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B. F. SLOAN, Editor.

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B. F. SLOAN, EDITOR.

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Poetry and Miscellany.

FOLLOW YOUR LEADER.

THE STORY OF A LIFE.

BY CHARLES MACKEY.

"Follow your leader!" So said Hovey.

In the joyous days when I was young.

Our meadow path, up mountain slope,

Through fragrant woods, I followed and sung;

And eye to eye with a glance he smiled,

Bright as the cherub in Paphos born.

And eye to eye with a glance he smiled,

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"What sort of people were they?" said I.

"Why, as I said before, interesting people. In the first place they were both extremely handsome."

"But the locality had nothing to do with their good looks, I presume," said I.

"I am not sure of that," she answered; "when there is the least foundation of taste or intellect to set out with the beauty of external nature, and the picturesque acci-

dent that harmonizes with it, do, I am persuaded, by their gentle and elevating influences on the mind, make the handsome handsome, and the ugly less ugly. But it was not alone the good looks of the Lovells that struck me, but their air of refinement and high breeding, and I should say birth—though I know nothing about their extraction—combined with their undisciplined poverty, and as evident contentment. Now, I can understand such people finding here an appropriate home, and being satisfied with the small share of this world's goods; because here the dreams of the romance writers about love in a cottage might be somewhat realized; poverty might be graceful and poetical here; and then you know, they have no rest to pay."

"Very true," I said; "but suppose they had sixteen daughters, like a half-pay officer I once met on board a steam packet?"

"That would spoil it certainly," said Mr. Markham; "but let us hope they have not. When I knew them they had only two children, a boy and a girl, called Charles and Emily; two of the prettiest creatures I ever beheld!"

As my friend thought it yet rather early for a visit, we had remained chattering in this way for more than an hour, sometimes seated on a tombstone, or a fallen column; sometimes peering amongst the carved fragments that were scattered about the ground, and sometimes looking over the hedge into the little garden, the wicket of which was immediately beneath the row. The weather being warm, most of the windows of the vicarage were open and the blinds were all down; we had not yet seen a soul stirring, and were just wondering whether we might venture to present ourselves at the door, when a strain of distant music struck upon our ears.

"To recognize me for my sake," I said, "it was the only thing wanting to complete the charm."

"It's a military band, I think," said Mr. Markham; "you know we passed some barracks before we reached the inn."

Nearer and nearer drew the sound, solemn and slow; the band was evidently approaching by the green lane that skirted the fields we had come by. "Hush," said I, laying my hand on my friend's arm, with a strange sinking of the heart; "they are playing the Dead March in Saul! Don't you hear the muffled drums? It's a funeral, but where's the grave?"

"There!" said she, pointing to a spot close under the hedge where some earth had been thrown up; but the aperture was covered with a plank, probably to prevent accidents.

There are few ceremonies in life at once so touching, so impressive, so sad, and yet so beautiful as a soldier's funeral. Ordinary funerals, with their unwieldy hearse and footmen, and the absurd-looking mutes, and the "inky cloaks" and weepers of hired mourners, always seem to me like mockery of the dead; the appointments being so closely on the grotesque; they are so little in keeping with the true, the only view of death that can render life endurable! There is such a tone of exaggeration, forced, heavy, over-acted gravity about the whole thing, that one had need to have a deep personal interest involved in the scene, to be able to shut one's eyes to the burlesque side of it. But a military funeral, how different! There you see death in life, and life in death! There is nothing unrestrained, nothing overdone. At once simple and solemn, decent and decorous, consoling yet sad. The chief mourners, at best, are true mourners, for they have lost a brother with whom "they sat yesterday at meat," and whilst they are competing in grief, recalling how merry they had been together, and the solemn tones of that sublime music float upon the air, we can imagine the freed and satisfied soul wafted on those harmonious beatings to its Heavenly home; and our hearts are melted, our imaginations exalted, our faith invigorated, and we come away the better for what we have seen.

I believe some such reflections as these were passing through our minds, for we both remained silent and listening till the swinging to of the little wicket, which communicated with the garden aroused us; but nobody appeared, and the tower being at the moment betwixt us and it, we could not see who had entered. Almost at the same moment, a man came in from a gate on the opposite side, and advancing to where the earth was thrown up, lifted the plank and discovered the newly-made grave. He was soon followed by some boys, and several respectable looking persons came into the enclosure, whilst nearer and nearer drew the sound of the muffled drums, and now we descried the firing party and their officer who led the procession with their arms reversed, each man wearing above the elbow, a piece of black cloth and a small bow of white satin ribbon; the band still playing that solemn strain. Then came the coffin, borne by six soldiers. Six officers bore up the pall, all quite young men, and on the coffin lay the shako, sword, side-hill, and white gloves of the deceased. A long train of mourners marched two-and-two, in open file, the private first, the officers last. Sorrow was imprinted on every face; there was no unseemly chattering, no wandering eyes; if a word was exchanged, it was only in a whisper, and the sad shade of the head showed of whom they were discoursing. All this was observed as they marched through the lane that skirted one side of the churchyard. As they neared the gate the band ceased to play.

"See there," said Mr. Markham, directing my attention to the cottage, "there comes Mr. Lovell. Oh, how he is changed!" And whilst she spoke the clergyman entering by the wicket, advanced to meet the procession at the gate, where he commenced reading the funeral service as he moved backwards towards the grave, round which the firing party, leaning on their firelocks, now formed. Then came those awful words, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," the hollow sound of the earth upon the coffin, and three volleys fired over the grave, finished the solemn ceremony.

When the procession entered the churchyard, we had retired behind the broken wall of the church, whence, without being observed, we had watched the whole scene with intense interest. Just as the words "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" were pronounced, I happened to raise my eyes towards the grey tower, and, peering through one of the narrow slits, I saw the face of a man—such a face! Never, to my latest day can I forget the expression of those features! If ever there was despair and anguish written on a human countenance, it was there! And yet so young! So beautiful! A cold chill ran through my veins as I pressed Mr. Markham's arm. "Look up at the tower!" I whispered.

"My God! what can it be?" she answered turning pale. "And Mr. Lovell, did you observe how his voice shook? At first, I thought it was illness; but he seems bowed down with grief. Every face looks awestruck! There must be some tragedy here—something more than the death of an individual! And feeling under this impression, that our visit might prove untimely, we resolved to return to the inn, and endeavor to discover if anything unusual had really occurred. Before we moved, I looked up the narrow slit—the face was no longer there; but as we passed round to the other side of the tower, we saw a tall slender figure, attired in a loose coat, pass slowly through the wicket, cross the garden, and enter the house. We only caught a glimpse at the profile; the head hung down upon the breast; the eyes were bent upon the ground; but we knew it was the same face we had seen before."

We went back to the inn, where our inquiries elicited some information, which made us wish to know more; but it was not till we went into the town that we obtained the following details of this mournful drama, of which we had thus accidentally witnessed one impressive scene.

Mr. Lovell, as Mrs. Markham had conjectured, was a man of good family, but no fortune; he might have had a large one, could he have made up his mind to marry Lady Elizabeth Wentworth, the bride selected for him by a wealthy uncle who proposed to make him his heir; but preferring poverty with Emily Dering, he was disinherited. He never repented his choice, although he remained vicar of a small parish, and a poor man, all his life. The two children whom Mrs. Markham had seen were the only ones they had, and through the excellent management of Mrs. Lovell and the moderation of her husband's desires they had enjoyed an unusual degree of happiness in this sort of graceful poverty, till the young Charles and Emily were grown up, and it was time to think what was to be done with them. The son had been prepared for Oxford by his father, and his daughter, under the tuition of her mother, was remarkably well educated and accomplished; but it became necessary to consider the future: Charles must be sent to college, since the only chance of finding a provision for him was in the Church, although the expense of maintaining there could be ill afforded; so, in order in some degree to balance the outlay, it was, after much deliberation, agreed that Emily should accept a situation as governess in London. The proposal was made by herself, and he rather consented to, that in case of the death of her parents, she would almost inevitably have had to seek some such means of subsistence. These parings were the first sorrow that had reached the Lovells.

At first, all went well: Charles was not wanting in ability nor in a moderate degree of application; and Emily wrote cheerfully of her new life. She was kindly received, well treated, and associated with the family on the footing of a friend. Neither did further experience seem to diminish her satisfaction. She saw a great many gay people—some of whom she named; and amongst the rest, there not unfrequently appeared the name of Herbert. Mr. Herbert was in the army, and being a distant connexion of the family with whom she resided, was a frequent visitor at their house. "She was sure papa and mama would like him." Once the mother smiled, and said she hoped Emily was not falling in love; but no more was thought of it. In the meantime Charles had found out that there was time for many things at Oxford, besides study. He was naturally fond of society, and had a remarkable capacity for excelling in all kinds of games. He was agreeable, lively, and exceedingly handsome, and sang charmingly, having been trained in participating by his mother. No young man at Oxford was more *forte*; but alas! he was very poor, and poverty poisoned all his enjoyments. For some time he resisted temptation; but after a terrible struggle—he had adored his family—he gave way, and ran into debt, and although the imprudence only augmented his misery, he had not resolution to retract his steps, but advanced further in this broad road to ruin, so that he had come home for the vacation shortly before our visit to T—, threatened with all manner of annoyances if he did not carry back a sufficient sum to satisfy his most clamorous creditors. He had assured them he would do so, but where was he to get the money? Certainly not from his parents; he well knew they had not it; nor had he a friend in the world from whom he could hope assistance in such an emergency. In his despair he often thought of running away—going to Australia, America, New Zealand; anywhere; but he had not even the means to do this. He suffered indescribable tortures, and saw no hope of relief.

It was just at this period that Herbert's regiment happened to be quartered at T—, Charles had occasionally seen his name in his sister's letters, and heard that there was a Herbert now in the barracks, but he had ignorantly supposed it was the same person; and when he accidentally fell into the society of some of the officer's friends, and was invited by Herbert himself to dine at the mess, pride prevented his ascertaining the fact. He did not wish to betray that his sister was a governess. Herbert, however, knew full well that their visitor was the brother of Emily Lovell, but partly for reasons of his own, and partly because he penetrated the weakness of the other, he abstained from mentioning her name.

Now, this town of T— was, and probably is, about the dulldest quarter in all England! The officers hated it, there was no dining, no dancing, no anything. Not a man of them knew what to do with himself. The old ones wandered about and played at whist, the young ones took to hazard and three-card-look, playing at first for moderate stakes, but soon getting on to high ones. Two or three civilians of the neighborhood joined the party, Charles Lovell amongst the rest. Had they begun with playing high he would have been excluded for want of funds; but whilst they played low, he won, so that when they increased the stakes, trusting to a continuance of his good fortune, he was eager to go on with them. Neither did his luck altogether desert him; on the whole, he rather won than lost; but he foresaw that one day night would break him, and he should be obliged to retire, forfeiting his amusement and mortifying his pride. It was just at this crisis, that one night, an accident, which caused him to win a considerable sum, set him upon the notion of turning chance into certainty. Whilst shuffling the cards, he dropped the ace of spades into his lap, caught it up, replaced it in the pack, and dealt it to himself. No one else had seen the card, no observation was made, and a terrible thought came into his head!

Whether too or hazard was played, Charles won of late, night after night, a most extraordinary run of luck. He won large sums, and saw before him the early prospect of paying his debts and clearing all his difficulties. Amongst the young men who played at the table, some had plenty of money and cared little for their losses; but others were not so well off, and one of these was Edward Herbert. He, too, was the son of poor parents who had straitened themselves to put him in the army, and it was with infinite difficulty and privation that his widowed mother had amassed the useful sum to purchase for him a company, which was now becoming vacant. The retiring officer's papers were already sent in, and Herbert's money was lodged at Cox and Greenwoods'; but before the answer from the House-Guards arrived, he had lost every expense. Nearly the whole sum had become the property of Charles Lovell.

Herbert was a fine young man, honorable, generous, impetuous, and endowed with an acute sense of shame. He determined instantly to pay the debt, but he knew that his own prospects were ruined for life; he wrote to the agents to send him the money and withdrew his name from the list of purchasers. But how was he to support his mother's grief? How meet the eye of the girl he loved?—who, he knew adored him, and whose hand it was agreed between them he should ask of her parents as soon as he was gazetted a captain! The anguish of mind he suffered then threw him into a fever, and he lay several days betwixt life and death, and happily unconscious of his misery.

Meantime, another scene was being enacted elsewhere. The officers, who night after night found themselves losers, had not for some time entertained the least idea of foul play; but at length, one of them observing something suspicious, began to watch, and satisfied himself, by a peculiar method adopted by Lovell in "throwing in his mares," that he was the culprit. His suspicions were whispered from one to another, till they nearly all