

A WOMAN'S THOUGHT.

It breaks my heart to meet your eyes, Since in them lies My world, my heaven, that still must be Afar from me!

On rosary of hopes and fears I pray, with tears; And yet, in every sigh is blent A sweet content.

I think, how sadder 'twould be If you loved me, And I, to your dear asking, Nay Must coldly say!

MADELINE S. BRIDGES.

MAC'S GIRL.



It was while I was out West, reporting for one of the leading dailies, that it all happened—during my humdrum existence as a police reporter. The Daily Journal (our esteemed contemporary) had just put a new man upon the "police run," and we took to each other from the start, getting fully acquainted in a manner and with a rapidity characteristic of bohemians. We saw much of each other—"trotted in pairs," as he used to put it in his quaint way. His name was McMorris. He had a Christian name, to be sure, but the affectionately diminutive appellation of "Mac," which came so readily to our lips and seemed so peculiarly fitted to him, supplanted it. He was an Irishman—a Limerick boy. Mac was a typical Celt; light-hearted, witty, full of anecdotes, good-natured, good-looking in his bizarre way, and a first-class newspaper man. His bright companionship served to haste the dragging hours of many a weary night when the sergeant, the reserve, Mac and myself sat there in the gloomy Central Police Station, waiting, like the immortal Mowber, for something to turn up. Now and then he sang us an Irish song in his irresistibly comic manner, with a brogue that smacked of the innermost recesses of the bog, or some pathetic ballad of Erin which brought tears to some eyes, and even subdued the dyspeptic jaifer.

It was in the spring, shortly after twelve one night, that we sat in the chief's office, playing the inevitable friendly game, when the patrol wagon rolled up to the side door, and the sergeant left us to attend to the new arrival. Mac and I took advantage of the pause to fill our pipes, and awaited the sergeant's return.

"What is it, Pumper?" "Simple drunk."

Just then a noise—the sound of voices—came from the big room. Mac started up.

"A woman! a girl, and a pretty one at that, or her voice belies her," he said. "Sure it's not for a McMorris to be cooling his heels outside when there's a woman within. Let's have a look at her."

Grumbling somewhat, I hastily followed. Mac's quick ear and ready instinct had not deceived him. Before the desk stood a girl of fifteen or thereabouts, pretty beyond question, with one of those piquant faces which invariably attract one. She was poorly, but neatly, dressed, and a glance at her face was sufficient to convince a discerning person that she was not one of those depraved creatures who are born in the gutter and return to it at maturity. She was undoubtedly under the influence of liquor to some extent, but the arrest, the mad ride in the patrol, the sight of the blue-coat, and the examination had sobered her somewhat. She looked from face to face with mute appeal in her tearful, misty-gray eyes, and finding no pity nor consideration there, now and then glanced towards the door, as if contemplating a break for liberty. Mac lounged up and looked at the sergeant's record. It said: "Maggie Ryan, drunk, fifteen years, Irish-American, domestic. No property on person."

He turned to the girl and again surveyed her, this time more critically and with something like sorrow in his face. Her dull eyes met his, and their gaze roved no further, as if in that frank and honest countenance they saw—even through the veil created by the fumes of alcohol—pity, consideration, even friendship.

"Look her up," said the sergeant, shortly. "Wait a minute," said Mac, without taking his eyes from the face before him. I started, for although he was crotchety to a fault, I had never seen him pay the slightest attention to an ordinary drunk.

"Wait a minute, Cronin," he repeated, addressing the jailer as that snarly functionary approached her.

"If you want to interview her, do it through the gratin."

"Take your dirty hand off of her, you murdering blaggard or I'll break every bone in your body!" cried Mac, who was evidently in one of his moods; for whenever he was excited or moved a touch of the brogue colored his speech. Then: "Sure, it's not for the likes of you to touch her. Step back or I'll take your kays away from you and look you up in one of your own dirty pens." The turnkey wisely retreated, as he knew better than to tittle with the wild Irishman when his blood was up, for the manner in which Mac had tamed several tough characters whom the police could not handle was proof enough of his bravery and prowess.

The girl's eyes dilated at this, and looked wonderingly at her protector, who, as calm as ever, leaned against the desk and eyed her reflectively.

"What kind of a girl is she?" he asked. "A bad un," said one of the officers, quickly, proceeding to give her a detailed certificate of character that would have sufficed for her commitment to the House of Correction.

"It's not true!" she cried hotly, her blue grey Irish eyes flashing fire. "Oh, sir, don't believe a word of it. He was civil enough to the coming up here in the wagon; but I slapped his face and he threatened to have me sent up for sixty days. I'd slap it again, if I could get at him now."

"Bravo!" said Mac, nodding his head approvingly. Then he said sternly, "See here, Murphy, a man that will lie about a woman and willfully besmirch her name is a coward. You are lying now, for I can see it in your face. If you don't take it back, I'll get the facts in the case, hunt you down, roast you to a turn, and demand your dismissal."

"Roast" was Mac's pet synonym for a personal attack through the columns of his paper. The officer hesitated, but finally said, rather shame-facedly: "I—I don't know anything against her, I—"

"There, that will do. I thought as much, and I'll remember you for it, Murphy. You're a burning disgrace to the island you were born on."

"Come, come, Mac," said the sergeant good-naturedly, "don't keep us waiting all night."

"I won't. Bring the girl into the chief's office." None of us knew what he was driving at, and the sergeant and I were as much surprised as the girl, whose face was a picture as she followed us in. Locking the door, Mac questioned her, and found that she was an orphan, was homeless, and had followed the occupation of a domestic, but was hardly strong enough for the work. She had spent the evening with two other girls, who had induced her to drink some liquor. Not being used to it, she had lost control of herself and staggered about until she was arrested.

"Just so," he remarked in his abrupt fashion. "Now let me talk. My name is Morris McMorris, and I am a reporter for the Daily Journal. The sergeant here will vouch for me. I am not an old man, but I want to adopt you. My motive is to lift you from the gutter. I propose to give you a good home, clothe you and educate you, in return for which I shall expect you to prove yourself worthy. Is it a bargain?"

I was prepared for almost anything, but not for that. It staggered me and almost asphyxiated the sergeant. The girl's dark head drooped, and her nervous hands clasped and unclasped themselves in her lap. I saw a tear fall and glisten on her soiled finger like a diamond in the dirt.

"Come, speak up," he said, kindly, and her streaming eyes sought his face. "It is all so—so strange, sir. You are so kind."

"If—if you mean it, sir, really and truly, I will go with you. There is no place else."

"Not so very flattering, but eminently satisfactory," said Mac, with a laugh. "Well, so be it. I shall constitute myself your guardian, and be answerable to these gentlemen. But should you fail me—"

"Never fear, sir," she replied.

"Well spoken." Then, turning to me, he said: "Watch things for me, old



man, while I take her over to the house and put her in the old lady's care."

When he returned he was quiet and thoughtful, and I did not question him; but when, after the papers had gone to press, we dropped into a cafe and chatted over an appetizing lunch, I asked:

"Mac, what was there about that girl to catch your fancy?"

"She bears a striking resemblance to my dead sister, who would have been about her age had she lived. I haven't kith nor kin—no one save a friend or two like yourself. Why shouldn't I look for some one and create a tie?"

"One does not usually search the gutters or police-stations for friends or foster-relatives," I remarked, dryly.

"And yet, jewels are often found in the gutter. As for the police-station, what would have become of her, poor child, had she been handed over to the tender mercies of that blaggard turnkey, and put with those drunken beasts? Sure, my boy, one night in there would have served to send her down the hill."

The speech was unanswerable.

In the following three years—during which time we still "trotted in pairs," until each won the advancement he sought—nothing happened out of the ordinary. I received nightly reports of Maggie—or "Mac's girl," as she was known to the boys—for we still lunched together at the old cafe when our nocturnal labors were at an end. She gradually developed into a remarkably fine-looking girl, with a very sweet and expressive face, and a certain womanliness which of itself would have been a most powerful attraction. Knowledge came to her to be easily absorbed and retained; needlework was her forte; music was a natural gift, and cultivation gave new power to her lark-voice. I know, because Sunday afternoon invariably found me at Mac's lodgings, and I had every opportunity of watching the satisfactory development of her better

nature. Besides all this, she had her share of Irish wit, and was fond of poking fun at us in her way, calling him "Guardy" and me "Uncle"; but I could not take umbrage at the elderly title (for I was only thirty) and her playful utterances delighted Mac.

"I'm not giving her a fancy education," he said, one night, "but a training that will be of use to her, so that she may make some lucky fellow a good wife."

"Why not marry her yourself?" I observed. I had never thought of it before, but the words came quite naturally to my lips.

"Nonsense, man! I've never thought of such a thing."

"Isn't it about time?" "I don't know but what you are right," he said, moodily. "I have knocked around for years, not caring what happened so long as there was a roof to cover me and a shilling in my pocket; but since I took the colleen in, everything has been so different—I have had something, some one, to live for. Still, I have never thought of marriage."

"Then what will you do when she leaves you?" I asked, watching him narrowly.

"Leave me?" he exclaimed, wheeling about in his chair. "Sure, she will never do that."

Said I: "Perhaps. You forget that she is a woman—a girl, and a very pretty one, indeed. Such a prize—for she is a prize—cannot remain long unwon. Some day she will come to you and tell her story, or send another to say the words for her, and will slip from your arms into the embrace of others more loving. You will realize it when it is too late. Good-night."

He did not speak, nor acknowledge the courtesy. As I passed out I turned to look at him, and saw that his head had fallen upon his folded arms. I missed him for several nights—the first in many a long day. When I saw him again I could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise. His face was haggard and wan, and there was a dull, vacant look in his fine eyes. He dropped wearily into his usual seat without a word. I did not need to ask what had happened, but merely uttered the monosyllable:

"Well?"

I shall never forget the look he gave me as he said, "You were right, Lynn; you were right. I ought to have known it; but, sure, I didn't know my own heart until your words touched a secret spring there, opened its doors and showed me the colleen's sweet face within. But the rose will be taken soon, and for me there will be nothing—nothing but leaves."

"Indeed! Who is he?"

"My God! I wish I could take it as coolly as you do," said Mac, pathetically, yet half inclined to quarrel with me because of my apparent indifference. "It is young Brown—you know him—a likely young fellow, and one to whom I should have given my daughter."

It so. He came to me the day after our chat, and told his story. I listened with a breaking heart, but gave no sign, not even when he said that he felt assured of the possession of her heart, while he loved her to distraction. What could I say? What could I do but treat him kindly for Maggie's sake, give my consent and God speed, and accept the bitter cup like a man? Ah, when she goes my life will be empty—more barren than it has ever been before.

There were tears in Mac's honest eyes; and I, matter-of-fact and prosy as I was, could not speak because of the lump in my throat, and felt my own eyes grow dim.

It was a week later, and we sat in the chief's office at police headquarters, chatting, as of old, with our friend the sergeant (now a lieutenant), to see whom we dropped in now and then. And while we were talking about old times and the changes in our fortunes, the fire-alarm sounded in the operator's room. Mac's face brightened perceptibly, and he sprang to his feet.

"A blaze!" he cried, bending to listen to the strokes and the voice of the operator. "Ah! a big one, too! Let's go, for the fun of it. I'm dying for the want of excitement. Here's the patrol wagon at the door and a chance for a wild night ride. Come on, old man, and enjoy a recollection of old times."

This appealed to me, I could not resist, and we boarded the wagon, which rattled at a terrific speed towards the glow reddening the sky to the westward. The spot reached, we found a tenement in flames, and the vicinity a mass of excited and awe-stricken spectators. Systematic shoving and unceremonious elbowing brought us to the ropes, under which the officer in charge at that point permitted us to crawl. Catching sight of one of his reporters, Mac ran over to give him some instructions, while I remained to chat with the officer until he returned.

A murmur suddenly rose from the crowd, and concentrated its force until it became a strange, fearful cry, ending with the words, uttered by a hundred pairs of lips:

"There's a woman up there!"

All eyes were fixed upon the upper window, upon a girl's face, dimly seen through a veil of smoke. A poor woman uttering a shriek of agony, rushed up to the Chief of the Fire Department and besought him to save her daughter. He turned to one of the men and motioned towards the ladder just being placed in position as near the window as possible. The fireman—thinking, perhaps, of wife and babe—hesitated, with one foot on the lower rung, and looked first at the flame-bordered window and then at his chief, as if afraid. Then a strong hand seized his shoulder and hurried him aside.

"A woman, is it? Sure, give me one of those machines to keep the smoke out of my nose and mouth, and I'll go up and get her."

The chief shook his head, and I added a more emphatic protest, but Mac only laughed at us in a curious untruthful

fashion, and took the smoker from one of the men. There was a queer light in his eyes, and his voice trembled a little, but his hand was as steady as steel itself when he adjusted the rubber sponge-case.

"I'll go anyway," he said, beginning the ascent, whether it is no or yes with you." Then he added in an under-tone to me: "If anything happens, you can tell Maggie whatever you think best. If I don't come back have a kind thought for me now and then. God bless you, old fellow!"

A firm pressure of the hand, a nod to the chief, and he was mounting the ladder with a rapidity and skill borne of practice gained and agility developed on shipboard. Not a step did he make, not a look behind did he give, but went to the top and entered the burning building through the window in search of the woman who had disappeared in the meantime. The crowd below was breathless under a potent spell. The minutes passed, bringing nothing—not even a glimpse of him, a groan went up from a thousand throats, and I buried my face in my hands, standing in shuddering anticipation of the crash which was to be poor Mac's death-knell.

A shout, deafening but joyous, caused me to look up. In the window above, supporting the girl in his arms, stood Mac, a blazoned, grotesque silhouette, made yet more grotesque by the queer arrangement which covered his nostrils. His voice sounded strange and indistinct as he called to us.

Crash! The rear wall collapsed, and we held our breath. Then, seeing the front and portions of the side walls stood firm, a dozen of us ran to the ladder, but the chief interposed and sent three of his dare-devils up the steep ascent. Before they had gone half way, the two ghastly figures in that upper window had disappeared—sunk back out of sight, and were hidden by the volume of smoke pouring out.

There was little more, thank Heaven and those brave fellows, to happen. The window was soon reached, and Mac and his fair companion taken below. Mac was terribly burned about the head, face and arms, having had to search several rooms for the girl, who fancied that she might yet find egress and escape by going down-stairs. He had caught her and dragged her back in the nick of time, but both had succumbed to the heat and smoke—one sapping away their strength and the other depriving them of air. The firemen found them lying upon the floor, and conveyed them out of danger amid the cheers of the crowd, which shouted itself hoarse. I tried to cheer, but the sound died on my lips, for when I saw my friend's seared face and hands and charred clothing, I could do nothing but kneel at his side and cry like a baby until the ambulance came to take him home.

He did not die, but outlived the pain of his wounds; yet when he left his bed, as he was another person, so frightfully disfigured was one side of his face and head, Maggie nursed him as tenderly as his mother would have done—faithful Maggie, who watched him night and day. Once, chancing to meet her in the parlor, during one of her brief respites, I requested a few moments of her time, as I had something important—concerning Mac—to say to her. I had recalled his words:

"If anything happens, you can tell Maggie whatever you think best," and I felt justified, as much had happened, in taking advantage of his permission to speak. She looked at me with those penetrating, pathetic gray eyes, as if to read my thoughts, but I averted my glance and said:

"Maggie, may I speak plainly, and will you answer my questions without reserve? As an old friend, I desire to be blunt and straightforward. I have a task to perform, and you can thus make it easier for both of us."

Her look became one of wonder, as she said:

"Ask whatever questions you please, and be assured that all my answers will be truthful. But please don't be so mysterious."

"Do you love Mac?" I asked, watching her narrowly.

"Love him?" she echoed, "as if I did not! I am not ungrateful."

"Love inspired by gratitude, lacks vitality and is insipid. Have you no greater love than that for him?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, coming close to me and scrutinizing my face.

"Do you love him enough to marry him?"

"Do I? Ah, I wish I could show you my heart, that I might prove my love for him; but I, being a woman, cannot speak. When he comes to ask if he has a kingdom in my heart, I shall tell him he never was absent from the throne. But I cannot tell him."

"And this young man, this suitor—Brown?" I inquired when I could recover myself.

"He is no suitor of mine," she said, proudly. "He is good in his way, but do you suppose that he could supplant Guardy? How you have misjudged me! Know this, and remember it: that unless I marry the man who has made me what I am, I shall go to my grave unwed."

I grasped her hand and bore it to my lips, saying:

"Take the advice of an old friend, Maggie. Go to Mac, throw aside all womanly reserve, and tell him what you have told me. It will make him forget his scars. Had he known this before, I doubt if he would have ascended that ladder."

"I—I don't understand," she faltered, growing as pale as the dainty collar she wore, and catching at a chair.

"His heart was breaking, and life had lost its charm for him since you were to go out of it," and then I told her all.

She said never a word, but turned and left the room, leaving the echo of a sob behind her. I am not prepared to state what happened in the next room, but Maggie is a wife now—a matron—and her name is not Brown.—Frank Leslie's.

RICE IN JAPAN.

An Interesting Description of its Growth and Treatment.

A report, recently received at the State department from Mr. John M. Birch, United States consul at Nagasaki, Japan, contains some instructive information relative to the production and consumption of rice in Japan. He says: The staple food of Japan is rice, and it is grown throughout the empire, not only wherever irrigation is possible, but the species known as upland rice is grown on high dry ground, needing no irrigation, just as wheat is grown in America. In this consular district the lowland variety of rice and the best rice in Japan is grown, and in such quantities that it is becoming a leading article of export. The fields in which it is grown in this district are small—the largest seldom being over one-fourth of an acre in area—and lies almost entirely under water from the time the seedling is planted in May or June until the ripened grain is harvested in October or November.

The water so necessary is conducted to the fields, which have raised borders, by means of conduits from different streams, or in times of drought, from basins, which have been constructed to retain the contents of these streams flooded during the rainy season. The sides of the numerous hills surrounding this city are laid out in terraces and into the levels which are intended for rice, the water collected on the higher grounds is led by conduits, the quantity being regulated by means of dams provided with wood-gates, so as to be left on or shut off at pleasure. On the level plains in the interior of the Island of Keirin irrigation, however, is not so easy, the farmers being compelled to pump the water to the higher level of their fields from the streams or reservoirs. The pump in universal use resembles a water-wheel, or a steamer's paddle-wheel, and is made to revolve by a man ascending the float boards.

In the spring, about the Month of March, the fields, which have been left without cultivation during the winter season, are dug up and begin to be prepared for rice sowing. In digging the ground the farmer uses for the purpose a mattock-shaped agricultural implement universally used in Japan. This implement is used as our laborers use the mattock, or the blade may be fastened to a wooden beam, thus forming a plow, which is drawn by a horse or an ox. The broken ground is then thoroughly saturated with a liquid manure, consisting of all sorts of refuse, such as night soil mixed with bathing water, rotten grass, bamboo leaves, and when dried by the sun the ground is again dug up and flooded with water to the depth of 3 inches. Through the slush is drawn an agricultural implement somewhat resembling a harrow, for the purpose of distributing the manure and thoroughly mixing the manure with it. The soil is now ready to receive the seedlings, which have been grown from the seed rice.

The seed rice being soaked until ready to sprout is sown in very heavily manured patches of ground, covered with water during the night, and drained off during the day; and when the sprouts are 6 inches high, which is in the month of May, they are transplanted into the prepared fields as shallow as possible (the number depending on the quality of the ground), in tufts of several plants, about 6 inches apart, and arranged in such a way that all the roots are of the same length. The work is done by all the members who are able to wade about in the water. The rice sprouts thus planted require a great deal of manuring and cultivating before they put forth the ripened ear. It is estimated that from the planting time until the harvest, in November, the fields are hoed once every two weeks, in order that they may be kept free from weeds, water-plants, etc. When the ear is about to burst forth the earth must be drawn up to the roots, and at the same time the plants must be heavily manured, which is done by the farmer pouring on the roots of each tuft liquid manure, consisting of a mixture of everything which is supposed to possess fertilizing qualities, but of which night-soil is the principal ingredient.

In September the fields are permitted to become dry, and in October and November, when the ears present a yellow color, the grain is cut by an agricultural implement resembling a sickle, dried on the fields as our farmers cure the newly-cut grain, made into bundles, and taken to the farm-yards. The heads are then pulled from the straw by drawing the bundles through a comb-like arrangement of wooden or iron teeth, hulled or thrashed by spreading them on a mat and beating them with a flail, and separated from the chaff by running the thrashed grain through a machine made of two bamboo buckets, placed one upon the other and full of cut bamboos placed on end, which form the cleaner. The food rice is also further cleaned by pounding it with a pestle, in a mortar-shaped vessel, and where a number of pestles are used in many mortars they are set in motion by water or steam power.—Washington Star.

Original Reason for Cane Carrying.

Somebody has been looking up the history of canes in this country, and finds that they were originally a part of the repertory of the leaders of the church, being the principal badge of the deacon. The cane was about five feet long, and one end was embellished with a knob, the other with feathers. When the small boy rebelled he got a rap on the head with the unwholesome head of the cane. If the head of the family got to dreaming of the happy days in the old English home, the turkey's plumage on the deacon's cane feathered him into life again.