

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., August 11, 1893

A STORY OF BILL MORRISON.

With the cut rate same from Kansas,
When the cut rate was in town,
Came a passin' pearl old Populist,
His name was Andy Brown.
And he said he known Bill Morrison,
Could mind what they was boys,
How they was hay an' horses
Down in Egypt's Illinois.

Where the winters stood wide open
And appeared to wait for spring,
With its long protracted meatin':
'Hoopin' cough, and everything;
And in summer in the season
That was made for farmer boys,
How they swore hay an' swum together,
Down in Egypt's Illinois.

How they use to hitch four horses,
In the winter to haul the team,
Headed out by the with the shadows
An' the mud lay down the lane
Leadin' out to where the schoolhouse,
At the foot of Pleasant Hill,
Held the hardy circuit rider.
He could mind how him and Bill.

Had put cockleburrs an' burdock,
In fact, anything that struck,
An' the mud was still blankets,
List to see the bronco buck,
And ag'in he he'd 'em holler;
Heard that band up boisterous boys,
Who rizless hay had hates,
Down in Egypt's Illinois.

"Law" he 'lowed, "they warn't no summer,
Warn't a single sign of spring,
Want's a wad to hold the hand
This is sand enough to sing;
Not a bluebird nor a woodchuck
Would begin to be about,
Till the mumps an' the revivals
An' the vacinates run out.

"Why, they warn't no use a hedgin'
When the mumps was on our tracks,
We was allus shore to git it
With the mumps an' the axe,
Even nature's peared to know an'
Waited patiently about,
Till the mumps an' the revivals
An' the vacinates run out.

"Then the poor an' the baptist'
We had with us every spring,
'bont' the time the critick was risin'.
An' the birds begun to sing.
I can hear the horses gnawin'
Up the quan' n' asp' trees,
An' the mush ice that a-havin',
Dripped round the preacher's knees.

"I kin see him arter shiver,
An' ag'in he he'd 'em holler;
In the water of this river
Ye shall wash your sins away;
Hear the song that they was singin',
See the winninin' folks in tears,
An' that music still a ringin',
Still a ringin' in my ears.

The next course was the lung fever,
As the seed time's shore to bring,
In the winter to haul the team,
Would have it every spring.
As I lay there, pale and patient,
You could find barefooted Bill
Layin' fur the bloomin' binebel,
On the south side up the hill.

"An' you kin bet they want no flower
That could bloom in that broad land.
An' live in the sun all the hour
Till he'd place it in my hand.
Oh, the roses and revivals
That we had when we was boys,
More than made up for the fever,
Down in Egypt's Illinois." —*Cy. Warman.*

A VAGRANT ROSE.

BY MARTHA McCULLOCH WILLIAMS.

Marcelle espied it with a great leap of the heart. The French girl, folk called her there in that small aristocratic South country town. Her father, Jean Mathieu, the confectioner, was French—French from his deft fingers to the curl of his mustache. But this his one child was purely American, despite the velvet-dark eyes, the pale creamy skin, the tiny feet, the cloud of dead-black hair, that were her sole inheritance from a creole mother. Wedded and widowed in the far South, grief had made Jean Mathieu a wanderer. The fate which we call chance had flung him a year ago into this upriver town, nodding in drowsy pride upon twice seven grassy hills.

On every hand turnpike ran into it—broad straight highways hard and white. The best people lived along them in big square houses, set apart with trees and vines and standing proudly apart from the gaze of passers by. Each had its own sufficient demesne of garden, orchard, lawn, and paddock. Walking was not the fashion save for the folk who were content to live in the town proper. Among them, even, the feminine rarely went more than five square upon its own tightly-shod feet.

Neither did young women to the manor born venture out alone, even to church or Sunday-school or prayer-meeting, where all the way was paved street. But nobody took account of Marcelle's wanderings. Mathieu lived over the shop, in a fashion before unheard of; no doubt that was the foreign way. As they went to no church, there was not the remotest possibility of bringing them socially in touch with the town. Along with the one-eyed German shoemaker, they represented its whole alien element. Naturally its good people, though among the kindest, the most humane, gave themselves small concern over the scant flocks from the Old World shores.

A point of costume the town—Bellsboro, let us call it—was morbidly fashionable; that is to say, the leaders dressed rigidly by the order of the modistes and the magazines. Other folk came as close to them as was possible. Up street or down you saw an approximation to the same cut, color, shape. The picturesque, the individual, had neither part nor lot in the community's costuming. So it is no wonder it looked askance at Marcelle, whose clinging garments took on the grace of herself, and held always some hint of vivid color to repeat the accent of scarlet lips in a creamy face.

Then, too, she wore always a flower at her throat—that is, when flowers were in season. Bellsboro had no commercial florist. One must have starved there in competition with the pots and greenhouses that never sold their treasures, but gave of them without stint to neighbor and friend in time of either joy or sorrow. So through the three winter months Marcelle pined for the scent, the touch of roses. The rose was to her the flower of flowers. If only their tiny windows had not been utterly sunless, she would have crowded them with rose-trees and spent hours in their company.

Now, though May, the month of

roses, lay soft along the hills, Marcelle had not yet rejoiced her heart with a single perfect blossom. Indeed, flowers of any sort had been hardly come at. There had been weddings, funerals, a christening feast, to nip and drain the gardens. So far she had made shift with peach and plum and cherry blossoms, with a hyacinth or two, and a scant handful of juncos that a kindly woman one day handed to her over the fence outside which she had stopped to look pitifully at the treasure it guarded.

This day she had hurried through her tasks, and while the sun was faintly westering, found herself facing countryward. Some way she chose the river road, which ran straight to south, and gave you all the way the fresh lapping of waters below the bank. The wind came full in her face; here and there a big branching maple, its soft new leaves drooping in the heat, flung wetts of shadow down on the turnpike's dusty ribbon, wherein country houses were strung as sparse beads upon a thread. The trees grew all upon the river side. The line of palings upon the other hand ran flush with the grassy bank that lifted some two feet above the roadway.

Now the boundary was low and open now high and thin, with jagged spikes at top. Inside, Marcelle's eyes drank thirstily of May bloom. May beauty—the jasmines' green mist, thick-sown with white stars; of whiter tall lilies, stately in powderings of gold; of cloudy honeysuckles waving in each sweet wind; of roses running riotously the whole chromatic scale.

How she yearned to kneel among them, steep her soul in their sweets, lay them against her cheek, her heart! Slow and loitering she went past their seat, hot dimness clouding her eyes, her breath coming hard, her head drooping. Suddenly something shut away from her this paradise of blossom. She was passing the Cammore place, the finest upon the road. The lawn of it had the usual open fence, but where the garden ran down, closer set cedar pickets stood higher than your head, with an ugly line of spikes atop them.

Externally all the inner roughness was massed in green beauty. Wherever the pickets came even a little apart a thorny rose branch came through. Other branches made emerald foam over the spiky top, showing here and there a lusty bud as green.

Marcelle looked at them with a little envious sigh. If only she might see the other side! There, fair to the sun rays, she knew there were roses without number—creamy, yellow, golden, scarlet, pink as the flush of dawn. Little as she knew of Bellsboro she had heard of the Cammore roses—how they were nursed and tended till their lavish largeness made the May world doubly sweet. Almost she was past the wretched fence when something caught her eye—a long pale golden bud half blown, and drooping well over the fence-top.

With a little glad cry Marcelle went under it, lifted her face as though to catch its dropping sweets. The barest breath of it came to her, yet enough to make the wetness of her eyes gather in a big drop and splash upon the sword. The flower hung well out of reach from where she stood. If, though she dared, it might be hers, just long step above the earth knot-hole would give her footing; a convenient upper crevice supplied holding ground. And how she longed for the flower, that seemed to sigh invitation to say, almost aloud, "Take me; I bloom to be loved!" Surely it could not be wrong. Madam Cammore would never miss the blossom, of whose unfolding she had not known.

Full five minutes Marcelle fought the battle with her conscience, her eyes the while upraised to the beckoning flower. Then, with a little laugh, she swung herself up, clung desperately with one hand, while with the other she essayed to part the rough flexible rose stalk from its parent stem. Hither and yon she bent it vain, until at last a quick impatient twich gave it into her hand. Victory, though, cost her dear. The swaying impulse of her figure tore loose the picket which she clung; from the foot of it came the low crushing of rotten wood. Next minute, with Marcelle still clinging to it, it lay full in the turnpike, at the feet of a horseman who had just come out of a lane that ran into the road at the rose garden's higher side.

"Take care, my lad; you may break your head," the rider called between the curvings of his high-backed horse.

Evidently Marcelle's straw hat, along with her present plight, led him to think her a marauding small boy. Seeing her lie inert and breathless, he sprang quickly down, knelt at her side, and felt for a pulse below the flaccid fingers that still held loosely clasped the yellow rose.

"Why, it's a girl—the French girl!" he said, amazedly. "Poor little thing!

To think she wished so much for a flower!" Then as he saw a faint twinkle of eyelids: "Lie still a minute, miss. You have had an ugly fall. I hope you are not hurt. Only scared and shaken."

Marcelle sat upright, but sank quickly to her elbow, covering her eyes and saying: "I am not hurt, sir—only shamed. I knew the good God saw me—but—but—I did not think He would punish me so quickly—and it seemed such a little thing—only a rose nobody would miss."

The man looked away—to the tree-tops, the sky-line; then said, lightly touching her hand:

"You have done no wrong. That lies with—people who let you lack what you must love so much."

"Ah, how I love the roses!" Marcelle said, getting slowly to her feet. "But," shaking her head, "it was not right. See the gap in the fence. I must go back to the people here—the grand rich lady—and tell her I am a thief who has made worse thievery possible."

"No, you will not," the man said, with a tinge of authority. "Leave

that to me. My mother—never mind. Sit here and rest till I come back."

"Why, do you live there?" Marcelle cried, a quick wavering scarlet in either cheek. Vaguely as she had heard of the Cammore roses, she had heard too of the son and heir, now come from foreign travels, and about to be wedded to his cousin, a girl with hair like spun sunshine, who sat always beside madam in the Cammore carriage. If this were he—Marcelle turned her eyes away, and tried to say steadily, "Please, sir, tell the lady how sorry, how shamed I have made myself, and pray her to tell me how I may—make amende."

"I will show you at once," young Cammore said, with a smile. "Come along—so. Here is a gate you did not see. Now shut your eyes, and open them only when I tell you. There that will do. Look, but sit still until I come back."

As he vanished, Marcelle drew a long breath that was half a sob. He had set her at ease upon a bank of warm green grass, strewed thick with dried rose leaves, and facing a wall of bloom—rarer, richer, more wreathen than her wildest fancy had painted it. A great Glore di Diorj overhung her seat; she was thronged, as it were, beneath a canopy of bursting buds. One hand, a bold white climber flung pearly trails at her feet; the other hand, a drift of low blossom glowed blood-red in the dipping sun.

The breath of them lay in benediction in the soft spring air. Through it Marcelle saw two figures come toward her, young Cammore and his betrothed. In a dream she felt them fill her hands with long-stemmed roses, heard their kindly speech, knew that she was bidden to come hither for flowers whenever she would. Somehow it took away her breath; set her to trembling so that she could only say, "I thank you." In spite of it, though, she took full note of the other girl's exquisite fairness. On the way home Marcelle said to herself over and over, holding up to her lips the talisman first flown: "My rose! my rose! she is like you would be if you were made a woman. I wonder, though, if ever she would dare to bloom outside the garden!"

And even as Marcelle questioned fate, Elinor Darell, at the side of her appointed lover, questioned her own heart. From the cradle her life had been exactly ordered. Indeed, in some moments of bitterness she had told herself that she must have been born solely to reunite the Darell fortune by marrying Darel Cammore. Her youth, her childhood even, had been oppressed with the weight of what was expected of one born to such a fate. She had been trained, guided, sheltered, until something within her cried aloud for breath. Darel's story of the French girl, what she had dared, her bitter humiliation, touched and stirred the other strangely. All the more that her eyes were so velvet dark, strangely reminiscent of other eyes long-forgotten, though for two years unseen.

Darel's eyes were as blue as the sky, They darkened thoughtfully as he said, "So that is the odd French girl! Do you know, Elinor, if she were really French and in Paris, half the artists would be raving over her beauty, and on their knees for the privilege of immortalizing it?"

Elinor's sole answer was a long expressive glance. Under it he reddened faintly, but went on with a judicial air: "Hers is a rare type. Did you note the fineness of it—the hair, the skin, the poise, the curve of head and hand? Poor child! What a pity she is ill placed in life!"

Again Elinor shot at him that keen sidelong glance. After a minute she dropped her eyes, saying: "so you pity her? I am not certain but that I envy her."

Thereafter Marcelle's summer was a long dream of scent and color, albeit she herself was far too abashed to go again for roses. Ellen Darell felt intuitively what held her away, and came loaded down with bloom to the dingy little shop. She drove into town every day. Madam Cammore loved too passionately her own vine and fig-tree to think of summer touring. Besides, there were Elinor's wedding clothes to see to. All the town's fine needle women were stitching, stitching at lace and linens. By-and-by, when the fall styles were really determined, she should have also a dozen new gowns, each of the very best. Darel hinted faintly, but went on with a judicial air: "Hers is a rare type. Did you note the fineness of it—the hair, the skin, the poise, the curve of head and hand? Poor child! What a pity she is ill placed in life!"

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