

Italian Peasants.

IF any of our readers have enjoyed the good fortune of visiting Cervara, the accompanying picture will awaken many pleasant memories, and, by its strict accuracy, win praises for the artist. Happily, it is not necessary to have witnessed the scene to admire the genius of the painter. It is sufficient for the picture, by its natural grouping, to suggest the idea—"If I had met at Cervara that young girl, that child, that old woman, they would have appeared just as they do on the canvas; the scenery, the costume, the physiognomy would have been just such as they are represented here. There are no effects 'got up' according to the traditions of the Academy; these are not the assumed attitudes of the models hired for the studio,—they are genuine villagers; the picture is true to nature, and is free from anything like the conventional representations of Italian peasants." Such praise is not extravagant when applied to M. Hebert's composition; it is simply candid, for there are few painters either in England or France who equal this artist in fidelity.

The subject is interesting. Of all the peasants of Europe, few are so attractive to poet and painter as those of Italy.

In ascending the valley of the Arino, above Tivoli, the traveller finds on the right and left, on the crest of the mountains, several small villages, founded in the middle ages by the peasantry, as a refuge from the violence of the feudal lords. Amongst the most picturesque are Anticoli, Rocca, Canterano, Cantalupo, the aspect of which is that of fortresses built on the rock. In approaching Subiaco towards evening, the traveller notices the last ray of the setting sun gilding, to the left, a peak shooting abruptly into the azure sky above the mountain chain; this is Cervara. The ascent to the place is only practicable for the sure-footed mules or asses of the district, and the journey occupies nearly three hours. The air is pure and bracing, the echoes are very remarkable, the wild-flowers and herbs yield an exquisite perfume, flocks of sheep and goats are seen wandering over the green carpet, and the prospect of hill and dale, fantastic cliffs, high peaks, and deep chasms, is bounded by the purple waters of the sea. The women of the country descend to fetch water from a fountain, by a road cut in the rock; the young girls, nimble as gazelles, the *conca* on their heads, charm by their artless coquetry and natural grace; the aged, with blue petticoats, embroidered with gold, their headdress in form of a turban, stockings as red as those of a cardinal, present a very singular appearance: one seems to have gone back four hundred years, and to belong to the middle ages.

Up to the age of fifteen, all the females of Cervara adopt this costume, but the influence of the example of the *elegantés* of Subiaco induces most of the Cervaroles to adopt, before they attain the age of twenty, the straight corsage and long Indian petticoat.

The streets of the little village are covered with numerous arches, which are found exceedingly useful during the heavy snows of winter. Nothing can exceed the picturesque beauty of these streets, bordered by houses built in the rock. The effects of colour are very striking. The red-white-and-blue costume of the people—an auspicious combination—finely contrast with the grey rocks and green foliage of the surrounding country. The population is about 1,200. The men are nearly all shepherds, who descend with their flocks during the winter to the campagna of Rome; they return to the hills on the approach of spring. The women devote their attention to household cares. There is something refreshing to the denizen of towns to spend a few days, even a few hours, in one of these retired hamlets,—something which invigorates the spirit fevered by the bustle and

turmoil of the world, just as the cool water from the fountain slakes the thirst of the traveller.

"Pride and ambition here
Only in far-fetch'd metaphors appear;
Here nought but winds can hurtful murmurs scatter,
And nought but echo flatter.
The gods, when they descended hither
From heaven, did always choose their way;
And therefore we may boldly say,
That 'tis the way, too, thither.

"How happy here should I
And one dear she, live, and embracing die!
She who is all the world, and can exclude
In deserts solitude.
I should have then this only fear—
Lest men, when they my pleasures see,
Should hither throng to live like me,
And so make a city here."

The Young Widow.

A RAILWAY ROMANCE.

BY MRS. GORDON SMYTHIES,

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ONE fine day, at the end of May, I was travelling on the Great Western line. Nothing could be more comfortable than the softly-cushioned spacious carriage in which I was, as it flew past the emerald meadows, the sparkling, dancing brooks; the orchards all one sheet of blossoms—dainty pink or snowy white—the happy, cosy hamlets nestled at the foot of some old gray and ivy-grown tower, whose spire pointed to heaven; while many generations of congregations past away, lay sleeping in the picturesque church yards.

There is no better line than the Great Western, and nowhere are the officials more civil, the refreshment rooms more comfortable, or the refreshments more really nice and tempting. Even members of the Carlton Club (epicures as they are) have often really enjoyed a lunch at Swindon Station.

However, I had not reached that haven of rest, but was on my way to it, when, at the B—— Station, a gay and handsome carriage drove up, and a young and very pretty widow, with a quantity of wealthy looking luggage, entered, and took a seat opposite to me. She was followed by two beaux, of whom more hereafter. She was exquisitely dressed, and appeared to be about five-and-twenty. She was going to Bath, and had three thousand a year. All this I ascertained in the course of time; but, when the fair incognita entered the carriage, I only knew she was young, beautiful, very elegantly and tastefully dressed, full of instinct courtesy and innate grace, and that she found it very difficult to avoid the over ardent glances of her two followers. Who and what they were, and who and what she was, came to my knowledge afterwards. I did not know even that she was a widow, for she wore no weeds, no worn-out crape, nor other signs of widowhood.

She had been married, at fifteen, to an East Indian director—a match made by her father, who held a similar office. For seven years she had been the exemplary wife of a cross, jealous, fault-finding old martyr to the gout; a good heart, a good temper, and an inexhaustible fund of good spirits and good health, enabled her to fear without a murmur or a tear what to most beautiful wives, in their earliest bloom, would have been torture. She had a splendid equipage, it is true, but she could never drive out without Sir Godfrey Bullion, and all his wraps, cushions, and pillows.

In the hottest weather, he would never have the window open. Oh! what a misery was such a drive! Every evening was spent by his sofa, reading the debates, or works on Indian finance.

Every night poor Bessie retired to bed at nine, to be at the side of her tyrant, whensoever his flannels wanted shifting, or his foot the friction of her velvet palm; whenever his *can medicinale* or colchicum had to be administered, or a civil answer required to turn away his wrath. Oh! the insufferable heat of that stately room! The broken slumbers of that downy bed, so closely curtained with crimson damask, the huge fires even in the dog-days, the weight of blankets and coverlids, the peevish rebuke if she stirred except at Sir Godfrey's bidding! How odious to her the sickly gleam from the slender rushlight, and the countless, unearthly-looking eyes its odious circles traced on the walls!

If she looked from the window into the gardens of the square—St. James's Square—how she sighed for a moonlight ramble across the velvet sod, and among its fragrant trees, so mysterious in the moonlight beams.

What gay carriages whirled past, bearing those not younger or fairer than herself to opera, ball, concert, play, or soirée—all, to her longing fancy, so much more delightful than those envied beauties found them. What brilliant assemblies on either side of Sir Godfrey's mansion, and how she would have enjoyed merely to watch the beaux and belles trip from their carriages into the hall. If, by great good luck, Sir Godfrey dosed, what romances did she conjure up, as a turbaned mamma, in ample amber satin, drew the fair girl, crowned with roses and robed in white, from the tall pale cavalier whose cab dashed up at the same moment, and who sprang out to offer his white gloved hand. What a tragedy to her sentimental view of things in the appearance of that pale bride, all blonde and diamonds, descending languidly from the coroneted carriage, and led in by old Lord —, but turning to cast a last glance at the handsome Captain —, who darted forward to pick up a flower, dropped, we hope not intentionally, from her bouquet.

How she envied those gay girls in cheap tarlatans and real myrtle wreaths and bouquets, each leaning on her chosen beau, mad for a polka. But an angry voice soon startled and recalled her, and "curses not loud but deep" were hurled by gouty age at all balls and ball-goers.

At twenty-two Bessie was a widow.

Sir Godfrey died at his country seat—Beech Park, Berkshire. Half her wedded life had been spent there; the only people ever admitted being Sponge, the family apothecary, and the Rev. Wilfred Osborne, curate of Beech. He became a sort of domestic chaplain to Sir Godfrey, who seemed, as he drew near his end, to fancy there was a sort of spiritual safety in the presence of a clergyman, and that he would exorcise the fiends that possessed him.

The curate was very poor—£80 a year and two rooms in the rectory being all the remuneration the absentee rector could afford; but Sir Godfrey was a liberal man, and many handsome presents rewarded the constant spiritual attendance of the Rev. Wilfred Osborne. But the curate's duties did not at all lighten poor Bessie's. When he prayed, Sir Godfrey made her kneel by his pillow, or easy chair: when he read a sermon, he was to be relieved every now and then by Bessie.

As the curate marked the thralldom, the confinement, the fatigue—so patiently endured—his heart bled for the beautiful young wife, whose tyrant would not allow her even to wear a flower in her bosom, or a bouquet on her table, complaining with a growl that the scent of flowers disagreed with him.

The Reverend Wilfred Osborne was not handsome. There was nothing about him to take the eye at first sight, or to captivate the fancy even of such an unwilling and romantic recluse as poor Bessie. He was eight-and-thirty, very pale, thoughtful, reserved, and silent; his thickly clustering black hair had here and there a line of silver, his forehead was very prominent, the reflective organs overhanging the perspective. His eyes were black, and deep set; his points of beauty were his teeth and hands. As for his form, it was tall and spare, and a habit of stooping took a good deal from the grace of his carriage.

He pitied Bessie intensely; he tried all he could, by the sacrifice of his own liberty, to increase hers. He often on a fine day offered to pass the morning with Sir Godfrey, if she would take his duty in the parish, call on Widow Wake who was bed-ridden, and lived right across the heath; or read to old Grunt who lived at the top of a distant hill. Sometimes he stipulated that, if he stayed with Sir Godfrey, Lady Bullion should preside at the school holiday, and superintend the sports in a field of the rectory; and all this he did that she might breathe the fresh air, hear the cuckoo's single note, that wakes more echoes in the young heart than ever prima donna did; gather the purple heath on her way to Widow Wake's cottage, and refresh her poor jaded spirit in the rectory field, by commune with the young and glad.

And the jealous, irascible, touchy, rebellious old Sir Godfrey never objected to any plan of the curate's. He felt for Wilfred Osborne a respect bordering on reverence; and he always intended, at the death of the rector of Beech, to present Wilfred to the living. It never struck him that, as the vulgar say, "The creaking door is long on its hinges;" and that the rector,

the Rev. Matthew Montessor, would be an invalid when he was in his grave.

He often resolved to revise his will, and leave everything he possessed to his patient Bessie, and, in case of accident, to his beloved curate the next presentation to the living of Beech. But the day of departure came suddenly, ushered in by fits, which unfitted him for any mental exertion. Bessie's noble jointure came of course to her; it was three thousand per annum. Sir Godfrey's income was eight thousand.

The five thousand he had wished to leave to her went, with the advowson and next presentation to Beech Rectory, to the heir-at-law.

Bessie was a good, fine-hearted, virtuous creature.

She did not know why the dark, hot room seemed to grow bright and pleasant when Wilfred Osborne entered. She did not know why, when he was expected, she so often looked at her watch, and so frequently took her stand at the window that overlooked the avenue. She did not know why her spirits rose at his approach, and felt at his departure. Why the smell of a russian-leather prayer-book he constantly carried about, had, when she took it up and pressed it to her lips, an ambrosial perfume that made her heart ache with its intensity. What his feelings were she knew not; she was no coquette; she never speculated on the power of her beauty; and the dangerous intimacy daily increased by Sir Godfrey's devotion to the young divine.

Sir Godfrey died!—died supported by Bessie on one side, and Wilfred on the other—died after they had watched him for three days and three nights, struggling with the angel of death!

Bessie's tyrant was no more!

He lay cold, stiff, helpless before her; and at first all her feelings were of sorrow. He had been her sole object, duty, occupation, study, care; and Wilfred Osborne's partnership in nursing had made the task so delightful, and the dark room so bright, that she wished for no change.

She often said, with the "Prisoner of Chillon":—

"My chains and I grew friends,
So much a long commune tends
To make us what we are; even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh."

During the first days of her bereavement, Wilfred Osborne was a brother to her; ever by her side, to help, to comfort, to advise.

But when Sir Godfrey lay in the family vault, and the beautiful young widow appeared at church, blushing through her double crape veil, and her heart beating under the deep mourning garb, a strange voice startled her from a sweet reverie—not the deep music of Wilfred's—a commonplace stranger filled the reading-desk, and then the pulpit. Wilfred was gone. A kind note of farewell awaited Lady Bullion. He merely said his health required change. He had found a substitute, and meant to winter in Italy.

No word of regret, no hope that she would write, no hint where to address him.

Bessie felt mortified, wounded, sick at heart; but consoled herself with the thought that the cold ingrate could not have known, and could never know, what thoughts, hopes, wishes, and even plans had been busy there, after she had recovered from the shock a first death must ever be. Wilfred was gone, and Susan, Lady Bullion's maid, while combing out her rich brown hair, told her lady, that the day before he went his wife and child had arrived at the rectory, and that he had left early the next morning with them. His wife and child! Bessie had had no idea such beings existed. How should she? He had never spoken of them. Susan saw the deadly pallor and the crimson flush reflected on the toilet glass; she felt the start, the shudder, the uncontrolled trembling.

Bessie had self-command, and, conquering all outward evidence of emotion in a moment, she said, with well-assumed unconcern, "I never knew he had a wife and child, Susan. Intimate as he was with your poor master, he never spoke of them."

"Well, my lady, I daresay he was not over-proud of them. The clerk saw her, and says she's a poor faded rag of a body, dressed very plain, and quite a servant girl look about her; and the boy was mean to look at, but the very image of his papa."

"Is it quite certain they were his wife and child, Susan?"

"Oh yes, my lady! She slept at the rectory on Thursday and

Friday nights, and the ostler of the 'White Hart' carried her box—a poor old shabby trunk (well nigh bald, as he said in fun)—my lady, with 'Mrs. Osborne' graven on a brass plate; and look here, my lady, here's a book left behind, and inside is written, 'Emily Osborne, from her affectionate Wilfred.' I hear, my lady, she has a pretty face enough; but such a poor, mean, skinny thing; an old delaine dress, and black cloth cloak, and a straw bonnet, with just a bit of ribbon, my lady, crossed over it! She did not want any one to see her, my lady, that's for certain, for she was off by the earliest train—and no wonder!"

Bessie was alone—alone with a bitter sense of disappointment and desolation; but her secret was unveiled.

She was twenty-two, very beautiful, and with three thousand a-year.

Should she wear the willow in addition to her weeds? Not she!

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Three years later, Bessie, the liveliest, the most admired, and the most fêted of widows, after a gay season in town, was on the way to Bath.

It is on this journey we met, and introduced her to our readers.

The preceding narrative was retrospect.

Two aspirants, as I have said, performed the journey with the lovely widow. They were not of her party, but had contrived to travel in the same carriage; the one a bold, showy, middle-aged man of fashion, rather stout, and, with a toupé, professes to go to Bath to see an old friend; the other a *nonchalant*, used-up old young man, deeply in debt, and in love with Bessie's fortune, pretends an illness for which the Bath waters are specific. The former is Major Ascott, the latter Lord Peregrine Hazard. There is one more person in the same carriage besides myself, the lovely widow, and her suitors; this is a pale, shrinking-looking lady. Yes, lady I must call her, though her dejected manner and shabby dress would not give her that title with the vulgar. She was in a sort of half-mourning—a very old black silk dress, and which bore evident marks of having been dyed, and cleaned, and turned, a grey barege shawl, the worse for wear, and a straw bonnet trimmed with rusty crape, while a double of the same material shaded a once pretty face, and her small taper hands wore very old black gloves, mended again and again.

How one so evidently poor, though very neat and clean, came to occupy a seat in a first-class carriage, I could not understand; but the mystery was soon unravelled, for stopping at the C— Station, an official came up and said, "Now get out, please, you second-class passenger, will you? There's room enough for ye in a more sootable place. Now then, if ye please."

Even through the double crape of her veil, I saw the hectic flush rise to her pale cheek, and the tears rush to the mournful eyes at the insolence of this address. It seemed when the poor creature showed her second-class ticket, and required a place in company with a gentleman in mourning too, the second class carriages would only accommodate one, and to save the trouble and delay of another carriage being attached, they surlily directed the lady into a first-class carriage. She hastened to obey the rude summons of the official, but, when shown into a second-class, apparently quite full, she expostulated. "There's no room there," she said, drawing back.

"There must be, there ain't the complement; only they're some of Pharoah's lean kine. Make room for the young woman, if you please," and he tried to push her in.

"Oh no! no! no!" she cried, as a good-humoured Daniel Lambert of a farmer tried to draw her on his knees, saying, "No gal shall ever want a seat while I've a knee to spare."

"I cannot, and I will not," said the poor girl.

"I don't doubt you like the first-class best," said the official; "but there ain't no twelve without you, and so in you go."

By this time all the windows were let down, and heads thrust from them—among others the poor victim's companion—who from a second-class carriage at the end of the train saw what was passing, and springing out, rushed up to the rude official and almost sinking girl. A scuffle now ensued. The gentleman pushed the man off, and threatened him with *The Times*—that great redresser of all social wrongs.

The man answered brutally, and all the fat farmers laughed

till their sides shook. He then led the young lady away from that carriage to a vacant seat in his own, and in so doing he passed by that in which Lady Bullion sat commiserating, and her admirers ridiculing, the unlucky second-class travellers. The gentleman looked up at that bright soft face—his own became ghastly pale, as did Lady Bullion's, and then both blushed deeply. He bowed with graceful reverence, and she slightly and haughtily returned the salutation.

The admirers exchanged looks of wonder and annoyance; but they did not venture on any inquiry. The shrill whistle and the railway call were heard—the monster train is off.

Lady Bullion sinks into a reverie, from which neither the vapid remarks nor boasting compliments of her beaux can rouse her.

Her thoughts are with the past. She has seen the only man she ever loved; what to her are those paltry and palpable gold worshippers?

Major Ascott, in the nearest seat to her own, is trying the effect of eloquent profession.

He is boasting of what he would do and suffer for one smile from the woman of his heart.

He beats upon the padded breast in which the unknown idol is supposed to be enshrined.

He talks of Egeria, for he has bought a copy of Routledge's edition of Godolphin. All this time Lord Peregrine Hazard, directly opposite pretty Bessie, is thinking how blue her eyes are, how brown her hair, how perfect her features, how thoroughbred the indifference with which she listens to her toadified, moustached, and whiskered major. He is also adding up her rent-roll, and his own debts.

He is comparing life with her and three thousand a year, to the Queen's Bench—or Boulogne, with his half-pay.

He warms towards her, he gazes at her with tears in his sloping violet eyes.

He hands her a flower, and tries to press her hand as she takes it. He has no doubt of success.

He enters into the conversation, and he implies that whatever Major Ascott would do for the woman of his heart, he would die ten thousand deaths for the queen of his soul. . . . Is he to be put to the test so suddenly?

What hideous jolt, crash, and chorus of shrieks is that?

"Danger! danger! The red lights, the luggage train! Oh, God! oh, God!" Major Ascott caught one glimpse of the red lights, and, *Sauve qui peut*, he hurled his well-padded form out of the door he burst open, followed by Lord Peregrine Hazard—both without a thought of the woman of their heart and the queen of their soul in this hour of peril and despair.

Major Ascott cleared the gap, and arrived unhurt on the bank. Lord Peregrine missed his footing, and fell into a ditch. Another crash, and the roof of the carriage breaks in—the door has closed suddenly, Lady Bullion prepares to die—but, no, no, —a strong arm tears her from the roof about to close upon her —a strong arm bears her to a place of safety—a dear voice sounds in her ear, a beloved breast pillows her fainting head—the words "Bessie! darling! angel! treasure! long-loved!" ring in her ears, as consciousness fades from her senses.

Yes, at the risk of his own immediate and dreadful death, Wilfred Osborne had snatched Bessie from destruction!

When she recovered she was lying in a moonlit field, on a bed of fresh hay—Wilfred and the poor girl who had travelled first-class with a second-class ticket by her side.

As she unclosed her eyes, Wilfred drew back—his reserve returned when he saw her safe.

Her eyes seemed to ask by their flush in the moonlight—who is this woman?

"How providential," said the pale mourner, "neither you nor my brother are hurt, and yet so many are killed!" and she wept.

"Your brother?" said Lady Bullion, suddenly raising herself. "Is Wilfred Osborne your brother?"

"I am his brother's widow, and he has been more than a brother to me, and more than a father to my lost darling."

Lady Bullion rose; Wilfred was standing at a little distance, against a tree watching the moon, through moistened eyes. Bessie drew near, put her arm in his, and led him away a few steps beneath the elm-trees. "Sit down, Wilfred," she said, "I have much to say; I have to thank you for a life preserved, and to beg your pardon for a grievous wrong."



EBENSEE, THE LAKE OF TRAUN, AUSTRIA.

He sat down as she bade him, and said, "Lady Bullion, it is for me to beg forgiveness—I, who, in the terror of the moment, forgot my own firm resolve, and divulged the secret of my heart. I love you deeply, entirely; but you are so far above me, Bessie, that ——"

"Am I above you now, dearest?" said Bessie, falling on her knees before him. "Wilfred! why did you go? Can a little of this world's dross outweigh in any woman's heart a love like yours?"

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Lady Bullion gave up her idea of going to Bath, as did Wilfred, who was bound there in search of a curacy. I met her again in a railway carriage on her way to the Lakes—a blessed bride, and Wilfred happy beyond description.

The poor widowed sister-in-law, poor no more, was with them, and no longer in a turned silk and the second-class.

The Lake of Traun.

THE Lake of Traun is as renowned in Austria as the Lake of Wallenstadt in Switzerland. A steamer crosses the lake several times every day, making the passage of its entire length between Ebensee and Gemunden, small villages situated at either extremity. The voyage is made in less than an hour. The shores of the lake are marked by rather sweeping acclivities, rising gracefully to a considerable height, and well wooded to their summits. Near Ebensee the water narrows, assumes a

blackish hue, and is difficult to navigate; but near Sonnstein the scene changes, and the blue waters rivals in tint and placidity the azure vault of heaven.

Passing before a picturesque old mill the boat enters a locality of singularly wild beauty at the foot of the Blochkogel. Near this spot, so says the legend, a lordly gentleman who loved a nun came in a little bark one night to sing beneath her jealously-guarded window, and maybe, if fortune favoured him, steal her from the cloister. Well, a dreadful storm arose, and when the morning dawned the empty boat, capsised, was seen upon the troubled water, and in a few hours afterwards the body of the lover was cast ashore.

After passing the convent of the Frannkirchen our attention is directed to a noble castle belonging to Duke Maximilian of Austria, but it is surpassed in beauty by that of Altmunster, with its old Florentine church stored with art treasures. Landing at Ebensee, the tourist may either regale on the banks of the lake, or ascend Kranawettsattel, with its double summit, Fewrekogel, and Albererfeldkogel. It is a tedious journey, but amply repays the trouble it occasions by furnishing a panorama unequalled of its kind in Europe. Lakes, cities, plains, and the snowy Alps are mapped out before the delighted spectator, and, wherever the eye wanders, it discovers some new object of attention and interest.