

THE WORK OF A WORD.

BY MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS.

A WORD! It was only a word—
A word said in lightsome jest;
I thought not, I knew not, he overheard,
Or the depths of passion that might be stirred
In a sensitive human breast.

Had I known that *he* was so near,
I'd have closed the gates of speech,
Ere the bolt was sped that struck my dear,
Dear love—the man who has never a fear—
And drew his heart's blood like a leech.

Oh! I must have been mad to play
With fate—through an idle jest—
I would give the world could I now unsay
The flippant lie that has driven away
The lover loved longest and best.

Well know I how slight a spur
Will goad a mettlesome steed;
And I might have spared the nameless slur
Of the, "What! Love him!" I flung out to her
As a blind, with so little heed.

I saw him go white as the snow,
As the light words left my lips—
And stagger, as if with a sudden blow,
Which had wrought him unutterable woe,
Blotting hope out in long eclipse.

I flung myself down at his feet—
"False to Madame, or false to *me*"—
His answer came cutting, and cold as sleet,
"We part, you and I, nevermore to meet;
Love and life are divorced," said he.

"My steed and my sword both are true;
Beauty's a mask to beguile;
It was torn from the face I thought I knew,
When the faith, and fame, of your love you slew
With a scornful jest, and a smile.

"I had set you for worship high,
In the very shrine of Truth—
As a star falls down from the eastern sky,
So has fallen my proud divinity—
What remains for worship, forsooth?"

With that he turned on his heel,
And went in his proud disdain,
Regardless how I, in my shame, might feel—
Oh! how I sprang up at the clank of steel,
And smothered the cry of pain.

Gone! With hoof-beats that smite my heart—
Gone! stung by a hapless word!
Are we twain to linger through life apart,
With secret love-wounds to throb and smart,
When a name is spoken or heard?

Gone! Out into the midnight murk—
Gone by the perilous pass!
If he come to ill where marauders lurk,
Or his steed should slip, it would be *my* work—
The work of a word—alas!

No bullet goes back to the gun;
No lightning back to the cloud;
And the spoken word is a something *done*,
For good or for evil, while life shall run,
Be the speaker sorry or proud.



AN INDEPENDENT GENTLEWOMAN.

QUITE unexpectedly it once fell to my lot to spend a whole summer in an out-of-the-way village in Sussex, and thereby I made the acquaintance of one of the most interesting women whom it has ever been my good fortune to meet.

My health had broken down in the whirl of London life, and my medical adviser and friend had peremptorily ordered complete rest. "No flying off to the Continent, or staying in a big noisy watering-place, remember; but go down into the country and vegetate. Live out of doors; take only the lightest books with you, and, above all, don't think!" Very easy to say, good Dr. Marshal; but not so easy to carry out, especially the last item. However, I had always found in the past that his prescriptions were worthy of strict attention; so I established myself at Norington, and tried to "vegetate."

Not strong enough for much exertion, I sauntered about the lanes, and being cut off from the world of books, took to studying the few human beings with whom I came in contact—the ancient dame who kept the post-office, the stalwart policeman, the capable-looking schoolmistress and her pert little

pupil-teacher, the sleepy old rector, and the gorgeous young ladies from the Hall Farm, who drove an old pony into the village daily to fetch their father's newspaper.

But the person who most caught my fancy was a tall, thin, pleasant-looking woman, whom I constantly met strolling along the wide-margined roads, leading two small Jersey cows, who leisurely browsed on the thick grass and white clover, while their guardian employed herself with knitting, or more often with a book. Almost every fine morning I met them. The cows were beautiful creatures, of a tawny cream-colour, with darker legs and tails, fine heads with small curved horns, and large, mild eyes. They seemed as docile as lap-dogs, and were led by long cords which ended in a loop slung over their guardian's left arm, thus leaving both hands free.

One day in a shady lane I met them, and noticed that the woman was much absorbed in a magazine—of all things it was the *Nineteenth Century*! The idea of a cowherd (I think there is no feminine appellation for a member of that profession) caring enough about the *Zeit Geist* to study intelligently one

of the leading reviews struck me as so unusual that I looked at her with great curiosity. She was entirely unconscious of my scrutiny as she slowly sauntered along, pausing wherever the Jerseys found a particularly tempting patch of grass. Yes, she *was* a lady; there was no doubt of it, in spite of her employment. Her grey-striped print dress was daintily fresh and clean, and the thick coil of grey hair beneath the shady hat showed careful arrangement. The face, though thin, was freshly coloured, and looked younger than the grey hair would have indicated. The eyes were dark and keenly observant; the hands well-shaped, bare, and brown.

One day, when I came upon her sitting knitting on a log which lay on the road-wide margin of a quiet lane, I stopped and asked the way to an interesting old church of which I had heard. She gave it in a gentle, cultivated voice, with hardly a trace of provincialism, and her clear directions were very different from those of the average rustic, which is generally in this style:—"You goes along this here road till *you comes to Mas'r Smith's* barn, and then turn off across Mas'r Brown's ten acres, and follow the Delvey lane as far as

Widow Jones's," etc., which directions might as well be Greek for their uselessness to anyone not acquainted with the neighbourhood. Finding her inclined to be friendly, I ventured to take a seat on the log by "Madam Rustica," as I had privately christened her, and my questions gained me much valuable information about the neighbourhood. I admired the cows, which evidently pleased her. They were Chérie and Cosette, she said, and mother and daughter. "My cousin, Mr. Edgar Bell, of Norington Court Farm, has a fine herd of Jerseys. These came from him, and they go to his large yards and pastures for those months in the year when they give no milk, as my meadow is but small."

"Then that is the reason that you lead them out to graze the road-sides?" I asked.

"Yes. It is only a pleasure on bright mornings like this; and otherwise all this fine clover and grass would be wasted, which would be a sad pity. All the afternoon, and on wet days, they are tethered in the orchard. I like to save as much as possible of my little paddock for the hay that they need in the winter."

"You make butter, I suppose?"

"Yes; and Cosette is giving nearly twelve quarts of milk a day now, so we make a good deal. I always supply the rectory, and the rest goes to private customers in Belsham. Now, Chérie, if you must lie down to rest, please come and do it at home. Good morning, madam! I hope you will have no difficulty in finding your way to the church." And she rose and moved away, followed by the docile animals.

A few days after, I happened to be about a mile from the village, on a road that I had not before explored. It had been a breathless, sultry morning, and now a low rumble of thunder warned me to return. I have a nervous horror of lightning, and made all the haste I could; but before I reached the first house the rain began to pelt, each drop seemingly a teaspoonful of water, and I had no umbrella! Frightened, and breathless with the unusual exertion, I turned into the first garden gate, and ran into the shelter of the deep porch of a small old house. In a moment the door flew open, and Madam Rustica appeared, beckoning me in with hearty hospitality.

"I saw you coming down the path in this heavy rain. Dear, dear! You are wet through! Come in at once out of the draught!" she said.

"But I am dripping wet!"

"All the more reason that you should come in and be dried."

And the door was shut behind me, and kind hands helped to remove my soaked hat and mantle. Then, running upstairs, she returned with a dressing-gown of thick grey flannel and a pair of slippers. In these she promptly arrayed me, carrying off my dripping garments to be dried in her kitchen. It was all done so quickly, and the thunder roared so constantly, that I felt bewildered and trembling; and my kind hostess, seeing how I shrank at every flash, established me in a cosy armchair with my back to the light, and chatted on cheerfully in her soothing voice, telling me how much this rain was needed for the crops, and how in dry summers the whole village of Norington was apt to run short of water. "And then they all come to me," she said smiling. "I have a deep well on my little place which never fails. I hope the rain will keep on all the afternoon, and you must stay and dine with me."

"How kind you are," I said gratefully. "But I feel I ought not to accept so much when I do not know even your name."

"That is soon told," said my hostess quietly. "It is Persis Pyne. My forefathers lived on the Hall Farm in this parish

for many generations. I was an only child, and when my dear father died, ten years ago, I settled down on this little place, and satisfied my inherited agricultural instincts with four acres and two cows."

Pleased with her concise self-introduction, I gave her a similar account of myself; and in an hour, while the rain poured down without, we seemed quite like old friends. When the tall old grandfather's clock in the corner pointed to ten minutes to one, she laid aside her sewing, and began to set the table for dinner, although in her visits to the kitchen I could hear her giving directions to somebody there.

Meanwhile, I looked round the large, low-pitched parlour, into which the front door opened direct. It was comfortably furnished, with many books, some pretty old china, a broad, old-fashioned sofa covered with chintz, and a bowl of roses on the dinner-table. It was all as unlike as possible to the smart gimcrack-bedecked parlours of the shabby-genteel, and was evidently in daily use.

A sewing machine stood there, and on the large oak writing-table near the long low window were pens and paper, some account books, and an open *Handbook of Botany* by a vase of rare wildflowers.

The whole looked so restful, and so refreshingly unlike city ways, that when my hostess called me to the table, I went with more appetite than I had felt for weeks.

"I wish I had known that you were coming," she said, "so that I might have had one of my spring chickens for dinner; for we are nearly vegetarians when alone—for convenience, not from principle."

But I enjoyed the simple dinner, and, looking at my gentle hostess, I thought of the "dinner of herbs where love is." It was not only herbs, however, but poached eggs served in brown gravy, new potatoes, green peas, and delicious home-made bread and butter, and by way of dessert, such fresh strawberries and thick yellow cream as one never sees in London.

When we had finished, Miss Pyne cleared the table, shut the kitchen door, and sat down to her sewing again. "I have a most efficient servant," she said smiling; "but there is one thing that I can never ask of her—to come into the parlour when strangers are here."

"Is she so shy?" I asked.

"It is not exactly that, but her face was disfigured by a frightful accident. Poor Rachel used to be as pretty a girl as you would often see when she was my housemaid at the Hall Farm. She was engaged to young Tom Welling, a blacksmith, whom I never thought good enough for her, and she left me to "better herself." At the next place she had there was a low gas-stove in use; the skirt of her cotton dress caught fire, and before it could be extinguished poor Rachel's pretty face and neck were sadly burned, and her hair quite gone. Soon after she came out of the hospital, all scarred and discoloured, she met young Welling and some of his companions coming home from a fair. They were the worse for drink, and without recognising her, they jeered at the disfigured face, until Rachel was heart-broken. She came straight to me and begged me to hide her—she would do anything if only she might never be seen. That is seven years ago, and the scars are much softened; but it is still an effort to her to answer the door when I am out, or to go to the little chapel of a Sunday evening with a thick veil. I think she is happy now, and she is simply invaluable to me. She gets up at three o'clock in the summer to work in the garden, taking a nap in the afternoon when more people are about; she milks the cows, feeds the pigs, takes entire charge of the poultry, and saves me all the heaviest work in the dairy and house. Her father comes in for a few hours

every week to clean out the cow-house and do the digging, but Rachel and I manage all the rest."

"Do you keep a horse?"

"No; not even a donkey. It would be more trouble and expense than use to me. I can always hire an old pony and little cart of the wheelwright, and every Friday I drive into Belsham to take my produce to customers, do my small shopping, and change my books at the library, which is my pet extravagance."

So passed the afternoon until a gleam of vivid golden sunlight streamed through the casement, warning me that I must wend homeward. My clothes, nicely dried, and even ironed, by the invisible Rachel, were brought in. Miss Pyne warmly invited me to come on a fine day and see her garden, and I made my way along the sloppy road to the village, admiring the raindrops glittering like jewels on the hedges in the sun.

It was on a fine warm Saturday afternoon that I again entered Miss Pyne's garden gate, noticing—what had not caught my eye before—a board by it, with "Milk, fresh eggs, fruit, honey, and cut flowers sold here," neatly painted thereon. A number of bicycles were leaning against the fence, and when I passed down the path, between brilliant beds of flowers, to the little lawn in front of the house, I saw some seats under the great walnut tree occupied by a party of young men in cycling costume, evidently very comfortable over great baskets of strawberries, pitchers of new milk, and plates of substantial home-made buns.

Miss Pyne was talking to them pleasantly as to old acquaintances, and just as I came up I saw sundry silver coins change hands. She came forward with a warm greeting, and said "Saturdays and Bank Holidays are my harvests. So many people driving or cycling from Belsham stop here for refreshments and garden produce, and of course it pays better to sell retail."

"And you really make *la petite culture* pay?"

"Certainly I do. My wants and Rachel's are very few, and except flour and a little grocery, the cows, poultry, and garden supply all our food. And here are—as the Irishman said of his pig—the gentlemen what pays the rent;" and she pointed to an array of beehives, twenty or thirty of them, painted of divers colours, standing among the fruit trees. The air seemed full of the busy hum of the bees, as they came flying home from all points of the compass. "These I manage entirely myself. Rachel is desperately afraid of them, but she helps me in straining, bottling, and packing the honey for market. I used to keep bees for amusement in my young days, and so learned my trade."

As we passed through the garden—quite an acre of the little patch being cultivated—my guide pointed out the beds of flowers, roses, carnations, and marguerites, which she grew for sale. Then large strawberry-beds, where a sleek, contented-looking tabby cat was tied to a kennel like a dog, to keep away marauding blackbirds and thrushes. A good-sized plot was devoted to mangold wurzel, for the cows' winter provender; and between the rows of potatoes were cabbages, newly planted, for the same purpose.

Every inch of ground seemed made the most of. Passing on to the miniature farmyard, we found it alive with chickens and ducks. "These are Rachel's pride and joy," said Miss Pyne. "She is devoted to them, and even goes out gleaning in the very early morning in our neighbours' fields for their benefit. The villagers have almost given up gleaning now bread is so cheap; but we find that it decidedly lightens our bill for poultry food. Wheat, oats, barley—nothing comes amiss to the fowls; and the straw goes into the pig-sty."

Here we saw two little black pigs, eagerly devouring a supper of potato parings, and such scraps boiled in buttermilk which Rachel had just brought them. In the orchard the pretty cows were tethered, both lying down, and chewing the cud of contentment, and beyond, in the paddock, the grass was waving ready for the scythe.

When I congratulated my friend on her charming little establishment, she smiled and said, "My friends wasted a good deal of pity on me when I chose this line of life. My dear father died after a succession of bad

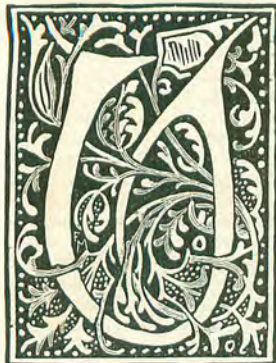
seasons, so that, instead of being a bit of an heiress, as everyone expected, I found it best to take this little place. But I had always lived an active, out-of-door life, and am far happier than I could have been playing the fine lady in a town. I have a little property laid by for a rainy day or for old age, and I believe nothing but death will part Rachel and me. I can truly say that my lines have fallen in pleasant places, and that my heritage of health and capacity for this simple country life is a goodly one; and I have always a little to spare to help my poorer neighbours,

who are apt to come to me in sickness or trouble."

This was by no means my last interview with my new friend, and the more I saw of Miss Pyne the more I honoured her. In spite of homely tasks and retail trade dealings she was a perfect lady, gentle, intelligent, and cultured. She believed in the dignity of labour, and carried out her theories; and although circumstances have led me far away from Norington, I hope I shall never forget the lessons learnt under the humble roof of Madam Rustica. MAUD MORRISON.

PYROGRAPHY; OR, POKER-WORK.

By B. C. SAWARD.



UNDER the many names given to the old-fashioned poker or burnt wood engraving the art still flourishes, and, as time goes on, instead of declining in the public estimation it, by the improvements introduced, not only retains

its hold on the working world but becomes, by new departures, more artistic and more useful.

The old original work done with red-hot irons flourished in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, England, Germany, and Italy during the centuries when heavy oaken chests, bureaux, and tables were in use, and some of this, in combination with fine wood carving, is still in existence. This decoration disappeared in Europe when furniture assumed less solid shapes, but in the rude half-civilised nations of South, West, and Central Africa it is still practised. With them drinking-bowls, hatchets, spoons, pillows, idols, state wands, and other wooden articles are profusely decorated with incised lines deeply burnt in and sometimes embellished with colouring matter; but in them, as in European specimens, no attempt has been made to give the effects of shade or tone by working from light to dark, a hard decided line of various widths upon a clean surface or upon a black background being all that is aimed at.

Pyrography, we are glad to be able to write, owes its impetus to an English firm, who during the last few years have vastly improved upon the German revival of the art. The specimens sent from that country for imitation were only suitable for fine landscape etching, or for large panels round a frieze. The machine cost 25s., and the wood procurable was not of the kind used for the originals. By producing an apparatus that could be bought at a reasonable rate, inventing many different-shaped tools for working with, employing artists to design patterns that could be adapted to small articles, and making a variety of wooden articles with close-grained and seasoned wood, Messrs. Abbott has supplied a want felt by all who are interested in the art. Not content with developing the work upon wood, the same firm has applied it to leather, to plain glass, and to ground glass.

Although most of our readers know that

the work is no longer done with hot irons or hot poker, few of them appreciate the delicacy of the machine that supplies their place. Surgeons will understand its working, as a somewhat similar instrument is used for cautery. The apparatus is a bottle half-filled with benzoline, through whose cork two tubes are passed. These tubes are fastened into india-rubber tubing, one ending in the holder of the platinum point that burns the wood, and the other in a small air-pump made of two hollow balls of rubber, connected together with a piece of tubing. The machine acts as follows:—The platinum point is hollow; it is heated in a spirit-lamp and held in the right hand. The lowest ball of the air-pump is held in the left hand, and pressed in and expanded by the finger and thumb of that hand. The air thus forced into the second ball runs along the tubing into the bottle, passes as a vapour over the benzoline, and takes up some of that spirit. It then runs through the tubing that is in connection with the platinum point and keeps that point in a perpetual glow; in fact, the point can be kept red-hot for hours without any relighting, as long as the left-hand thumb and finger gently press in and allow to expand the lowest ball. A beginner naturally thinks that this action of the left hand is a nuisance, but after a little practice it becomes quite mechanical; and though anyone can help by relieving the artist of this work, it should never be delegated to another at critical moments, as good work often requires the blowing to be either very slow or with a sudden burst of heat, and this variety can only be done by the worker. No violent action is at any time needed; a slight even pressure for general work, with a little quickening or stopping when certain effects are to be brought out.

Platinum, being the hardest of all metals, does not waste to any great degree when subject to heat and brought in contact with wood, leather, or glass, but it will amalgamate with lead or zinc, and must not be tried on these metals. The handle of the point is made of wood or cork, and so arranged that the point will unscrew and allow of another shaped point replacing it. Thus to the same handle can be attached a fine point for landscape etching, a very broad point for glass work and for deeply incised lines and other coarse work, or a curved point for burning down plain backgrounds, or a "pattern point."

It is not necessary to buy all these points, as they are the expensive part of the apparatus, and most workers can and do make one point answer every requirement by simply holding it in different ways—flat, when working at backgrounds, as a drawing-pencil when shading or making fine lines, and quite perpendicular when deeply burning down any particular

parts, such as the centres of flowers, the eyes of animals, and conventional designs. With the aid of the pattern points—which are shaped as rounds, triangles, diamonds, hearts, ovals, trefoils, and crescents—the backgrounds of subjects are made into diaper patterns and large conventional designs, as shown in Fig. 1, relieved from any flat appearance. For borderings they are also useful, and they allow the worker to exercise individual taste, as by combining them together, or by simply using one of them at different angles, a great variety of work is obtained. They are made in platinum and in copper, the latter being the cheaper, and good enough when not much work is required.

There is one thing that must be remembered before undertaking this art, and that is, that no good work can be expected when common or very hard wood is used as a foundation. It is this rage for cheap wooden tables and other common deal articles that has spoilt not only decorative painting upon wood, but delicate work with a platinum point. The common fresh deal that oozes out turpentine and gives forth a most pungent smoke when worked on will never allow of any fine lines, half-tones, or artistic handling; it will burn a strong black and nothing more. Again with elm or oak; these woods, however good in quality, are much too hard for anything but strong deep lines. The best woods are holly, sycamore, lime, Kauri pine, birch, chestnut, aspen, poplar, tulip, pear, and yew. Some of these woods do not grow large enough for panelling, but they can always be carefully joined; and no one who has once tried their surfaces and seen what delicate effects of light and shade are obtainable from them will ever grudge the small extra expense their use involves. The solid strong glove and handkerchief boxes, the blotters, photo frames, tea chests, and numerous other articles now procurable at good shops are made of the right sort of wood, while table-tops, door panels, and other particular articles can always be ordered. The wood used must be free from knots and half an inch in thickness, as very thin wood will warp from the intense heat of the instrument. Knots in the wood will spoil any fine effects, not only by reason of the unsightliness of the knot, but because the circles of wood round it are much harder in grain than the rest of the surface. Good artists are so impressed with the desirability of using well-seasoned wood that they keep it by them for a long period, but ordinary people are content to buy articles that are well and closely made.

In the list of the woods above given as fit for pyrography, we would point out that beech, cedar, and yew are red woods, and make very good backgrounds for classical figures, animals, and other large designs.