







## SILVIA.

THE bare facts of Silvia's story, which are almost identical with those of Julia's, would to a certain extent warrant one in imagining a like identity of character; yet there is a clear difference between the gracious, well-disciplined Lady Silvia—a court beauty, whose lightest act is governed by prescribed etiquette, and whose lofty dignity despises all tricks to attract admiration, all coquettish displays of wit or person—and the Veronese belle, whose caprices are as countless as her lovers, and whose pretty head is at one time almost hopelessly turned by their fine speeches and the delightful contemplation of her own perfections. Both are in love; but how different is its expression in the two women: Silvia, incapable of indulging her vanity at the expense of her lover's peace, condescends to a pretty ruse to assure him of her favor; Julia, in the hey-day of successful coquetry, alternately blesses Proteus and drives him to despair, twenty times a day, as her fantastic humor may dictate—consenting to make him happy, by a confession of her preference, only when her genuine sorrow at parting from him gets the better of her caprice.

In devotion and fidelity they assimilate more closely—but only in degree, not in kind: we feel sure that Silvia could never have



continued to love a man whom she had found treacherous; with her, passion would always be subordinate to principle; a shock to her sense of honor, from the object beloved, would prove its death-blow. She is less loving, in a general application of the expression, less impulsive, less vain, less *womanly*, than Julia;—or rather, she is a higher type of woman: Silvia derives her strength from her intellect; Julia is strong only in her affections.

As for their amorous pilgrimages: Julia's is undertaken in obedience to an impulse of wild, adventurous romance, having no authorities to consult but her waiting-maid and her own accommodating will—a delicious indulgence of high-wrought passion in picturesque disguise, in mystery, in possible danger. That of Silvia, on the other hand, is forced upon her by cruel necessity: suffering the impertinent and pertinacious espionage of her father, and the suits of two detested aspirants for her hand, while her betrothed husband is banished the country, she has no choice but to comply with her father's wishes and marry Thurio, or to follow at all hazards him to whom her faith is plighted. Having once resolved on the latter course, she pursues it with her characteristic dignity and careful deliberation; and she escapes from her father's custody under the protection of a gentleman of the court, who is "vow'd to pure chastity" on the grave of his lady-love. We are convinced that nothing short of violence could have turned Silvia from her purpose; but we can readily believe that some necessary disfigurement in her page's costume might have rendered Julia's proposed freak distasteful, or even have deterred her from it altogether.

Her beauty is, with Julia, a consideration of the first importance; she has made it the study of her dainty life; in a coquettish engagement she knows to a hair of her pencilled eyebrows how much each weapon is worth, and when the time to employ it; her

first thought, on seeing the woman who has caused her lover to forget her, is: In what is she more beautiful than I, that he should love her better? Silvia is not less informed of her rare charms of person—perhaps no less happy in that knowledge; but she is seemingly devoid of even a trace of vanity; her serene brows are as guiltless of the blushes of a vulgar consciousness as those, crescent-crowned, of Dian.

We may scarcely accept lovers' words as evidence, in a case requiring such nice impartiality; yet even their hyperbolic rhapsodies may assist us in establishing a theory concerning the source of their inspiration:

*Pro.* \* \* \* \* \*

Was this the idol that you worship so?

*Val.* Even she; and is she not a heavenly saint?

*Pro.* No; but she is an earthly paragon.

*Val.* Call her divine.

*Pro.* I will not flatter her.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Val.* Then speak the truth by her; if not divine,

Yet let her be a principality,

Sovereign to all the creatures on the earth.

*Pro.* Except my mistress.

*Val.* Sweet, except not any—

Except thou wilt accept against my love.

*Pro.* Have I not reason to prefer mine own?

*Val.* And I will help thee to prefer her too:

She shall be dignified with this high honor—

To bear my lady's train; lest the base earth

Should from her vesture chance to steal a kiss,

And, of so great a favor growing proud,

Disdain to root the summer-swelling flower,

And make rough winter everlastingly.

*Pro.* Why, Valentine, what braggardism is this?

*Val.* Pardon me, Proteus: all I can is nothing,

To her whose worth makes other worthies nothing;

She is alone.



*Pro.* Then let her alone.

*Val.* Not for the world. Why, man, she is mine own;  
And I as rich in having such a jewel  
As twenty seas, if all their sand were pearl,  
The water nectar, and the rocks pure gold.

Proteus, alone:

\* \* \* \* \*

Is it mine eye, or Valentinus' praise,  
Her true perfection, or my false transgression,  
That makes me reasonless, to reason thus?

\* \* \* \* \*

How shall I dote on her with more advice  
That thus, without advice, begin to love her?  
'Tis but her picture I have yet beheld,  
And that hath dazzled my reason's light;  
But when I look on her perfections,  
There is no reason but I shall be blind.

\* \* \* \* \*

And Silvia—witness Heaven, that made her fair!—  
Shows Julia but a swarthy Ethiope.

A few passages, here and there, will serve to illustrate Silvia's character. The following soliloquy of Proteus, touching his perfidious suit, does her honor, even from lips so unworthy:

\* \* \* \* \*

But Silvia is too fair, too true, too holy,  
To be corrupted with my worthless gifts.  
When I protest true loyalty to her,  
She twits me with my falsehood to my friend;  
When to her beauty I commend my vows,  
She bids me think how I have been forsworn  
In breaking faith with Julia whom I lov'd;  
And, notwithstanding all her sudden quips,  
The least whereof would quell a lover's hope,  
Yet, spaniel-like, the more she spurns my love,  
The more it grows and fawneth on her still.

And her own words to him, in Julia's hearing, on the night of the serenade, afford still more conclusive evidence of her incorruptible purity:

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou subtle, perjur'd, false, disloyal man!  
Think'st thou I am so shallow, so conceitless,  
To be seduced by thy flattery,  
That hast deceiv'd so many with thy vows?  
Return, return, and make thy love amends!  
For me,—by this pale queen of night I swear!—  
I am so far from granting thy request,  
That I despise thee for thy wrongful suit;  
And by and by intend to chide myself,  
Even for this time I spend in talking to thee.