The Tired Wife.

All day had the wife been toiling,
From an early hour in the morn
And her hands and feet were weary
With the burdens that they had borne;
But she said to herself: "The trouble
That weighs on my heart is this—
That Tom never thinks to give me
A comforting hug or a kiss.

"I'm willing to do my duty
To use all my strength and my skill
In making the home attractive,
In striving my place to fill.
But though the approval of conscience
Is sweet, I am free to say,
That if Tom would give me a hug and a kiss—
It would take all the care away."

And she counted over and over
The years she had been Tom's wife,
And thought of the joys and sorrows
She had known in her married life.
To be sure there was money plenty,
And never a lack of food;
But a kiss now and then and a word of praise,
Would have done her a world of good.

Ah! many a one is longing
For words that are never said
And many a heart goes hungry
For something better than bread.
But Tom had an inspiration,
And when he went home that day,
He petted his wife and kissed her
In the old time lover-like way.

And she—such enigmas are women!
Who had held herself up with pride,
At her husband's display of fondness,
Just hung on his neck and cried.
And he, by her grief reminded
Of troubles he might have shared,
Said—"Bless my heart what a fool I've been,
And I didn't suppose you cared!"

BELINDA: A BEAUTY

And she tells her stories well; dramatizing a scene in Spanish here, throwing in some caustic bit of mimicry there, keeping her characters vivid and living before her audience, always.

"We have had enough, more than enough scandal," cried Rose at last. "You have quite taken my breath away, Belinda. These may be the moralities of foreign watering-places, the subjects of foreign conversation, but they are not English. I declare, when we were girls we did not know the meaning of evil!"

"How hard of comprehension you must have been, my dear," observes Belinda, cheerfully. "I suppose that was in the innocent days when you first met Captain Temple?"

The taunt makes Roger himself wince. The innocent days when he first whispered his passion to old Shelmadeane's young wife beside the hippopotamus!

"You are severe this evening, Belinda," he remarks coldly. "You make no distinction between friend and foe. Rose, my dear," bending over the widow and whispering—yet not so low but that Belinda's ear can catch every lover-like syllable—"is it not late for you to be out, after all the fatigues of your journey? Let me take you back to the hotel, dearest. You look pale."

"Oh, but Belinda," says Rose generously, and making a feint of quitting her lover's arm. "Don't anybody think of me! See Belinda home first."

"Thanks, very much, Rose," cried the girl. "As Belinda has been seeing herself home (only she never had a home) during the last four years, she will probably be quite capable of doing the same to-night."

"If—if I may be allowed?" And Mr. Jones puts himself forward in obedience to a glance he received from Rose. "It is too late for Miss O'Shea to pass through the town without an escort."

"Miss O'Shea has got Costa for her escort," begins Belinda, with her usual sturdy independence, then abruptly she discovers that Roger Temple is watching her face, and a new freak of perversity takes possession of her. "Miss O'Shea has got Costa, but she will be only too glad of your protection, now and at all times, Mr. Jones!"—smiling affectionately at Jones with her lips, and mocking him, ridiculing him, despising him with her eyes.

"You will see if that is not a match," remarks Rose, as the two figures walk away together in the moonlight.

CHAPTER VII.

MAMMON WINS HIS WAY.

They walk for a considerable time in silence, Belinda and Mr. Jones. At last, "I hope you have forgiven me for not feeding Costa on maccaroons?" whispers the young man, pressing her unresponsive hand ever so little to his side.

"Do you, Mr. Jones—why?" She accepts his arm out of sheerest perversity, and because she guessed that certain eyes were watching her; but her heart feels wicked against poor Augustus, wicked against the whole bright world which forms a background for Roger Temple and for Rose. "When I know people detest me, I would much rather be without their forgiveness than with it."

Not an encouraging answer for a man on the eve of proposing. But Mrs. O'Shea's wary arts during that starlight conversation on the terrace have brought up Mr. Jones' resolution to the sticking point. So much familiar talk of Lady Althea and Lord Lionel—"Belinda's nearest relations, Mr. Jones—the people, whenever our dear Belinda does settle in London, with whom she and her husband must be constantly and intimately thrown"—so much familiar talk, I say, about possible cousins in the peerage, not unmingled with suggestions that, in our dear Belinda's position, a happy early union, rather than large settlements is what Rosie's step-maternal heart yearns after, has made Mr. Jones resolute to win or give up all to-night.

He does not love, he sees no remotest chance of bringing himself to love this meagre, dark-skinned, bitter-tongued mite of an earl's granddaughter. But Jones is not a man to be turned from any project, commercial or matrimonial, by obstacles so paltry as personal likes or dislikes. The earliest sacred truth instilled into his childish soul, his highest mature conception of moral law, is that Christians and Englishmen should buy in the cheapest market whatever article they require. He, Jones, requires the article birth; has hunted it up and down many English watering-places, as men of the Cornelius O'Shea genus hunt money; and now has it under his hand, to be bought for a song (did not Rosie wisely throw in the hint about modest settlements?) the only difficulty being as to the article's consent. But after sunning himself in the widow's smile, and listening to the widow's silky flatteries during the past hour and a half, Mr. Jones cannot but feel that he is a very captivating fellow, indeed, in women's eyes, and entertain but little fears as to that.

"I have never been fortunate enough to find you at home yet, Miss O'Shea." He makes this next attempt at tender talk just as they reach the Maison Lohobiague, on the third floor of which Miss Burke and Belinda lodge. "I should like," sentimentally, "to see the apartment where you spend your time, if I might?"

It seems to him that the task of bringing her to terms will be easier of accomplishment indoors than out. Never yet has he seen Belinda between four walls, and the idea strikes him that she may prove more manageable within a restricted space; like a squirrel in a cage, a colt within a pound, or any other inferior animal whom it is man's supreme pleasure to tame and subjugate.

"The apartment where I spend my time. Burke's den! Well, if you want to see it, you had better use your legs and walk up now. Miss Burke, as you know, is away; our servant—actually we have a servant, Mr. Jones, just to set our soup going of a morning—went off to the bull fight at Fontarabia yesterday and has not appeared since. So you must not expect to see things in apple-pie order."

She quits his arm, bestows a series of hugs and farewells on Costa—the poor old dog, well-trained, stopping discreetly three or four paces away from Miss Burke's threshold—then vanishes out of sight beneath an overhanging stone *portecochere* or archway, whither Mr. Jones, his dapper feet tortured by the stones, his yellow-kidded hands extended to save his nose from collision with the wall, follows her.

The dark, winding staircase seems trebly dark after the intense moonlight of the streets; and Mr. Jones, a careful man not only as regards moral but bodily risks, pauses at the bottom.

"Come along, if you are coming," rings out Belinda's voice from airy heights overhead. There is plenty of light when once you get up here, only look out after your shins meanwhile."

The "plenty of light" proceeds from a solitary oil lamp, which sheds its dim, religious rays before the figure of a saint on the landing of the second floor.

"We live one story higher still," says Belinda, Mr. Jones stopping to turn up his British nose at this work of sacerdotal art.

"And unless Juanita happens to have left a candle, I shall have to entertain you in the dark. However, there is the moon."

"And—and the brightness of your eyes, Belinda!" says Jones, groping his way up the steep staircase after her.

"And what?" shouts the girl sharply, through the darkness. "There is such an echo, Mr. Jones—no hearing a word unless you speak more distinctly. What did you say would light us?"

But something, either in the tone of her voice or in the distance that separates them, restrains Mr. Jones from again launching into the hazardous region of compliment.

Half ajar stands a huge oaken door, blackened with time, crusted with dirt, a door as old, probably, as the solid masonry of the house. On a vigorous push from the girl's hand, it creaks slowly back upon its hinges and Mr. Jones is introduced to "Burke's den," a room bigger than Isle of Wight church, the roof joisted and innocent of all modern refinement of lath and plaster, the walls of the indescribable smokey grey of ages. Vast pictures of saints and martyrs in different stages of burning or mutilation, French studies, probably after Ribera, exaggerations, nightmares of that master's most expulsive realism, hang around. Saints and cobwebs may, indeed, be said to furnish the room. Of furniture proper there is—a table that was once carved and gilt, now in the last stage of rickety decay, and of which one leg is propped up by a pile of battered books; a lofty pier glass, overdim with antiquity for purposes of reflection; three crippled chairs, piled pell-mell at the present moment in a corner; and a shelf containing in all about twelve pieces of crockery, of different sizes and patterns.

Mr. Jones looks around him, open-mouthed, Belinda having been fortunate enough to find a candle whose solitary light barely pierces from end to end of the sombre shadowy room.

"And you—you live here?" he exclaims, with unaffected amazement. "What a place—what pictures! It gives one the horrors to look at them."

"Well, yes—the Maison Lohobaigue is not furnished according to Clapham taste," retorts Belinda, with her frank impertinence. "But it suits me better. I like the old, shabby room, Mr. Jones, and the 'orrid pictures and the cobwebs; yes, and I should be very sorry to exchange them for any stuccoed cockney gentility. I have lived here two years off and on; Miss Burke has made it a sort of headquarters in all her comings and goings, and I have grown to the place. If Burke would only get killed on a railway or made a professoress, or anything, I should be quite content to stop in the Lohobaigue with Costa always!"

And now Augustus feels is the time for him to crush down on this poor pauper child with the magnificence of his offer. "Miss O'Shea—Belinda," he cries, coming up beside her very close, "there is no necessity for you to spend your days in these miserable foreign places any longer. Since I saw you this afternoon I—ahem—I have been talking to your mamma."

"Step-mamma. If you are not accurate you are nothing."

"And I have made my mind up! I have made my mind up, fully," says Jones, with magnanimity, "as to my line of conduct. There may seem, there are disparities." He glances with an air of condescension at the girl's dress, at the appointments of the meagre room. "Still, as Mrs. O'Shea says, six months of the first educational advantages in England would work wonders, and, at our age, we can afford to wait, can we not?"

"I should answer better if I had a glimmering notion of what you mean by 'we.' Are you going to school again, Mr. Jones? Mind your 'h's,' you know, if you do."

"Belinda," his voice shakes, his color rises. (How hideous he is, communes Belinda with herself! How the mosquito-bites glow and radiate from out that purple blush!) "Do you think you ever—I mean, I know I never——" confound it all, why will the girl fix those hard eyes of hers upon his face!—"never saw any one so likely to make me happy. Oh, come, you mustn't take your hand away——" which she does, with unmistakable energy, the moment she feels his touch. "I will not let you go till you answer me. Belinda, could you ever care for me enough to be my wife?"

"You are a more complete fool than I took you for, Mr. Jones. If you really want me, me to marry you, why not say so like a rational being, instead of stammering and hesitating and blushing like a schoolboy ashamed to tell the truth?"

Mr. Jones stands silently recovering his nerve after the plunge. "It will, I know, meet the wishes of Mrs. O'Shea and of Captain Temple," he remarks at last, almost humbly.

"What will?"

"Our marriage, Belinda."

"Did they tell you so?"

"Mrs. O'Shea led me to believe——"

"Rose leads everybody to believe everything. And he—Captain Temple?"

"It can be no interest of Captain Temple's to put himself in the way of your settlement, I should say."

She turns from him, she walks quickly to the further end of the room; a certain dignity, a child though she be, in every movement of her poor little ragged figure. Then she comes back to the young man's side and looks steadily with her honest eyes into his.

"A thing like this cannot be decided in a moment, Mr. Jones. If you want really and truly to marry me, you must, I suppose, have some good reasons for doing so. That is not my business, however. Every one is free to have his own crotches about happiness! But what I do want to know, and what I dare say you can tell me, is—why should I marry you?

"I should hope, a little because you like me," suggests Augustus, trying with imperfect success to throw a lover-like warmth into his voice. "That is the reason, generally, I believe, for which young ladies accept men."

"Is it, indeed? I thought liking had nothing whatever to do with such things. I thought the lover said, 'I can afford such a house, a carriage, servants, diamonds, on condition that you take me for a husband!' And then that the young lady reckoned up the sweets and the sour together, and answered yes or no, according to whether she found the bargain good."

"Is that the kind of a way you wish me to address you, Miss O'Shea?"

"It is the best way for you to address me if you want to get a sensible answer, Mr. Jones."

She perches herself on a corner of the rickety table, tilts her hat back on her head, and swinging her sandalled feet to and fro in the air, begins—as coolly as though she was scoring up the points at paume—to reckon the items of the projected "bargain."

"Carriage, so much; diamonds, so much; house, so much. We will begin with the house. How large a house, exactly, should you and I have to live at Clapham?"

"I am not joking, and you are," replied Jones, sullenly. "Of course if you do not choose to take the thing seriously, I have nothing more to say."

"Well, would you mind my having my supper first? I am as hungry as a wolf, sir! Burke leaves me on a kind of board-wages when she goes off literaturing, and I have not eaten a mouthful since your maccaroons. You will not mind? Thanks. And while I eat, you know, you can make yourself agreeable, tell me all the delightful projects you and Rosie have been laying out for my future welfare."

Belinda's supper consists of a big slice of household bread, and another rather bigger one of melon, washed down by cold water. Having produced these refreshments from the shelf, which at once answers as dresser, larder and pantry, she resumes her former place on the corner of the table, and unincumbered by knife, fork, or plate, sups.

"I cannot imagine what put it into your head to think of me, Mr. Jones. Oh, I know why you came to St. Jean de Luz; of course Rosie planned your tour for you! But what first put it into your head to think of me in that sort of light?" For a moment her long eyelashes shade her cheek, the cheek that neither pales nor reddens under his gaze. "I have not made myself over-and-above civil to you, have I?"

"Well, no, not anything very particular," Mr. Jones asserts.

"And I am sure I am not what you, with your fastidious tastes, would think lady-like"—oh! the curl, imperceptible perhaps to Augustus, of her upper lip!—"nor what any one," with a thoroughly sincere sigh this, "would think pretty. Now what in the name of Heaven, can make you wish to marry me?"

"I—I—because I love you," begins Jones, stammering.

"Tell that *blague* to some one else," interrupts the girl with sudden passion, "not to me! If you loved me, I should feel it—here!" clasping her graceful brown hands to her breast, "just as I feel that Costa loves me, and I would marry you—yes, even you—to-morrow out of gratitude, and if you had only a hundred a year instead of all the thousands you talk of. But you do not. You care no more for me than I for you, and so——"

"And so I suppose you will not marry me," says Jones, with mortification that he would fain hide under an air of banter.

Belinda hesitates—looks away from him. She is a child, with all a child's instinctive craving for the sweets of liberty; but she is a Bohemian as well, with all a Bohemian's keen appreciation of money, and what money will bring. It would—it would be sweet, she feels, to wear finer dresses, richer jewels than Rosie's, to invite Rosie and Captain Temple condescendingly to dinner, lend them one's opera box, take them for a drive occasionally in one's carriage. And then to bid good-bye forever to Miss Burke! The thought of Augustus Jones as a life-companion may be hideous, but half its hideousness vanishes, surely, if one remembers this—he would replace Miss Burke.

"I am certain I shall make you wretched, Mr. Jones; but as you seem, you and Rosie, to have set your minds on this engagement—stop, though, I must ask one thing first: is your name on the door-plate, I mean of the Clapham villa? That I could not stand."

"My name—on a door-plate?" says Jones, as indignantly as though the blood of all the Howards ran in his veins. "Why, what do you take me for? No one but professional men, apothecaries, or that sort of thing, ever ticket their names outside on a door-plate."

"Well, then, I could never suit you nor you me, the whole thing is preposterous; still, if you would like to try it, just as an experiment——"

He rushes forward rapturously.

"Oh, I thank you—very much obliged, indeed!" Belinda springs upon her feet and puts herself in a not altogether unscientific attitude of self-defence. "We may be engaged if you like, but I will have no fooleries of that kind. Do you hear me—I will not! Mr. Jones, you shall never kiss me."

And then, quick as thought itself, flashes on her the remembrance of the moment when her eyes first met Roger's this afternoon, of the hour spent with Roger alone under the stars, of the moment when he praised her—ah, with praise how unlike the fulsome compliments of this legitimate lover!—and when vanity, shame, and minglement of feelings such as her life had never known before, held her dumb.

"Never kiss you! Not even when we are married, I suppose?" remarks Mr. Jones, unwisely jocular.

"Married—who talks of being married?" cries Belinda; such mutiny against her own weakness, such disdain, such mockery of her captor in her eyes!

"You talked a moment ago about trying the experiment, did you not?"

"I said that we might try being lovers—no, not lovers either—that we might try being engaged; and I keep to it. You are going away to visit the Pas de Roland, you know, to-morrow—"

"Not now. I shall have no spare time for sight-seeing now," interrupts Augustus, amatively.

"Why not? Because Rose is here? Oh, Rose has quite enough on her hands without you. You will go to the mountains to-morrow, and you will stay away four days, as you intended, and admire every waterfall and rock and ruin Murray bids you. By that time I shall be used to the thought of—of Clapham, perhaps. Miss Burke will be back for one thing, and I shall have had a good deal," with a sigh, this, "of Rose. I shall feel better disposed toward any change. Mr. Jones, if you will promise never, as long as you live, to kiss me, I dare say I shall not be very sorry to see you come back."

And not one other warmer word or promise can Augustus wring from her. She will try being engaged, minus love-making, as an experiment; and if he will promise never as long as he lives to kiss her, perhaps after four days' absence she may not be very sorry to see him return.

So much for his present chance of an alliance with the noble family of Vansittart.

CHAPTER VIII.

VANITY VERSUS CONSCIENCE.

Mrs. Augustus Jones. Belinda Jones. Mr. and Mrs. Jones, Clapham.

So Belinda, when she is alone, rings every possible change upon her future titles as a matron, and finds each tuneless. But then the diamonds! reflection that ere this has governed the conduct of so many a wiser, older, better woman.

Wistfully gazing through the open window at the sky, Belinda thinks of the remote Belgravian days when her papa was in the first delightful flush of Rose's money—the days of dinner parties and balls, when even she, Belinda, wore pretty frocks, and occasionally tasted the society of lovely, bare-necked beings, with flowers in their hair, silken trains, fans, lovers, instead of watching them forlornly from without, as she did to-night. How would she look bare-necked, with flowers in her hair, with a train, a fan, lovers? How if she should attempt a rehearsel of the effect (lovers excepted) with such rough materials as she may have at hand!

Miss Burke, as it chances, has left the key of her travelling-case in the lock—alas, the frame of mind for wrong-doing given, and when does the demon opportunity fail any of us?—and in Miss Burke's travelling-case lies, neatly folded, that lady's black silk dress. In shorter time than it has taken me to write, Belinda, candle in hand, glides into the adjoining room, the sanctuary of Miss Burke's maiden charms, opens the case, gazes, vacillates—handles!

The skirt is too long, for Miss Burke is of loftier stature than herself. So much the grander will be her train. And the sleeves must be tucked up, and the bodice pinned down, and white lace, also of Miss Burke's, added here and there, for lightness. She collects together such dislocated sewing implements as the household can boast, with absorbed interest stitches down a fold here, puckers up a plait there; finally skips lightly out of her own dingy, Cinderella frock, and a minute later stands radiant in the majesty of rustling silk, short sleeves, bare throat, and train—a young lady.

She is not an ugly girl, after all. So much the tarnished glass upon Miss Burke's dressing-table assures her promptly. Her neck and shoulders look lily fair, compared to the sun-tan of her face; her arms are delicately fashioned and tolerably plump for seventeen. But the pig-tails! She snatches off the hideous frayed out green ribbons, unplaits them, and behold! the ill-kempt, neglected hair falls round her slender figure in waves of silky chestnut. A pair of gloves of Miss Burke's supplies an impromptu cushion, over which she coifs it high above her forehead, as the little Spanish blonde in pink (the blonde Roger Temple admired) was coifed to-night. A scarlet passion-flower wet with dew, from the balcony, finishes the picture.

Not ugly! Why, she is pretty already—a year or two hence will be admirably so, prettier than was even Rose in her prime thinks Belinda, gazing at her own transfigured self in a kind of rapture. The only thing she lacks now is jewelry—ear-rings, bracelets, a necklace for her throat; the Jones diamonds, in short. Pending the possession of these, could no substitute be found to give one some imperfect foreshadowing of their splendor?

On the landing of the second floor stands, as we know, the life-sized figure of a saint; martyred, satin-slippered, glittering with gorgeous paste adornments. If the good old Beata would only lend that necklace of hers for half an hour, ten minutes, long enough to yield some one faint foretaste of the sweets of brilliants! If—assuming her permission—one were to borrow it, say! The glass case can be opened by a cunning hand from the back. And no living soul is about; and it could not surely be much of a sin, considering that the saint is but a big wax doll with bead eyes.

She creeps down the echoing stone stairs, her heart beating, her unaccustomed feet entangling themselves at every movement in her trailing skirts; she reaches the landing of the second floor. There stands the Beata, her livid hands crossed on her breast, her bead eyes awfully wide open. There are the paste brilliants.

The cranky fastening of the glass door gives a groan as she opens it, causing Belinda's guilty conscience to quake again; but no ear save her own hears the sound. She unclasps the necklace, shivering as her fingers come in contact with the clammy wax throat; then bears away her booty, her legs trembling under her at every step upstairs. She takes it to the light of her solitary candle; admires its mock effulgence; clasps it, trembling, around her little warm soft neck; surveys herself on tiptoe in the tarnished mirror above the chimney-piece; and where is conscience now, where remorse?

She surveys herself, well nigh awe-stricken by her own fairness. She feels that to be the possessor of real diamonds she would cheerfully become Mrs. Augustus Jones, and start for Clapham to-morrow. Now, nothing is wanting but a fan and lovers. The fan can be had—a huge gilt and black structure, of the date of thirty years ago, which lies for ornament on the mantel-shelf—and of this Belinda possesses herself. But the lovers? Bah, some unimportant details are sure to be wanting at every rehersal.

She struts up and down the room, her train outstretched, her fan in motion, her eyes glancing complacently at the *mignon* little figure the glass gives her duskily back. "If Captain Temple could see me—if Captain Temple could see me now!" thinks vanity. "If he knew I could be anything but ragged, and hideous, and a gamin. And if he did know this, what would Captain Temple care?" says another sterner voice than that of vanity. "Of what account is the whole world to him by the side of Rose, and Rose's beauty?"

A sudden leaden weight sinks dead on Belinda's heart. She is nothing to Roger Temple; holds no more place in his present than in his future. She seems to stifle. The saint's paste diamonds must surely be too heavy, so painful is the choking feeling in her throat. Turning abruptly away from the sight of her finery and of herself, she extinguishes the candle; then goes out bare-armed, bare-necked, in her diamond necklace and train, upon the balcony.

It is now past midnight, and something like cooler air begins to stir across the sleeping country. Balmy sweet is the air; every floor of the vast old house has its balcony, every balcony its flowers; the sky is all a-quiver with stars; mountains, river, plains, are lying in one great hush of purple sleep. Belinda rests her arm against the iron balustrade, and, gazing away westward toward the rugged line of Spanish coast, muses.

Click, click! goes the sharp sound of a vesuvian, close, as it seems, beside Belinda's ear. She turns with a start, and there on the adjoining balcony, *en robe de chambre*, and placidly lighting his midnight pipe of peace, stands Roger Temple. Roger may breakfast with Rose, dine with Rose, walk with Rose, spend any number of hours during the day that he chooses alone with Rose; but it would be the acme of indiscretion for him to lodge under the same roof with her. Thus the widow well versed in the minutæ of surface morals decides. And so—from Scylla to Charybdis—fate, and the landlord of the Hotel Isabella together, have contrived to lodge him under the same roof with Belinda.

Belinda sees him, grasps the whole dramatic capabilities of the situation in a moment, but gives no sign. Now, she feels, is a magnificent opportunity for her to act, and with a purpose! A glance at Roger Temple's face convinces her that he does not recognize Rose's vagrant, out-at-elbows step-daughter under the disguise of civilization. Now she will have a rare opportunity of arriving at a truth or two; now may she even test the practical worth of a "life-long fidelity," see if this devoted lover cannot be led into a passing flirtation—moonlight, loneliness, the certainty of the crime remaining undetected, favoring.

With an unconsciousness the most perfect she resumes her former attitude, and after a minute or two of silence sings, in that undertone for which we have no word in English, the whisper of singing, a stanza of the Mendicant Student serenade, familiar from one end of the Peninsula to the other:

Desde que soy estudiante,
Desde que llevo manteo,
No he comido masique sopas
Con suelas de zapatero.

She has a sweet, a sympathetic voice—*in posse*, like the beauty of her face; and melody and voice alike harmonize deliciously with every external accessory of the scene.

"Brava, brava!" exclaims Roger, when she has finished. "That first verse was so excellently sung that it makes me eager for the second."

"Senor!" she exclaims, holding her head up with dignity, and in such a position that the moon shines upon its soft young outline full.

"I beg a thousand pardons," says Roger, putting his pipe hastily out of sight. "But the senora's song was so charming that I forgot that we had no master of the ceremonies to introduce us. Has it not a second verse?"

"My song has a second and a third verse," replies Belinda in English, strongly flavored with Castilian gutturals. "I must acquaint his lordship, however, that I believed myself to be alone. I never sing for the pleasure of strangers except when I am on the stage."

"The stage!" repeats Roger Temple, scrutinizing the girlish face and figure critically. "Why, is it possible?"

"I have acted as long as I can remember," says Belinda, with all the effrontery conceivable. "If his English excellency has travelled through any of the principal Spanish towns he must have heard of me."

"When the senora favors me with her name I shall be able to question my memory more accurately," answers Roger.

Belinda pauses for a minute or two; then, "My name on the stage is Lagrimas," she tells him, "or as you would say it in English, 'Tears.' Doleful, is it not? but I do not wish it changed. Who would not sooner be called tears than laughter?"

She sighs, and, half turning from him, rests her cheek down upon the graceful bare arms that lie folded on the balcony. Seen thus in the moonlight, her bright hair falling around her shoulders, her childish face grown pensive, she seems to Roger as fair a little creature as ever blessed man's vision in this prosaic world; and his pulse quickens. The balconies are distant about four or five feet from each other. Leaning across the giddy intervening space, two persons of steady nerves might easily clasp hands, or at least touch fingers, if they so minded. They are alone together, he and this girl, absolutely alone, as were the first pair of lovers in Eden; and yet impassably divided, as their lives are destined in very fact to be forevermore. And Roger's pulse quickens.

(To be Continued).