

The Montrose Democrat.

"WE ARE ALL EQUAL BEFORE GOD AND THE CONSTITUTION."—James Buchanan.

J. J. Gerritsen, Publisher.

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THE TRYING TREE.

"Deep in the forest was a little dell,
High over-arched with the leafy sweep
Of a broad oak, through whose gnarled roots
There fell
A slender rill that sang itself asleep,
Where its continuous toll had scooped a well,
To please the folk who sought its cooling
The stillness was as when the dreaming brook
From its small urn a drowsy murmur
Lozeth."

Hark!
A sudden and fearful crash of thunder starts
The heavens and shakes the earth.
A moment since the air was glittering and
sparkling with golden sunlight—the birds
were singing among the trees—the bees and
insects were humming drowsily. Now the
sun has a veil before its face, and the surface
of the earth has lost its golden hue.

Hark!
Again there is a tremendous burst of thun-
der—the forked lightning comes crackling
as it flashes with light. The sky each moment
darkens, until at an unnatural moment night
seems suddenly to set in.

The silence begins to be felt—to assume a
dead effect; the song birds have hushed their
warblings—the bright, many-hued insects have
ceased their busy hum—not a sound is now
to be heard.

Hark!
There is a sudden pattering and rattling on
the leaves of the forest trees. A thunder-
shower has commenced to fall.

Along a narrow, damp, earthen, beaten
pathway, beneath the widely spreading, inter-
lacing leaf-vent branches of the huge
elm, and broad oak in the forest of Hunting-
field, hurried an affrighted young girl.

She was on the way from Woddingene to
Latimers, where she resided with her father.
This path, which was the only foot way through
the forest, for which communication between
the two places could be obtained, was six
miles in length, and she had to travel three
to reach her home—a small neat cot-
tage, in a very small village. She was timid
and nervous—extremely apprehensive of
thunder and lightning—and had at this mo-
ment a too keen recollection of all the ter-
rible stories she had heard of the ravages
committed at various times by thunderbolts.

As she began to enter the dell, she was
gladly and gratefully reminded of the
clattering upon the broad leaves as it fell,
her heart best; quicker; and when a broad
sheet of flaming lightning illuminated the
whole forest, only to render its recesses and
depths darker and gloomier than ever, she
was ready to faint upon the pathway.

Still she hurried on; the forest grew more
sombre, and each moment murkier still. She
glanced uneasily right and left, and peered
into the misty recesses, but no living thing
greeted her sight. The trees were within
hairs—the birds were in their nests—nothing
was to be seen, and soon it seemed that
nothing would be seen, for the air darkened more
each moment, and the way beneath the vast
forest trees grew indistinct as in the night
time.

Now a vivid flash of lurid light lit up every
spot, then all again faded away. The
deluge of rain burst, with its
soft vibrations; and then she ran up against
something soft—screamed and sunk in a
swamp upon the ground.

When she recovered she found herself lying
at the foot of a huge tree, surrounded, on
all sides, by willow-bushes, close at her feet
meandering a silver stream—murmuring,
gurgling, and splashing, as it swiftly glided
over its shallow bed—chanting a low, mourn-
ful, quivering song, as it forced its way
over the rugged stones abounding in its
course.

Over her, bending with earnest, anxious
look, was the face of a young man, handsome
as the Angel Michael. Her eyes pursued the
lineaments of his features with wonder. Was
she in a dream?

A fearful flash of lightning, followed by a
terrific crash of thunder, made her scream,
and spring to her feet in unconsciousness
of what she did, to nestle in his breast.

"Be not alarmed, pretty one!" he said
gently. "It is but a thunder-storm. It will
soon be past. It is a violent too last long."
She could not articulate a word for the
reverberating echoes, still sullenly repeated,
through each moment dying away.

His arms were entwined round her waist,
and her face was buried in his shoulder. It
was only when she heard the beating of his
heart, as he felt perhaps a certain relaxing
pressure of his arms, that she became con-
scious that her situation at that moment did
not altogether square with the rules of maiden
propriety; and so, though yet much terrified,
she disengaged herself from his arms, and
in a low voice said she should be better
soon.

"The sun will shine presently," he said in
a musical voice, and the birds will warble in
the air again; the rain will depart with the
thunder-clouds, and your spirits and your
courage will come back with returning light.
You are safe here. Rest in peace—calm your
fears: you will soon be able to go on your
way again."

She looked in his face. How particularly
handsome it was!—how precisely that ideal
of manly beauty she had formed in her own
mind as the perfection of masculine good
looks! His eyes were large, soft and deep
blue; his eyelids were large, top, and gave a
dreamy character to his eyes. His skin was
transparently fair; his cheeks had the glow
of health upon them; his teeth were white
and even his hair was long and fair; and
altogether, face and form, he was just the young
fellow, to distract a young girl with a supple-
mentary heart, as he was.

Ellen Clinton—for that was the young girl's
name—thought not as she perceived his features,
and her eyes, as they sought his, went directly
into the glowing blue.

"How came I here, sir?" she asked, with
an embarrassed air.

He laughed.

"You, like myself, were caught in the
storm, and was hurrying, I presume, to Lat-
imers."

"Yes."

"And too deeply engaged in peering on
each side of you, ran into my arms, screamed,
and fainted."

"How foolish!" she exclaimed, blushing.
A loud crash of thunder, preceded by a
brilliantly vivid flash of lightning, burst with
startling suddenness at that instant; she ut-
tered a shriek, and once more nestled in
his arms, which he folded protectingly round
her.

He held her there to shield her; and she
would have held her longer than there was

any necessity for, so far as protecting from
danger was concerned, but that she disengag-
ed herself as quickly as she could, recover
from her terror, and stood apart from him.
It was at least two hours before she sent
for him, and then, he saw that she had been
sleeping, but he made no remark.

"Arthur," she said, addressing him, "I
wish you to go over at once to Latimers for
me."
"With pleasure, dear mother."
"Who?" cried Arthur, startled.
"A Mr. Clinton. Do you know the name?"
"I apprehend you will not have much difficulty
to find him; like me, he has but one child;
that, however, is Ellen—daughter. Yes, her name,
I remember, is Ellen—Ellen Clinton."
"O, yes! mother—"

"Arthur!"
Horribly confused, Arthur stammered out
an excuse for his interruption, and put his
hasty remark to a readiness to execute her
wish, instead of his true cause. She accepted
and believed it.

"Yes," she continued, "the girl was a
sweet child, and bid fair to grow up into a
beautiful young woman. You will probably
see her at her father's house."
"Yes, dear mother."

"Avoid her!"
"Aye, avoid as though she breathed pesti-
lence!"

Completely electrified, Arthur gazed in his
mother's stern face speechless.

"But mother!" he exclaimed, "she surely
can have done no ill!"
"I know not. She belongs to one who has
—to one I hate—hate, bitterly—fiercely, un-
forgivably—her father, boy! and so I bid
you to avoid her, if you would not have my
curse!"

"Mother! Mother! this is not the Chris-
tian doctrine you sometimes preach to me
and to others!"

"I know it—painfully know it! In this
matter I am a heathen; but though all the
world howl this in my ear, I cannot with
Christian apothems remove from my soul the
inextinguishable hatred I bear that man—
Your task will be easy, if his name be
Clinton. He will answer in the affirmative;
and you will then hand him this letter, and
leave him. Should you see the girl, treat her
with scornful contempt. Go, my son!—I
shall be sick at heart until I know that you
have executed my mission."

Without a word, Arthur took the packet
and departed on his errand.

As he made his way through the forest he
pondered on his mother's words, and though
he could not unravel them, it was clear there
was some painful story behind them—what,
he could not imagine, but he determined to
try and discover.

As to avoiding Ellen, that was easy to
counsel. He had met her before he had any
notion that his mother was in any way con-
nected with a member of her family, and he
was not disposed to resign her because of
some unreasonable hatred she entertained for
another.

He speculated and imagined, and drew out
a chain of circumstances, and worried him-
self all to no purpose. When he reached
Latimers the sum of his cogitations was that
it was a strange coincidence he should have
met with her as he had, that there should
have been some former communication between
his family and hers; but he thought it would
be far stranger if any quarrel between the old
people should prevent the meeting of the
young folks at the trying-tree!

Of course, he marched straight up to Mr.
Clinton's residence on gaining Latimers, and
was ushered into the parlor, where sat Major
Clinton and his pretty daughter, who looked
at Arthur with glittering eyes, surprised that
she was to see him there.

"Your name is Clinton I believe?" said
Arthur respectfully to the major.

"It is sir," said the old soldier, erecting
himself into a stern, upright position. "Pray,
to what am I to attribute the honor of this
visit from an entire stranger?"

"I have been requested by my mother to
place this packet in your hands," replied Ar-
thur.

The major snatched it rather than took it.
He tore open the cover, and reading a few
lines, he threw the packet furiously upon the
table, and in a fierce tone, he exclaimed to Ar-
thur, "Your name, I presume, is Spencer?"

Arthur bowed.

"But for the imperative laws of hospitali-
ty," the major almost howled, "I would fain
carry you across into the road. You will un-
derstand, thereby, young sir, that your presence
here is, to me and my daughter, especially
offensive. I need not suggest to you, there-
fore, that it will be prudent in you to retire
before you are thrust out, and though I never
permit myself to get in a passion, I—"

"Father! father!" cried Ellen, throwing
herself in his arms and bursting into tears,
—"what is it you would do to one who can-
not have ever offended you?"

"Do not plead for me, Miss Clinton," ex-
claimed Arthur; "some day Major Clinton
will hold me in better estimation than he
does now, and you will be glad to see me."

"Never, you impudent puppy!" roared
the major after him.

The street-door slammed—the major thrust
his head out of the window. "Never you,
impudent jack-pot!" he shouted.

Had Arthur been less pained he would have
said; as it was, he made his way home
with a sad heart. He greatly softened in his
mother the account of what had taken place.

"I was prepared to hear much worse," she
said.

The trying tree was now the only spot
where Ellen and Arthur dare meet; and these
meetings they were obliged to manage
with discretion and care, to avoid discovery,
especially as the brother of Mrs. Spencer,
General Noel, had arrived from India. He
had taken a fancy to Arthur, and occupied a
great deal of his time. Still, Arthur contin-
ued occasionally to give him the slip, and
most his dear little Ellen, who seemed to
grow sadder and sadder as their meetings
grew wider apart. At length the General
began to suspect these slings and was re-
solved to find out where Master Arthur slipped
to the first time he considered him absent
without leave, and with what object he
disappeared. Now, it happened that Major
Clinton had his attention roused to the
fact that Ellen was seldom out of the house
with the very maddest and most obstinate
solace—she walked in the wood, no matter what

suggestion of his, of a trip somewhere else,
and he pressed before they reached
Woddingene.

They found Mrs. Spencer in the most am-
iable of tempers. He day was bright and
sunny; besides, the unexpected return to Eng-
land of a brother whom she fondly loved, had
enlivened her spirits, and made her almost a
different woman.

Arthur introduced Ellen to his mother as
the daughter of one of General Noel's oldest
and most valued friends, and the old lady
took her in her arms, kissed her, took away
her bonnet and pretty little mantle, and with-
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she would really would make him a very nice,
pretty little wife.

Arthur clasped his hands and bowed. El-
len's face and neck became of the brightest
crimson.

Here Sophie started. She heard the door
bell ring. With a nervous spring she stood
before her mirror, smoothing down her brown
hair with a taste truly comical.

"It won't do to seem interested," she said,
as she took a finishing survey of her person
in the glass, and shook out with her plump,
jawed fingers, the folds of her airy muslin
dress.

The moment afterwards, when a servant
entered to announce Mr. Harry Ainslee, she
was back to her old seat by the window,
rocking and playing with her fan, apparently
as unconcerned and listless as though that
name had not sent a quicker thrill to her
heart, or the betraying crimson all over her
pretty face.

"Tell him I will be down pre-
sently," she said.

The girl disappeared, and Sophie flung open
the window, that the cool, fresh air might fan
away the extra rosin from her complexion.
Then she went again to the mirror, and after
composing her bright, eager, happy face into
an expression of demureness, descended to the
parlor. A smile broke over her features, and
she reached out both her hands to the guest;
but as if suddenly recollecting herself, she
drew them back again, and with a formal bow
of recognition, she passed him and seated
herself in a further corner of the room.

It was very evident that something was
wrong with Sophie; that she had made up
her mind, either not to please, nor to
please. Could it be that she had foreseen
what was coming? that a presentment of that
visit and its result had dictated the merry
speeches in her chamber? It is that she may
have had some premonition of the fact that
Ainslee's land and fortune, (which latter, by
the way, was nothing wonderful), were in the
same place where Captain Morris and Dr.
Wilkins had been before him.

"The first man that I ever heard say such
things without making a fool of himself,"
muttered Sophie emphatically from behind
her fan, as she sat blushing, and evidently
the gallant straight forward speech in reply to
her lover had risked its all of hope.

"He ought to do penance for the pretty
way he manages his tongue. He's altogether
too calm to suit me." And Sophie shook her
curly head meaningly, holding her fan before
her for a screen—nor did she forget what she
had been saying! "I wonder if I could now
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Sophie's blue eyes danced with suppressed
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and drawn towards him as they never before
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But she could not give up her rallying then
she would go one step further from him ere
she laid her hand in his and told him she
dearer than all the world beside. So she
checked the tender response that trembled on
her tongue and flinging off his grasp, with a
mocking gesture and a ringing laugh danced
across the room to the piano.

She seated herself, she ran her fingers grace-
fully over the keys, and broke out in a wild,
brilliant, defiant song, that made her lister-
less single as he stood watching her, and
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"Sophie, listen to me!" he said at length,
as she paused from sheer exhaustion. "It is
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turn into ridicule the emotion of a heart that
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crowding to his lips for utterance.

"Sophie, listen to me!" he said at length,
as she paused from sheer exhaustion. "It is
generous—it is just, to trifle with me so to
turn into ridicule the emotion of a heart that
offers you its most reverent affections?"

like a flight to me afterwards. Then there
was Dr. Wilkins—he was agreeable, and
people said very learned. I was delighted
with him for a time, but he spoiled it all with
the offer of his—what long waded adjective!
and how the poor fellow blushed, and puffed,
and perspired!" He called me an "adorable
creature," and blushed in the middle of
"adorable." Horrors! I have detected him
ever since.

Here Sophie started. She heard the door
bell ring. With a nervous spring she stood
before her mirror, smoothing down her brown
hair with a taste truly comical.

"It won't do to seem interested," she said,
as she took a finishing survey of her person
in the glass, and shook out with her plump,
jawed fingers, the folds of her airy muslin
dress.

The moment afterwards, when a servant
entered to announce Mr. Harry Ainslee, she
was back to her old seat by the window,
rocking and playing with her fan, apparently
as unconcerned and listless as though that
name had not sent a quicker thrill to her
heart, or the betraying crimson all over her
pretty face.

"Tell him I will be down pre-
sently," she said.

The girl disappeared, and Sophie flung open
the window, that the cool, fresh air might fan
away the extra rosin from her complexion.
Then she went again to the mirror, and after
composing her bright, eager, happy face into
an expression of demureness, descended to the
parlor. A smile broke over her features, and
she reached out both her hands to the guest;
but as if suddenly recollecting herself, she
drew them back again, and with a formal bow
of recognition, she passed him and seated
herself in a further corner of the room.