VARIOUS

GRAHAM'S MAGAZINE VOL XXXIII NO. 4 OCTOBER 1848

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Graham's Magazine Vol XXXIII No. 4 October 1848

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THE UNMARRIED BELLE

BY ENNA DUVAL

[SEE ENGRAVING.]

> Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted;
> If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters returning
> Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment;
> That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain.
> Patience; accomplish thy labor; accomplish thy work of affection!
> Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is godlike;
> Therefore accomplish thy labor of love, till the heart is made godlike,
> Purified, strengthened, perfected, and rendered more worthy of heaven!
>
> *Longfellow's Evangeline.*

I was loitering beside my mother's chair, in her drawing-room, one day on my return from school, listening to the conversation between her and some morning visiters; they were discussing most earnestly the merits of a reigning belle.

"She is, indeed, perfectly beautiful," exclaimed my mother. "I looked at her the other evening, when I saw her at the last concert, and thought a more lovely creature could not exist. The music excited her, and her cheek was delicately flushed, which heightened the brilliancy of her eyes; her lovely lips were just half apart and trembling with feeling. Then she understands so well the art and mystery of dressing. While other young ladies around her were in the full pride of brilliant *costume*, the eye felt freshened and relieved when looking at her – there was such a repose in her *demi-toilette*. The simple white dress was so pure and chaste in its effect, displaying only her lovely throat, and her beautiful chestnut-brown hair was gathered up carelessly but neatly, while over one tiny ear fell a rich cluster of ringlets; then, with all her beauty and exquisite taste, she is so unconscious, so unstudied. That the world should call Mary Lee a beauty, I do not wonder; but that society should pronounce her a belle, is, indeed, a surprise to me – she is so unassuming, so free from art and *affectation*."

"So unlike her mother," exclaimed a lady, eagerly. "I think Mary's success in society is as gratifying as unexpected to Mrs. Lee. She delayed her *entrée* into society as long as she could, and used to lament most piteously to me the trouble she expected to have with her, from her total want of animation and spirit. But now she seems to have entirely forgotten her former misgivings, for she takes many airs on herself about Mary's popularity, talking all the while as though scarcely any one was good enough for the husband of the daughter she pronounced one year ago a stupid, inanimate creature."

"Ah!" said a gentleman, laughing, "the tie now is between young Morton and Langley, I believe. As Langley is the more *distingué* of the two, I suppose the mother will favor him; but if one can judge from appearances, the daughter prefers Harry Morton."

"I can assure you," interrupted Mr. Foster, an intimate friend of our family, "the daughter has quite as much admiration for the rich Mr. Langley as the mother. There is a little incident connected with that same concert Mrs. Duval speaks of, that convinces me of the daughter's powers of management."

"Shame on you, Philip Foster!" said my mother, "you should not talk thus of any lady, much less of Mary Lee."

"What was the incident, Mr. Foster?" eagerly inquired the other ladies.

"Yes, do tell us, Phil," urged his gentleman friend.

My mother looked reproachfully at Mr. Foster, but he shook his head laughingly at her, as he said,

"Hear me first, dear Mrs. Duval, before you judge. I was at Mrs. Lee's two or three mornings since. Several visitors were in the drawing-rooms, among them Harry Morton, as usual. I was looking at a new and costly collection of engravings on the *commode* table, when I overheard Harry Morton ask Miss Lee if he should join their party at the concert the next evening. She replied that she regretted they were not going, for she had already promised her mother to dine and spend the evening quietly with an old friend. The next evening at the concert the whole Lee party were there, and our belle, Miss Mary, was brought in by young Langley, just newly arrived from Europe. The unconscious *demi-toilette* Mrs. Duval speaks so admiringly of, had the desired effect. Langley's taste has been chastened by a voyage over the Atlantic; the noisy over-dressing of his countrywomen would, of course, annoy his delicate sense – therefore was the simple home costume adopted in preference, and the "*available*" Mr. Langley secured as an admirer."

"I do not believe any such thing, Philip!" exclaimed my mother, indignantly. "I will answer for it, there was some mistake. Mary Lee would scorn a falsehood, and is entirely above all artifice or design. Mrs. Lee is said to be maneuvering and worldly; if she is, her daughter is entirely free from such influences."

"How did Morton take it, Phil?" asked the other friend, laughingly.

"He was with me," replied Mr. Foster, evidently enjoying with some little malice my kind mother's annoyance, "we had dropped into the concert by chance together. He looked thunderstruck, but said nothing, and did not approach her during the whole evening. She knew he was there, however, for I saw her return his cold bow in a painfully embarrassed manner."

The entrance of some other visiters, connected with the Lees, put an end to the conversation. That night, when my nurse was undressing me for bed, I said,

"What's a belle, Katy?"

"A very rich and beautiful young lady," replied my nurse, "who has plenty of lovers, and gets married very soon."

"Will I ever be a belle?" I innocently inquired, as she gathered up my rebellious hair under my cap.

"No," she replied, in impatient tones, "your hair is too straight, and your skin too yellow; but you must do as you're told to, or else nobody will even love you; so go to sleep right away."

I was silenced, and thus obedience was obtained by appealing to my love of approbation. Many years passed, bringing me to womanhood, when I discovered the truth of Nurse Katy's reason why I should not be a belle. Other people decided that my "hair was too straight, and my skin too yellow," to use Katy's homely, rough words; but her *brusque* admonition, that made me go to sleep so quickly when a child, acted upon me as a woman. My approbativeness once roused, I managed, despite my want of personal attractions, to secure a host of friends; and the lesson I then learned, to please others

rather than myself for the sake of gaining their love, has caused my life thus far to be very sunny and happy, even more so than if I had been the belle my childish fancy desired.

One of Nurse Katy's principal attributes of a belle, however, Mary Lee was deficient in. She did not get married at all – and Mary Lee she remained all her life. But she was one of the loveliest old maids in the world, and quite as popular in our circle as she had been in her own. She had been confined many years with an invalid mother and paralytic father, but after their death some time, she re-entered society; and her house was the favorite resort of the new set of young people, as it had been in her young days. She gave the most delightful parties, planned the most pleasant enjoyments for us, and although acknowledging herself to be an old maid, she still retained her youthful feelings unimpaired.

Her mind remained in a fresh, healthy state, and her disposition was still sweet and joyous. How we all loved her; she was our confidante, adviser and friend. She was still pretty, and might have proved a very formidable rival had she chosen to enter society as a young lady; but she preferred being regarded by us as an elder friend. The young ladies grouped around her as younger sisters; and one half the young gentlemen would have married her *instanter*, notwithstanding she was ten or fifteen years their senior. Old maid as she was, strange to tell, she was a promoter of marriages. The ill-natured called Mary Lee a match-maker. She certainly did interest herself very much with lovers, fathoming all the little mysteries of their love-quarrels, and setting every thing quite straight, even when they seemed in inextricable confusion.

Miss Lee had been very fond of my mother, and extended to me the same regard, therefore I was, notwithstanding the difference in our ages, on a more intimate footing with her than her other young friends. One day, as we were discussing the merits of an approaching wedding, the conversation assumed a confidential tone.

"Indeed, Enna," she exclaimed, laughingly, "there is nothing more interesting to me than a couple of lovers full of romance, poetry, and perfectly blind and uncaring as to the future. I love to watch them in courtship, lend them a helping hand in the quicksands of that dangerous but delicious season; and then it makes me so happy to congratulate them after their troubles are all over, and they are happily married."

"Ah! if they only could be sure of happiness," I replied.

"Shame on you for that old maid's croak!" she said, with a bright look; "those who are not happy in married life, would never be happy in any situation. There should be no old maids or old bachelors, Enna; we would all be happier married; we fail in fulfilling our missions when we remain single. Hunt up a lover, Enna; let me watch your courtship, and rejoice over your wedding. As a clever friend of mine once said, we think poetry as lovers, but in married life we act true poetry."

I opened my eyes with astonishment, and innocently asked, "Why is it, then, you have never married?"

A shadow crossed over her face, and I felt a desire to recall the question, for I feared I had called up disagreeable reminiscences, but the next instant her countenance was as beaming and calm as before.

"I will tell you, Enna," she said, as she caressingly rested her head on my shoulder, "why I have never married; but to do that I must relate the history of my rather uneventful life. My story has but little interest, but it will gratify the curiosity of one who loves me. My childhood was spent with an old aunt. She took me when I was a delicate wee thing, and I remained with her until her death, which took place when I was nearly grown. She was a dear, good old lady, and with her my life passed most happily; my short visits home gave me little pleasure, for my mother was a very worldly, ambitious woman, and displayed but little tenderness for me, which, when contrasted with my aunt's fondness and indulgence, made me feel quite as a stranger in my family; and when Aunt Mary died, I wept as bitterly, and felt as lonely and bereft of friends, as though I did not possess a mother, father, and sisters. The two years after my aunt's death were spent in close attention to those accomplishments

which had been neglected in my education as unnecessary, and which my mother deemed so essential; and not a day passed without my poor mother's exclamations of despair over me.

"'One comfort there is, however,' she would say, 'your aunt's little fortune of a few thousands will be exaggerated in society, and people will forget your *mauvaise honte* in giving you credit for being an heiress.'

"But the report of my being an heiress was not needed, for when I entered society, to my mother's amazement, I created quite a sensation. I had been looked upon as a pretty girl always; but my mother had so often declared that I was so inanimate and innocent, she never would be able to do any thing with me, and my pretty face would be of no service to me, that I looked upon myself as quite an ordinary person, and was as much surprised at my belle-hood as my family. I wonder my little head was not turned with the attentions I received, so unused as I had been to admiration; it might have been, however, had not a disappointment – a bitter, heart-aching disappointment, wearied me of all this adulation and attention.

"Soon after my entrance into society, I became acquainted with a Mr. Morton – agreeable, good-looking, and attentive he was, of course – quite an acquisition to me in my circle of admirers. His worldly qualifications were not of so brilliant a nature as to attract my prudent mother's fancy, for he was only a young lawyer of slender means and moderate practice. I do not think she ever dreamed of the interest he excited in me, but looked upon him as one of the crowd of attendants necessarily surrounding a belle. But how differently I regarded him. The piles of costly bouquets I received daily, gained but little attention from me, unless I discerned among them the tiny bunch of sweet-violets, tea-roses, and mignonette, which he once in a great while sent me. In my ball-tablets my eyes sought the dances marked down for him; and when he was my partner, the dance, generally so wearisome, was only too short, too delightful; the reminiscence of that happy time makes a silly girl of me again. My mother never imagined he aspired to my hand – she would have looked aghast at the bare mention of such a probability; but she regarded him as a friend, and he was a great favorite with her. She used to say young men like Harry Morton, that knew their places, were invaluable acquaintances for a belle; thus were we thrown a great deal together. She was so blind to his real position with me, quick-sighted as she generally was in other things, I was permitted to have him for my partner in dancing, even for several quadrilles during an evening; he was my constant attendant in my daily rides on horseback, and my mother never hesitated to call upon him if we were at any time in need of an escort to a ball or opera. He was upon the footing of a brother or cousin in the family; but, ah! how dear was he to me. Without any actual explanation, I felt sure of Harry Morton's love. I never had any doubts or jealousies – we seemed to perfectly understand each other. I never looked forward to our future – I was too quietly happy in the present. I only dated from one meeting to another – from the dinner to the party, when he would be ready to hand us from our carriage, to take me off my father's arm in compliance with my mother's constant inquiry and request of, 'Where's Harry Morton? Here, Harry, do take charge of Mary,' a request which he always seemed delighted to obey. Then, after the happy good-night, I would lie my head on the pillow to dream of him and the morning ride we would take together. Why he never spoke to me of his love I cannot tell. It might have been that feelings of delicacy restrained him; my father was rich, while he was but a poor young lawyer; then report had made me an heiress in my own right, as well as a belle, to my worldly mother's great content. That he loved me I am sure, though he never told me with his lips.

"One morning my mother said to me, 'Do not make any engagement for to-morrow, Mary; we must dine *en famille* with dear old Mrs. Langley; we have not been there for a month.'

"Now this Mrs. Langley was a person of great consideration in my mother's eyes. She was very wealthy, and, moreover, had been at the head of the fashionable world for many years. Since my entrance into society, she had been quite an invalid, and rarely appeared in public, but it gratified her exceedingly to have her friends around her, for she dreaded yielding up her command in the world. My mother was an especial favorite of hers; and after I had taken such a prominent situation in society,

she expressed great regard for me. Once in a month or so we spent a day with her. She lived in great style – a stately dinner, and a stupid, grand, heavy evening was the amount of the visit. How I used to dread the coming of the day; it was the only time I was separated from Harry, for Mrs. Langley being very exclusive, and making no new acquaintances, he had no *entrée* there. I used to sing for her, arrange her worsteds, tell her of the parties and different entertainments, and read to her her son's last letter. She had only one son, and he had been in Europe for two or three years. He was her idol, and she never tired talking of him. Dear old lady, my conscience smote me many times for the feelings of impatient weariness and *ennui* I would give way to during one of her tedious dinner parties.

"The following morning after my mother had announced the visit of penance, Harry Morton made his appearance in our drawing-rooms, as usual, with the other morning visiters. Every one was talking of a new singer who was to make her *debût* on that evening.

"'May I join your party at the concert this evening?' Harry asked me, in a low voice.

"'I regret exceedingly,' I replied, 'that we are not going to the concert. I have already promised mamma to spend a quiet day and evening with an old friend of hers. You must listen attentively to this new *donna*, and tell me all about her voice if you go.'

"'I do not think I shall go,' he replied, in low, earnest tones, 'for I could not enjoy the concert if not with you.' A turn in the general conversation drew us more into notice, and some ladies and gentlemen entering, put an end to all further intercourse between us; how long I remembered and cherished those last words of his. When I made my appearance in my mother's room at 5 o'clock, shawl and hood in hand, she regarded me from head to foot smilingly.

"'What new caprice to-day?' she said, 'and yet I must confess it is very becoming to you.'

"I had felt too languid to dress much, and as the weather was warm, spring being quite far advanced, I had chosen a simple white mull robe for the visit to our old friend, knowing that we should meet with but few visiters there. This I explained apologetically to my mother, who tapped me with her fan good-naturedly, saying that beauties were cunning creatures, they liked to show once in a while they could defy the aid of ornament. The first few months of my entrance into society my mother superintended, with great attention, all my *toilettes*; but near the close of the season she fell into the general opinion, that what ever I did was exactly right; and poor little me, that one short half-year before had no right to express an opinion upon so grave a subject as dress, was now constantly appealed to; and whatever style I adopted was perfect in her eyes. Society had placed its stamp upon me, I could pass current as a coin of high value to her.

"When I reached Mrs. Langley's, I found the old lady attended by but one gentleman, who, beside ourselves, was her only visiter. What was my surprise to hear her introduce him as her son, Templeton Langley. The dinner passed more pleasantly than usual, for Mr. Langley made himself very agreeable. After dinner he proposed we should go to the concert, as he felt an interest in the new *primadonna*, having heard her at her *debût* in Europe. I made an objection, which was overruled by Mrs. Langley's expressing a desire – strange for her – to go likewise; and we went. I had not been ten minutes in the room when, on lifting my eyes, the first person I saw was Harry Morton looking sternly at me. Foolishly, I grew embarrassed, my face burned, and my whole frame trembled with nervous agitation. He did not approach me, but gave me only a cold bow. 'He thinks me guilty of falsehood,' I said to myself. How wretchedly passed the evening, and yet I have no doubt I was an object of envy to many of my young lady friends. The rich *distingué*, Templeton Langley showed himself my devoted admirer, while his mother, the acknowledged leader of *ton*, sat beside us smiling approvingly. My indifferent, cold manner, my simple costume, and my beautiful face, completed that evening the conquest of the fastidious, fashionable young man. You cannot imagine the delight of my mother, when day after day found Templeton Langley constantly beside me, she could scarcely restrain her exultation; while I, poor child, listened with aching, throbbing senses for the approach of one who never came near me. Two or three weeks passed in a whirl of gayety. It was the close of the season, and one or two brides in our circle made the parties very constant. Mrs. Langley proposed

that our family should join her son and herself in their summer visit to the Lakes; accordingly we did so, and we spent more than three months traveling. Ere the close of those three months, Templeton Langley offered himself to me. I could not describe to you the scene that ensued between my mother and myself when I rejected him. She was a worldly woman, and my conduct seemed perfectly wild to her. She remonstrated, persuaded, then reproached me in impatient, angry tones. My father was a quiet, amiable man, and rarely interfered with my mother in her management, but he fortunately shook off enough of his lethargy to come to my rescue at this time.

"'If Mary does not love Mr. Langley,' he said, 'why urge her to marry him? Do not scold the poor child,' and he drew me toward him tenderly.

"Templeton Langley was rather an indifferent person in every way. His wealth, combined with his situation in the fashionable world, placed him in a fictitious light; but he had little intelligence, no originality, and only a passable personal appearance. I was constantly drawing the comparison between him and Harry Morton. Harry was so handsome, so brilliant in conversation – and this thought rendered poor Mr. Langley, with all his fastidious, elegant manners, quite unbearable to me. To think of being tied to such a man for life was perfect martyrdom for me; and although hitherto so yielding, I showed myself on this occasion obstinate. Floods of tears I shed, and my mother fancied at first she could overcome my 'ridiculous sentimentality,' as she called it, but in vain; and finding a friend in my father, I remained firm. I felt more sorry for old Mrs. Langley, who was, indeed, terribly distressed, but she treated me very kindly, and exonerated me from all blame. She was, however, really very fond of me, and had set her heart upon having me for a daughter. Mr. Langley returned to Europe, and for many months our circle of friends were quite at a loss to know whether he had offered, been accepted, or refused, or whether he had only flirted with me. My mother felt too disappointed to boast of the rejection; and, moreover, she was so occupied in bringing out my sister, Emma, as to have little time to think of me or my affairs. My sister was but seventeen, three years younger than I, but much nearer my age in appearance. I found myself now of but secondary consideration in my mother's eyes. I fear she really disliked me then. She was an ambitious woman, and had set her heart upon my making a brilliant match; this favorite hope of hers I had blighted, and feeling little interest in society, I became of less consequence, for my sad, absent manner made me, of course, uninteresting; therefore, as my reign as a belle was over, my poor mother now sought to dismiss me from her mind and occupy herself with other objects.

"Harry Morton had gone to the Southwest ere we returned from our summer's journey, and we never met again. A year or so afterward I heard of his marriage with a dashing southern belle, and he is now a distinguished man at the South. After these perplexing, unfortunate misunderstandings, my health failed, and for a long while I was an invalid, rarely appearing in society. My two sisters, Emma and Alice, were more lucky than I, for they married happily, and with my mother's gratified approbation – for they each made the 'best match of their season.' Neither one was so pretty as I had been, and as my mother used to ejaculate,

"'Thank Heaven! neither Emma nor Alice are belles; they at least will not trouble me with their exaggerated notions about love and all that nonsense.'

"I passed a miserable, wretched existence for a year or more after Harry and I were separated. How earnestly I prayed for death, so completely prostrated was my spirit by my disappointment. I felt as lonely as I had at the time of dear Aunt Mary's death. In time, however, I aroused myself from my morbid feelings, and in reading and study found at first occupation, then strength and content.

"The week after my youngest sister was married my father was stricken down with paralysis. I was the only one at home with my parents, for my bride sister had sailed for Europe the day after her wedding, and Emma was far distant in her Southern home, having married a wealthy South Carolinian two years before. Faithfully I devoted myself to my father, and when my mother, a year afterward, was seized with a painful, lingering disease, I made myself so necessary to her comfort, that she at last acknowledged, that what had appeared to be her greatest trouble had proved her greatest blessing.

She altered very much before her death, and lost entirely all those worldly feelings which had actuated her during her early life. She suffered for many years at times agonizing pain, and during this time I was sole companion and nurse to my parents. Often I thanked Providence for having denied to me my early love, granting to me in lieu an opportunity of fulfilling the most holy of duties. See, Enna, to what an unromantic and yet enviable state of mind I at last attained. Believe me, dearest, we never should grieve over unavoidable troubles, for many times they are but the rough husk of that sweet kernel – a hidden blessing."

ZENOBIA

BY MYRON L. MASON

'Twas holyday in Rome. Her sevenfold hills
Were trembling with the tread of multitudes
Who thronged her streets. Hushed was the busy hum
Of labor. Silent in the shops reposed
The implements of toil. A common love
Of country, and a zeal for her renown,
Had warmed all hearts, and mingled for a day
Plebian ardor with patrician pride.
The sire, the son, the matron and the maid,
Joined in bestowing on their emperor
The joyous benedictions of the state.
Alas! about that day's magnificence
Was spread a web of *shame*! The victor's sword
Was stained with cowardice – his dazzling fame
Tarnished by insult to a fallen woman.
Returning from his conquests in the East,
Aurelian led in his triumphant train
Palmyra's beauteous queen, Zenobia,
Whose only crime had been the love she bore
To her own country and her household gods.

Long had the Orient owned the sovereign sway
Of Rome imperial, and in forced submission
Had bowed the neck to the oppressor's yoke.
The corn of Syria, her fruits and wares,
The pearls of India, Araby's perfumes,
The golden treasures of the mountains, all
Profusely poured in her luxurious lap,
Crowned to the full her proud magnificence.
Rome regal, throned on her eternal hills,
With power supreme and wide-extended hand,
Plundered the prostrate nations without stint
Of all she coveted, and, chiefly thou,
O Liberty, the birthright boon of Heaven.
But Rome had passed her noon; her despotism
Was overgrown; an earthquake was at work
At her foundations; and new dynasties,
Striking their roots in ripening revolutions,
Were soon to sway the destinies of realms.

The East was in revolt. The myriad seeds

Of dark rebellion, sown by tyranny,
And watered by the blood of patriots slain,
Were springing into life on every hand.
Success was alternating in this strife
'Twixt power and *right*, and anxious Victory,
With balance poised, the doubtful issue feared.
Amid the fierce contention, 'mid the din
Of war's sublime encounter, and the crash
Of falling systems old, Palmyra's queen
Followed her valiant lord, Palmyra's king.
Ever beside him in the hour of peril,
She warded from his breast the battle's rage;
And in the councils of the cabinet
Her prudent wisdom was her husband's guide.

Domestic treason, with insidious stab,
Snatched from Zenobia's side her gallant lord,
And threw into her hand the exigencies
Of an unstable and capricious throne.
Yet was her genius not inadequate.
The precepts of experience, intertwined
With intellectual power of lofty grade,
Combined to raise Palmyra's beauteous queen
High in the golden scale of moral greatness.
Under the teachings of the good Longinus
The streams of science flowed into her mind;
And, like the fountain-fostered mountain lake,
Her soul was pure as its ethereal food.
The patronage bestowed on learned men
Declared her love for letters. The rewards,
Rich and unnumbered, she conferred on merit
Her own refined, exalted taste betrayed.
Her graceful and majestic figure, crowned
With beauty such as few but angels wear,
Like the rich casing that surrounds the gem,
Heightened the splendor of her brilliant genius.
Equally daring on the battle-field
And in the chase, her prudence and her courage,
Displayed in many a hot emergency,
Had twined victorious laurel round her brow.
Under her rule Palmyra's fortunes rose
To an unequalled altitude, and wealth
Flowed in upon her like a golden sea,
Her wide dominion, stretching from the Nile
To the far Euxine and Euphrates' flood —
Her active commerce, whose expanded range
Monopolized the trade of all the East —
Her stately capital, whose towers and domes
Vied with proud Rome in architectural grace —

Her own aspiring aims and high renown —
All breathed around the Asiatic queen
An atmosphere of greatness, and betrayed
Her bold ambition, and her rivalry
With the imperial mistress of the world.

But 't is the gaudiest flower is soonest plucked;
The sturdiest oak first feels the builder's axe.
Palmyra's rising greatness had awaked
The jealousy of Rome, and Fortune looked
On her prosperity with envious eye.
Under the golden eagles of the empire,
Aurelian's soldiers swept the thirsty sands,
And poured into Palmyra's palmy plains,
A mighty host hot for the battle-field.
Borne on her gallant steed, the warrior queen
The conflict sought, and led her eager troops
Into the stern encounter. Like the storm
Of their own desert plain, innumerable,
They rushed upon the foe, and courted danger.
Amid the serried ranks, whose steel array
Glowed in the noonday sun, and threw a flood
Of wavy sheen into the fragrant air,
Zenobia rode; and, like an angry spirit,
Commissioned from above to chastise men,
Where'er she moved was death. There was a flash
Of scorn that lighted up her fiery eye,
A glance of wrath upon her countenance —
There was a terror in her frenzied arm
That struck dismay into the boldest heart.
Alas for her, Fortune was unpropitious!
Her fearless valor found an overmatch
In the experienced prudence of Aurelian;
And scarcely could the desert's hardy sons
Cope with the practiced legions of the empire.
The battle gained, Palmyra taken, sacked —
Its queen a captive, hurled from off a throne,
Stripped of her wide possessions, forced to sue
In humblest attitude for even life —
The haughty victor led his weary legions
Back to Italia's shores, and in his train
His fallen rival, loaded with chains of gold,
Forged from the bullion of her treasury.

'Twas holyday in Rome. The morning sun,
Emerging from the palace-crested hills
Of the Campagna, poured a flood of light
Upon the slumbering city, summoning
Its teeming thousands to the festival.

A playful breeze, rich-laden with perfume
From groves of orange, gently stirred the leaves,
And curled the ripples on the Tiber's breast,
Bearing to seaward o'er the flowery plain
The rising peans' joyful melodies.
Flung to the wind, high from the swelling dome
That crowned the Capitol, the imperial banner,
Broidered with gold and glittering with gems,
Unfurled its azure field; and, as it caught
The sunbeams and flashed down upon the throng
That filled the forum, there arose a shout
Deep as the murmur of the cataract.
In that spontaneous outburst of applause
Rome spoke; and as the echo smote the hills
It woke the slumbering memory of a time
When Rome was *free*.

A trumpet from the walls
Proclaimed the day's festivities begun.
Preceded by musicians and sweet singers,
A long procession passed the city-gate,
And, traversing the winding maze of streets,
Climbed to the Capitol. Choice victims, dressed
With pictured ornaments and wreaths of flowers,
An offering to the tutelary gods,
Led the advance. Then followed spoils immense,
Baskets of jewels, vases of wrought gold,
Paintings and statuary, cloths and wares,
Of costliest manufacture, close succeeded
By the rich symbols of Palmyra's glory,
Torn from her temples and her palaces,
To grace a triumph in the streets of Rome.
With toilsome step next walked the captive queen;
And then the victor, in his car of state,
With milk-white horses of Thessalian breed,
And in his retinue a splendid train
Of Rome's nobility. In one long line
The army last appeared in bright array,
With banners high displayed, filling the air
With songs of victory. The pageant proud
Quickened remembrance of departed days,
And warmed the bosoms of the multitude
With deep devotion to the commonwealth.
High in his gilded chariot, decked in robes
Of broidered purple, and with laurel crowned,
Rode the triumphant conqueror, in his hand
The emblems of his power. The capital
Of his wide empire was inflamed with zeal
To do him honor and exalt his praise.

The world was at his feet; his sovereign will
None dared to question, and his haughty word
Was law to nations. Yet his heart was troubled.
In the dim distance he discerned the flight
Of Freedom, on swift pinions heralding
Enfranchisement to the oppressed of earth.
He knew the feeble tenure of dominion
Based on allegiance with reluctance paid;
And read the future overthrow of Rome
In the unyielding spirit of his victim.
Uncovered in the sun, weary and faint,
Bowed to the earth with chains of ravished gold,
With feet unsandaled, walked Zenobia,
Slave to the craven tyrant's cruelty.
Neither her peerless beauty, nor her sex,
Nor yet her grievous sufferings could melt
The despot's stony heart. She, who surpassed
Her conqueror in all the qualities
Of head or heart which crown humanity
With nobleness and high preëminence —
She, whose *misfortunes* in a glorious cause,
And not her *errors*, had achieved her ruin —
Burdened with ignominy and disgrace
For her resplendent *virtues*, not her *crimes*—
She who had graced a palace, and dispensed
Pardon to penitence, reward to worth,
And tempered justice with benevolence —
Wickedly torn from her exalted station,
Now walked a captive in the streets of Rome,
E'en at the feet of the oppressors steeds.
Yet was her spirit all untamed. Disdain
Still sat upon her countenance, and breathed
Unmeasured scorn upon her persecutors.
The blush of innocence upon her cheek,
The burning pride that flashed within her eye,
The majesty enthroned upon her brow,
Told, in a language which the tyrant *felt*,
That her unconquered spirit soared sublime
In a pure orbit whither *his* sordid soul
Could ne'er attain. Had he a captive led
Some odious wretch, whose sanguinary crimes,
Long perpetrated under sanction of a strength
No arm could reach, had spread a pall of mourning
Over a people's desolated homes,
He then had *right* to triumph o'er his victim.
But 't was not thus. Insatiable ambition
Had led him to unsheath his victor sword
Against a monarch whose distinctive sway
Ravished from Rome no tittle of her *right*;

And, to augment the aggregate of wrong,
That monarch was a woman, whose renown,
Compared with his, was gold compared with brass.
As o'er the stony street the captive paced
Her weary way before the victor's steeds,
And marked the multitudes insatiate gaze,
The look of calm defiance on her face
Told that she bowed not to her degradation.
Her thoughts were not at Rome. Unheeded all,
The billows of the mad excitement dashed
About her, and broke harmless at her feet.
Dim reminiscences of former days
Burst like a deluge on her errant mind;
Leading her backward to the buried past,
When in the artless buoyancy of youth
She sat beneath Palmyra's fragrant shades
And gleaned the pages of historic story,
Red with Rome's bloody catalogue of wrong.
Little she dreamed Palmyra's palaces
Should e'er be scenes of Roman violence;
Little she dreamed that *hers* should be the lot
(A captive princess led in chains) to crown
The splendor of a Roman holyday.
Alas! the blow she thought not of had fallen.
A bloody struggle, like a dreadful dream,
Had briefly raged, and all to her was lost,
Save the poor grace of a degraded life.
Her sun of glory was gone down in blood —
The glittering fabric of her power despoiled
To swell the triumph of her conqueror.
But in the wreck of her magnificence,
With eye prophetic, she foresaw the ruin
Of the proud capital of all the world.
She saw the quickening symptoms of rebellion
Among the nations, and she caught their cry
For *freedom* and for *vengeance*!
Hark! the Goth
Is thundering at the gate, His reckless sword
Leaps from the scabbard, eager to vindicate
The cause of the oppressed. A thousand years
The sun has witnessed in his daily course
The tyranny of Rome, now crushed *forever*.
The mighty mass of her usurped dominion,
By its own magnitude at last dissevered,
Is crumbling into fragments; and the shades
Of long-forgotten generations shriek
With fiendish glee over the yawning gulf
Of her perdition.

High in his gilded chariot, decked in robes
Of broidered purple, and with laurel crowned,
Rode the triumphant conqueror, in his hand
The emblems of his power. The capital
Of his wide empire was inflamed with zeal
To do him honor and exalt his praise.
The world was at his feet; his sovereign will
None dared to question, and his haughty word
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Of her perdition.

TEMPER LIFE'S EXTREMES

BY GEORGE S. BURLEIGH

'Tis wise, in summer-warmth, to look before,
To the keen-nipping winter; it is good,
In lifeful hours, to lay aside some store
Of thought, to leaven the spirit's duller mood;
To mould the sodded dyke, in sunny hour,
Against the coming of the wasteful flood;
Still tempering Life's extremes, that Wo no more
May start abrupt in Joy's sweet neighborhood.
If Day burst sudden from the bars of Night,
Or with one plunge leaped down the sheer abyss,
Painful alike were darkness and the light,
Bearing fixed war through shifting victories;
But sweet their bond, where peaceful twilight lingers,
Weaving the rosy with the sable fingers.

THE CRUISE OF THE RAKER

A TALE OF THE WAR OF 1812-15

BY HENRY A. CLARK

(Continued from page 136.)

CHAPTER V

The Revenge

The report of the pistol fired by Julia had also been heard upon the pirate brig. To Florette it gave assurance of the safety of the fair fugitive. The pirate sprang to his feet, forgetful of his wound, but fell back helpless upon the companion-way, and soon relapsed into his former thoughtful state, supposing the sound had come from the deck of the Raker, though it had seemed much too near and distinct to appear possible that such was the case.

The escape of Julia was not discovered until the following morning. The wrath of the pirate was fearfully vindictive. Even Florette became alarmed when he fiercely accused her of some share in the disappearance of the captive girl. This she tremblingly denied, suggesting the opinion that Julia must have jumped overboard, in her despair, induced by the threats of the pirate. The loss of the boat was also noticed, but not connected with the escape of Julia, it being supposed that it had been carelessly fastened. As a very natural consequence of his anger, the pirate sought some person on whom he could vent its fury.

"Call aft the other woman," shouted he, "unless she, too, has jumped overboard."

A grim smile was interchanged between the men who heard this order. John's true sex had not been long kept concealed after he had reached the pirate brig, and he had nearly fallen a victim to the rage the unpleasant discovery excited in the men, but his ludicrous and abject expressions of terror, though they awoke no emotions of pity, yet excited the merriment of his captors, and turned their anger into laughter. A man's garments were thrown to him, in which he speedily equipped himself, being indeed in no slight degree relieved by the change. Since that time he had kept himself as much aloof as possible from the crew, anxiously and fearfully expectant of some sudden catastrophe, either that his brains would be blown out without affording him an opportunity to expostulate, or that he would be called upon to walk the plank.

He was roused by a heavy hand laid upon his shoulder.

"O dear, don't," cried John.

"The captain has sent word for'ard arter you, and faith ye had betther be in a hurry, for he's a savage when he's mad."

"O! now I've got to do it."

"Do what?"

"Why walk the plank to be sure."

"Arrah, jewel! don't be onaisy now."

"Wont I's, don't you think?"

"Not a bit of it, darling. I think he will be afther running you up to the yard-arm."

"But I can't run up it."

"Ha! ha! but come along, honey."

Half dragging John after him, the sailor led him to the quarter-deck.

"Here's the lady, captain, an' faith she's a swate one."

The truth of the case had already been explained to the pirate.

"You cowardly fool," said he, "did you expect to escape by such a subterfuge? Pat, run him up to the yard-arm."

"Yes, captain, and that will be a relaif to him, for he was mighty afraid he'd have to walk the plank."

"He was? well then he shall."

The vindictiveness of the pirate commander, who had only changed the mode of John's death because he thought that by so doing he should render it more fearful and bitter to the victim, was the means of saving the poor cockney's life. So do revenge and malice often overreach themselves.

A long plank was laid out over the side of the brig and John commanded to walk out on it. He showed a strong disinclination to obeying, but a huge pistol placed against his forehead quickly influenced his decision, and with a cry of anguish he stepped out upon it. As the board tipped he turned to spring back to the brig, but slipping up, fell upon the board, which he pulled after him into the water.

"Fool," cried the captain to one of his men, "what did you let the board loose for, he will float now till the chase picks him up – fire into him."

A dozen balls were fired at John, and it seems he was hit, for he let go the board and sunk.

"There, captain, he's done for."

The brig by this time had reached a considerable distance from the place where John had been committed to the deep, and when he rose to the surface, as he soon did, he was out of danger from their shot.

"O dear!" cried he, "I shan't ever get ashore; I never could swim much."

The waves threw him against the plank.

"O! a shark! a shark!" shouted John, "now don't;" and he grasped hold of the plank in a frenzy of fear. He soon discovered the friendly aid it would afford him, and held on to it with the tenacity of despair.

In less than half an hour the Raker came up. John was noticed from its deck, and a brawny tar seizing a rope and taking two or three turns of it round his left arm sprang overboard to rescue the half unconscious cockney.

As the sailor seized him, John, supposing it to be a shark, uttered a loud cry and lost all sensation. In this condition he was hauled up to the deck of the privateer, where, upon recovering his senses, he found to his great surprise and joy, that instead of being in the belly of some voracious fish, like Jonah of old, he was in safety, and surrounded by the crew of his former vessel, the Betty Allen, including his master.

The poor fellow was severely wounded by a pistol shot, in the arm, but regardless of this he was wild in his demonstrations of joy, especially when told that his young mistress had also escaped.

Captain Greene found that he had gained little, if any, upon the pirate during the night, and became convinced that he must again commence firing upon her, trusting to some lucky ball to carry away a spar, or failing, to allow the villains to escape the punishment they so richly deserved, not only for their inhuman treatment of the crew of the Betsy Allen, but doubtless for numerous other crimes committed upon the seas, as savage in their conception, and more successful in their execution.

The long gun was again uncovered, and a shot dispatched from its huge portals after the pirate brig. The first ball fired fell short of the brig, striking the water directly in its wake, and ricochetting again threw up the water beyond it.

A succeeding ball, however, did some execution, crashing through her top-gallant forecastle, but without in any degree lessening her speed. As every fire from the Raker lessened her speed, Capt. Greene became exceedingly anxious that no balls should be thrown away, and commanded Lieut. Morris to point the gun, having more confidence in his skill than in that of the gunner. The young officer aimed the gun carefully, and as it was fired three cheers arose from his crew, as they perceived the pirate's mizzen-mast fall away.

"She is ours," cried the lieutenant.

"Stand by, men, to take in sail," shouted the captain. "We will draw near enough," continued he to Morris, "to fire into her at our leisure, a pirate is not entitled to a more honorable warfare, and he seems also to greatly outnumber us in men."

As the privateer approached the pirate they could not but admire the singular beauty of her build. She rose and fell upon the waters as gracefully as a free and wild ocean bird. The long red lines of her port-holes swept with a gentle curve from stem to stern, and her stem was so sharp that the bowsprit seemed rather to terminate than to join it. Twelve carronades occupied a double row of port-holes, and the deck seemed crowded with men, all armed with cutlases and pistols.

"A formidable looking set," said Captain Greene, as he laid aside his glass, "keep the gun lively."

An ineffectual fire opened upon the privateer from the pirate, but though they had a swivel of pretty heavy calibre, turning on its axis amidship in such a manner as to menace at will each point of the horizon, it was evident that its force was far less than the long gun of the privateer.

A well aimed shot brought down the pirate's fore topsail-yard, which hung in the slings, and succeeding shots did much injury to her masts and rigging, and at length the main-topmast fell over the side.

The scene on board the pirate, during this unequal warfare, was one approaching perplexity and disorder. Their commander stood by the helm, gazing at the privateer, his brow clouded with angry thought, and giving little heed to the movements of his crew. He was aroused from his abstraction by the voice of one of his officers.

"Captain, this is bad business, what is to be done?"

The captain gazed at him in silence.

"The crew are alarmed, and demand of you some relief from this harassing state. Our guns will not reach the chase, and we cannot leave her in this crippled state."

At this moment a heavy ball from the privateer whizzed by them and buried itself in the main-mast of the brig.

The captain seemed fully aroused. His eyes flashed with their wonted fire. He turned toward his crew, and saw at a glance the state of depression which had fallen upon them all. He even overheard some muttered words of complaint.

"Pat," says one, "this seems to be playing a rough game, where nothing is to be won on our side."

"Faith, an' ye may say that, but we stand a chance to gain one thing."

"What may that be, Pat?"

"O, a two-inch rope, and a run up to the fore yard-arm."

"The devil! That's not a pleasant thought, Pat."

"No, but they say it's an aisy death."

"Silence, men," was heard in the deep tones of the captain's voice.

In a moment all was still, and every eye turned toward the companion-way, on which the captain stood, resting one hand upon the main-boom, as he was exceedingly weak from the wound inflicted by the ball of Captain Horton.

"My brave fellows," said their leader, "do not be alarmed, we shall not be hanged this time. Is our situation any worse than it has been in times heretofore? Trust in me. Have I ever deceived you – have I ever failed yet? You know I have not. Where we cannot conquer by fair battle, we must use stratagem. Be watchful and ready, and we will yet not only escape yonder vessel, but stand upon her deck as masters."

The confidence with which he spoke inspired his followers with like feeling, and with countenances relighted by hope, they returned to their several stations. Their reliance upon their commander was unbounded. He had so often triumphed when even greater difficulties opposed, that they already felt sure of ultimate delivery, now that he had been restored to his former energy – they had mistaken the lethargy into which pain and weakness had thrown him for the torpor of despair. Again the joke and laugh went round, and already they began to compute their respective shares of booty in the vessel so soon to be theirs, they knew not how.

"Haul down the ensign, in token that we surrender," cried the captain.

A murmur of indignation and surprise arose from the crew.

"What, men, do you doubt me? 'Tis but a feint. Haul down the flag and take in sail."

The men obeyed with alacrity, for they already clearly comprehended the plan of their leader. It was his intention to entice the privateer alongside, and, well aware of his own superiority in numbers, to make a sudden onset upon her deck, and thus, contrary to all laws of honorable warfare, seize by foul means what could not be obtained in any other way.

These pacific indications were viewed with some surprise on board the privateer.

"By Heaven!" cried Lieut. Morris, "she's tired of this game soon."

"Well, she had no other way to do; as it was we should have sunk her without receiving a shot."

"It was a losing game for her, true enough."

"Lay the brig alongside of her," shouted Captain Greene to his men.

As his men with a cheer began to unfurl all sail, Captain Horton approached the commander of the privateer. He had up to this period ventured no interference, both from matter of delicacy, and because he saw nothing to disapprove of in the course pursued by Captain Greene.

"My dear sir," said he, as he laid his hand upon the arm of the captain of the privateer, "allow me to say a word."

"Certainly, sir," replied the courteous commander. "I ought sooner than this to have asked your advice."

"I would not place too great confidence in the pirate's signal of surrender."

"Do you apprehend foul play?"

"Recollect the savage brutality which the fiend has already evinced, and judge for yourself whether he is worthy of being trusted at all."

"You are right, sir. Lieut. Morris," continued he, turning to his young officer.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Load the long gun with grape and canister, and wheel it abaft – load the larboard guns the same way. Now, my men, don't run too near her. She must send a boat aboard."

The privateer approached within half a cable's length of the pirate.

"Ship ahoy!" cried Captain Greene.

No answer came from the pirate, but her head was rounded to, so as to bear directly down on the Raker.

"Answer me, or I'll fire into you."

"Fire and be d – d," came from the deck of the pirate, and at the same time a broadside was poured into the Raker, which killed two or three men at the guns, and severely wounded Captain Greene.

"Lieut. Morris," cried he, "take the command of the vessel," and falling on the deck he was immediately carried below.

The young officer was fully equal to the emergency of the occasion. At a glance he perceived that the pirate in the confusion which ensued from his unexpected broadside, had fallen foul of the privateer's rigging, and the crowd of his crew in his bow and fore-rigging, all with cutlases drawn, and ready to spring aboard the privateer, plainly announced the intention to board.

"All hands to repel boarders," shouted Morris, and drawing his cutlas he sprang forward, followed by his men.

A well contested struggle ensued, the American seamen, indignant at the foul deceit which had been practiced upon them, fought like tigers, and for a time kept the pirates at bay – they had indeed, notwithstanding their superior numbers, nearly driven them from the deck, when the form of their commander appeared among them. In consequence of his wound he had, contrary to his custom, entrusted the command of the boarders to his first lieutenant, and had remained upon his own vessel watching the fight. He sprung among his crew, with a sword drawn, and a tight sash bound around his waist, from which the dark blood was slowly oozing, his wound having burst away from its ligaments.

"Cowards!" he shouted, "do ye yield – ye are two to their one."

Leaping to their front, he struck down a sailor and plunged into the thickest of the fight. Reanimated by the presence of their leader, who had so often led them to victory, a new spirit seemed to light up the fainting courage of the pirates, and with a fierce yell they rushed forward. The American crew were compelled to fall back before the fierce assault. At the head of his men Lieut. Morris several times crossed swords with the pirate captain, but the swaying of the fight separated them. Perceiving that his men were slowly yielding, though in good order, Lieutenant Morris, cool and collected, cheered their courage, and at this moment thought of the long gun which had been drawn up, loaded to the muzzle with grape and canister, against the companion-way, and a man with a lighted match stationed by it.

"Fall back to the quarter-deck," cried the young officer.

They retreated in close array, and uncovered the mouth of the huge gun. At the sight of this a cry of dismay broke from the foremost of the pirates, who broke the front rank, and many of them escaped for the time by leaping into the sea.

"Fire," cried Lieut. Morris. In a moment he was obeyed. Wild cries of agony arose amid the gathering smoke, which, as it rolled away, revealed a horrible sight. Not a living pirate stood upon the deck of the privateer. A dense mass of bodies, writhing in pain, lay upon the fore-deck, and many of the pirates who had jumped into the sea were seen scrambling up the sides of their own vessel; the pirate chief lay dead at the head of his followers, foremost in death, as he had been in life. It was a terrible and revolting scene – the scuppers literally ran with blood, the bulwarks were bespattered with brains and pieces of scalps; several limbs were strewn about, and the entire deck covered with the dead or dying.

While the crew of the Raker stood for a time awe-struck at the desolation they had themselves made, the pirates, ferocious to the last, had regained their own ship and cut her adrift, and as they paid off fired a broadside into the Raker, which injured several of her men. Roused by this, the privateersmen rushed to their guns. The larboard guns, in obedience to the order of Captain Greene, were already loaded with grape; while with the starboard Morris commanded his men to keep up a steady fire at the masts and rigging.

A fortunate shot from the Raker struck the helms-man on board the pirate, shattering at the same time the tiller. In a moment the brig was up in the wind, and taken aback, throwing the pirates into confusion.

"Ready about," cried Morris, leaping from the carronade-slide on which he had raised himself, and taking in at a glance the exposed position of the enemy – "head her round, and stand ready to give the rascals a taste from our larboard quarter."

The Raker ranged across the bows of the pirate, and before he could regain his headway, raked him with a tremendous broadside of the same deadly missiles which had already destroyed so many of their comrades. The wild cries of anguish which arose from the clouds of smoke told with what destructive effect the death-bolts had been hurled.

The pirate now paid off and returned an ineffectual broadside, but rendered ungovernable by the loss of her head-sails and tiller, he immediately broached-to again, and the privateer poured in another terrible discharge of grape and canister, raking him fore and aft, then heaving-to and taking up a position on his bow, she fired broadside after broadside into him in rapid and deadly succession. The main-mast now fell over the side, and the pirate at the same time fell off before the wind, and drew out of the deep mantle of smoke which had for some time covered both vessels. As the smoke slowly curled up from the deep it was seen that not a living man was visible upon the deck of the pirate. Several of her guns were dismounted, and her masts so cut away that she lay upon the waters a helpless and disabled wreck. Yet the red ensign of death, though rent into ribbons, still fluttered from the peak, and the young lieutenant hesitated to board, having learned caution from the treachery of the pirate.

While the crew of the Raker were thus occupied in watching their enemy, a light female form was seen to issue from the hatchway and gaze around the deck of the pirate. She passed from body to body, but seemed not to find what she sought. At length she turned her eyes, streaming with tears, toward the Raker, and pointing to the flag above her, as if to indicate that there was no one to lower it, she knelt upon the deck, bowing her head upon her hands. Her long hair fell over her forehead and trailed upon the blood-stained deck, as she knelt in mute despair among the dying and the dead. It was a mournful and singular picture of wo, and there were eyes long unused to tears that filled to overflowing as they gazed upon her.

A boat was immediately lowered, and Lieutenant Morris with a dozen of his crew were soon in possession of the pirate's deck. Upon examining the brig it was found that she was fast filling with water, and after conveying to the Raker all that they could lay hands on of value, including a large amount of precious metal, she was left to her fate. Not one of her crew was found living, so destructive had been the continual discharge of grape from the Raker. Florette accompanied them on board, and wept bitterly as she saw the dead body of the pirate commander lying in front of his slaughtered followers, but suffered herself to be led below by Julia, who received her with kindness and gratitude.

All sail was now set upon the privateer, and she bore away from the sinking craft of the pirate upon her former course. The latter vessel, traversed in every direction by the Raker's terrible fire, was rapidly settling into the ocean. Suddenly, with a sound like the gushing of an immense water-spout, a huge chasm opened in the waves – the doomed brig seemed struggling as if with conscious life, and then lashing the waters with her shattered spars and broken masts, went down forever beneath the deep waters, over whose bosom she had so long rode as a scourge and a terror, with blood and desolation following in her wake.

Among the effects of the pirate captain which had been conveyed on board the Raker, a manuscript was found, which seemed to be an autobiography of his life. For what purpose he had written it can never be known – most probably from an impulsive desire to give vent on paper to thoughts and feelings which he could not breathe to any living person, and which he doubtless supposed would never be perused by human eye – they show that, savage, and lawless, and blood-thirsty as he had become, strong and terrible motives had driven him into his unnatural pursuit, and perchance a tear of pity may fall for him, as the gentle reader peruses the private records of the scourge of the ocean.

CHAPTER VI

The Pirate's Story

I am the youngest son of a gentleman of the northern part of England. My father's family is as good as any in the county, for without laying claim to any title of nobility, our blood is as pure and our lineage as ancient as the most boasted in England. I had but one brother, who succeeded at our father's death to the broad lands and rich heritage of our name. The accursed law of primogeniture, to which I owe all the evil that has befallen me, of course debarred me from all share in the family estate. I had refused to enter the army, the church or the navy, though my inclinations were in favor of the latter profession; yet a stronger claim than ambition or a roving life kept me on the paternal estate. It was not that I envied my brother the possession of the wide bounds over which he ruled, or that I found less happiness in witnessing his, for I loved my brother, as God is my witness, here, in my lonely cabin, with this great sea around me, and this broad sky above me; here, though no eye may ever see these lines, I write, do I repeat it, I loved my brother dearly and proudly. It was love that kept me idle at home while other young men of England, belonging to the same position in society as myself, and in the same unfortunate category of younger sons, were carving out for themselves fame and wealth in the service of their country.

Helen Burnett was the loveliest girl I have ever seen, and I loved her with all the passionate devotedness of a young and ardent heart; she was to me the light of life, for all was dark when I was not with her. She was the only daughter of our village curate, and resided near our family mansion. We had sported together beneath the venerable trees of the park from the earliest days of childhood. Until I left home for college she had seemed to me as a sister, and I had loved her as such until, on returning home from a long absence at college, I found a blushing and beautiful young woman where I had expected, forgetting the rapid work of time, to meet with the same playful and lovely child I had kissed at parting. She was, indeed, beautiful; tall, graceful, and even commanding in figure, while the mildness of an angel reposed in the glance of her deep-blue eyes, and the sweet smile that so often visited her lips, while her pleasantly modulated voice was music itself.

> "A lyre of widest range,
> Touched by all passion – did fall down and glance
> From tone to tone, and glided through all change of liveliest utterance."

Her hair was of the darkest shade of brown, resting in soft wave-like smoothness above her high, pale forehead. Alas! that she was *so* lovely! had she been less so, either I might not have loved her, or I might have been permitted by fortune to have been happy with her.

After leaving college, my time was all devoted to Helen. She loved me no less than I loved her; and I looked forward to a quiet and happy life, picturing the future with colorings of the brightest hope and joyfulness.

It was at this time that my brother returned from a long tour of the Continent. He was one of the handsomest men of the day, and had been distinguished by the appellation which had accompanied him from court to court, of "the handsome Englishman." He was of a medium stature, and faultlessly proportioned; his expansive and intellectual forehead seemed the seat of lofty thought, and his dark flashing eye, intensely expressive, seemed to penetrate to the heart of all who met its glance. I see him now – not in his glorious beauty, but pale – pale, touched by the cold fingers of death.

I had too much of the pride of my race to live as a dependent on my brother's bounty, yet I could not bear the thought of leaving Helen. I was in no situation to marry, and in an undecided state of mind I suffered the days to glide away.

My brother had just come back from a day's angling in the trout-stream that flowed through his lands. He met me at the park-gate.

"Well, John," said I, "what luck to-day?"

"O, William," said he, without heeding my question, "I have seen the most charming girl – the loveliest one that breathes. She outvies all I have seen in my travels; do you know her. She is the curate's daughter."

I felt a sickness at heart, like the bitterness of death – was it a presentiment, a warning of evil to come.

"Say, William?"

"Yes – yes, she is lovely."

"She is an angel."

Sir John passed into the park, and I proceeded, with a strange melancholy I could not dispel, to meet Helen. She was at her father's door, and greeted me with her accustomed kindness of voice and manner.

"Why are you so sad this lovely evening William?"

"Sad! – am I sad?"

"You look so."

"Well, I will be so no longer, then;" and I endeavored to shake off my depression, but not succeeding, I bade her farewell at an earlier hour than was my custom.

From that day my brother's angling excursions became more frequent – but he seldom returned with a full basket. He often spoke to me of Helen, but I always replied carelessly, and changed the topic of conversation to something else, yet when alone, I was in continual torment from my thoughts. I endeavored to console myself with the reflection that Helen's love was plighted to me, and that she would not change, yet my thoughts were continually recurring to my brother's great advantages over me in every respect, not only in fortune but in personal appearance; and I had already, in my suspicions, placed him in the light of a rival for the hand of Helen. I knew his high-minded and honorable disposition too well to fancy for a moment that he would attempt her ruin; and I also knew that there was nothing in the inferior station of Helen's family that would prevent him from seeking her hand in marriage, if she had compelled his love.

All that followed might perhaps have been prevented had I at first told my brother frankly of my love for Helen; but a foolish desire to prove her love for me, and a certain feeling of self-respect kept me silent.

It was not a long time before I either saw, or fancied I saw, a change in the manner of Helen toward me – the thought was torture. I was for days undecided how to act, but at length determined to learn the true state of things. I knew my brother was often at the parsonage, and I trembled for the result.

"Helen," I asked her, "is not my brother a frequent visitor here?"

It was twilight, but I thought I observed a heightened color in her cheek.

"Yes, he has been here several times since his return."

"Dear Helen, answer me frankly, has he ever spoken to you of love?"

She hesitated, but at length replied,

"He has."

"And did you not tell him your vows were plighted to another?"

"My father entered the room before I made any reply at all."

"Helen, do you love me now the same as ever you have done?"

"You have my plighted word, William." Yet there was something bordering on coldness even in the sweet accents with which she spoke; the nice instinct of love detects each gradation of feeling with an unerring certainty. I was not satisfied, and when I left her, I was more unhappy than ever. I longed to speak to my brother on the subject, yet some indescribable feeling prevented me; and I allowed the days to glide away, growing more and more troubled in mind as they passed by.

I was now convinced that Helen's affection for me was not what it had been; and after a short interview with her, in which she had again repeated her love for me, but in such chilling tones that I felt it was not from the heart she spoke, I sought the chamber of my brother in a state almost bordering on madness. All of our race have been of ungovernable passions, but none more so than myself. I paused at his door to regain in some degree my self-command, then lifting the latch, I entered.

"Ah, brother!" said Sir John, in a cheerful tone.

"Yes, your younger brother," replied I, bitterly.

Sir John started with wonder.

"Why, William, what mean you?"

I paid no heed to the interruption, but continued growing, if possible, still more enraged as I proceeded.

"Are not all the broad lands of our family estate yours – its parks, its meadows, its streams; this venerable mansion, where the *elder son* has rioted for so many generations, leaving the younger to make his way in the world as best he may."

"Brother, are you mad? My purse is yours – I have nothing that is not yours."

"You have every thing, and not content with that, you have sought to win away the love of my affianced bride."

"Who mean you, William?"

"Helen Burnett."

My brother turned pale, and gazing upon me for a moment with astonishment, he heaved a deep sigh, and covered his face with his hands.

I folded my arms, and stood looking upon him scornfully, for my passion had made me consider him in the light of one who had knowingly stolen away my bride.

Sir John at length uncovered his face and spoke.

"I would to God, William, you had told me this sooner."

"Is it then too late?" I inquired, bitterly.

"Too late – too late for my happiness, but not too late for justice and honor. She is yours, William, I resign all pretensions to her hand, and will cease to visit the parsonage."

I was touched by the generous spirit of my brother, and by the mournful shadow which clouded his noble brow. I have ever acted from impulse, and seizing him by the hand, I said,

"Not so, John – not so! She is, as I have told you, my affianced bride; her solemn and oft-repeated vows are mine, and I have thought that her love was forever mine; but this very night I plainly perceived that a change has been wrought in her feelings. She treated me with coldness instead of warmth, and maddened by my interview with her, I rushed into your presence, and have blamed you unjustly."

"My dear brother – "

"No, no, John, I was wrong to accuse you. I should have better known your nobleness. Henceforth let us stand on equal ground; I do not want an unwilling bride, and if you can win her love from me, take her, though it drive me mad."

A gleam of pleasure passed over Sir John's countenance as he replied,

"Be it so, my brother, it is but honorable; yet will I at once resign all hope, and leave the country if you but will it so."

"Sir John, have you reason to think that Helen loves you?"

"She has never said so, but I did not think she looked coldly upon me."

"She is 'false, false as hell!'"

"My dear William, however this suite terminate, any thing in my power shall be done for you. If the estates were not entailed, I would at once give you a deed for half of them, and then I should have no advantage over you in wealth or position. Here is an order for a hundred thousand pounds."

"Sir John I will accept nothing; if I lose Helen, I shall have no more to live for, and I warn you, if I become mad from disappointment, do not cross my path, or I know not the consequence."

"You do not threaten me."

I felt the turbulent passions of my nature rising within me, and fearing that I should lose all self-command, I rushed from the room, and entering the silent park, I wandered from grove to grove till the cool air of the night had calmed my raging spirit, when I sought my own chamber.

I had never told the worthy curate of my love for his daughter, and Helen had never been accustomed to depend on him for advice or consolation. It was to her mother that she had always turned for both, and that mother had died but a year before the return of my brother. Mr. Burnett was a quiet student, passionately fond of his books, as innocent of the world as a child, only fretful and peevish when any thing occurred to disturb the quiet monotony of his existence, and apparently unconscious that his little Helen had grown from a child to a woman. His mind was wholly wrapped up in his studies, even at his meals it was abstracted, and he retired hastily to his closet. Helen had no inclination to disturb the serenity of his life, until it became absolutely necessary that he should be made acquainted with her engagement to me; and I had been too thoughtless of all but my own happiness to intrude upon his privacy, confident that his sanction to our marriage would not be refused whenever demanded.

I had yet to learn the lesson, bitter and agonizing, that no woman is proof against the captivating temptations of ambition, and the glare of wealth. I know but little of the sex; they are called angels, and I had thought Helen was an angel – alas! I found my mistake. I read my doom in the averted coldness of her glance; I felt it in the unwilling pressure of her hand whenever we met, and I knew it when I gazed upon the countenance of my brother, on which was a quiet glow of happiness his expressive features could not conceal, even when he knew my searching glance was upon him. O! the agony of feeling which oppressed me in those bitter days; I felt all the savage passions of my nature rising within me; there were moments when I felt as if I could gladly see my brother and Helen stretched dead at my feet. Day by day these vindictive thoughts increased within me. It wanted but the finishing stroke to make me completely mad – it came. Though I had long dreaded to make the trial, on which all my happiness for this world rested, I at length determined to put it off no longer.

The shadows of twilight were settling over the earth as I slowly and sadly approached the parsonage. My head was bowed upon my breast as I walked with a noiseless step upon the little path that led to the unpretending dwelling. I was not aware how near I had come, till a ray of light from the window fell across the path, and recalled me to myself. As I stopped, I heard the tones of my brother's voice in low and earnest conversation. I drew nearer, and beheld a sight which rooted me to the spot, even though I was not wholly unprepared for such a scene.

My brother and Helen were seated in the little arbor before the parsonage, as she and myself had often before sat when I fancied our love was lasting as life. In the dim light I could see that my brother's arm was round her waist, and that her head rested upon his shoulder. I could hear their conversation.

"And you do love me, then, Helen?"

I heard no answer, but the long curls moved slightly upon my brother's shoulder, and as he bent his head and kissed her, I felt that he was answered – I was answered – that he *was* loved.

My brain burned as if on fire – and I sunk to the earth with a low groan. How long I remained unconscious I do not know; when I recovered, Helen and Sir John stood beside me. I sprung to my feet, and gazed upon them with the glare of a maniac. It was so – my brain was crazed.

"William," said Helen.

Her soft voice fell upon my ears with a singular cadence. With a fierce laugh I struck my brother to the earth, and rushed forth into the forest. All that night I must have wandered through its depths. I found myself at the break of day miles from our mansion, lying beneath an aged oak. I did not seem to know myself. I cannot now describe the feelings and thoughts which raged within me. The wild storm which is now lashing the ocean without my cabin is not more wild and fierce – the black sky above me is not more dark and gloomy. They seemed at length to settle into one stern, unchanging emotion, and that was hatred toward my brother, and a stern determination to revenge upon him the cruel wrong which had driven me mad.

My path led along the course of a mountain torrent, whose sudden descent as it hurried toward the river, formed successive water-falls not unmusical in their cadence. A few purple beech and drooping willows with here and there a mountain ash, skirted the ravine that formed its bed; their leaves had fallen before the blasts of autumn, they seemed emblematic of myself; like me their glory had departed – they were shorn of their loveliness by the rough storm, left bare and verdureless in the chilling breath of autumn; the seasons in their round would restore to them their beauty and their bloom, clothing their branches again in all the freshness of youth; but what should give back to me the freshness and youth of the heart? what restore the desolation of of the soul?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.