

THE MARRIED BELLE.

BY SALLIE M. BRYAN.

"True as the worm in this cold heart it is—
I am Mokannah's bride—his, Azim, his."—MOORE.

Oh, sweet the music seemed that stirred
The perfumed air of princely halls,
To one whose ear had only heard
Wild songs of birds and waterfalls ;
And then the gems, the radiant light,
The picture's hues, the statue's grace,
And the exotics rare and bright
Low drooping from the marble vase—
All these had tempted her—and she
Was gifted, beautiful and young !
Then blame not so remorselessly
That love on pride's cold shrine was flung.
Alas, she'll sigh again ere long
For—violet-bloom and blue-bird song.

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In purple, flashing with the light
Of India's diamond-heart, through crowds
She glided, regal as the Night
When crowned with stars and robed in clouds.
And words of praise from that bright train
Were murmured as she moved around—
And yet her homage seemed in vain—
Why heard she not the soothing sound ?
'Twas that a bracelet formed of hair,
And clasped with gold round one white arm,
Clung like a fatal serpent there,
Though warm its hue and light its form ;
And, for a promise early made,
She dared not lay aside that braid.

Paul Allyn Raymonde was the name
Graved on the bracelet's simple clasp ;
And o'er her cheek a crimson flame
Seemed burning when—*an old man's* grasp
Tore from his bride's unwilling wrist,
In playful mood, that triumph night,
The braided curl that erewhile kissed
His poet-brow of blue-veined white.
Just then, a stranger through the crowd
In traveler's garb impatient broke ;
Calm seemed his brow, his bearing proud—
Yet trembling was the voice that spoke :
" *Mary !*" he muttered—this was all—
With ashen lip she answered, " *Paul !*"

Then came the thought of curious eyes—
She said : " An early friend long gone."
None deemed him *more*, and in such guise
They left them free, and glided on.
She gazed—his boyhood's lovely hair
In careless waves of wandering gold ;
His deep-blue eyes with dreamlight there ;
His lip and brow sweet as of old—
These agonized her heart—and yet
The practiced features were serene,
Till that soft voice none could forget,
Said, " *Mary*, does this splendid scene
Bless more than had my love ? If so,
I will not murmur ?"—" No—no—no !"

" I dreamed thee lost—and I was frail—
Was proud, and lowly was my lot ;
And I *must* live, I thought, as pale
My brow grew—I could bear this not.
And so—and so—thou knowest the rest."
" That love's denied should all things be ?"
This feverish question stung my breast,
Till—" Hush, I've no reproach for thee !"
He whispered hoarse—" Thou'lt smile and wear
Thy splendor with crushed heart below—
I too my poisoned dreams must bear—
But this is life ! Farewell !—I go."
And with calm brow and writhing brain,
Paul Raymonde crossed the seas again.

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