

A SONG OF THE CYCLE.

THIS is the toy, beyond Aladdin's dreaming. The magic wheel whose hub is wound. All roads, although they reach the world around, O'er western plains or orient deserts gleaming.

This is the skein, from which each day unravel Such new delights, such witching flights, such joys Of bounding blood, of glad escape from noise— Such ventures, beggarly old Crusoe's travel.

It is as if some mighty necromancer, At king's command, to please his lady's whim, Instilled such virtue in a rubber rim, And brought it forth as his triumphal answer.

For whereso'er its shining spokes are fleeting, Fair benefits spring upward from its tread, And eyes grow bright, and cheeks all rosy red, Responsive to the heart's ecstatic beating.

Thus youth and age, alike in healthful feeling, And man and maid, who find their paths are one, Crown this rare product of our century's "run," And sing the health, the joy, the grace of wheeling!

—Youth's Companion.

A PASTEL PORTRAIT.

The picture was charming. There was no denying that. Frank Harwood stood at the window of the shop and stared in at it, as he had done every day for the last week. The execution of the work was not faultless. Some crudities marred it, but the ensemble was bewitching.

The face—that of a girl in the first fresh bloom of maidenhood—looked back at you over one mistily-draped white shoulder. The liquid eyes were laughter-lit the slightly-parted scarlet lips had a shy droop, there was a little, round dimple in the chin, the hair that melted into the soft gown and dusky background was a wind-blown tangle of reddish gold.

Harwood entered the shop, shutting out the whirling snowflakes behind him.

"Is that picture—the pastel portrait in the window—for sale?" he inquired.

"No, sir," he was told.

"Can you tell me the name of the original?"

"I do not know it, sir. The portrait was left here as a sample to solicit orders."

"You are sure it is a portrait—not merely an ideal head?"

"The artist said so."

"Give me his name and address, please."

But when the rising young barrister had the slip safe in his pocket-book and was out again in the white wintry world he began to feel uncomfortably conscious that in this particular instance he was not acting with the discretion on which he ordinarily prided himself.

He was a trifle troubled, too, by the recollection of a certain conversation held with his aunt the previous

evening. She was the dearest old lady in the world and the most generous. She had brought young Harwood up, on him the best procurable education, and three years of continental travel. But on one point, the question of probable marriage, she was inclined, he thought, to be dictatorial. "So you refuse to meet Miss Fainsworth?" she had asked.

"As a suitor—yes," he had replied, tively.

Frank felt that he must see the original of the portrait, so discretion was won to the winds, and starting on quest he reached a row of high, flat, dreary, red brick houses. In one of these the artist must live.

He found the number, rang the bell, a woman, with a smudge of paint on her cheek opened the door.

"Mr. Vincent Brand?" asked Harwood.

"Third floor back," she returned, tly.

Harwood knocked. A voice bade him in. He went in. The room was bare, dreary. Some sketches tacked on the walls. An easel and stood in the center of the apart-

A handful of fire and a tiny

sheet-iron stove made the cold of the place more noticeable.

"Mr. Brand, I believe?"

The occupant, an invalid with death written in his hollow eyes, on his blue-veined hands, bowed assent.

"I came," said Harwood, declining the solitary chair which was proffered him, "about the picture exhibited in Mercer's window. It is not for sale?"

"No, sir."

"Not at a large figure?"

The artist did not at once answer. He was ill and very poor.

"Not at any price," he said.

"You could not make me a copy?"

"No, sir. The truth of the matter is this: The young lady who consented to sit for me for that picture did so out of her own sweet charity. She is so beautiful, and makes such fine study. I fancied her face would bring me orders, where ones less lovely, even if admirable as a likeness, would fail. I need not enumerate to you the reasons why it would be dishonorable for me to abuse her kindness."

"I understand your reasons, Mr. Brand, and respect them. May I give you an order for a life-sized pastel from this photograph?"

He had fortunately remembered having in his pocket the picture of a nephew that morning received. The commission would help the poor artist.

A light tap came to the door.

"May I come in, Vincent?" called a sweet voice.

The door opened. Frank Harwood turned to look into the face that had haunted him waking and sleeping, but a thousand times fairer than the colored crayons had reproduced it.

She half drew back at the sight of the stranger, but Brand called to her:

"Come in, Claire!" And then, with youthful candor: "This gentleman was just asking about your portrait."

She bowed slightly. She was all in rich furs and deep glowing velvet. The elegance of her attire puzzled Frank Harwood.

"I hope the picture is bringing you orders, Vincent."

"It is, indeed," he answered, brightly.

"Well, it is late. I must go. I just ran in to see how you were getting on."

He smothered in a fit of coughing.

"You have the carriage?"

"No, I am on foot."

"I shall see you home, then," the artist said, looking troubled. "This is not the best neighborhood in the world, and it is growing dark."

The fierce cough shook him again.

"You shall do nothing of the kind!" she said, peremptorily.

Harwood went forward, hat in hand. "Will you do me the honor of permitting me to accompany you? I am sorry I have not a card. My name is Frank Harwood."

She had been listening with a somewhat haughty air. She smiled now with sudden friendliness.

"I shall be glad if you will come with me," she said, simply.

On their way she told him about Brand, whom she had known from childhood.

"He is dying," she said. "It is hard to help him; he is so proud!"

The house before which she paused was a magnificent one.

Harwood mustered courage to ask it he might call.

"No," she said, gently; and then, as if repenting, "I shall be at Brand's studio on Friday."

She ran up the steps.

Needless to say, Harwood was in the painter's room early on Friday afternoon. The number of orders he gave quite overwhelmed the artist. She came at last, her face like a rose over her dark furs.

They met, not quite by chance, many times, and still Frank did not learn her name. He called her Miss Claire.

One evening when he was leaving the studio with her, he told her the story of how he had first happened to come there.

"I fell in love with a pastel portrait," he said. "I am to-day in love with the original. But I know so little of you it seems like being in love with a spirit. Are you going to punish my presumption, or reward my daring?"

She indicated her carriage that stood at the curb.

"Get in," she said, smiling. "I chance to be driving your way."

The vehicle stopped at his aunt's door.

"Do you know my aunt?" he began.

Just then his aunt came towards them.

"Claire, my dear!" she cried. "Frank, where did you meet Miss Fainsworth?"

"Fainsworth!" he repeated, blankly. "You"—he reproached. Claire—"knew me all the time!"

"Do you think I would have let you see me home that night if I did not?" she asked, archly.

"What in the world are you children talking about?" Frank's aunt questioned.

They only laughed.

But there was that in the lovely eyes raised to his which told him he might plead again—and not in vain.

KATE M. CLEARY.

That Bright Smile Was His Last.

As they led the condemned man from his cell they saw that he was smiling. Even while they were blinding him in the electric chair the smile lingered on his lips. The curiosity of the warden was aroused. He paused with his thumb gently touching the fatal button and asked the cause of his unseemly mirth.

"I—I was just thinkin'," chuckled the malefactor, "how I'm foolin' my old school teacher. He always said I was born to be hanged."

Then the warden's thumb came down.

A LOST COURTESY.

They were a group of choice spirits and they gathered daily in the same place, in summer beneath the wide-spreading boughs of a pride of India, and in winter before the hearth in the dingy little office of Squire Brice. The aforesaid boughs shaded the door of the aforesaid office, and as the same choice spirits met every day, or rather lounged all day, naturally many questions were broached and exhaustively discussed among them. They were speaking of politeness one day, each man giving his opinion of the quality of true politeness. The subject had been widely discussed and began to dwindle, when one of the group, who had been a silent listener, revived it with an observation, giving his personal reasons why too much of a good thing can be just as bad as a paucity of well-being.

"Yassir," observed Jere Dinkin, the last speaker, stepping from behind the fire and lifting the cloth of his hot trousers away from the calves of his spindling legs, "Yassir, gentlemen, politeness mought be a mighty good thing, but when run to death hit's wusser'n no manners a-tall. That-ar article," he resumed, looking around the assem-

ber, but bring somebody erong with her. I was a-settin' next Miss Rose on one side an' Miss Rose's maw come an' plumped right down by the thes miserable sinner of a Critchett an' com-

menced a-exhortin' an' a-persuadin' hotter'n a yaller hound on a trial.

Critchett was he affered toe make the ol' lady mad, so he set an' listened an' 'lowed 'Yes'm' toe everythin', she sed,

while I got over ground with Miss Rose.

"That-ar made Critchett madder'n a wet hen'an' after meet'n' he sent leetle Bunchy Calley toe tell me that if I could leave pesterin' a gall long enough to come out in the pine thicket he'd lick me quicker'n a houn' pup can lick a skillet, an' you know that's pow'ful quick. We went out in the thicket an' a lot of the boys was a-waitin' toe see the fun, an' without any foolishness we clinched an' went at hit. We fit fur a leetle an' both of us was a-gittin' blown. My nose was skinned and Critchett's eye was most gouged out, when here come two preachers an' half a dozen deacons amblin' out inter th' thicket ter break up th' dewel.

"Of course, after we'd fit Critchett an' me didn't speak, but we both kep' a-courtin' th' gall. If he went a-walkin' on one side I was right that on t'other, an' th' purty creetur was as sweet toe me as she war toe him.

"Things would a' come out sooner, but Miss Rose went toe see her married sister in Pineville an' stayed till night about Christmas, an' when she come home some of the young folks got up a barn dance in the schoolhouse for her. As soon as I heard she was home I cut over to see her, thinking I would be thar befo' Critchett had done heard she had come, but, bless my soul, when the ol' lady opened the do' who was a-sittin' thar grinnin' like a possum in a holler tree but that sorrel-top ijit, Critchett, an' he had done ast her toe let him 'scort her toe th' barn dance, too.

"I let Critchett set me out that time, but I done had a scheme I was gwine toe work on him an' had toe be lively if I wanted hit toe work smooth.

"I hunted up ol' Abs'lom, th' nigger fiddler, an', drappin' a quarter into his ol' black pam, I xplained my idee an' I tell yer hit worked like new soap.

The gall was a-dancin' oppesite me when the fiddler give out the fitter gall change pardners an' I jest danced up to her as keeless an' gay as a young shoat, an' when I helt out my hand she give me hern an' then th' fiddler, moved by the devil, most likely, forgot to change us back an' we danced half the day together.

"Well, suh, Satan he put hit into th' gall's hand not to go home with any one of us, but toe snuggle up to her ol' daddy when the dance was over. We were a-goin' home on th' train an' th' kyar was crowded, me an' Critchett a-settin' on th' same seat. A heap of folks was standin' up an' all of a sudden I looked around an' thar stood our gall.

"Now, here was a fix. By gitthin' up I would be perle, but hit would give him a mighty fine chance toe do some pleadin', plastered that so clost ter her. I studied a minit or two, then Critchett see her, but wouldn't move a peg.

"At last up I bounces. 'Miss Rose,' I says, 'have this 'ere seat.' She laughs so murtly an' set down.

A sympathetic glance round the company and some one murmured: "Ah, she married Critchett?"

"Naw, she didn't nuther, not by a blamed sight! She married me, an' et that 'oman ain't bin a yaller-jacket an' a torment toe me ever since I don't want toe eat no mo." "An," mournfully, "the beauty of the question is that I hadn't bin so doggadest perite she mought hav married Critchett."

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