LOVE—The POET'S THEME

By Laura Jean Libbey

LOVE is God's spoken word to all his children; it is the golden chain between this world and eternity; it is the bond of fellowship, the force of forces, greater than light, rain, sunshine and gravity.

It is more precious than the treasures of the earth and the sea, also more beautiful.

It is as brilliant as the myriads of stars in the firmament, for it illumines the hearts of millions of men and women just as the stars illumine the firmament.

It is because I prize pure love more than all of God's other gifts that I want you girls to prize it and try to understand the full and proper meaning of love. It cannot be understood in a day, a week, or a year, because it is worth while; you may be deceived at times as to what love is and mistake infatuation, flattery, and other things equally less worth while. But if you are willing to have patience and listen to the advice of others who have had more experience than yourself love will some day be yours. It is because love is the greatest gift in the world that the greatest poets and artists of all times have dedicated their genius to its songs and epics.

Of all the heaven-bestowed privileges of the poet, the highest, the dearest, the most enviable is the power of immortalizing the object of his love, of dividing with her his amaranthine wreath of glory and repaying the inspiration caught from her eyes with a crown of everlasting fame.

Beauty Immortalized in Verse.

It is not enough that in his imagination he has deified her; that he has consecrated his faculties to her honor; that he has burned his heart in incense upon the altar of her perfection; the divinity thus decked out in richest and loveliest hues he places on high and calls upon all ages and nations to bow down before her, and all ages and nations obey, worshipping the beauty thus enshrined in imperishable verse, when others, perhaps as fair and not less worthy, have gone down unsung to dust and endless darkness.

If in return for being made illustrious she made her lover happy, if for glory she gave a heart, was it not a rich equivalent? And if not—if the lover was still unsuccessful, still the poet had his reward. Whence came the generous feelings, the high imaginations, the glorious fancies, the heavenward inspirations which raised him above the great masses of men?

Through her the world opened upon him with a divine beauty and all nature became in his sight but a transcript of the charms of his mistress. He saw her eyes in the stars of heavens, her lips in the half-blown rose. The perfume of the opening flowers was but her breath that "wafted sweetness round the world"; the lily was a "sweet thief" that had stolen purity from her breast; the violet was dipped in the azure of her veins; the aurorean dew, "dropt from the opening eyelids of the morn," were not so pure as her tears; the last rose tint of the dying day was not so bright or so delicate as her cheek.

Hers was the freshness and the bloom of Spring; she consumed him to languor as the Summer sun; she was kind as the bounteous Autumn or she froze him with her wintry disdain.

Love the Great Inspiration.

As Shakespeare says in one of his loveliest sonnets:

For what of thee thy poet doth invent,
He pots thee of and pass it thee again.
He lends thee virtue and he stole that word
From thy behavior; beauty doth he give,
But found it in thy cheek; he can afford
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live;
Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
Since what he owes thee, thou thyself dost pay.

A poet cannot really sing hymns of love and praise unless there is real love and thanksgiving in his heart. In the same way no woman has ever been truly, lastingly deified in poetry but in the spirit of truth and love.

One of the most beautiful word pictures ever painted of a modest, sweet young girl just growing into womanhood is given in Homer's "Odyssey." Ulysses has just been thrown ashore by his wrecked ship, and at his sight all the maidens except Nausicaa are afraid—

—All but Nausicaa fled, but she fast stood.
Pallas has put a boldness in her breast,
And in her fair limbs tender fear compprest.
And still she stood him, as resolved to know
What man he was or out of what should grow
His strange repair to them—

There are few pictures in literature as beautiful as the farewell between Hector and Andromache when the great warrior leaves his wife and young son for the battle field.

Patriotism in Highest Form.

Her husband, Hector, and her son, Astyanax, are all this young woman has to love, and still she is glad to give her husband for the defense of her country. Throughout the whole scene we see the dependence of the woman, her splendid love and her willingness to sacrifice it for a cause greater and nobler than herself and her boy. We almost hear the words that pass through her mind: "Save thyself, too, because I love thee."

Further on, in the twenty-second book of the "Iliad," we see Andromache, yet ignorant of the fate that has befallen her, for she is trying to distract herself by weaving a veil "strown curiously with varied flowers," while her maidens are busy preparing the bath for Hector on his return from battle. She hears a clamorous uproar and loud cries from her maidens. Then she sees her husband being dragged by the horses of Achilles toward the Greek ships. She falls back in a faint, and when she recovers she pours out her sorrow in the most sincere despair.

A much different picture of love is given of Helen in the "Iliad." Her beauty and wiles led to a long and hard-fought war. Even when Troy falls he does not make Helen appear as an utterly corrupt and degraded woman. Rather, he shows her as a blameless victim of the power of Aphrodite, and her love for Paris is a fate sent by the goddess.

When she realizes what she has done she is overcome with grief and reproaches herself in the harshest terms. Homer has immortalized the wife, the mother, the young girl, and in all these he shows them dominated by a feeling of womanly love.

Sappho the "Tenth Muse."

Among all the other Greek poets who dedicated their genius to singing about love, none was so successful as Sappho. This woman wrote such wonderful love poems that she was called the "tenth muse." Music and poetry and the art of love were taught by her to the young members of her sisterhood. It is said that the old law-giver, Solon, on hearing one of her poems recited, prayed that he would not die until he had learned it by heart. She wrote more than 100 beautiful love sonnets, though only one remains complete. In this she describes the tortures she is suffering from some unrequited love and begs Venus to soothe her aching heart:

Venus, bright goddess of the skies,
To whom unnumber'd temples rise,
Jove's daughter fair, whose wily arts
Delude fond lovers of their hearts;
O! Listen gracious to my prayer,
And free my mind from anxious care.

Once more, O, Venus, hear my prayer,
And ease my mind of anxious care;
Again vouchsafe to be my guest,
And calm this tempest in my breast.
To thee, bright Queen, my vows aspire.
O, grant me all my heart's desire.

These are only two stanzas of a beautiful and touching poem supposed to have been spoken by a young Mytilenean named Phaon, to whom the great poetess had lost her heart.

Poetess Kills Self for Love.

Legend says he did not respond to this feeling of love and that she was so heartbroken by his indifference that she threw herself from the Leucadian promontory into the sea. She had two pupils who also dedicated their genius to the goddess of love—Venus. The one was Erinna, who wrote a long, beautiful poem called "The Spindle That Has Been Lost."

But none of her pupils, either men or women, of whom she had many, ever reached her height.

She sang in the childhood of the world, when people felt more than they thought, when love was a sensation, a joy, a passion, not a sentiment. If she did not "spiritualize her theme, she purified it of the coarseness which made the love songs of men before her unfit for a delicate ear. She took love from the exclusive domain of the senses and gave it a soul.

Long before love poems were written they were sung by people of all countries, and nowhere were they sung with more enthusiasm than among the early troubadours of France. The amatory poetry of Provence had the same source with the national poetry of Spain, both being derived from Arabia. Most of the original folk poems have been lost and only their spirit survives, but enough has been left to show how romantic they were. Sometimes these singers were bards and minstrels, who wandered from town to town. Again they were Princes and even Kings.

Among the most famous of these singers were William, Count of Poitou; Richard I, two kings of Arragon, and the dauphin of Auvergne. Though they sang of many fair women, they were most devoted to Blanche of Castile, the mother of Louis IX. Thibault, one of their number, wrote one of the finest and most romantic songs about her.

Princesses and ladies of rank entered this list of poets and often vanquished the troubadours of the other sex. They were rewarded by their husbands or their lovers with rich dresses, horses, armor and gold. Among the most famous of the women songsters was the Countess of Champagne, who presided at one of the courts of love. Then there was Beatrice, Countess of Provence; Clara d'Anduse, one of whose songs is translated by Sismondi; and one of the most successful was the Countess de Die. Rudel was one of the most popular minstrels, and he wrote many songs to her, one of the most popular being the following:

Grieved and troubled shall I die,
If I meet my love afar;
Alas! I know not that I e'er
Shall see her, for she dwells afar.
O God, that didst all things create,
And formed my sweet love, now afar;
Strengthen my heart that I may hope
To behold her face, who is afar.
O Lord, believe how very true
Is my love for her; alas, afar;
Tho' for each joy a thousand pains
I bear, because, I am so far.
Another love I'll never have,
Save only she who is afar,
For fairer one I never knew
In places near, nor yet afar.

Bertrand of the Fierce Mien.

Another famous singer was Bertrand de Born, who was as wild and ferocious as Rudel was mild and gentle. He first celebrated Elinor Plantagenet, who was the sister of Richard the Lion Hearte" The princess was greatly flattered by his words of praise. He continued to make her his theme until she married the Duke of Saxony, and then he chose the beautiful Waenz de Montagnac, daughter of the Viscount of Turenne and wife of Talleyrand de Perigord, as his next ideal.

He sang of her with so much fire and zeal that soon gossip began to wag its tongue.

Later King Henry had this poet besieged in his castle, he was taken a prisoner, and "ould have been executed when he reminded the king of his former friendship for his son. This moved the king, who spared his life and gave him back his castle.

Another of the most romantic of these singers was Pierre Vidal, whose brain was turned with love and vanity. He believed himself to be the mirror of knighthood and the prince of the troubadours. He had great talent and his songs were not surpassed by any of the singers of his day. He sang about many of the most beautiful women of court, and when he had exhausted these themes he followed Richard the First on a crusade and devoted his talent to this cause.

Later these singers were not welcome at court, so they deteriorated into wandering minstrels and jugglers.

The same love songs were being composed in Germany by the minnesingers, who wandered from place to place and court to court singing their songs. One of the loveliest is attributed to the talented minnesinger Der Von Kurenberg. Modernized it runs:

So the star of evening hides its brightness now,
Fair lady, if thou see me, even so do thou.
Then upon some other man let they glances go.
And how it stands between us there's never any man shall know.

Hildbold Writes Many Sonnets.

One of the most popular and romantic of these singers was Hildbold von Schwangau. A few of his many love poems dedicated to women's beauty and charms remain. These are the last lines

May I yet live her graciousness to see.
'Tis strange I never felt so sorely tried
When I on four belike my service set.
Now I love only one and none beside,
And for that one my grief is greater yet
Than e'er because of love it was of yore,
All that was sport and pastime, nothing more.
Now I know love; I know it not before.

The best-known of all these singers was Walthern von der Vogelweide, who lived in the 13th century and spent many years at court dedicating his talent to love and fair women. Finally he tired of his minstrel lays and went off with his King on a crusade. Before leaving he wrote this love song:

In this short life of ours, false coin
Is often struck in Love's design.
Yet if a man knows what its real stamp is,
I pledge my word upon the truth of this,
That rudeness shall assail him ne'er.
If he will take it for his guide.
Love is to Heaven so near allied,
That I implore its guidance there.

Then there grew up many beautiful songs that were sung for many centuries before they were written. The most wonderful of these are "The Ring," which includes the Rheingold, Sigfried, Tannhauser, and the Dusk of the Gods. One of the most beautiful in the original is Tannhauser's love song.

Love Poets of the Italians.

The Italians were by no means lagging behind in composing and singing songs of love; they had their minstrels and their troubadours. But these soon gave way to their great love poets and among this number were Dante, Petrarch and Calvacanti.

There have been few poets who have ever sung a song of impassioned praise so romantically as did Petrarch to his sweetheart Laura. He describes her in the following words:

And whether coldness, pride, or virtue dignify
A woman, so she is good, what does it signify.

In his sonnets he says that she was in person a fair Madonna-like beauty, with soft, dark eyes and a profusion of pale, golden hair, parted on her brow and falling in rich curls over her neck. In his different poems he describes each feature, such as the celestial grace of her figure and her movements, the beauty of her hand, and the loveliness of her mouth.

He notices even the varying expression of her loveliness, such as the lighting of her smile, the tender magic of her voice which was felt in the inmost heart. He says that she had a habit of veiling her eyes with her hand, and her looks were generally bent on the earth.

In another sonnet he sings, "I bless the place, the time, the hour when I presumed to lift my eyes upon her. I say, O my soul, thankful shouldst thou be that hadst been deemed worthy of such high honor, for from her spring those gentle thoughts which shall lead thee to aspire to the highest good and to disdain all that the vulgar mind desires."

Petrarch a Constant Lover.

Who was this Laura to whom this great genius had dedicated his talent and life? He tells us in one of his sonnets that he first met her in the Church of St. Claire. She was habited in a robe of green, spotted with violets. Mention is also made of a coronal of silver with which she wreathed her hair, of her necklace and ornaments of pearl. Her father was a noble of Avignon, Audibert de Noyes. He was proud of his daughter's charms and beauty and he had her married when she was 18. But it was Petrarch who was her real lover and spent his genius singing of it.

Since I spoke to you about Dante's magnificent and high love for Beatrice in another story I must pass by their romance in this and the beautiful words of praise Dante speaks for her in his Divine Comedy and his Vita Nuova. But I do want to quote one of his love songs because there are few so beautiful in all literature.

"Ascended is our Beatrice to the highest heaven, to those realms where angels dwell, and you her fair companions and love and me, she has left, alas! behind. It was not the frost of Winter that chilled her, nor was it the heat of Summer that withered her; it was the power of her virtue, her humility, and her truth that ascending into heaven moved the eternal father to call her to himself, seeing that this miserable life was not worthy of anything so fair, so excellent."

Cavalcanti Friend of Dante.

Another great poet of this time was Guido Cavalcanti, a friend of Dante, who amused himself writing about the love affair between Dante and Beatrice. He was of noble birth, but allied himself with the liberal party in Italy. He had a number of romances of his own and wrote charming love poems to his ladies real and the creation of his own brain. I quote a few stanzas from one of his most beautiful poems:

Dear God, what seemeth if she turns her eyes?
Let Love's self say, for I in nowise dare;
Lady of meekness, such that by compare
All others as of wrath I recognize.
Words might not body forth her excellence,
For unto her inclineth all sweet merit,
Beauty in her hath its divinity.

HOW REVOLUTIONS ARE MADE TO ORDER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

arms were cautiously shipped into Mexico by Gustavo Madero and turned over to the revolutionary sympathizers. Gradually, also, the right sort of public opinion was being developed in the United States. The masses in this country lent their moral influence to Madero and this prevented any antagonistic action on the part of Congress or of the State Department. The neutrality laws provide that no friendly nation shall allow an armed expedition to be fitted out upon its soil nor any vessel intending to commit hostilities to leave its ports. International law, which is a more indefinite code, also holds that no nation shall permit its ports to be used as a base for the shipment of arms into a friendly country for hostile use. The tribunal of Geneva upheld this principle when the United States complained of the assistance that Great Britain had given the Confederacy. Popular opinion might easily have enforced this law and thus made the success of Madero's revolution impossible.

As a matter of fact this principle of international law which might have been enforced against Madero is now being called into present-day Mexican insurrectos. Congress has passed a resolution calling upon the President to apply this principle of law to prevent arms being shipped from the United States into Mexico. Thus the insurrectos are finding themselves without ammunition, the lack of which renders it not improbable that their activities will be smothered and the Madero government saved. The United States is guarding its frontier very strictly in its attempt to keep ammunition from going into Mexico. The insurrectos, who are mostly in the northern part of that country, receive their supplies almost entirely from the United States. To maintain such an insurrection as they are now carrying on is very difficult, even under the most favorable circumstances, and will probably prove impossible with the munitions of war thus made so difficult to obtain. Those who watch these developments from the standpoint of Washington appreciate the fact that this Congressional resolution originated in the office of Madero's American attorneys and that, if this insurrection is smothered, the responsibility for it lies with the revolution jugglers in the Hibbs building.

Double-Crossing Zelaya.

Another of the most recent revolutions in Latin-America was that in Nicaragua, which resulted in driving out the tyrant, Zelaya, and placing Juan Estrada in his place. The Zelaya administration had long been notorious for its grafting and for the manner in which public funds were used to enrich the President. At the time the revolution was precipitated Zelaya had arranged a loan of £1,250,000 with London bankers. Had he got this money the opposition would not have been able successfully to fight him. He did not get it, however, because, through Hopkins & Hopkins, all manner of stumbling-blocks were placed in the way. Though the contract had actually been signed, so many were the objections raised that the money was never finally delivered until Zelaya had been deposed and then it went into the hands of the new government where, it is to be hoped, it was applied more to the benefit of the public than otherwise would have been the case.

The story of Zelaya's overthrow is a typical drama of Central American politics. Juan Estrada was in command of the military forces at Bluefields and up and down the entire east coast of Nicaragua. Salvador Castrillo was the insurrectionary diplomatic agent in conjunction with whom Hopkins & Hopkins worked. This combination had a very difficult game to play. It not only had to outwit General Zelaya in getting sufficient supplies into Nicaragua to make an insurrection successful, but it had also to fight the influence of President Diaz, of Mexico, who was in sympathy with Zelaya and sought to maintain him in the Presidency. Even after Estrada had executed his military coup by which he had practically overthrown Zelaya, Diaz and the Cientifico crowd in Mexico were strong enough to place Madriz, a friend of Zelaya, in the Presidency. To counteract this Cientifico influence in Central America there stood only Don Manuel Estrada Cabrera, President of Guatemala. Cabrera and Diaz had long been enemies. Cabrera has long been the friend of the United States. There was always a suspicion that through Cabrera munitions of war poured into Bluefields at this critical time. For many years Cabrera had been an intimate personal friend of the Hopkinses. The fact that his administration is the only one in Central America that has remained steadfast and peaceful through the last dozen years is ascribed to the guidance of his American friends and advisers. To these attorneys was due the blocking of the Zelaya loan, the failure of which, together with the moral support of the United States and the aid of Cabrera, meant the downfall of the Zelaya dictatorship.

A Soldier of Fortune.

The facts in connection with the uprising a year ago in Honduras are not dissimilar. In this case there is an added interest in having the most eminent American financier, J. P. Morgan, and the most interesting American soldier of fortune, General Lee Christmas, as prominent figures in a revolutionary embroglio. Morgan & Co. had agreed to advance President Miguel Davila $10,000 with which to pay off the accumulated indebtedness of Honduras and the United States has practically agreed to guarantee the loan by arranging for the administration of the custom-houses of that benighted country. Morgan was to make a handsome profit by taking up the old loans of Guatemala and by realizing from the intervention of the United States in collecting the customs of Honduras, an act which would raise the value of that country's bonds from 85 per cent to 100. Besides these there were other profitable features to the scheme.

In the meantime Generals Manuel Bonilla and Lee Christmas were busily at work in New Orleans fitting out an expedition in the name of the former, who aspired to the Presidency. Below Canal street in New Orleans the city is as Latin as Paris or Rome. Here dwell the dissatisfied exiles from all the nations of Latin-America. The unsuccessful Latin-American revolutionist, compelled to flee his own country, takes up his abode below Canal street in New Orleans. Knock on almost any door in that section and it will be opened but an inch and a countersign will be required before you can gain admission. Here more plots are hatched and more revolutionary expeditions developed than anywhere else in America. These are rarely successful except where the venture is of sufficient importance and the adventurers are sufficiently wise to make a Washington connection by acquiring the services of those most scientific guiders of revolutions, Hopkins & Hopkins.

Bonilla eventually succeeded in getting his expedition to Honduras and, after winning a series of brilliantly fought battles, placed Bertrand, Manuel Bonilla's candidate, in the Presidency. Since then Bonilla has been legally elected and inaugurated as President.

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WOMEN ARE NOT WANTED

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

officers, also chosen annually. In each of the other nine monasteries an executive committee of three members is yearly selected by the oldest and leading monks. For important questions the whole body of each community is assembled, but the committee of three carry all decisions into effect.

The regime and rules of the monasteries are very severe. Meat is absolutely forbidden. Fish, cheese and eggs are permitted. Each year has four long fasts, comprising together 154 days, not counting the Wednesdays and Saturdays of the non-fasting weeks. During these fasts only one meal of salads, olives and bread is allowed daily at noon. The repasts are brief and without conversation. One of the brethren, seated in the middle of the refectory, reads from a pious book. Great hospitality exists throughout the peninsula and travelers are cordially welcomed. Beds are unknown in the majority of the convents, but it is easy to sleep comfortably on the wooden divans covered with Oriental carpets and cushions.

Women Barred Absolutely.

For 1400 years no woman has slept upon the Sacred Mountain. This proscription is rigidly absolute; even the Turkish representative has to leave his harem outside the limits of the peninsula. Not women only, but females of all kinds, are excluded so far as the monkish power extends. No cow, mare or even domestic hen is permitted on the holy territory. Eggs are imported from Lemnos. The monks are forbidden to cut either hair or beard; at one epoch no beardless brother was admitted.

The tribute paid to Turkey is 14,000 francs yearly. This is in addition to the customs duty on foreign imports. The central seat of government is at the village of Karyes, near the middle of the peninsula, nestling in the midst of a green and fertile valley.

The monasteries are constructed like vast citadel-fortresses, with high towers and massive walls, on mountain slopes or seaside cliffs. They follow no regular design, each adapting itself to the peculiar formation of its site. One on the western shore—Samopetra—is perched on an almost inaccessible rock. Flourishing vineyards surround the bases of the convent hills, and the forests around yield plentiful supplies of nuts. Every night just as the sun is setting behind the mountains of Macedonia, long processions of monks may be see climbing laboriously up to the monasteries with their donkeys laden with the result of the day's toil.