted against another's.

June Langdon had wealth, beauty, and passion. Mignon had twice her intellect, and tenderness, and capacity for pain, and self-sacrifice and love. June was a magnificent cactus-blossom, scarlet and gold, and subtle; Mignon was a fair day-lily, pallid and fragrant and pensive.

And men have such an unfortunate weakness for tropical flowers, they cannot pass them by carelessly or unconsciously, even though they have already plucked the lily and laid the fragrant petals over their hearts. The white flower brought out all the beauty of Don Eastern's soul, its chivalry and tenderness, its belief in the good and true, its higher impulses and aspirations; but he could not ignore the brilliant cactus-bud; it caused his blood to flow faster; it gave a new zest to living—for an hour.

Mignon was his saint, his nun, his good angel, and he loved her truly, with all the high love a man of the world can ever know. He revered her for her womanly goodness and truth; he trusted her as he never supposed he could trust any one. She rested him and soothed him unspeakably.

And little Mignon loved him with a strange power and intensity that was the very breath of her life to her.

But he went to see Mrs. Langdon all the same.

She came to him more royally beautiful than ever, with eyes more lustrous and filled with a starry dusk, with redder lips and a deeper flush on her delicate cheeks; her garments clung about her lissom form, a faint, mystic perfume rose from her laces—*Circe*, indeed.

He stood up silently and gravely, but she laid her head on his shoulder and drew his lips down to hers. She had once been delicately reserved, and high and proud, but a mad, unthinking love had changed her strangely. And married though she was, this man, Don Eastern, held all her soul in his keeping, and with a tropical nature like hers, love is everything.

She would have preferred heaven and the "lites and languors of virtue"; debarred from that, she would take hell and the "rapture and roses" of a love to which she had no shadow of right. By-and-by she said:

"Don, you love some one."

He bowed, with a deep look into her face.

"Not me—you do not love me!" she said, impatiently. "It is some one else, some one I don't know—tell me about her!"

"My dear June, could a man ever find room for two women in his heart, when one of them was you?"

"Tell me about her," she said, steadily. "I have not loved you all these years, Don Eastern, without learning every phase of your mood. Does she live here?"

"No, but she is visiting here at present."

"Is she beautiful?"

"No."

"Brilliant?"

"No."

"Wealthy?"

"No."

"What is she, then?"

"An angel, whose garments it is a profanation to touch."

She looked at him wonderingly and sighed heavily.

"Can I see her?"

"I am sure I do not know. You may possibly meet her at some party or something."

"Are you going to hear Modjeska tomorrow night?"

"Yes."

"With her?"

"I believe so."

"Then I shall see her—Oh, my God!"

She caught her breath sharply, and fell down at his feet in all her exquisite beauty.

"Can you never, never love me again."

"My life, my soul, it is all yours! Can you not give me a little love in return?"

He lifted her up gently.

"It is too late to ask that now, June. Try and forget you ever loved any one but your husband. Believe me, you will be happier. No one can more bitterly regret than I the misery of our past. Let us begin anew."

But she thrust him away from her wildly, and bade him to go, if he did not wish her to fall dead at his feet.

He went away sadly.

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Mignon was visiting a school friend, Mrs. Barrymore, and the next night they all sat listening to the heart-breaking story of "Camille"—Mrs. Barrymore's piquant and gipsy-like: Mr. Barrymore blonde and languid, but very devoted to his pretty, dash-ing wife; Mignon and Don Eastern.

Mignon was listening earnestly to Modjeska, who interpreted so well a passionate, loving, erring, noble woman's heart. The high-bred grace, the dainty foreign accent, the naturalness of this actress, held her in thrall, and she never took her eyes from the stage; but as the curtain went down on the second act, she lifted her glass and slowly scanned the house. Suddenly she paused with a heart that throbbed strangely. Directly across from her sat a woman whom

surely she had seen somewhere—a woman with great dusky eyes and golden hair, and a brilliant scarlet on her lips, and a fitful flush on her cheeks—a woman in gold satin that fell away from the snowy neck and arm, on which opals gleamed ominously, with a knot of crimson in her hand.

"Don," she said, tremulously, "is not that an old friend of yours in the box opposite?"

He lifted his glass.

"You recognize her from her picture. I see. She is looking remarkably well, is she not?" nonchalantly.

"She is glorious!" but the tender heart contracted.

The dusky eyes across were looking in her direction with a restless, smoldering fire in their depths that pained her to see.

June Langdon had glanced over with a hungry intensity that seemed to search her. She passed over Mrs. Barrymore's bright, dark beauty, and settled directly on Mignon's face, studying it intently. The dark eyes, the wistful mouth, the dreaming, calm, sweet face.

"Not beautiful? No; but a face that any man would shine in his heart and love more recklessly than any mere beauty of form and coloring," she murmured. "Yet she dresses like an actress. There is not another woman in the house like her. She is odd and picturesque. She is like a strain to Mozart, a spray of lilies, a cool pool in the heart of a desert. My God! how he looks at her—he never looked at me like that! He respects her, he worships her!"

She sank back, breathless with misery, and yet again and again she found herself gazing intently at Mignon.

In a long, black velvet gown, cut after the fashion of an old picture, with rare lace at throat and elbow, with long black gloves and a black fan, and a large bouquet of creamy, odorous jasmine in her hand, she was a contrast indeed to most women there.

Mrs. Barrymore was more of a gypsy than ever in pale amber and dark ruby; all about her was color and glow and shimmer, but from the rich darkness, Mignon's clear pallor, like the leaf of one of her jasmine buds, the sweet red lips, the dreaming eyes, shone out and attracted a thousand eyes.

She was like a picture of repose. She was like the twilight, tender and passive, after the hot, tumultuous day. And Don Eastern, looking across at the beautiful enchantress in her gold-satin draperies without a thrill, knew that for one touch of the small gloved hand at his side he would brave death.

As Camille was parting with Armand after her interview with his father, looking so sadly changed from the light-hearted, joyous girl, in her pretty pink dress and garden hat, from an hour before, laughing and sobbing in a breath