

WILD CLEMATIS.

WHERE the woodland streamlets flow,
 Gushing down a rocky bed,
 Where the tasseled alders grow,
 Lightly meeting overhead;
 When the fullest August days
 Give the richness that they know,
 Then the wild clematis comes
 With her depth of tangled blooms,
 Reaching up and drooping low.

And her fresh leaves only shade
 That which is within her bower,
 Like a curtain, lightly made,
 Half to hide her virgin flower,
 None too close to let the wind
 Find a place to breathe between,
 Where the wild bee cannot miss
 All the sweetness that there is
 Underneath her tent of green.

And the sunlight flickers in,
 So to touch her maiden breast,
 And between her twists of vine
 Sings the wood-bird to his nest;
 And the air is wondrous sweet,
 And the twilight lingers long,—
 And the young birds learn to fly
 In among her greenery,
 And she hears their earliest song.

But when Autumn days are here,
 When the woods of Autumn burn,
 Then her leaves are black and sere,
 Quick with early frosts to turn!
 As the golden Summer dies,
 So her silky green has fled,
 And the smoky clusters rise
 As from fires of sacrifice,—
 Sacred incense to the Dead.

THE CASCARONE BALL.

It was the evening of Shrove-Tuesday, and we were expecting a box of violets by the stage from San José. There is no connection between these two facts, but that is the way it is in California,—a number of interesting things claiming one's attention, with no visible thread on which to join them. The middle of February would seem rather early to set violets in the ground in our climate, but the air was soft and spring-like on the lower foot-hills, the rains had prepared the ground for the tender, groping roots, and a sun as warm as our sun of June welcomed the opening buds.

About six o'clock, I went up the trail to meet Alec and the violets. He presently appeared, coming round the corner by the carpenter's shop with the fragrant box on his shoulder. He set it down on a pile of logs before the door of the shop, and stepped inside to speak with Pedro, the carpenter. Pedro stood with his back to the light, leaning over a broad red-wood plank, and making measurements on it with a rule and pencil. He wore a white cotton cap or "gorro," as he would have called it, pulled tightly down over his black curls, and a sheep-skin apron tied about his waist. While Alec began some explanations, with rapid

pencil diagrams on the plank, and Pedro listened, exclaiming, "*Bueno! bueno!*" at intervals, I waited outside, pulling apart the violet leaves to find the blossoms. There were a good many blossoms, for the plants were large and vigorous; their perfume recalled a certain broad, bright street in a gay city, thousands of miles away, where the snow is trampled into miry slush under the endless procession of wheels; where the chill of the February fogs is softened by a breath of sea-wind, and the scent of violets, faint as the vapory spring sunshine, haunts the street, wandering from one flower-stall to another. This was very different, but the violets were just as sweet.

Two little girls, coming down the trail from the camp, espied my small private joy and came to share it.

"Oh, smell they vi'lets! Aint they sweet ones?"

"Susan 'Odges, keep th' 'ands off the lady's flowers!"

"Us 'as vi'lets at 'ome," said the unembarrassed Susan, "but they doant smell none."

I presented Susan with a small bunch of the coveted flowers. The elder sister showed her scorn of my weakness by walking on slowly down the road. Susan looked after

her triumphantly, and then confidentially at me, saying:

"See 'ere! I've got some cascarones!"

She opened her apron, which was gathered into a bag in one hand.

"Manwell's Horaya give 'em to me!"

I could not imagine at first what she meant, but in a moment it occurred to me she was speaking of the Mexican Emanuel's daughter Aurelia, whom I had often seen passing up the trail with her little brother Jesus (for so he was devoutly named), and driving before her a small donkey loaded with brush-wood.

The cascarones looked very pretty huddled in the hollow of Susan's blue-checked apron. They were egg-shells, emptied of their contents by means of a small hole in one end, over which was pasted a patch of bright paper, cut into various forms,—a star, or flag, or many-pointed sun. The egg was painted in gay colors with spots, or stripes, or encircled with bands, like the rings of Saturn. Some of them were colored, one half blue, the other red or yellow. Altogether, they were a gorgeous collection. No sober-minded, respectable hen would have claimed them; she would never have dared to sit on them, for fear of hatching a brood of frivolous chicks, too erratic in their tastes to earn a living by plain scratching.

"Aint they gay?" said Susan. "Look 'ere!" She pushed back her bonnet and smote herself smartly on the head with one of the eggs. It burst with a crash and scattered a shower of bright bits of tinsel paper over her sun-bleached hair. "They's for the ball to-night. The's bar'ls o' them up to the Mexican camp. They's been a-crackin' and a-smashin' up there all day. My mother says it's wicked, and Lent a-comin' so near! To-morrow the priest'll sprinkle ashes on their 'eads. Mother says it's just a-makin' fun o' their own church!" And Susan darted off as Alec came out of the shop.

Alec shouldered the box, and as we went down the trail he told me about the games of the day, which was a carnival among the Mexicans. There had been a "flour-fight" on the high, rolling plain which stretches between the hills of New Almaden and those of Guadeloupe, four miles distant. We were told by a young Spanish Californian that this game originated among the mountains of Spain, where the peasants of neighboring villages met on Shrove-Tuesday and threw snow at one another until one side or the other cried quarter. The cus-

tom had wandered, by way of Mexico and lower California, to the colonies of the foothills, but in its wanderings had left the snow behind, flour being used instead. Seventy-five dollars' worth of it was thrown away that day by men who earn their daily bread with hammer and drill in the caverns of the hills, and who, in case of a discharge, had scarcely a penny to take them to another camp.

There was some irregularity about the sport that afternoon, but it all ended in the usual scene of wild confusion and gayety, in the midst of which the captain of the Guadeloupe men was taken prisoner after being half smothered with flour, and was brought in triumph to grace the cascarone ball at the camp that night.

"We must go up," said Alec. "It will be rather rough, but it's a thing you ought to see."

So at eight o'clock we started, with a lantern to guide us through the shadows of the live-oak scrub; but on the high, clear profile of the hills above, we needed no other light than the wide arch of starlit sky, the lights of the Cornish camp twinkling below us, and the constellation of the Campo della Mejicana beckoning from above. We kept our lanterns swinging beside us, however, and watched all the other shifting, dancing lights which flickered along the many foot-paths converging at the *hostinero de los Mineros*. At the Cornish camp, our Spanish friend joined us, and we made three shadows instead of two, flitting diagonally up the trail. We passed many other groups,—sometimes a huddle of shadows talking and gesticulating, with sharp touches of light on bronzed faces and gleaming eyes; sometimes two shadows, lingering very close together. Sometimes a ray of lantern-light revealed a darkly tinted cheek close to the shoulder of a blonde young giant from the "West countrie."

The windows of the *hostinero* were all alight, and the piazza was thronged with noisy young men when we reached the camp, but the dancing had not yet begun. We crossed the street to the quiet restaurant, kept by a Franco-Mexican family, where there were two pretty daughters. Madame Barique entertained us with that gentle, cordial manner, which makes speech almost unnecessary to the women of her race; but her mind was evidently wandering toward the room, down two steps, and across the passage, from which came sounds of girlish voices and laughter. It

was pretty to see her face light up with a mother's pride, when the girls came out, arrayed in stiff, ruffled muslins and bright ribbons, with their dark hair piled rather higher than usual. Merced, a child except in height and figure, could not repress her smiles, but Aurelia greeted us with a shy, half-conscious dignity, and glanced at our handsome young interpreter who was repeating our words, with, possibly, more eloquent additions of his own. They needed no "touch of nature" to make them sisters to all the pretty rural maids, of whatever complexion, the world over. They joined their escorts at the door, and now the bursts of music from across the way settled into a steady, inspiring rhythm, and the dancing had begun! Chairs were taken across to the hostinero, as the benches were by no means "reserved," and were also very narrow. Madame Barique put a shawl over her head, and went across with me. She kept her place beside me all the evening, though weariness showed very plainly under her valiant smiles.

The room was long and low, with rows of little windows on either side, like port-holes. The walls and ceiling were covered with thin muslin, nailed over the unplastered boards, and whitewashed; there were Mexican and American flags hung about, and colored prints of various patriots, in uniform, who had distinguished themselves in the last Mexican war for independence. The side walls were lined with benches, and here sat the dusky ranks of dowagers, each with two or three little children under her wing, a cigarette at her lips, and a bag of cascarones in her lap, from which her own particular señorita was supplied with ammunition for the fray. In the course of the evening, most of the little ones fell asleep, and made very pretty pictures, reclining in restful abandon, against the weird old crones beside them.

The music was excellent of its kind,—two violins, a guitar, a flute, and one or two brass pieces. During the waltzes one could hear but a single united shuffle, as if all the dancers in the room moved with one pair of feet. Full dress for the young men was a short velveteen coat, black trowsers, white vest, and a bright silk scarf, knotted with particularly happy effect over the shoulders, outside the coat. Some of the young men wore the uniform of the flour-fighters,—red flannel shirts, black trowsers with red stripe down the sides, and a silver star on the breast. The crowd was too great, and the

motion too rapid and incessant, for any attempt at study of individuals. One received an impression of extreme vivacity of speech and manner,—bright ribbons, scarfs and serapas,—waving heads and hands, swaying lines of figures joined in the dance, circling lines of figures, winding and separating into couples, waltzing away in a maze of color, music, laughter, and tobacco smoke. The ceiling was dim with smoke from the cigarettes of the dowagers, and the cigars of the loungers on the piazza, who leaned in at the open windows. When the dance flagged, cries of "*Viva, viva!*" sounded from all parts of the room, and gave new life to the music.

Among the company was a young South American, with a high, aquiline profile, and a crest of bushy curls, rising from his receding forehead, like the sculptured manes of the horses on a Greek bass-relief. I noticed him, first, because of his height and sinewy grace, afterward, because he was the partner of such a pretty girl,—a tall, slight, dark beauty, with the most joyous unconsciousness of expression and movement, like a child or a beautiful animal. It was worth coming to the ball to see these two dancing together; it was the very spirit of revelry, without conscience or care. I found the canker in the rose, afterward, when I learned that my joyous girl had been a wife for two years at least, and that while she was dancing at the cascarone ball, her young husband was in prison, awaiting his trial for stabbing a friend in a Christmas brawl at the Guadeloupe.

The war of cascarones did not fairly begin until the *danza del guerro*, at midnight, but there were scattering shots and sallies, and skirmishes in all directions. The cascarones were crushed over the heads of the señoritas, but the young men were soundly clapped on the head, and the shells were well rubbed into their thick black manes. The girls generally hunted in couples or packs, and set upon their chosen victim with shrieks of glee; then a charge of young men to the rescue would scatter them in all directions. The prettiest girls got the most salutes, and looked all the prettier with the tinsel powder sparkling on their dark braids. There were some wild young romps, whose audacious charges upon friend and foe, cost them at last their feminine prerogative;—they were pursued and surrounded and bombarded and battered with shells, until what hair they had left could hardly have been worth combing out in the morning.

The Mexicans save egg-shells all the year for this ball; improvident as butterflies, they are capable of great forethought where pleasure is the object.

We stayed to see the beginning of the war dance, when the Guadeloupe captain was led into the room and greeted with cheers and a storm of cascarones. He was a tall, black-bearded young fellow, and looked as if he had plenty of fun and fight in him. He waved his hat and called, "Viva Guadeloupe!" whereupon all the girls set upon him with cries of "Viva Nuevo Almaden!" The young men laughed and cheered them on, and supplied them with cascarones. The captive held his felt hat down over his head with both hands and continued to shout "Viva Guadeloupe!" A wild and merry scuffle ensued,—his hat was dragged off, the Philistines were upon him; he darted about the room, pursued by the crowd of girls and the storm of cascarones; at last he threw up his hands, cry-

ing: "*Mucho gracias, señoritas,—viva Nuevo Almaden!*" Then the dance began with the vanquished guest as leader. There was no drunkenness, or ill-temper, or intentional rudeness. What the later (or earlier) hours of festivity developed, we did not wait to see. As the fun grew wilder, the lights dimmer, and the smoke more dense, we made our way out of the crowd into the cool night air.

The moon had risen,—it seemed to me I had never seen whiter, stiller moonlight. We took our way along the narrow, shadowy street, and down the hills, while fainter and fainter sounded the music and tumult of the ball. The streets of the Cornish camp, as we passed through, were empty and silent,—two or three young men lingering on the trail above, were singing:

"In the sweet by and by,—
In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore."

TWO POEMS BY BAYARD TAYLOR.

I. GABRIEL.

ONCE let the Angel blow!—
A peal from the parted heaven,
The first of seven!
For the time is come that was foretold
So long ago!
As the avalanche gathers, huge and cold,
From the down of the harmless snow,
The years and the ages gather and hang
Till the day when the word is spoken:
When they that dwell in the end of time
Are smitten alike for the early crime,
As the vials of wrath are broken!

Yea, the time hath come;
Though Earth is rich, her children are dumb!
Ye cry: "Beware
Of the dancer's floating hair,
And the cymbal's clash, and the sound of pipe and drum!"
But the Prophet cries: "Beware
Of the hymn unheard, the unanswered prayer;
For ignorance is past,
And knowledge comes at last,
And the burden it brings to you how can ye bear?"

Again let the Angel blow!
The seals are loosened that seemed to bind