

MARGARET FULLER.



THE generation has not yet entirely passed away for whom Margaret Fuller was a shining light among lights. We have personal memoirs, the eloquent tributes of friends, biographies transmitting faithfully, and even tenderly, every incident and phase of her career; and yet, for the women of to-day, Margaret Fuller is little more than a name, or else a myth, vague, unsubstantial, and not quite seriously to be considered. How may we explain this discrepancy? Is it we who underrate, or did her contemporaries overrate her? Both questions might be solved, perhaps, if one could in any measure restore her personality, bring back the personal element with which all of her qualities, and all of her defects, were so highly charged; for it was to personality that she owed her power, and it is from the vanishing of personality that her power has ceased to exist.

Born in the first decade of our century,—May 23, 1810, at Cambridgeport, Massachusetts,—she belongs by all natural right and inheritance to the epoch of most marked and vital interest in the history of American culture and thought. We have grown accustomed to attach but little respect—some ridicule even—to the so-called transcendental movement in New England, mainly on account of the little knot of reformers, with their crudities and exaggerations, who made themselves its exponents—attempting to put into too literal practice, and realize in too external and material a fashion, their somewhat cloudy ideals; but we must not forget that springing from this source and around it cluster some of the names we have most cause to be proud of in our life and literature. Emerson himself was the fountainhead of this “wave of spirituality,” as it has been called. His pages are steeped with it; we hear only of the soul, the soul, the over-soul! And thus with Margaret Fuller also, if we have read her story aright, the key to her character, and the secret of her strong individual influence and fiery sympathies, was this same quality of soul—the power of soul to receive, the power to evoke. “All the good I have ever done has been by calling on every nature for its highest,” she tells us. This, then, is the clue, and this the claim, that bears out the testimony of her friends,—the wisest and noblest of her day,—and that sets her among the starry spirits whose light should not be permitted to die out.

She was the eldest of eight children, and her childhood does not seem to have been a happy one. Her education was superintended by her father, with unusual success so far as

her mental training and development were concerned, but with a singular disregard of the ordinary rules of health and the peculiar susceptibilities of his pupil. Innumerable were the tasks imposed upon her, and far beyond her years. At six she began to read Latin, and her studies were prolonged late into the night, so that she went to bed in a fever of excitement, a prey to violent dreams and somnambulism, often walking the house in her sleep. Overstimulated in every direction, there was but little outlet in her New England home and surroundings for her prematurely aroused faculties; and she found nothing congenial around her. “I liked nothing about us,” she says, “except the tall, graceful elms before the house, and the dear little garden behind, . . . full of choice flowers, and fruit-trees. . . . Here I felt at home. A gate opened thence into the fields,—a wooden gate, made of boards, in a high, unpainted board wall, and embowered in the clematis creeper. This gate I used to open to see the sunset heaven; beyond this black frame I did not step, for I liked to look at the deep gold behind it. How exquisitely happy I was in its beauty, and how I loved the silvery wreaths of my protecting vine!” In this garden were spent the best hours of her lonely childhood. She wandered among the flowers, gathered them, and pressed them to her heart, cherishing them with passionate feelings, and ardently longing “to be as beautiful and as perfect as they.” Unguessed by those around her, buried deep in her heart, was this world of her own—an intense inner life, with the germs of that spiritual experience which was to give her insight into the hearts of others, and to be her best possession and best gift to the world. Indoors her companions were books. Surrounded by her silent friends, Margaret loved to sit at the window, and gaze out on the fields and slopes. A vague sadness often filled her, tears came to her eyes, and she felt herself stirred by longings and aspirations which her child-heart could not understand.

Three authors powerfully impressed her imagination at this early period—Shakspere, Cervantes, and Molière. Ever memorable, she tells us, was the day on which she first took in her hand a volume of Shakspere—“Romeo and Juliet.” She was eight years old. It was Sunday,—a day on which the reading of a novel or a play was expressly forbidden,—a cold winter afternoon. Seated before the parlor fire, absorbed in her book, twice she was discovered, twice reprimanded, and finally sent off to bed in disgrace. She describes how,

alone and in the dark, she conjured up the scenes she had been witnessing—the glow, the freedom, the very life she longed to live.

Of still greater significance was an event which broke in upon the child's solitary life, and awakened, while at the same time it absorbed, all the latent energies of her being. This was her first friendship. It is not surprising, in a life like hers, where friendship was to play so commanding a part, that her first experience should have had almost the shock of passion; and it is easy to detect the note of exaggeration which colder natures can hardly comprehend. "The first sight of her was an apparition," she says. . . . "This woman came to me, a star from the east, a morning star, and I worshiped her. . . . Like a guardian spirit, she led me through the fields and groves, and every tree, every bird greeted me, and said what I felt: 'This is the first angel of your life.'" But the friend, who was a stranger, sailed for her home across the sea, and Margaret was left alone again. "Melancholy enfolded me," she says, "as joy had done." A settled dullness fell upon her. The books, the garden, lost their charm. "The fiery temper of the soul had been aroused, not to be pacified by dreams or shadows, but rather to consume what lay around it." Her health broke down, and, greatly to her chagrin, she was sent to boarding-school for change of scene and surroundings. Nothing could be more curious than the chapter of her school life, if her version of it, called "Mariana," is to be relied on as correct. She seems to have played about like a flame among her companions, at first charming them by her scintillations of passion and wit, her bursts into song and wild dances, her altogether unexpected and unique individuality. But after a while they tired of her caprices and extravagances, her absolute and domineering personality. A crisis came that opened as an abyss, she tells us, the dangers and violence of an ungoverned nature, made her aware of the higher and lower possibilities, and brought into being her better self, giving new impulse and illumination to her whole life.

At fifteen she left school, and for eight years lived with her family at Cambridge, near the college. The wayward, fanciful, ecstatic girl settled down at once to a life of constant and untiring study. Rising before five, she studied French and Italian literature, English philosophy and metaphysics, Greek and music; and before retiring at eleven, wrote characteristic essays in her journal. The love of knowledge was "prodigiously developed," and she had learned to believe that "nothing, not even perfection, is unattainable." During this period she passed from girlhood into womanhood; and in regard to her personal appearance, all

accounts agree that it was not prepossessing. She is described as a "blooming girl," with a tendency to stoutness, which she anxiously tried to conceal, a florid complexion, and reddish blonde hair. She was very near-sighted, and her eyes, which were usually half shut, had a way of opening suddenly with a keen, rapid glance, and then closing again. There was also something peculiar about the movements of her neck, which is described as long and flexile, arching and undulating in swan-like fashion. In her whole person and bearing there seems to have been something inscrutable and a little disquieting—a want of measure and repose, too constant and intense a play of expression, too high a pitch of being, and an excess of temperament that startled and disconcerted many people. W. H. Channing characterized her as a bacchante, and Emerson found somewhat "foreign and exotic about her, as though one were making up a friendship with a cultivated Spaniard or a Turk." All the more wonderful was the spell she cast over those who approached her, even if they were at first repelled by her.

It was at Cambridge that she formed many of the friendships so memorable in her life. She drew around her, says Emerson, every superior man and woman within her range. At nineteen she met James Freeman Clarke, who speaks of her friendship as a "gift of the gods," "an influence like no other." With him she studied German, and was initiated into German thought and literature, which powerfully impressed itself upon her culture. It was conversation, however, which was her forte,—her "natural element," she calls it,—not alone in *tête-à-tête*, when her judgment was often biased and personal, but in a large circle, which seemed especially to inspire her. According to Emerson, it is impossible to give a true report of these conversations. A sort of electric current seemed to flash between speaker and hearer, and each was enkindled. A beautiful destiny seemed to hover near, the commonplace fell away, hope sprang anew, and life was worth living. All flocked around her—the young, the old, the brilliant, the obscure; no title was needed to her esteem except some inward and upward striving, some glimpse of the ideal. "Let me be Theodora," she says, "the bearer of heavenly gifts to my fellows"; and this she became, ever giving, as she called out, the best. Says Emerson again: "She extorted the secret of life, which cannot be told without setting heart and mind in a glow, and thus had the best of those she saw. Whatever romance, whatever virtue, whatever impressive experience—this came to her."

But through all these years of first youth, with their intellectual ferment, and ardor of friendships, was there not a deeper depth, a

higher height, where Margaret's spirit soared "alone and lonely" still? No human heart had her confidence, she says, but she took refuge in her journal, whose pages she burned when they had done their work. "For years, to write there, instead of speaking, had enabled me to soothe myself; and the Spirit was often my friend, when I sought no other. Once again, I am willing to take up the cross of loneliness. Resolves are idle, but the anguish of my soul has been deep." And suddenly this passionate cry: "Of a disposition that requires the most refined, the most exalted tenderness, without charms to inspire it—poor Mignon! fear not the transition through death; no penal fires can have in store worse torments than thou art familiar with already."

But the storm and stress passed, or at least Margaret so believed. "I have been a chosen one," she says; "the lesson of renunciation was early, fully taught. . . . The great Spirit wished to leave me no refuge but itself." Outwardly, the current of her life also changed. The home in Cambridge was broken up, and Mr. Fuller took his family to Groton, a village about forty miles from Boston. The trial was a hard one for Margaret, who was torn from the literary and intellectual center where she had herself become a center, and from all the activities and interests that made her life at its moment of fullest expansion and unfolding. She plunged into study and work. She was planning a trip abroad, and in order to make good to the family any expense, she now undertook the education of the four younger children. Five hours a day, often eight, were given up to teaching; then sewing and housework. In the intervals of relaxation she found solace with Goethe, whose guidance she followed into realms of the "Wahren, Guten, und Schönen." She also tried her hand at original composition, not, however, to her own satisfaction; and in the midst of these numberless duties there was constant illness in the family,—her brother, her mother, her grandmother,—and finally she herself succumbed to the strain, and fell desperately ill, to recover only in time for a sudden and unexpected blow—the death of her father.

In the face of this trial, her courage and moral force were a support to all those around her. While her father's form still lay among them, she called the younger children together, and, kneeling, dedicated herself to love and service for them, with the solemn prayer that she might be equal to the duties and responsibilities that awaited her. Sorrow to her meant only the stepping-stone to the larger and deeper life. The family found themselves in more straitened circumstances than ever, and it was Margaret who took charge of everything. The trip to Europe was definitely given up—

a most tempting one with cherished friends, Miss Martineau among them, to whom she had become warmly attached in Cambridge.

From this time forward Margaret's life was one of constant trial and sacrifice. Leaving Groton, she taught Latin and French in Mr. Alcott's school in Boston, also forming classes of her own in French, German, and Italian; and at the end of some months accepted the position of principal of a large school in Providence, where she had charge of about sixty girls and boys. Her intercourse with her pupils was touched by that human and personal quality which characterized all her relations; and in regard to her aims she says, "General activity of mind, accuracy in processes, constant looking for principles, and search after the good and beautiful, are the habits I strive to develop."

Her friendship with Emerson dates from this period. During her summer vacation, she made her first visit to Concord. Repelled at first, Mr. Emerson said, "We shall never get far"; but he did not long hold out against her persistent efforts to please him, and her real claim to his favor. All prejudice disappeared before her generous and vitalizing personality. "When she came to Concord," he says, "she was already rich in friends, rich in experience, rich in culture. . . . She had outward calmness and dignity, and had come to the ambition to be filled with all nobleness." She spent a fortnight in his household, and thenceforth became an established friend and frequent inmate, for she suited each and all.

But constant and genuine as the affection was, there were radical differences of organization between the well-balanced sage of Concord and the high-strung, over-strung woman, whose measure of expectancy was in proportion to her bounty. "I remember," says Emerson, "at the very time when I, slow and cold, had come fully to admire her genius, and was congratulating myself on the solid good understanding that subsisted between us, I was surprised with hearing it taxed by her with superficiality and halfness. She stigmatized our friendship as commercial. It seemed her magnanimity was not met, but I prized her only for the thoughts and pictures she brought me—so many thoughts, so many facts yesterday, so many to-day. When there was an end of things to tell, the game was up." Such susceptibilities were outside of Emerson's apprehension. "When I found she lived at a rate so much faster than mine," he says, "and which was violent compared with mine, I foreboded rash and painful crises, and a feeling as if a voice cried, 'Stand firm under!' and as if, a little further on, this destiny was threatened with jars and reverses which no friendship could avert or console. This feeling partly wore off on better acquaintance, but remained

latent; and I had always an impression that her energy was too much a force of blood, and, therefore, never felt the security for her peace which belongs to more purely intellectual natures." Margaret's own words bear out this criticism: "Oh, that my friends would teach me that simple art of not too much! . . . I am too fiery. . . . The intensity of passion which so often unfits me for life, or rather for *life here*, is to be moderated, not into dullness or languor, but a gentler, steadier energy. . . . With the intellect I always have, always shall, overcome; but that is not the half of the work. The life, the life! O my God, shall the life never be sweet? . . . I am deeply homesick, yet where is that home? . . . I would be gone, but whither?" Thus the inward strife, the restless questioning, goes on, and she finds that the work of renunciation must be done again and again. Nowhere do we come upon any fixed and central fact, any decisive thought or emotion that could control the life and give it lasting satisfaction and repose. The religion of the day did not appeal to her: "the churches seemed empty and dead, the preachers no longer fired by the Word made God." Nor was her own faith the "consuming fire" that can make of sacrifice a radiant thing, and shed over earth "the light that never was on sea or land." True to her own ideal of Good and Duty, she followed wherever it led, filled the place and did the work assigned her; but there was always an impulse unfulfilled, and a reaching out to realms yet undiscovered.

After two years of school life Margaret found more congenial employment in a class for conversation, organized among the most cultivated and distinguished women of Boston. Margaret's aim was not to teach, but to stimulate and suggest thought, to open out higher and wider possibilities, and to raise the standard and value of living. The subjects were broad in their scope: Greek mythology, Beauty, Poetry, Genius, the Fine Arts, What is Life? Woman, Faith, Education, etc. We do not glean much from any account that comes down to us. It all sounds rather cloudy and attenuated, and of the nature of rhapsody and improvisation, whose success depended upon the *rapport* between the speaker and her audience. But certain it is that the success was decisive, and the conversations were kept up for six consecutive winters. Among the ladies present were many dear friends of Margaret. The following unpublished letter to one of them will show the influence she exerted in her circle.

SUNDAY, Sept. 1, 1844.

Sunday is to me, in my way, a very holy day. If there are words that require to be spoken with the assurance of pure love and calmness, I wait to see if I can speak them on that day. There-

fore I have deferred answering your note. If you can feel towards me as a mother, after knowing me so long, I should not be afraid to accept the sacred trust, only I should say, "My child, my dear daughter, we are all children together." We are all incompetent to perform any duty well, except by keeping the heart bowed to receive instruction *every moment* from the only wisdom. I may have seen more, thought more, may be advanced in mental age beyond you, as you beyond your A —, and she, in turn, knows more than the flowers, so that she can water them when they cannot get water for themselves. But though we are not useless to one another, we cannot be very useful to one another, either, other than by clearing petty obstructions from the path which leads to our common home, and cheering one another with assurances of mutual hope. The Virgin was made worthy to be the mother of Jesus by her purity. We do not suppose she foresaw intellectually all that was needed for his career. But she commended him to the Spirit that had given him to her. With like desire, if not from the same consecrated life, I could wish good to thee, who, I believe, in thy own wishes, and a heart uncorrupted though perhaps frail, worthy of great good. I advise you not to deal too severely with yourself. There is probably a morbid tinge in you. . . . Treat it as I do my headache demons,—evade rather than fight with it. Do not spend time in self-blame so much as solicit the communion of noble and beautiful presences. No doubt you were married too young, and have got to bear a great deal in growing to earthly womanhood with your children. But that is nothing, either to you or to them, compared with the evils of fancying one's self really grown up because a certain number of years are passed. The children may have fair play, if not the highest advantages. You do really need some employment that will balance your life, and be your serene oratory when you need one.

During these full years, Margaret also accomplished much literary work. She published her translation of Eckermann's "Conversations with Goethe," the "Letters of Caroline von Günderode to Bettina," and a descriptive tour of Lakes Superior and Michigan, called "Summer on the Lakes." But her most important work was in connection with "The Dial," a little quarterly journal of local renown, the organ of the transcendentalists and of the community at Brook Farm. For four years Margaret gave this her earnest and disinterested efforts, and in its pages first appeared "The Great Lawsuit," which she afterward enlarged into her volume of "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," a noble and spirited plea, far in advance of the ideas of the times. She now began to feel the need, however, of a larger field of thought and action. Her home was breaking up; her brothers had left college, and entered upon their separate careers; her sister was married; and her mother visited in turn the scattered

children. Margaret's fidelity and devotion had been fully recognized. We cannot refrain from quoting her brother's tribute.

When, now, with the experience of a man, I look back upon her wise guardianship over our childhood, her indefatigable labors for our education, her constant supervision in our family affairs, her minute instruction as to the management of multifarious details, her painful conscientiousness in every duty, and then reflect on her native inaptitude and even disgust for practical affairs, on her sacrifice—in the very flower of her genius—of her favorite pursuits, on her incessant drudgery and waste of health, on her patient bearing of burdens and courageous conflict with difficult circumstances, her character stands before me as heroic.

Feeling herself free, she accepted a position on the staff of the "New York Tribune," and went to live in New York, in the family of the editor, Horace Greeley. In entering upon a literary career, however, there is a note of depression and disappointment. "Let me use the slow pen," she says, while in former years she would have "wielded the sceptre or the lyre." Least of all did journalism appeal to her; but she valued it for the larger hearing it gave her, the opportunity to arouse and educate public opinion, and to take part in the life and movement of the times. She warmly espoused the cause of reform in every direction, and made herself the champion of truth and human rights at any cost. For the first time, a woman's voice was raised in defense of the outcast and degraded of her own sex—"women like myself," says Margaret, "save that they are the victims of wrong and misfortune." Not content with merely passive service, she engaged in active benevolent work, visited the prisons and charitable institutions, and talked freely with the inmates. It was on the common ground of womanhood that she approached these unfortunate creatures, true to her unalterable faith in awakening whatever divine spark might be there. She was surprised herself at the results—the touching traits and the possibilities that still survived in beings so forlorn and degraded. Many of them expressed a wish to see her alone, in order to confide to her the secret of their ruined lives; nor can we doubt that Margaret, on her side, gained new spiritual insight from these tragic revelations. Her sympathies expanded. No longer absorbed by individualities, she felt the large, the universal needs of humanity. She, the friend of persons, became the friend of the impersonal and of the spirit, wherever and however housed.

Her connection with the "Tribune" lasted over a year and a half, and at the end of that time she was able to put into execution her long-cherished dream, and sailed for Europe with friends in the month of August, 1846. She vis-

ited England, Scotland, and France, meeting many people of note—among them Martineau, Wordsworth, who received her most hospitably, and Carlyle, who, alas! thus records the fact in his journal: "Yesternight there came a bevy of Americans from Emerson, one Margaret Fuller, the chief figure of them, a strange, lilted, lean old maid, not nearly such a bore as I expected." This was his fling; but later on he learned to do her full justice and honor, and his letters to Emerson have many tributes to her rare and high worth. We quote his elegiac words in memory of her tragic death:

Poor Margaret, that is a strange tragedy, that history of hers; and has many traits of the Heroic in it, though it is as wild as the prophecy of a Sibyl. Such a predetermination to eat this big Universe as her oyster or her egg, and to be absolute empress of all height and glory in it that her heart could conceive, I have not before seen in any human soul. Her "mountain-me"¹ indeed; but her courage, too, is high and clear, her chivalrous nobleness indeed is great, her veracity, in its deepest sense, *à toute épreuve*.

But it was in Italy that Margaret Fuller found her heart, her home, as she expressed it. "Italy receives me as a long-lost child," she says.

She visited all the important cities, but it was Rome, "The City of the Soul," which claimed her soul, and which yielded its soul in return. From her window on the Corso she watched the varied and picturesque life flit by—a procession of monks chanting a requiem, followed by a gay troop of the *Trasteverini* in their peasant costume, with colors flying and drums beating. Each day she could make some delightful excursion, always to a new point of interest.

And in addition to all the external movement and stimulus, there had occurred an event of private and personal importance, and of lasting influence upon her destiny. Shortly after her arrival in Rome, she met Ossoli,— "a strange, almost fateful, meeting," she calls it,—after vespers at St. Peter's, where she was wandering in search of her companions, from whom she found herself separated. A young man came forward and offered to assist her. This was the Marquis Giovanni Angelo Ossoli. Two months afterward he asked her to marry him. She refused,— although she loved him, she says,— for the connection seemed in every way unfit. He was seven years her junior, and intellectually as wide apart from her, without talent or culture of any sort. She did what she could to discourage him, but he persisted, and, finally convinced that he loved her, and would be miserable without her, she consented, and was secretly married to him in December, 1847.

¹ An expression which Emerson had used in his biography of her.

Not even to her mother, nor her most intimate friends, did Margaret confide the marriage. Owing to complicated family affairs, Ossoli's prospects would have been ruined had the connection been made known at that time; and shortly afterward Margaret writes: "I enter upon a sphere of my destiny so difficult that I, at present, see no way out, except through the gate of death. I have no reason to hope I shall not reap what I have sown, and do not. Yet how I shall undertake it, I cannot guess; it is all a dark and sad enigma. The beautiful forms of art charm no more, and a love in which there is all fondness but no help flatters in vain." Unhappy and enigmatic words into which it is difficult to read the whole and true meaning.

The new year dawned,—the year 1848,—which rang like a tocsin-call throughout Europe. Italy was the battle-field. Margaret was swept out of herself by the storm of public events. It was a time she had always dreamed of, and she rejoiced to be in the midst of it. Margaret threw herself into the struggle, and took active part, encouraging and stimulating the leaders. Kindled herself, she knew how to kindle others. Casting aside all family allegiance and tradition, Ossoli took up the liberal cause, and joined the Civic Guard in the service of the Republic. Spring burst with unwonted splendor over Italy, and Margaret writes with enthusiasm: "Nature seems in sympathy with the great events that are transpiring. . . . The Italian heavens wear again their deep blue, the sun is glorious, the melancholy lustres are stealing again over the Campagna, and hundreds of larks sing unwearied above its ruins." But her own fortunes were still dark and tangled; some heavy cloud of depression and disappointment seemed to hang over her,—disappointment with herself,—for she wrote to Emerson: "I do not prize myself, or expect others to prize me. Some years ago, I thought you very unjust, because you did not lend faith to my spiritual experiences; but I see you were quite right. . . . Those were glorious hours, and angels certainly visited me; but there must have been too much earth, too much taint of weakness and folly, so that baptism did not suffice."

On account of her health, she was obliged to leave Rome very early, and she passed the summer at Rieti, a remote and secluded spot high up among the snow-covered peaks of the Abruzzi, where Ossoli could come to her occasionally for a Sunday. Except for these flying visits, she was absolutely alone—or, indeed, worse than alone, for the natives of the place were little better than robbers and brigands. Her apartment was separated from the rest of the house, the loggia overhanging the mountain stream, which, swollen by fierce storms, became a rushing torrent, over which the light-

ning flashed. Unable to sleep, Margaret paced up and down the narrow space night after night. Ossoli's guard was ordered to Bologna. He hesitated, for this would have cut him off entirely from Margaret; but she wrote to him with Spartan firmness: "Do what is for your honor. If honor requires it, go. I will try to sustain myself. . . . At least we have had some hours of peace together, if now it is all over. . . . Not often does destiny demand a greater price for some happy hours." But the trial was averted. The guard remained in Rome, and Ossoli could come to her. He arrived on Sunday, and on Thursday following, September 5, 1848, her child was born. The very next day Ossoli was obliged to leave her again at the mercy of cruel and grasping people. Desperate and forlorn indeed was Margaret's condition; but her baby was her treasure and her consolation. "If he lives and is well," she writes, "it will compensate for everything. He grows more beautiful each hour. . . . When he smiles in his sleep, how it makes my heart beat!" But even this happiness was soon to be denied her. The future loomed up dark with care and anxiety. Their only means of support depended upon what she could gain from her writings. For this she must be in Rome; and, in order to preserve secrecy, the baby must be left behind in charge of such a nurse as could be found. Ossoli arrived, and in November she started with him for Rome. Twice she was able to return and visit the child: once in December, when she found him well and hearty, but having had a severe attack of smallpox, which happily had not disfigured him. The house was dreadfully cold, the wind coming in in all directions, but the poor mother fondly hoped he would be all the stronger for being exposed so much in these early days. And again in March, after three long, anxious months, she saw him. "What cruel sacrifices have I made," she says, "to guard my secret for the present, and to have the mode of disclosure at my own option. It will indeed be just like all the rest, if these sacrifices are made in vain."

In the mean while all Italy was in a ferment, and Rome the scene of the most exciting events. The minister Rossi was stabbed in the back as he descended from his carriage to enter the Chamber of Deputies. The troops and the people walked the streets singing, "Happy the hand which rids the world of a tyrant." From her window Margaret saw the storming of the Quirinal. "Who would have believed," she says, "that the people would assail the palace of the good-natured Pio Nono? I was on Monte Cavallo yesterday, and saw the broken windows, the burnt doors, the walls marked by shot, just beneath the loggia on which we have

seen him giving the benediction." Mazzini arrived, summoned back with enthusiasm after seventeen years of exile. He went at once to see Margaret, and talked over everything. Heart and soul she had given herself to the cause. "Freely would I give my life to aid him!" she exclaims. The Republic was proclaimed, but how brief the dream! The tide of war turned; the Austrian arms were everywhere successful; and from all the Italian cities, from north to south, fugitives and refugees came pouring in upon Rome, which was their last rallying-place. In April, 1849, the French army appeared before the gates, and laid siege to the city.

And now it was that Margaret's fate became inextricably interwoven with the destinies of a nation. Bound by public as well as private ties to the cause of her adoption, her own personal drama made part of the world-drama which was being enacted around her. She immediately offered her services as nurse, and was given charge of a hospital, which she organized rapidly and with great skill. Her husband was stationed with his men on the walls of the Vatican Gardens. The attack opened, and from her loggia Margaret witnessed "a terrible, a real battle," lasting from four in the morning until nightfall. The loss on the Italian side was about three hundred killed and wounded; on the French, much greater. Margaret now spent all her time at the hospital—seven and eight hours a day, and often the entire night, in the midst of frightful scenes of death and suffering. Here she was at her best: her heroic soul, her tender woman's heart, shone out, lighting the dark valley of the shadow for some, bringing life-giving comfort and help to others. How touching are the incidents she records! "One fair young man, who is made a cripple for life, clasped my hand as he saw me crying over the spasms I could not relieve, and faintly cried: '*Viva l'Italia!*' . . . 'God is good,' 'God knows,' they often said to me when I had not a word to cheer them." "How long will the Signora stay?" "When will the Signora come again?" they eagerly asked, raising themselves on their elbows for a last glimpse of her as she passed along. In addition to all this fatigue and excitement, she had the still greater strain of personal anxiety and apprehension. Ossoli's post was one of great danger, which he could not be persuaded to leave either for food or rest. For days she was without news of him. Then, in the burning sun, carrying provisions with her, she walked across the Vatican grounds to the blood-stained wall, where she exchanged a few hurried words with him. From their child they could hear nothing, until finally, after days of agonizing suspense, a letter arrived from the nurse, saying that unless

they should immediately send her in advance a certain sum of money, she would altogether abandon Angelo. They succeeded in forwarding the money, with the gravest doubt, however, as to its ever reaching her, on account of the distracted state of the country.

In the midst of her private woes, Margaret has a lament for Rome, which was being destroyed: "her glorious oaks; her villas, haunts of sacred beauty that seemed the possession of the world forever. . . . O Rome, *my* country! Could I imagine that the triumph of what I held dear was to heap such desolation on thy head!" And, again, this one quiet picture:

The Palace of the Pope on the Quirinal is now used for convalescents. In those beautiful gardens I walk with them—one with his sling, another with his crutch. . . . A day or two since we sat in the Pope's little pavilion, where he used to give private audience. The sun was going gloriously down over Monte Mario, where gleamed the white tents of the French light horse among the trees. The cannonade was heard at intervals. Two bright-eyed boys sat at our feet, and gathered up eagerly every word said by the heroes of the day. It was a beautiful hour, stolen from the midst of ruin and sorrow; and tales were told as full of grace and pathos as in the gardens of Boccaccio, only in a very different spirit,—with noble hope for man, with reverence for woman.

They were in the last days of June; the bombardment was very heavy, shot and shell falling in every part of the city. Ossoli had command of a battery on the Pincian Hill, "the highest and most exposed position in Rome, and directly in the line of the bombs from the French camp." Margaret felt that the moment had come when she must take her place by her husband's side, and share the dangers of the coming night with him. Before doing this, she sent for Mr. Cass, the American *chargé d'affaires*, informed him of her marriage, and placed in his hands a packet of important papers which, in the event of her death, he was to transmit to friends in America—the certificate of her marriage, and of the birth and baptism of her child. After this, Ossoli came for her, and at the "Ave Maria" they walked up the Pincian Hill to meet their fate together. The cannonading, however, was not renewed that night, and at break of day she returned to her apartment with her husband. On the same day—July 1, 1849—the French troops entered Rome. The gates were opened, and Margaret and Ossoli flew to their child! Amid the roar of the cannon she had seemed to hear him calling to her, and always crying. She arrived barely in time to save him. "He was worn to a skeleton; his sweet, childish grace all gone! Everything I had endured seemed light to what I felt when I saw him, too weak to smile or lift

his wasted little hands." But by incessant care they brought him back to life. "Who knows if that be a deed of love," says Margaret, "in this hard world of ours!" Four weeks she watched him, day and night, before she saw him smile again "that poor, wan, feeble smile." Then new courage dawned in her heart again, and she resolved "to live day by day, hour by hour, for his dear sake." With the child completely restored, they journeyed by way of Perugia to Florence. Like a clear space among driven clouds is this brief chapter of Margaret's stormy life. How keen her delight again! "The pure mountain air is such perfect elixir, the walks are so beautiful." They travel through Tuscany, where "the purple grape hangs garlanded from tree to tree," and the fields are bright with men and women harvesting.

In October they were settled in Florence, and the marriage was made public. Very difficult was the announcement. "It half killed me to make it," says Margaret; in all her letters we feel how conscious she is of an awkward situation, and of possible disapproval. To some of her friends she writes even brusquely, and almost as if challenging resentment. But, with scarcely an exception, all responded generously with sympathy and confidence in regard to her motives and reserve. To her mother Margaret was especially grateful for the loving spirit in which she received the news, rejoicing that she should not die feeling that her daughter would be left with no one to love her with the devotion she needed, expressing no regret as to their poverty, but offering to share with them her humble means. About Ossoli Margaret writes frankly enough that he was not in any respect such a man as her friends would expect her to choose—without fortune or education, and "of all that is contained in books absolutely ignorant." Whatever the seeming incongruities, however, the union between Margaret and her husband was a deep and true one. "My love for Ossoli," she says, "is most pure and tender; nor has any one, except my mother and little children, loved me so genuinely as he does. To some I have been obliged to make myself known; others have loved me with a mixture of fancy and enthusiasm excited by my talent at embellishing life. But Ossoli loves me from simple affinity; he loves to be with me, and to serve and soothe me. . . . In him I have found a home."

But even more than the wife, Margaret was the mother, and she threw herself into this new relation with naïve, almost childlike fervor. "What shall I say of him? All might seem hyperbole," she says. "In him I find satisfaction for the first time to the deep wants of my heart." And again: "So sweet is this unimpassioned love; it knows no dark reac-

tions, it does not idealize, and cannot be daunted by the faults of its object. Nothing but a child can take the worst bitterness out of life, and break the spell of loneliness." Thus, motherhood was the goal for her, the clue to all life's mazes. Her whole being was refreshed and born anew with the life of her child. Her letters take on a clear, fresh ring, different from anything we have heard before, as she prattles of his baby ways and doings; and we hardly recognize the tragic, sibylline Margaret, whose freed, joyous spirit soars and sings like a bird.

We should love to linger over those halcyon days, with the happy group basking amid the sunshine and flowers and splendor of Italy. But there were grave cares and preoccupations, of course; and Margaret had the prescience of the unfortunate—of those to whom gifts have been shown and then denied. "Who knows how long this brief interval will last?" she asks; "perhaps all we shall ever know of peace." They could not remain in Italy. Ossoli was entirely without prospects or career, and upon Margaret all their future depended. She had written with great care, and in touch with the very life, the "History of Italy," which was now almost ready for publication.

America offered the best field, and many reasons now conspired to draw her toward her home. The following letter (also unpublished) to the friend of her early days sums up so well the difficulties and uncertainties of the situation that we transcribe it almost in full.

FLORENCE, CASA LIBRI, PIAZZA MARIA

NOVELLA, evening of 29th Nov., 1849.

It is an evening of cold, statue-like moonlight, such as we have in New England, such as I do not remember in all my life of Italy. That light falls most holy on the Bride of Michael Angelo,—the church to be near which I live in this piazza,—and great has been the delight of looking at it, and its background of mountains, every morning and evening. . . . I crossed the river for my afternoon walk, to see Mr. and Mrs. Browning. They have a beautiful little baby, two or three months younger than mine, so we have this in common with so many other sympathies. . . .

Now Ossoli is gone out, and I am alone in my little room, beside a bright fire. I have your letter before me, and I am thinking how much I wish for you instead. Though your letter is very dear, and does me good, you are one of the persons I have wished so much might know about me without being told. I have thought a great deal about you, and things you used to tell me, and remembered little traits and pictures of your children that would surprise you. How pleasant it would be to talk over all these now and here; for you are quite right, it is in Italy we should have met. . . . I wish I did know how to write to you about myself, but it is exceedingly diffi-

cult. I have lived in a much more full and true way than was possible in our country, and each day has been so rich in joys and pains, actions and sufferings, to say nothing of themes of observation, I have never yet had time to know the sum total—to reflect. My strength has been taxed to the uttermost to live. I have been deeply humiliated finding myself inferior to many noble occasions, but precious lessons have been given, and made me somewhat better, I think, than when you knew me. My relation to Ossoli has been like retiring to one of those gentle, lovely places in the woods—something of the violet has been breathed into my life, and will never pass away. It troubles me to think of going to America. I fear he will grow melancholy-eyed and pale there, and indeed nothing can be more unfit and ill-fated outwardly than all the externals of our relation. I can only hope that true tenderness will soothe some of them away. I have, however, no regrets; we acted as seemed best at the time. If we can find a shelter for our little one, and tend him together, life will be very precious amid very uncongenial circumstances. I thought I knew before what is the mother's heart, I had felt so much love that seemed so holy and soft, that longed to purify, to protect, to solace *infinitely*; but it was nothing to what I feel now, and that sense for pure nature, for the eager, spontaneous life of childhood, was very partial in me before. My little one seems nothing remarkable. I have no special visions about him; but to be with him, to take care of and play with him, gives me such delight, and does me so much good, that it is only now I feel poverty a great evil, that it is to disturb me in these days, fetter me with toils for which I do not feel inclined, and harass with care the purest feelings of my life. Should I succeed in cutting my way through the thorns, and stand in a clear place at last, I shall be tired out and aged perhaps, or my little one will be dead. This last seems to me very probable, for Heaven has thus far always reclaimed the children I most loved. You ask my plans: they are very unsettled; there is no chance that we can return to Rome, or Ossoli get anything from a little property he has there, at present. I had a promise of employment here, but the promiser seems to have forgotten it. I suppose I will have to return to the U. S. I want to see my mother, and some of you, my dear ones; and if we had a little money and could live in obscure quiet, I should not be sorry to leave Italy till she has strength to rise again, and stay several years in America. I should like to refresh my sympathy with her great interests and great hopes. I should like to do anything I could for people there; but to go into the market, and hire myself out, will be hard as it never was before: my mind has been very high-wrought, and requires just the peace and gradual renovation it would find in still, domestic life. I hardly know how I am to get there, either; even in the most economical way, direct from Leghorn or Genoa, is two hundred dollars for us both. I am very sick, and suffer extremely in the head at sea. I suppose it would be worse with these poor accommodations than it was in the steamer, and Ossoli is

untried. We cannot afford to take a servant, and what would become of the baby if we were both sick? . . . I never think of the voyage without fearing the baby will die in it. . . . These things look formidable in the distance, however they may diminish nearer.

Such were the hard facts and the misgivings when it was finally decided that they should take passage in a merchant ship, the *Elizabeth*, sailing from Leghorn, May 17, 1850. From the very first Margaret was beset by gloomy fears and forebodings. She had long had a presentiment that the year 1850 would bring some crisis in her destiny; and Ossoli, in his youth, had been warned by a fortune-teller to beware of the sea. Very strange and pathetic are her last words to her friends:

It seems to me that my future upon earth will soon close. . . . Yet my life proceeds as regularly as the fates of a Greek tragedy, and I can but accept the pages as they turn. . . . I shall embark more composedly in our merchant ship, praying fervently indeed that it may not be my lot to lose my boy at sea, either by unsolaced illness or amid the howling waves; or, if so, that Ossoli, Angelo, and I may go together, and that the anguish may be brief.

Her parting words to her mother were: "Should anything hinder our meeting upon earth, think of your daughter as one who always wished at least to do her duty, and who always cherished you, according as her mind opened to discover excellence."

The day arrived, and the *Elizabeth* stood ready, stanch and trim, quite a new vessel; and yet, at the last moment, Margaret faltered, again overcome by nervous fears, and unable to make up her mind to go on board.

We, too, at this distance, shrink at setting out with her on that fatal voyage, with its record of doom. First, the captain stricken with malignant smallpox; his death and burial at sea, off Gibraltar; the body wrapped in a flag and lowered deep into the deep. Margaret consoles and cares for the widow. Then little Angelino seized with the dread disease, lying at the point of death for days, and rescued again only by tireless watching and care. Contrary winds detain them, so that two long summer months wear away before they near their journey's end. On Thursday, July 18, the *Elizabeth* was off the Jersey coast. The passengers were told to pack their trunks, and prepare to land the next morning. At nine in the evening the wind arose, and at midnight it was a hurricane. The ship tossed and pitched all night, flying—no one knew where or how swiftly—with the wind and tide, headlong to destruction. At four o'clock on Friday morning, July 19, she struck off Fire Island beach. First a

jar, then a crash, and the thunder of the seas breaking over them. One hates to rehearse the horrors of that awful dawn and awakening, yet how else may we realize the test of the souls which confronted them? The passengers meet in the gray twilight, exchanging hurried words, calm but desperate. And now, for twelve mortal hours, amid the wrack of tempest and fury of unchained elements, that doomed band of human beings awaited death—a hundred deaths. We have a glimpse of Margaret singing her terrified child to sleep through the howling storm. Land was in sight, actually within a hundred yards, only the raging breakers between. Through the gray cloud of rain and spray they could see the gray sand-hills, with people moving on the beach, and a wagon drawn up, but not a hand lifted to save them, not a life-boat sent to the rescue. Morning—noon—afternoon—how endless, and yet how swiftly passing! The wreck was going to pieces, plank by plank. A single mast remained, with a fragment of the deck that rose and fell with every wave. Here the desperate group were clinging. The last moment came. Some plunged into the sea, and succeeded in swimming to the shore; others trusted to a frail plank and rope. The last vision of Margaret was at the foot of the mast, in her white night-dress, with her bright hair streaming over her shoulders. Ossoli hung for an instant to the rigging, but the next wave caught him, and he sank, never to reappear. Neither his body nor Margaret's was ever recovered. Only the little body of Angelino was washed ashore some minutes later, still warm, but stripped of every shred of clothing. One has almost a regret that the sea gave him up, and that he should not sleep with his parents beneath the waves, in whose still depths, no less than in the fixed and stable earth, there is peace.

IN the face of such a tragedy it is difficult to sum up coldly, and it seems almost a cruelty to call up the living figure of Margaret again from her hard-won rest. So vast a pity fills the heart, that silence seems most fitting in the presence of calamity that human knowledge cannot reconcile or explain. But it is just here that mortal puts on immortality, and the deathless spirit shines out victorious and disenthralled. Thus Margaret Fuller lives for us again, and for all time. As far as possible, in these pages she has been made to speak for herself, and tell her own story; and in doing so she has revealed her real self: wherein she conquered, and wherein she falls short. We have seen her in every relation—as daughter, sister, and

friend, wife, and mother, faithful in each, and true to the high ideals. To say this, is it not to say that life was rich, rounded, and fully expressed? Not quite so, in Margaret's case; for we cannot help feeling a lack somewhere—something inadequate, un-lived, and unfulfilled. Again and again in her journals we come upon her longings for a "home," as she puts it. "A wandering Intelligence," she styles herself, driven from spot to spot, from person to person, resting nowhere; for truly she had found no inward abiding-place safe from the jars and shiftings of destiny. Had she been born a man, she might have been satisfied to command through the intellect, and to concentrate her energies in that direction. As a woman she needed what nature had denied her—the external symmetry and charm that would seem the necessary and appropriate vesture of so beautiful and aspiring a soul. Or, rather, if we would go deeper, we will find that the lack of symmetry and poise was within as well as without, and indeed pervaded her whole being. Opposing forces were constantly at war within her—the intellect and the emotions, the large, unasking sympathies, and the close, hungry, human affections. "Her brain was all heart," as Frederick Robertson said about her; and so her point of view was always confused and colored with personality. Despite her Puritan conscience and discipline, she was, perhaps, a bacchant, with something lawless, chaotic, and unregulated, over which she herself never had perfect control. For so complex a nature as hers, what was needed was some large, unifying principle that could coördinate all the facts of life, and bring them into harmony and accord; in other words, some deep spiritual conviction, that inner vision and touch of the divine which opens out horizons always luminous, and deeps where there is forever peace. Lacking this, her ideals were always human, her kingdom was of the earth, and she never gained that full mastery and knowledge of the truth which alone can make us free—free of self and the limitations of sense. Nevertheless, her destiny, though incomplete, was a high one, and worthy to be crowned with martyrdom.

Once again we see her against a background of storm-cloud, with bright robe and gleaming tresses, like the warrior-maidens of the sky, fighting the good fight, and privileged to take part in the great struggle where great ideas are liberated to bear fruit for mankind. And still once more she glides before our vision, an angel of mercy and compassion, bringing gifts of tender sympathy and healing, and leaving with the world a sense of ministry and consecration.

Josephine Lazarus.



PAINTED BY THOMAS HICKS.

OWNED BY THE ESTATE OF GEORGE CABOT WARD.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

SARAH MARGARET FULLER, MARCHIONESS OSSOLI.