Second Choice.

Let me kiss you for your sister;
You're a dainty little elf.
If I had not wooed and missed her,
I would kiss you for yourself.
So this proffered osculation
Cometh from a consolation
Of a present admiration
And a love laid on the shelf.

To be sure you're rather youthful
All this to appreciate,
You're ridiculously truthful—
Tender innocence of eight.
One unlucky exclamation,
Quite beyond all expectation,
Brought to light a situation,
Which decided there my fate.

Those dark eyes would tempt a Titian,
With the tangled curls above.
You're a miniature edition
Of the girl I used to love;
But you have not reached the station,
Where your normal occupation
Is a desperate flirtation
With some poor, deluded cove.

You are pretty—and you know it—
With those eyes of dusky hue.
Probably you will outgrow it;
Pretty children often do.
Now you know the situation
That I hold to your relation,
You must not express negation
If I crave a kiss of you.

Let me kiss you for your sister;
You're a dainty little elf.
It is long since I have kissed her;
You do very well yourself.
Wild and reckless dissipation
Cured by blind infatuation.
Now I love a maid of station
And abundant store of pelf.

PAULINE.

CHAPTER IV.

NOT FOR LOVE OR MARRIAGE.

A week has passed by. I am more in love than ever. I am now satisfied as to the thoroughness of my passion; certain that this sudden love of mine will endure as long as my life; that it is no transient flush to fade away with time or absence. Whether my suit be successful or not this woman will be my first and last love.

As yet I have made little progress in the furthering of my desire. I see her every day, because I watch for her coming and going; and every time I see her I find fresh charms in her face and graces in her figure. Yet Kenyon was right. Here is a peculiar style of beauty. That pale pure face, those dark dreamy far-away eyes, are out of the common run of womanhood. It may be that this accounts for the strange fascination she has for me. Her carriage is upright and graceful; she walks always at the same pace; her face is always grave, and it seems to me she seldom speaks to that old companion or servant who never quits her side. I am beginning to look upon her as a riddle, and wonder if the key will ever be mine.

I have found out some few things about her. Her name is Pauline—a sweet and suitable name—Pauline March. She is therefore English, although I sometimes hear her saying a few words in Italian to old Teresa, her servant. She seems to know no one, and, so far as I can learn, no one knows more about her than I do—I, at least, know she came from Turin, and that is more than my informants were aware of.

I still occupy my rooms, waiting my chance. It is tantalizing to live in the same house with the one you love and find no opportunity of even commencing the siege. That old Teresa guards her charge like a thorough-bred Spanish duenna. Her dark eyes glance quickly and suspiciously at me whenever I meet the two women, and bid them good-morning or good-evening which a fellow lodger may venture upon. As yet I have got no further than these cold civilities. Pauline's eyes and manner give me no encouragement. She acknowledges my salutation gravely, distantly and apathetically. It is clear to me that love at first sight is not bound to be reciprocal. I comfort myself by thinking that Fate must have something in store for me, or Pauline and I would never have been brought face to face again.

So all I can do is to lurk behind the thick red curtains of my window and watch my love, guarded by that old cat Teresa, go out and come in. I am obliged now to exercise due caution in this proceeding, as the duenna once caught sight of me, and now each time they pass I see her fierce eyes peering into my hiding-place. I am beginning to hate Teresa.

Yet if I have done little, I am in the same house, breathing the same air as Pauline, and I am a patient man and can wait for my opportunity. It will be sure to come at last.

This is how it came. One evening I heard a fall, a clatter of china and a cry of distress. I ran out of my room and found Teresa lying on the stairs amid the ruins of the landlady's best tea set, and groaning earnestly. My chance had come!

With the shameless hypocrisy of love, I ran to her aid, as eager to help her as though she had been my mother. I endeavored, in the most tender manner, to raise her; but she sank back, waiting out something about, "one of ze feets broke."

It was clear that Teresa's English was not her strong point; so I asked her in Italian what was the matter. She brightened up as she heard her own language, and I found that she had sprained her knee so severely that she was unable to rise. I told her that I would carry her to her room, and without more ado picked her up and bore her upstairs.

Pauline was standing on the landing. Her large dark eyes were opened wide, her whole appearance was that of affright. I paused a moment and explained what had happened, then I took the old woman into the room which she occupied and laid her on the bed. The servant of the house was sent for a doctor, and, as I retired, Pauline thanked me quietly, but I fancied listlessly, for my kindness. Those dreamy eyes met mine, yet scarcely seemed to know it. Yes, I was obliged to confess it, my goddess was in manner apathetic—but then, her beauty! Those refined regular features, the girlish well-formed figure—the thick brown hair, even those strange dark eyes. Surely there was no woman in the world to compare with her!

She gave me her hand at parting—a small well-formed soft hand. I could scarcely refrain from pressing my lips to it—I could scarcely refrain from telling her then and there that for months I had thought of her and her only—but injudicious as such proceedings might have been at a first meeting they would have been doubly so whilst old Teresa was lying and, in spite of her pains, with suspicious eyes watching every movement of mine; so I could only express a wish to be of further service to her and bow myself out discreetly.

But the ice was broken—our hands had met. Pauline and I were strangers no longer!

Old Teresa's sprain, although not such a serious affair as she fancied, kept her indoors for several days. I hoped this would enable me to improve my acquaintance with her mistress, but the result was not commensurate with the hope. For the first few days Pauline, so far as I knew, did not leave the house. Once or twice I met her on the stairs and, assuming a fictitious interest in the old woman, kept her in conversation for a minute or two. It seemed to me that she was painfully shy—so shy that the conversation I would fain have prolonged, after a little while, died a natural death. I was not conceited enough to attribute her shyness and reticence to the same cause which made me blush and stammer as I spoke to her.

At last, one morning I saw her leave the house alone. I took my hat and followed her. She was walking up and down the pavement in front of the house. I joined her, and, after the usual inquiry for Teresa, continued at her side. I must make an attempt to establish matters on a better footing between us.

"You have not been long in England, Miss March?" I said.

"Some time—some months," she replied.

"I saw you in the spring at Turin—in church, at San Giovanni." She raised her eyes and met mine with a strange, puzzled look.

"You were there with your old servant—one morning," I continued.

"Yes—we often went there."

"You are English, I suppose—your name is not an Italian one?"

"Yes, I am English."

She spoke as though not quite certain about it—or as if it was a matter of complete indifference.

"Your home is here. You are not going back to Italy?"

"I don't know—I cannot tell."

Pauline's manner was very unsatisfying. I made many attempts to learn something about her habits and tastes. Did she play or sing—was she fond of music, of pictures, of flowers, of the stage, of travelling? Had she many relations and friends? Directly and indirectly, I asked her all these questions.

Her replies were unsatisfactory. Either she evaded the questions, as if determined I should know nothing about her, or she did not seem to understand them. Many of them I felt sure puzzled her. At the end of our little promenade she remained as great a mystery to me as before. The only comfort I could take was that she displayed no wish to shun me. We passed and repassed the house several times, but she did not suggest re-entering, as she might have done had she wished to get rid of me. There was no trace of coquetry in her manner—quiet and reserved as I found her, she was at least simple and natural—and she was very beautiful, and I was very, very much in love!

It was not long before I discovered that old Teresa's black eyes were watching us from behind the blind of the drawing-room. She must have crept from her bed to see that her charge got into no mischief. I chafed at the espionage, but as yet it was too early to escape from it.

Before Teresa could hobble out of doors I had met Pauline more than once in the same way. She seemed, I was glad to believe, pleased when I joined her. The difficulty I labored under was to make her talk. She would listen to all I had to say without comment and without reply, save yes or no. If, by a rare chance, she asked a question or spoke a longer sentence than usual the effort was never sustained. I attributed a great deal of this to shyness and to her secluded life—for the only person she had to speak to was that terrible old Teresa.

Although every word and action of Pauline's told me she was well-educated and well-bred, I was certainly surprised at her ignorance of literature. I quoted an author, mentioned a book by name, the remark passed unnoticed; or she looked at me as if puzzled by my allusion, or distressed at her own ignorance. Although I had now seen her several times, I was not satisfied at the progress I had made. I knew I had not as yet struck the key-note of her nature.

As soon as the old servant, duenna, friend, or what she was, grew well, I heard some startling news. My landlady asked me if I could recommend her apartments to any friend of mine—such another as myself she was good enough to say—Miss March was going to leave, and the landlady thought she would prefer taking a gentleman in her place.

I felt certain this was a counter move of that old hag Teresa's. She had cast venomous glances at me when we passed each other on the stairs; had responded surlily when I asked if she was quite recovered from the effects of her accident—in a word, I knew she was my enemy; that she had discovered my feelings toward Pauline and was doing her best to keep us apart. I had no means of knowing the extent of her power or influence over the girl, but I had some time since ceased to regard her as nothing more than a servant. The intelligence that my fellow-lodgers were about to quit showed me that to bring my love for Pauline to a successful issue, I must in some way make matters straight with this unpleasant old attendant.

That same evening, as I heard her coming down the stairs, I threw open my door and stood face to face with her.

"Signora Teresa," I said, with high-flown politeness, "will it please you to step into my room? I wish to speak to you."

She gave me a quick, suspicious glance, but nevertheless complied with my request. I closed the door and placed a chair for her.

"Your poor knee—is it quite well?" I asked sympathetically, and in Italian.

"It is quite well, Signor," she replied laconically.

"Will you take a glass of sweet wine? I have some here."

Teresa, in spite of our inimical relations, made no objections, so I filled a glass and watched her sip it approvingly.

"Is the Signorina, Miss March, well? I have not seen her to-day."

"She is well."

"It is about her I wish to speak to you—you have guessed that?"

"I have guessed it." As she spoke Teresa gave me a sullen, defiant look.

"Yes," I continued, "your vigilant faithful eyes have seen what I have no wish to conceal. I love Signorina Pauline."

"She is not to be loved," said Teresa, sulkily.

"One so beautiful must be loved. I love her and will marry her."

"She is not to be married."

"Listen, Teresa. I say I will marry her. I am a gentleman and rich. I have 50,000 lire a year."

The amount of my income, magnificent when reduced to her native coinage, was not without its expected effect. If her eyes, as they met mine, were as unfriendly as ever, their look of astonishment and increasing respect told me I was appealing to her tenderest feeling—cupidity.

"Now tell me why I should not marry the Signorina? Tell me who her friends are that I may see them and ask her in marriage?"

"She is not for marriage."

This was all I could get from the old woman. She would tell me nothing about Pauline's family or friends. She would only reiterate that she was not for love or for marriage.

I had but one chance left. Teresa's eager look when I mentioned the income I possessed had impressed me. I must condescend to the vulgar act of direct bribery; the end would justify the means.

As I was so often travelling it was my habit to carry a large sum of money on my person. I drew out my pocket-book and counted out a hundred pounds in new crisp notes. Teresa eyed them hungrily.

"You know what these are worth?" I said. She nodded. I pushed a couple of the notes toward her. Her skinny hand seemed twitching with the desire to grasp them.

"Tell me who Miss March's friends are and take these two notes; all the rest shall be yours on the day we are married."

The old woman sat silent for a while, but I knew temptation was assailing her. Presently I heard her murmuring, "50,000 lire! 50,000 lire a year!" The spell worked. At last she rose. "Are you going to take the money?" I asked.

"I cannot. I dare not. I am bound. But—"

"But what?"

"I will write. I will say what you say to il dottore."

"Who is the doctor? I can write to him or see him."

"Did I say il dottore? It was a slip. No, you must not write. I will ask him and he must decide."

"You will write at once?"

"At once." Teresa, with a lingering glance at the money turned to leave me.

"You had better take these two notes," I said, handing them to her.

She buttoned them in the bosom of her dress with feverish delight.

"Tell me, Teresa," I said coaxingly, "tell me if you think—if the Signorina—Pauline—cares at all for me?"

"Who knows?" answered the old woman testily; "I do not know—but again I say to you she is not for love or marriage."

Not for love or marriage! I laughed aloud as I thought of the old woman's absurd and oft-repeated assertion. If on earth there was a woman more than another made for love and marriage it was my beautiful Pauline! I wondered what Teresa could mean; then remembering the fervor with which she prayed in San Giovanni I decided that, being an ardent Roman Catholic, she wished Pauline to take the veil. This theory would explain every thing.

Now that I had bought Teresa I looked forward to the enjoyment of Pauline's society without espionage or interruption. The old woman had taken my money, and no doubt would do her best to earn more. If I could persuade the girl to let me pass several days of each day in her company I need fear no hinderance from Teresa. The bribe had been accepted, and although I blushed at the expedient to which I had been compelled to resort, it had been successful.

I was obliged to defer any further attempt at love-making until the next evening, as an important piece of business had to be attended to in the morning. It kept me away from home for several hours, and when at last I returned to Maida vale I was thunderstruck to hear that my fellow-lodgers had left the house. The landlady had no idea whither they had gone. Teresa, who it appears always acted as purse-bearer, had paid her dues and had departed with her young mistress. There was nothing more to tell.

I threw myself into my chair, cursing Italian guile; yet, as I thought of Italian cupidity, not altogether hopeless. Perhaps Teresa would write or come to me. I had not forgotten the eager looks she cast upon my money. But day after day passed without letter or message.

I spent those days for the most part, wandering about the streets in the vain hope of encountering the fugitives. It was only after this second loss that I really knew the extent of my passion. I cannot describe the longing I had to see that fair face once more. Yet, I feared the love was all on my side. If Pauline had felt even a passing interest in me she could scarcely have left in this secret and mysterious manner. Her heart was yet to be won, and I knew that unless I won it no woman's love would to me be worth having.

I should have returned to my old lodgings in Walpole street had it not been that I feared to quit Maida vale, lest Teresa, if she should be faithful to her engagements, might miss me. So I lingered on there until ten days went slowly by; then, just as I was beginning to despair, a letter came.

It was written in a delicate pointed Italian style and signed Manuel Ceneri. It simply said that the writer would have the honor of calling upon me about noon to-day.

Nothing was hinted at as to the object of the visit, but I knew it could be connected with only one thing—the desire of my heart. Teresa, after all, had not played me false. Pauline would be mine. I waited with feverish impatience until this unknown Manuel Ceneri should make his appearance.

A few minutes after 12 he was announced and shown into my room. I recognized him at once. He was the middle-aged man with rather round shoulders who had talked to Teresa under the shade of San Giovanni at Turin. Doubtless he was "il dottore" spoken of by the old woman as being the arbiter of Pauline's fate.

He bowed politely as he entered, cast one quick look at me as if trying to gather what he could from my personal appearance, then seated himself in the chair I offered him.

"I make no apology for calling," he said; "you will no doubt guess why I come." His English was fluent, but the foreign accent very marked.

"I hope I guess correctly," I replied.

"I am Manuel Ceneri. I am a doctor by profession. My sister was Miss March's mother. I have come from Geneva on your account."

"Then you know what the wish—the great wish of my life is?"

"Yes, I know you want to marry my niece. Now, Mr. Vaughan, I have many reasons for wishing my niece to remain single, but your proposal has induced me to reconsider the matter."

Pauline might have been a bale of cotton, so impassively did her uncle speak of her future.

"In the first place," he went on, "I am told you are well born and rich. Is that so?"

"My family is respectable. I am well connected and may be called rich."

"You will satisfy me on the latter point, I suppose."

I bowed stiffly, and taking a sheet of paper wrote a line to my solicitors asking them to give the bearer the fullest information as to my resources. Ceneri folded up the note and placed it in his pocket. Perhaps I showed the annoyance I felt at the mercenary exactness of his inquiries.

"I am bound to be particular in this matter," he said, "as my niece has nothing."

"I expect nothing or wish for nothing."

"She had money once—a large fortune. It was lost long ago. You will not ask how or where?"

"I can only repeat my former words."

"Very well—I feel I have no right to refuse your offer. Although she is half Italian her manners and habit are English. An English husband will suit her best. You have not yet, I believe, spoken of love to her?"

"I have had no opportunity. I should no doubt have done so, but as soon as our acquaintance commenced she was taken away."

"Yes, my instructions to Teresa were strict. It was only on condition she obeyed her that I allowed Pauline to live in England."

Although this man spoke as one who had absolute authority over his niece, he had not said one word which evinced affection. So far as that went, she might have been a stranger to him.

"But now, I suppose," I said, "I shall be allowed to see her?"

"Yes—on conditions. The man who marries Pauline March must be content to take her as she is. He must ask no questions, seek to know nothing of her birth and family, nothing of her early days. He must be content to know that she is a lady, that she is very beautiful, and that he loves her. Will this suffice?"

The question was such a strange one that even in the height of my passion I hesitated.

"I will say this much," added Ceneri, "she good and pure—her birth is equal to your own. She is an orphan and her only near relative is myself."

"I am content," I cried, holding out my hand to seal the compact. "Give me Pauline, I ask no more."

Why should I not be content? What did I want to know about her family, her antecedents or her history? So madly did I long to call that beautiful girl mine that, I believe, had Ceneri told me she was worthless and disgraced among women, I should have said, "Give her to me and let her begin life anew as my wife." Men do such things for love!

"Now, Mr. Vaughan," said the Italian, drawing his hand from mine; "my next question will astonish you. You love Pauline and I believe she is not indifferent to you—"

He paused and my heart beat at the thought.

"Will your arrangements permit of an early marriage—an immediate marriage? Can I upon my return to the Continent in a few days leave her future in your hands entirely?"

"I would marry her to-day if it were possible," I cried.

"We need not be so impetuous as that—but could you arrange for, say, the day after to-morrow?"

I stared at him—I could scarcely believe I heard correctly. To be married to Pauline within a few hours! There must be something in the background of such bliss! Ceneri must be a madman! Yet, even from the hands of a madman how could I refuse my happiness?

"But I don't know if she loves me—would she consent?" I stammered.

"Pauline is obedient, and will do as I wish. You can woo her after marriage instead of before it."

"But can it be done on so short a notice?"

"I believe there are such things as special licenses to be bought. You are wondering at my suggestion. I am bound to return to Italy almost at once. Now, I put it to you—can I, under the present circumstances, leave Pauline here with only a servant to look after her? No, Mr. Vaughan, strange as it may seem, I must either see her your wife before I leave or I must take her back with me. The latter may be unfortunate for you, as here I have only myself to consider, whilst abroad there may be others to consult and perhaps I must change my mind."

"Let us go to Pauline and ask her," I said, rising impatiently.

"Certainly," said Ceneri, gravely, "we will go at once."

Till now I have been sitting with my back to the window. As I faced the light I noticed the Italian doctor look very straight at me.

"Your face seems quite familiar to me, Mr. Vaughan, although I cannot recall where I have seen you."

I told him he must have seen me outside San Giovanni whilst he was talking to old Teresa. He remembered the occurrence and appeared satisfied. Then we called a cab and drove to Pauline's new abode.

It was not so very far away. I wondered I had not encountered either Pauline or Teresa in my rambles. Perhaps they had both kept to the house to avoid the meeting.

"Would you mind waiting in the hall a minute?" asked Ceneri as we entered the house. "I will go and prepare Pauline for your coming."

I would have waited a month in a dungeon for the reward in prospect; so I sat down on the polished mahogany chair and wondered if I was in my right senses.

Presently old Teresa came to me. She looked scarcely more amiable than before.

"Have I done well?" she whispered in Italian.

"You have done well—I will not forget."

"You will pay me and blame me for nothing. But listen—once more I say it—the signorina is not for love or marriage."

Superstitious old fool! Were Pauline's charms to be buried in a nunnery?

Then a bell rang and Teresa left me. In a few minutes she reappeared and conducted me upstairs to a room in which I found my beautiful Pauline and her uncle. She raised her dark dreamy eyes and looked at me—the most infatuated man could not have flattered himself that the light of love was in them.

I fully expected that Doctor Ceneri would have left us to arrange matters alone; but no—he took me by the hand and in a stately manner led me to his niece.

"Pauline, you know this gentleman?"

She bowed. "Yes, I know him."

"Mr. Vaughan," continued Ceneri, "does us the honor of asking you to be his wife."

I could not permit all my wooing to be done by proxy, so I stepped forward and took her hand in mine.

"Pauline," I whispered, "I love you—since first I saw you I have loved you—will you be my wife?"

"Yes, if you wish it," she replied softly, but without changing color.

"You cannot love me now, but you will by-and-by—will you not, my darling?"

She did not respond to my appeal, but then she did not repulse me, neither did she strive to withdraw her hand from mine; she remained calm and undemonstrative as ever; but I threw my arm round her, and in spite of Ceneri's presence, kissed her passionately. It was only when my lips touched her own that I saw the color rise to her cheek and knew that she was moved.

She disengaged herself from my embrace, glanced at her uncle, who stood impassive as if he had witnessed nothing out of the common, and then fled from the room.

"I think you had better go now," said Ceneri. "I will arrange everything with Pauline. You must do on your part all that is necessary for the day after to-morrow."

"It is very sudden," I said.

"It is, but it must be so—I cannot wait an hour longer. You had better leave me now and return to-morrow."

I went away with my head in a whirl—I was uncertain what to do. The temptation to call Pauline my own in so short a time was great; but I could not deceive myself by thinking that she cared for me at all, as yet. But, as Ceneri said, I could do my wooing after marriage. Still I hesitated. The hurried proceeding was so strange. Ardently as I desired to wed Pauline I wished I could have first won her. Would it not be better to let her uncle take her to Italy, then to follow her and learn if she could love me? Against this prudent course came Ceneri's vague threat, that in such an event, his mind might be changed—and more than all, I was desperately in love. Although it could only be for her beauty that I loved her, I was madly in love. Fate had thrown us together. She had escaped me twice—now the third time she was offered to me unreservedly. I was superstitious enough to think that if I rejected or postponed accepting the gift, it would be withdrawn forever. No—come what will, in two days' time Pauline shall be my wife!

I saw her the next day, but never alone. Ceneri was with us all the time. Pauline was sweet, silent, shy and languid. I had much to do—much to see to. Never was a wooing so short or so strange as mine. By the evening all the arrangements were made, and by 10 o'clock the next morning Gilbert Vaughan and Pauline March were man and wife—those who had not in their lifetime even conversed for a time amounting, say, to three hours were linked together for better or worse till death should part them!

Ceneri left immediately the ceremony was over, and to my astonishment, Teresa announced her intention of accompanying him. She did not fail to wait on me for the promised reward, which I gave her freely and fully. My heart's desire was to wed Pauline, and by her aid it had been compassed.

Then, with my beautiful bride I started for the Scottish lakes, to begin the wooing which should have been completed before the final step had been taken.

CHAPTER V.

BY LAW, NOT LOVE.

Proud and happy as I felt when seated side by side with Pauline in the railway carriage which was taking us to the north; fortunate as I told myself I was to have won such a fair bride; great as my love was for the sweet girl who had just vowed herself mine forever, Ceneri's extraordinary stipulation kept recurring to my mind—the man who marries Pauline March must be content to take her as she is; to wish to know nothing of the past.

Not for one moment did I think such a contract could be enforced. As soon as I had succeeded in making Pauline love me, she would surely wish to tell me all her history—there would be no need to ask for it—the confidence would then be given as a matter of course. When she had learned the secret of love, all the other secrets would cease between us.

My wife looked very beautiful as she sat with her head leaning against the dark cloth of the carriage. Her clear-cut refined features showed in that position advantageously. Her face, as usual, was pale and calm; her eyes were cast down. A woman to be indeed proud of; to worship, to cherish, and—how sweet it seemed to whisper the word to myself—my wife!

(To be continued.)

A Parisian once remarked to Longfellow that there was one American word he never could understand, or find in any dictionary says Boston *Every Other Saturday*. "What is it?" inquired the poet. "Thistido," was the reply. "I never heard of the word," said Longfellow. Presently a servant came in to replenish the fire. After putting on a little fuel, Longfellow remarked to him, "That will do." "Ha!" exclaimed the Frenchman, "that is the very word which has troubled me."

Eating in a hurry, John Mulhall, of Port Chester, N Y, was choked to death by a large chunk of beefsteak.