

of telling this story can never come) sat all day, without food, under a tree. The night threatened to be very pitiless; for the wind arose, and there was every sign of a heavy rain; and wild beasts prowled around. But about sunset, as he was preparing to pass the night in the branches of the tree, a woman, returning from the labors of the field, perceived how weary and dejected he was, and, taking up his saddle and bridle, invited him to follow her. She conducted him to her hut, where she lighted a lamp, spread a mat on the floor, and bade him welcome. Then she went out, and presently returning with a fine fish, broiled it on the embers, and set his supper before him. The rites of hospitality thus performed toward a stranger in distress, that *savage* angel, pointing to the mat, and assuring him that he might sleep there with-

out fear, commanded the females of her family, who all the while had stood gazing on him in fixed astonishment, to resume their spinning. Then they sang, to a sweet and plaintive air, these words: "The winds roared, and the rains fell. The poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree. Let us pity the white man; no mother hath he to bring him milk, no wife to grind his corn." Flowers in the desert! *

Flowers in the desert! And De Sauty shall spare them, though he botanize on his mother's grave. Borro-boolah-gah may know us by our India-rubber shirts and pictorial pocket-handkerchiefs; and King Mumbo Jumbo may reduce his rebellious locks to subjection with a Yankee currycomb; but these, our desert flowers, are All Right, De Sauty!

* Leigh Hunt.

BEAUTY AT BILLIARDS.

THERE is a lady in this case.

For three days she had sat opposite me at the table of the pleasantest of White Mountain resorts, (of course I give no hint as to which *that* is,—tastes differ,) and I had gradually become enthralled. Her beauty was dazzling, and her name was Tarlingford. For the first of these items, I was indebted to my own intelligence; for the second to the hotel register, which also informed me that she was from New York.

I, too, had come from New York;—a coincidence too startling to be calmly overlooked.

Our acquaintance began oddly. One morning, at breakfast, I was musing over a hard-boiled egg, and wondering if I could perforate her affections with anything like the success which had followed my fork as it penetrated the shell before me, when I felt a timid touch upon my toe, thrilling me from end to end like a

telegraph-wire when the insulation is perfect. I looked up, and detected a pink flush making its way browward on the lovely countenance across the table.

"I beg your pardon," said I, with much concern.

"It was my fault, Sir; excuse *me*," said she, permitting the pink flush to deepen, rosily.

"Shall I pass you the buttered toast?" said I.

"Muffins, if you please," said she, and so sweetly that I was blinded to the absence of sugar in my second cup of coffee.

I was confused by this incident. Many men would have concealed their disquietude by an affectation of sudden appetite, or by bullying the waiter, or by abrupt departure from the scene. I did neither. I felt I had a right to be confused, and I gloried in it.

Very soon Miss Tarlingford withdrew,

and I experienced an aching void within, which chops and fritters had no power to replenish.

I opened a chambermaid's heart with a half-dollar, and the treasures of her knowledge were revealed to me. The beauty and her party were to remain a fortnight. Among her companions there were no males, except a youthful irresponsibility. *Exultemus!*

Later in the morning I heard the tinkling of the parlor pianoforte. Music has soothing charms for me, though I have not a savage breast. I drew near, and found Miss Tarlingford trifling with the keys,—those keys which lock together so many chains of human sympathy. She rose, and gave out demonstrations of impending disappearance. I interposed,—

“Pray, continue. I am famished for music, and came specially to listen.”

“It is hardly worth while.”

“How can you say so? It is I who know best what I need.”

“I will play for you, then.”

And she did. This was wonderful. Usually, a long and painful struggle precedes feminine acquiescence, on such occasions. Repeated refusals, declarations of incapacity, partial consent vouchsafed and then waywardly withdrawn, poutings, head-tossings, feebler murmurs of disinclination, and final reluctant yielding form the fashionable order of proceeding. The charm of it all is, that the original intention is the same as the ultimate action. Whence, then, this folly? Having been many times wretchedly bored by this sort of thing, I was now correspondingly gladdened by the contrast.

Miss Tarlingford played well, and I said so.

“Pretty well,” she answered, frankly; “but not so well as I could wish.”

Shock Number Two. It is customary in good society for tolerable performers to disavow all praises, (secretly yearning for more,) and to assail with invective their own artistic accomplishments. Here was a young lady who played well, and had the hardihood to acknowledge it. This rather took away my breath,

and a vacuum began to come under my waistcoat.

For three blissful days Miss Tarlingford and I were seldom separated. Her sister, a pale, sedate maiden, of amiable appearance, and her brother, a small, rude boy, of intrusive habits and unguarded speech, I consented to undergo, for the sake of conventional necessity. To the mother of the Tarlingfords additional respect seemed due, and was accorded.

Three blissful days of sunshine, meadowy rambles, forest explorations, the majestic tranquillity of Nature spiced with the sauce of flirtation, or something stronger. Sometimes we took our morning happiness on foot, sometimes our mid-day ecstasy served up on horseback, sometimes our evening rapture in an open wagon at two forty.

The puerile Tarlingford, interfering at first, was summarily crushed. Aspiring to equestrian distinctions, he wrought upon maternal indulgence, until, not without misgivings, maternal anxiety was stifled, and, with injunctions that we should hover protectingly near him, he was sent forth, a thorn in our sides. In half an hour he was accidentally remembered, and was found to be nowhere within view; so we pursued our way, well pleased. He had dropped quietly off, at the first canter, into a miry slough, and had returned sobbingly, covered with mortification and mud, to the arms of his parent. Keen questioning at dinner was the result.

“Why did you so neglect him?” demanded fond mamma, adding, reproachfully, “The child's life might have been sacrificed.”

“Mother, we looked for him, and he was gone. Why didn't he cry out?”

“So I did,” shouted this youth of open speech; “but you two had your heads together, laughing and talking like anything, and couldn't hear, I suppose.” (With a juvenile sneer.)

“Oh, fie, Walter! Now I think you were so frightened that you could not speak.”

“I shall know better than to intrust

him to your care again," said indignant mamma, as one who withdrew a blessed privilege.

"Don't say that, mother; it would be a punishment too severe," said the mischievous little pale sister, in tones of pity, and her face brimming with mirth.

Everybody laughed, and peace was restored.

On the third evening, misery came to me in an envelope post-marked New York:—

"MY DEAR PLOVINS:—

"I shall be with you the night after you receive this. Engage a room for me. Have you seen anything of a Miss Tarlingford, where you are staying? You should know her. She is very brilliant and accomplished, but is retiring. I am willing to tell you, but it must go no farther, that we are betrothed.

"Yours, in a hurry,

"FRANK LILLIVAN."

My heart was as the mercury of a thermometer which is plunged into ice; but I preserved an outward composure. Turning over the pile of letters awaiting owners, I came upon one, directed in Lillivan's handwriting, to Miss A. Tarlingford, etc., etc.

To think that a paltry superscription should carry such a weight of tribulation with it!

I thus discovered that my lines had fallen in unpleasant places. I was fishing in a preoccupied stream, and had got myself entangled.

I avoided the public table, and shrunk from society. During the whole of the next morning, I kept aloof from the temptations of Tarlingford, and took to billiards.

In the afternoon, as I sat gloomily in my room, with feet protruding from the window, and body inclined rearward, (the American attitude of despair,) the piano tinkled. It was the same melody which had attracted me a few happy days before. Strengthening myself with a pow-

erful resolution to extricate myself from the bewitching influence which had surrounded me, I arose, and went straightway to the parlor. Could it be that a flash of pleasure beamed on Miss Tarlingford's face? or was I a deluded gosling? The latter suggestion seemed the more credible, so I cheerfully adopted it.

"We have missed you, Mr. Plovins," said the fair enslaver; "I hope you have not been unwell?"

"Unwell?—oh, no, no!"

"You have not been near me—us, today," (reprovingly,) "not even at dinner; and the trout were superb."

A sudden hope mounted within me.

"Miss Tarlingford, pray, excuse me,—your first name, may I ask what it is?"

"Arabella is my name, and" (whisperingly) "you may use it, if you like."

"Oh, hideous horror! And this is what they call flirtation," I thought. And the hope which had risen blazing, like a rocket, went down fuliginous, like the stick.

"Mr. Plovins, I will say you are very—very inconstant, to be absent all day, thus."

"Miss Tarlingford, it is not inconstancy, it is billiards."

"Billiards!"

"Billiards. I adore them. You know nothing of billiards; women never do. They are my joy. Pardon me," (with a sudden uprising of the moral sense,) "I have an engagement at the billiard-room, and I should be there."

"Dear me! I should like to do billiards."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Why so, Sir?"

"No, I do not mean that; but ladies never play billiards."

"I suppose there is no reason why they should not?"

"A thousand."

"Why, what harm?"

"My dear Miss Tarlingford, if your first name were not Arabella,—alas, alas!—there would be none."

"Nonsense! now you are laughing at me. Come, you shall teach me billiards."

"It cannot be, Miss Tarlingford." (Low tragedy tones.)

"Why not?"

"Because your name is Arabella."

"Very well, Sir,—if you do not like my name, you need not repeat it."

"I adore it; it is not that. Forgive me."

"Then I will get my hat";—and her light footsteps tapped upon the stairs.

Here was a state of things! Where were my firmness and my resolution now? Where was the Pythian probity for which, according to my expectations, Lillivan was to have poured Damoniæ gratitude upon me? Was I, or was I not, rapidly degenerating into villany? I felt that I was, and blushed for my family.

If her name had been anything but Arabella,—anything the initial of which was not A, then I could have justified myself; but now,—and I was about to teach her billiards! To what depth of depravity had I come at last!

She rejoined me, beaming with anticipation and radiant with the exercise of running down-stairs. Together we entered the billiard-room.

Now this I declare: the ball-room, with its flashing lights, intoxicating perfumes, starry hosts of gleaming eyes, refulgent robes, mirrors duplicating countless splendors and ceaseless whirl of vanity, may add a tenfold lustre to the charm of beauty, and I know it does; the opera-box embellishments of blazing gas, and glittering gems and flowers, fresh from native beds of millinery, all-odorous with divinest scents of Lubin, harmoniously dulcified, have their value, which is great and glorious, no doubt, and regally doth woman expand and glow among them; in numberless ways, and aided by numberless accessories, do feminine graces nimbly and sweetly recommend themselves unto our pleasant senses; but this I will for ever and ever say,—that nowhere, neither in gorgeous hall, nor gilded opera-box, nor in any other place, nor under any other circumstances, may such bewildering and insidious power of maidenly enchantment be exercised as at the

billiard-table; especially when the enchantress is utterly ignorant of the duties required of her, and confidently seeks manly encouragement and guidance. Controlled by the hand of beauty, the cue becomes a magic wand, and the balls are no longer bits of inanimate ivory, but, poked restlessly hither and thither, circulating messengers of fascination.

I know, for I have been there.

Had Miss Tarlingford turned her thoughts toward the bowling-alley, I might without difficulty have retained my self-possession; for her sex are not charming at ten-pins. They stride rampant, and hurl danger around them, aiming anywhere at random; or they make small skips and screams, and perform ridiculous flings in the air, injurious to the alleys and to their game; or they drop balls with unaffected languor, and develop at an early stage of proceedings a tendency to *gutters*, above which they never rise throughout; and all this is annoying, and fit only for Bloomers, who can be degraded by nothing on earth.

But billiards! what statuesque postures, what freedom of gesture, what swaying grace and vivacious energy this game involves! And then the attendant distractions,—the pinching together of the hand, to form the needed notch, the perfect art of which, like fist-clenching, is unattainable by woman, who substitutes some queerness all her own,—the fierce grasping and propulsion of the cue,—the loving reclension upon the table when the long shots come in,—the dainty foot uprising, to preserve the owner's balance, but, as it gleams suspended, destroying the observer's,—all combine, as they did this time, to scatter stern promptings of duty beyond recalling.

First, Arabella's little hand must be moulded into a bridge, and, being slow to cramp itself correctly, though pliant as a politician's conscience, the operation of folding it together had to be many times repeated. Next, shots must be made for her, she retaining her hold of the cue, to get into the way of it. Then all went on

smoothly with her, turbulently with me, until, enthusiastically excited, she must be lifted on to the table's edge, "just to try one lovely little shot," which escaped her reach from the ground.

My game was up!

We were alone. Arabella perched upon the table, jubilant at having achieved a pocket,—I dismal and blue, beside her.

"There, take me down," she said.

I looked around through each window, inclined my ear to the door, swept an arm around her waist, and forgot to proceed.

"Oh, Arabella! Arabella! wherefore art thou Arabella?"

"Do you wish I were somebody else?" she asked, slyly.

"No, no! but what of Frank Lillivan?"

"Frank, do you know him?" (With a luminous face.)

"And he has told me — yes."

"What?"

"Of his relations with Miss Tarlingford."

"With Anna,—yes."

"What Anna? Who is Anna?"

"Dear me! my sister Anna. Don't be absurd!"

"But I never knew" —

"No,—you knew nothing of her; the worse for you! You avoided her,—I'm

sure I don't see why,—and she is retiring."

"Retiring! — the very word!"

"What word? You vex me; you puzzle me; take me down."

"Forgive me, dear Arabella! I'm too delighted to explain. I never will explain. I thought it was you on whom Frank's affections were fixed."

"Dear, no! Frank is sensible; he knows better; he has judgment"; and she laughed a quiet laugh, and made as if she would jump down.

As she descended, two heads caromed together with a click. It was the irrepressible influence of the billiard atmosphere, I suppose. No one contemplated it.

That evening, when Frank Lillivan arrived, I met him at the door.

"God bless you, Frank!" said I; "I forgive you everything. Say no more."

"Hollo! what's up?" cried Frank.

"Well, certainly, it was a little imprudent for you to neglect writing the whole address of the letter you sent to Anna Tarlingford. I thought it was for Arabella."

"Dear me!" said Frank, twinkling, "what then?"

That is enough.

ITALY, 1859.

WAIT a little: do *we* not wait?

Louis Napoleon is not Fate;

Francis Joseph is not Time;

There's One hath swifter feet than Crime;

Cannon-parliaments settle nought;

Venice is Austria's,—whose is Thought?

Minicé is good, but, spite of change,

Gutenberg's gun has the longer range.

Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!

Lachesis, twist! and Atropos, sever!

In the shadow, year out, year in,

The silent headsmen wait forever!