The Columbian.

COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT, STAR OF THE NORTH, and COLUMBIAN, Consolidated.]

Issued Weekly, every Friday Morning, at BLOOMSBURG, COLUMBIA CO., Pa.

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The Columbian.

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BLOOMSBURG, PA., FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 1887.

THE COLUMBIAN, VOL. XXI NO 4
COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT, VOL L, NO 45

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1 inch	$ 75	1 25	1 50	2 50	3 00	4 50	7 00
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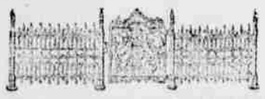

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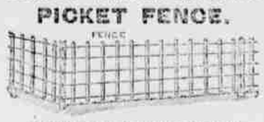

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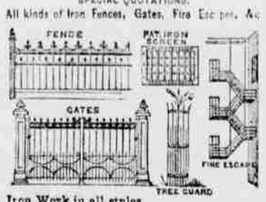

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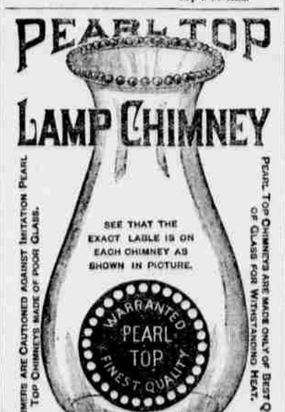

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RETRIBUTION.

BY "THE DUCHESS."

CHAPTER I.

The coffee and toast are suffering, the eggs and kidneys are growing cold, the butler is looking distinctly aggrieved, and Sir Thomas, lifting his head from his well aired Times, gazes across the table cloth, with a solemnity even more pronounced than usual, at his stepson, Granit Boyle.

"Your mother is late again this morning," he says testily. "This is, indeed, the third time this week she has been behind time."

"Old age begins to assert itself," suggests the younger man carelessly.

Something in the indifference of his tone nettles Sir Thomas. His brow contracts, and he stares angrily at the other, betraying how very little love is lost between them.

"Age has nothing to do with it. Your mother is not failing in any way, however much that thought may find favor with you! Your entrance into your kingdom will not be yet, I hope and believe."

This reference to his inheritance of a considerable estate on his mother's death raises a smile upon Boyle's lips and a contemptuous movement of his shoulders.

"I see no disgrace in old age myself," he says. "It has its drawbacks, perhaps"—with a look of studied insolence at Sir Thomas—"but its privileges too." He laughs slowly. "As you see, my mother is late—her privilege is to oversleep herself."

"Your mother, sir, has not been the same woman since the robbery of her jewel case, a month since. It has preyed upon her cruelly, as any one—who—who"—in his odd, fuming manner—"had a spark of feeling in them might have seen. But you are too devoted to your racing, your cards, your town dissipations, to spare a thought for one of the best women, the best mothers, who ever"——

His indignation is cut short in a very summary manner. The door is flung wide, and Lady Valworth, entering, totters to the nearest arm chair and sinks in to it.

"Oh! Thomas! Oh! good heavens!" she cries. "The diamonds!"

Sir Thomas, flinging down The Times, starts to his feet, and turns to her.

"Why the deuce can't you speak, Lucinda!" says he.

"They are gone!—gone, I tell you! I've searched everywhere, and they are not to be found. This is the second robbery—and where is the fault to be laid! What on earth is to be done?" The poor woman, growing quite hysterical, covers her face with her hands, and sobs aloud.

"Your diamonds! The family diamonds! Bless my soul! Has the world come to an end?" cries Sir Thomas. "But there must be some mistake. When"—putting on his most magisterial air—"did you see them last?"

"Two nights ago. I wore them at the Eyers' dinner. You remember, Granit? You came with us."

"Yes, I remember," says Granit.

"It is absurd. It is outrageous! Is there no law in the land?" fumes Sir Thomas. "Have you sent for the police—a detective"——

"Of what use was the detective we got down from town about my emeralds?" asks Lady Valworth despondingly. "No; it is a conspiracy—a deeply rooted one!"

"Nonsense!" growls Sir Thomas; "it's burglars. D'ye see your mother's concern, Granit—what do you think, eh?"

"Servants, I should say," laconically.

"Oh, my dear Granit!" cries his mother. "But which amongst them would you first suspect? We have had excellent characters with them all; and Johanna, as you know, has been with me for twenty-eight years—in fact, ever since you were born. Her character is surely established."

"It is the people with established characters who invariably enrich themselves at the expense of their employers. In the long run, they reward themselves for the years of correct living that they have endured. Take my advice, and keep your eye on Johanna."

He laughs cynically. There is, indeed, what one might almost believe to be an under current of amusement in his tone.

"This Johanna should, indeed, be well known to you!" breaks in Sir Thomas; "she was your nurse, I believe. She, as I have learned, is devoted to you—has given you almost a mother's love."

He is gazing at the younger man with a slow scorn in his old, but yet brilliant, eyes.

"Surely all that is no reason why I should seek to defraud justice of its dues," says the young man, with an indolent uplifting of his brows. "You, as a magistrate, would surely not suggest such a course?"

"What d'ye mean, sir?" cries Sir Thomas, turning upon him so fiercely that Lady Valworth, who has had cause to dread a collision between them, rushes into the breach.

"Pray reserve discussion, however amicable, until later on,' she implores excitedly. "I cannot listen to it now, I am so unstrung—so wretched. The emeralds were bad enough; but if nothing comes of the loss of these diamonds I don't believe I shall get over it. If they had been my own, I shouldn't so much have cared; but being yours, Sir Thomas, and expected by your heir—I"——

She breaks down again, and subsides into tears and her handkerchief.

"Now I must beg you will not so allude to this unfortunate affair," says Sir Thomas, a strong affection underlying the pomposity of his manner. "Let nothing outside the loss itself distress you—and, besides, there may be no loss; all yet is mere conjecture. Recovery of these jewels (if, indeed, they are gone) is sure."

"Positively certain," says Granit Boyle, with his inscrutable smile.

"In the meantime, as you are so unstrung, I shall recommend you a change," says Sir Thomas, laying his hand very kindly upon his wife's. "Go to town for a month or so, to your sister, Mrs. Brand—she always does you good—and leave me here to fight out this mystery."

But though he fights it out hardly, so far as money and perseverance can go, nothing comes of his exertions. The family diamonds have vanished as entirely, as mysteriously, as did the emeralds belonging to his wife a month before.

CHAPTER II.

Lady Valworth had been rather glad to avail herself of Sir Thomas' suggestion to spend a few weeks in town with her sister, Mrs. Brand—a fashionable woman of the world with a very kindly heart, who, childless herself, had adopted the daughter of a dead sister, now a charming girl of seventeen, and engaged to Granit Boyle, her cousin. She is, however, hardly to be regarded as a young lady fairly launched upon the world, as she is still undergoing a course of study with various masters, and reading in German three times a week with a governess—a girl of about her own age, who had lived so much abroad as to be an almost naturalized Prussian.

Nadine Roche counted herself lucky when she sought and found employment in the home of Mrs. Brand. She had drunk sufficiently deep of the waters of affliction to be almost on the borders of despair, when Fate, who is not always unkind, shunted her on to the line that led to, at least, a glimpse of prosperity. Her pupil blossomed into her friend. Mrs. Brand took a special fancy to her. Her feet seemed to have dropped into the primrose way, and she felt at last, poor little soul, that she could lift her head to heaven with the firm assurance that she could walk, without fear of falling, upon the earth beneath.

Her pupil, Millicent Grey, is almost as pretty as she is, if not quite. A tall, stately girl with fringed lids, from which the brown eyes look out as if in wonderment at the world outside, and soft sleek hair of a dark shade, that contrasts oddly with her retrousse nose, and that is so altogether put in the shade by the charming Grecian feature that distinguishes her governess. To many people, indeed, Nadine's merry mouth, and fair dancing locks, and eyes blue as a caverned sea, would have had their objections; but the child herself is so sweet, so gay, so suggestive of all things good and pure, that it would be impossible to regard her in any light except a kindly one.

With only the memory of a dear father—who had been a general in the Prussian army, although an Englishman—and a mother, very dear, but very dependent, to sustain her, Nadine, up to her connection with Mrs. Brand, had been compelled to look at life through anything but rose colored spectacles. And of late a chance of still surer escape from her dreary surroundings has suggested itself to her. Into her life (how, she hardly knew) a young man has fallen, who, while declaring his love for her, has at the same time repelled her almost as much as he attracts her. There had been a slight touch of romance in the manner of their meeting, but yet nothing very worthy of comment. A dull January night, ignorant of stars—a crowded crossing—a young man who had kindly come to her rescue in the absence of the necessary policeman, and who had piloted her across, through the tangled mass of vehicles, and landed her safely on the pavement at the other side. He had laughed aside her thanks, and when she had insisted on them, had demanded largesse in the shape of permission to escort her to her home. "The night was so dark, so stormy, so destitute of comfort in any form, and she was so evidently timid about the conquering of those terrible rubicons, the crossings, and he was so entirely master of his time for the next four hours."

It hardly took him one, however, to guide her to her home. She had steadily declined his offer of cabs or hansoms, but had felt it ungracious to refuse him further when he said he would traverse the distance with her on foot. In truth, she had been glad of his escort, and not altogether blind to the beauty of his face; and yet, as I have said, there was a repulsion as well as a fascination even then in her feelings toward him.

There was one other thing that puzzled her. Had she seen him before? Those marked features, those soft brilliant eyes—were they familiar? It seemed to her that somewhere in the rather immediate past she had seen him; but yet when he so kindly came to her aid on that crossing, just as she left Mrs. Brand's house, she could not connect him with any place or period, and after a while felt that her imagination had played her false in the matter.

When he had taken her home that night he had stood lingeringly upon the door step, until at last, in an uncertain way, half reluctant, half longing, half desirous of his departure, half eager to show some gratitude to one who had been so courteously kind, she had asked him to come in and let her make him known to her mother. The invitation was accepted with alacrity. Mrs. Roche, a gentle, tender voiced woman, received him with a little soft dignity that astonished him; and two hours later, when he left them, as they fondly but erroneously believed, on his way to his bed, he laughed aloud to himself on the deserted pavements of that anything but aristocratic neighborhood, as he called to mind how he had indulged in tea and toast at that hour, and enjoyed them too. What eyes that girl had! What a mouth! How gentle, how sweet, how lovable! Yet there was a fire about her too, that suggested many things, and made the pulses beat, and added ten thousand charms to those she already possessed. Well! He had lost his dinner, certainly, gazing at those beaux yeux, but there was always one's club, the gods be praised! and a supper that would be undeniable.

The acquaintance, thus opened, had been followed up with an ardor that perhaps astonished no one so much as the young man himself. He soon—astonishingly soon, as it appeared to Mrs. Roche—mastered the hours of Nadine's days. Knew when she was off duty and when on. Never put in an appearance on the Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays on which she gave her German lessons to Millicent Grey, Mrs. Brand's niece; but invariably dropped in on the afternoons of Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Sunday his visits were uncertain, but he came even on that day more than he stayed away.

Mrs. Roche was troubled a little about him at first, but grew accustomed to him later on, and admiring him intensely as she did (regarding him, indeed, as a breath from that old world in which she once had moved, but which had proved cold and forgetful when fortune's sun went down upon her life), was openly glad and gratified when one day her daughter came to her and told her how Mr. Annerley had asked her to marry him, and how she had given him "Yes" for his answer.

The girl had not seemed either elated or, indeed, moved in any way when telling her story, but had sighed rather, and been a little petulant and impatient—a most strange thing for her—during the remainder of the evening.

Paul Annerley had followed up his proposal by a graceful word or two to the girl's mother that had more than prepossessed her in his favor, and the courtship had run ever since very smoothly, all things considered—the man being passionately in love, the maiden cool, if always gentle and sweet, and as adorable in manner as in face.

From the first Mr. Annerley had been extremely open about himself and his prospects. He would talk continually of "your office," and was always positively eager to enter into any question that related to his status in life, his "business," as he called it, or his income.

"It is neither big nor small now," he would say, with his charming smile, that showed all his beautiful teeth, and lit up his handsome eyes. "But it will improve. I have many irons in the fire, and one sure thing, should all else fail. No, I never tempt Providence too far. I despise the man who puts his all upon the dice. I would have a reserve fund somewhere, however small it might be. Not that I should speak despairingly either"—with another brilliant smile—"of the little I can really call my own. It is sufficient to give bread and butter at least to not only one, but two—perhaps, indeed, three, should the desires be modest."

Here the handsome eyes fall meaningly upon pretty Miss Roche bending over her knitting, and then pass on to Mrs. Roche with an even more meaning expression in them, that the good lady would catch and dwell on afterward with a maternal delight.

Ah! if her Nadine could but be placed beyond the fear of poverty—beyond the hateful drudgery of teaching. If her daily bread might be earned for her, instead of the dear feet being pressed every day into the toilsome path of labor! Yes; certainly Paul was very open, very explanatory about his prospects; though, perhaps, after all, the explanations did not amount to much. He had an office—somewhere. An extraordinary press of business—sometimes! He was utterly destitute of relations—his father and mother having died when he was "quite a little fellow," and he was an only child. His sisters, his cousins and his aunts had no resting place upon the face of the earth—he was, as he would remark often in his deep pathetic tones, "alone in the world." He had friends, of course. Oh, yes! Every man had friends somewhere; but he found friendship a cold