

SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY.

VOL. IV.

OCTOBER, 1872.

No. 6.



MIGNONETTE.

“Your qualities surpass your charms.”

—*Language of Flowers.*

I PASSED before her garden gate :
She stood among her roses,
And stooped a little from the state
In which her pride reposes,
To make her flowers a graceful plea
For luring and delaying me.

“When summer blossoms fade so soon,”
She said with winning sweetness,
“Who does not wear the badge of June
Lacks something of completeness.
My garden welcomes you to-day,
Come in and gather, while you may.”

I entered in : she led me through
A maze of leafy arches,

Where velvet-purple pansies grew
Beneath the sighing larches,—
A shadowy, still, and cool retreat
That gave excuse for ling'ring feet.

She paused, pulled down a trailing vine,
And twisted round her finger
Its starry sprays of jessamine,
As one who seeks to linger.
But I smiled lightly in her face,
And passed on to the open space.

—Passed many a flower-bed fitly set
In trim and blooming order,
And plucked at last some mignonette
That strayed along the border ;

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A simple thing that had no bloom,
 And but a faint and far perfume.
 She wondered why I would not choose
 That dreamy amaryllis,—
 “And could I really, then, refuse
 Those heavenly white lilies!
 And leave ungathered on the slope
 This passion-breathing heliotrope?”
 She did not know—what need to tell
 So fair and fine a creature?—
 That there was one who loved me well
 Of widely different nature;
 A little maid whose tender youth,
 And innocence, and simple truth,
 Had won my heart with qualities
 That far surpassed her beauty,
 And held me with unconscious ease
 Enthralled of love and duty;
 Whose modest graces all were met
 And symbolled in my mignonette.

I passed outside her garden-gate,
 And left her proudly smiling:
 Her roses bloomed too late, too late,
 She saw, for my beguiling.
 I wore instead—and wear it yet—
 The single spray of mignonette.

Its fragrance greets me unaware,
 A vision clear recalling
 Of shy, sweet eyes, and drooping hair
 In girlish tresses falling,
 And little hands so white and fine
 That timidly creep into mine;

As she—all ignorant of the arts
 That wiser maids are plying—
 Has crept into my heart of hearts
 Past doubting or denying;
 Therein, while suns shall rise and set,
 To bloom unchanged, my mignonette!

ERNST OF EDELSHEIM.

I'LL tell the story, kissing
 This white hand for my pains,—
 No sweeter heart, nor falser
 E'er filled such fine, blue veins.
 I'll sing a song of true love,
 My Mimi dear! to you;
Contraria contrariis—
 The rule is old and true.
 The happiest of all lovers
 Was Ernst of Edelsheim;
 And why he was the happiest,
 I'll tell you in my rhyme.
 One summer night he wandered
 Within a lonely glade,
 And, couched in moss and moonlight,
 He found a sleeping maid.
 The stars of midnight sifted
 Above her sands of gold;
 She seemed a slumbering statue,
 So fair and white and cold.
 Fair and white and cold she lay
 Beneath the starry skies;
 Rosy was her waking
 Beneath the Ritter's eyes.
 He won her drowsy fancy,
 He bore her to his towers,
 And swift with love and laughter
 Flew morning's purpled hours.
 But when the thickening sunbeams
 Had drunk the gleaming dew,

A misty cloud of sorrow
 Swept o'er her eyes' deep blue.
 She hung upon the Ritter's neck,
 She wept with love and pain,
 She showered her sweet warm kisses
 Like fragrant summer rain.
 “I am no Christian soul,” she sobbed,
 As in his arms she lay;
 “I'm half the day a woman,
 A serpent half the day.
 “And when from yonder bell-tower
 Rings out the noon-day chime,
 Farewell! Farewell forever,
 Sir Ernst of Edelsheim!”
 “Ah! not farewell forever!”
 The Ritter wildly cried,
 “I will be saved or lost with thee,
 My lovely Wili-Bride!”
 Loud from the lordly bell-tower
 Rang out the noon of day,
 And from the bower of roses
 A serpent slid away.
 But when the midwatch moonlight
 Was shimmering through the grove,
 He clasped his bride thrice-dowered
 With beauty and with love.
 The happiest of all lovers
 Was Ernst of Edelsheim,—
 His true love was a serpent
 Only half the time!