

MULTNOMAH.

BY PHILIP HOFFMAN.

In the days of Pometacum, when the Indian roamed free
From the valley of great waters westward to the mighty sea,
When the buffalo and bison and the antelope and deer
O'er the broad and sweeping prairies sported wild without a fear,
Long before the cave of miner, or the hut of trapper shown
Through the wilderness and forest on the hills of Oregon,
In the wigwam on the mountains, reaching out so bleak and high
That it seemed to rest half hallowed midway 'tween the earth and sky,
Lived a little Indian maiden, fair as mortal ever saw,
Whom the father called his jewel, and the redmen Multnomah,
She was young and ever joyous, pure in heart and bright in mein,
Loved by all who chanced to know her, treated like a May-day queen,
Sought by many a boastful lover, chief of tribe and warrior bold,
Who to her pledged all their riches, wampum, feathers, rings and gold,
And with arms outstretched 'fore heaven by their ancient fathers swore
To obey her, and to follow where she led, forever more.

But no answer could she give them, save that sweet, benignant smile
That belongs to childhood only—half to please, half to beguile.
For as yet, love was a stranger to Multnomah's heart so pure—
Never had she nursed the passions that all lovers must endure.
At no meeting had she ever felt her milder passions rise,
Nor at parting found the teardrops lurking in her pretty eyes;
But in innocence and freedom, tripping through time's golden hours
With the open sky and landscape as her riches and her dowers,
Thinking little, caring nothing what the future hours would bring,
She served neither law nor manual, feared no master, lord or king.

All alone she loved to wander through the trees by hill and glen,
Keeping company with the squirrel, talking to the jay or wren. [quail,
Warbling notes that fooled the robin, strains that thrilled the modest
Chirping like neglected nestlings that made old birds cry and wail,
Or away to race unwary with her shadow o'er the lee,
Till her limbs would quake beneath her and her heart beat violently;
Stopping then beneath some pine tree, waiting but to catch her breath,
Off again to chase a rabbit over valley, stream and heath.

Thus the childhood of Multnomah passed, as passes it with all,
Leaving naught but recollections for us after to recall.
Happy, then, are those whose childhood has been knit with childish joys,
And unfortunate the others whose was stained with dire alloys.

But at last the day of bondage dawned upon Multnomah's life,
And around her careless spirits locked the chains of care and strife,
As one morn she lightly wandered where she oft was wont to roam,
Close beside a little streamlet running near her mountain home,
And was casting careless pebbles at her shadow in the water,
Filling all the dismal forest with her gusts of merry laughter,
Suddenly before her vision stood a youth of noble mold—
Stood the noted Pocatello, he, the mighty and the bold.

"Ah! fair maiden," said he sweetly, "in the woodland here below,
All disheartened with my troubles I was walking to and fro,
When the accents of thy laughter stealing through the lonesome air
Fell so softly on my hearing that it bore away my care;
And I came to seek, and with you by this little streamlet sojourn,
That the secret of thy pleasure and thy lightness I might learn."

Not a word could find its fitting on the lips of that sweet child
As she looked at him and wondered, and he looked at her and smiled;
But a voice seemed to speak for her and a form her actions sway
As she felt herself draw near him and beside him walk away.

Why it was, the blithesome maiden could not plainly understand,
That her heart should be so ready to obey his light command,
Or why in the cheerful features or the manner that he bore
She could find so many beauties that she never saw before.

Just the same perplexing feeling troubled here the heathen heart
That is nurtured and transplanted in the dowerly cultured mart;
For whenever nature's workings in their boundless channels move,
There we find that power resistless—undefiled, unfathomed love,
From that hour to glad Multnomah every leaf and bird and stone
Seemed to wear a sweeter semblance than they e'er before had done.

And one day alone in silence smothering a heavy sigh,
Thus she argued with the streamlet as it hurried softly by:
"Little streamlet, idle streamlet, how I loathe the lonesome day,
Here to sit and gaze upon you as you wend your lazy way,
Stealing in through shady byways where the balmy winds waft low,
Out again to kiss the sunshine, careless thus you come and go.
But why should I call you idle, or why should I thus complain—
I who know not what is labor, I who never felt a pain?

As your course is so my life is—through the brightest thoroughfares,
As you run around each hindrance, so I turn aside from cares,
Eagerly you seek but one thing, and that is to reach the sea,
And my one and only object is my lover's bride to be.

So forgive me, little streamlet, and my secret do not tell—
Ah! but hush! here comes my lover—gentle wanderer, fare you well."
Love which rises accidental is the keenest of them all,
But as true as 'tis the keenest so it is the first to fall.

Strong at first had grown the fetters binding these two hearts as one,
And each meeting saw them stronger as the days wore slowly on,
But as human aspirations, gliding in their normal range,
Never satisfied with plenty, struggling ever for a change,
So at last their joys and pleasures, all the hopes they'd nursed so well,
Turned to woe and wrath and sorrow in an idle lover's quarrel.

Far adown the murmuring streamlet strolled Multnomah then again,
On her brow the marks of sorrow, in her heart the drugs of pain;
Careless where her steps were leading and slow she wandered on
Till she came to seem more distant than she e'er before had gone—
Till she came to where the waters, with a rippling, splashing sound,
Over rock and shell and pebble rushed in hurried torrents down;
And here she sat down sadly, wiped the teardrop from her eyes,
And again addressed the streamlet, talking slow 'mid sobs and sighs:
"Little friend and little companion of my childhood's sunny years,
For the first do I behold you through the dim of gushing tears;
For the first in all my life-time have I felt, and feeling, know
Of the pain induced by sorrow and the wage of human woe;
And the first time, gentle comrade, sadly is it that I know
That a ripple broke thy smoothness or a stone ere troubled you;
But I see how well you bear it, and again you glide along
Just as if thy smiling surface never felt the hand of wrong;
So I will forget my sorrow, happy to my love I'll go,
And restora with smiles and kisses for these idle tears of woe."

Speaking thus she turned and hastened back across her wayward course,
And of Pocatello meekly sought a balm for her remorse;
And she pleaded for forgiveness, begged to be restored again—
But when man is truly jealous woman's tears are shed in vain;
As the waves are lashed and riven on the rocks along the shore,
So the teardrops fall as powerless on the heart which they implore;
Blinded then with disappointment, maddened with a sense of wrong,
Poor Multnomah went an outcast from the haunts she'd known so long.

And beside her faithful streamlet, through the dark and dismal wood,
Night and day she journeyed seaward, taking neither rest nor food
Till one evening, faint and weary, as her strength was failing fast,
She was looking for a lone spot, there to lie down for the last.
Suddenly her path betook her to a fearful precipice,
Over which the waters bounded fading far beneath in mist;
And once more in falt'ring accents thus she to the streamlet spoke,
As her heart beat with emotion, and its throbs her voice would choke:
"Little streamlet thou hast known me from my infancy till now,
Thou hast ministered and listened to each childish wish and vow;
And you were the only witness when I to my lover swore
I would love him, and none other, through this world forevermore;
And the same to me he promised—but the promise of a man
Breaks as easy, breaks as quickly as a rod of green rattan;
Whilst a woman's vow is ironclad, braced with ribs of seasoned oak,
That by vexing or by coaxing can be neither bent nor broke;
And far rather would I suffer all death's agonies than lie,
So with you I'll leap in silence e'er this precipice and die."

'Twas but a moment and the smoothness of the water's distant roar
Quivered with a dull sensation and Multnomah was no more,
True to every bond of friendship that her heart had ever made,
True to every vow and promise was this little Indian maid;
And unflinching in her duty for the one she'd promised all,
Thus she sanctioned all her passions in the surging water fall.
But no good can come to nothing and each noble act receives
In the urn on memory's altar many fresh, unfading leaves,
To the brook to which the red men oft in deep submission came,
Added they with thought of honor the unfortunate maiden's name;
And forever and forever as the years to ages draw,
Green the streamlet keeps the memory of the lovely Multnomah;
And the stars that nightly watch it from their peerless homes above,
Nourish there an everlasting sulfion of true woman's love.

THE eye of the master will do more work than both
of his hands. Not to oversee workmen is to leave your
purse open.