

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

From the London Metropolitan Magazine for Dec.
THE WOMAN-HATER.

"Trust not the tresson of those smiling looks,
Until you have their guileful trains well used."
BRYANT.

'Many remembrances,' says Aristotle, 'make up one experience,' and if it could be hoped or expected that remembrance of written words would make up an experience, as well as that of actions, I might with justice anticipate much good from the records of my past fortunes. Alas! that the verbal teaching of the old falls powerless on the ear of the young, and nothing but the sad contact with calamity and sorrow can write upon the heart the lessons of wisdom and prudence. But the melancholy pleasure of looking back from the shores of age on the angry waters just past over—of recounting old perils and escapes—induces me to incur the charge of useless tedium, by reading, to all who will listen, a page from that riddle-book of creation, woman.

But you do me much injustice in calling me a woman-hater, in the proper meaning of the term; I hate no being, and in few things. It is true, that the society of those, the music of whose tones, the roundness of whose forms, and the intoxication resulting from whose intercourse, remind me too forcibly of miseries I would fain forget, is distasteful; true that it lacrates to the cruellest degree of anguish my inward heart; and therefore I fly from it, seeking in the passionless communion with books, an excitement less enthralling perhaps, but infinitely richer in calm joy and not inactive contemplation. With my whole heart do I desire to benefit the sex whom you would say I detest, but I would fain do so without the expense of personal pain to myself, which must result from their contact and intercourse. If there be any truth in the assertion that I hate woman-hat, it is, that I abhor the woman-man and the world have made, but that I love and reverence the trusting being of feeling and affection whom God intended she should be.

Many years, when I was in Cambridge, I cherished a favorite theory, favoring of Platonism as I think, of silliness as I know, that nature never did, and never would, unite surpassing loveliness of form to anything but corresponding purity of soul and refinement of intellect. How rudely this theory was shaken from its basis—how this chaff of speculation was dissipated before the wind of practice, shall now be shown. Leaving Cambridge one summer with the determination of visiting the Lakes of Cumberland in search of that health which had been but a sad transient from my body, I fell in, during my journey northward, with a young lady and her father, with whom I was slightly acquainted, and who invited me to join them in their route, as our destination was nearly the same—an invitation with which my love of society induced me cheerfully to comply. Would that my tongue had failed me before I had acceded to any such fatal measure! Aura Merion was the very loveliest creature I ever saw; I cannot elaborate a description of her personal

excellencies. To you, my friend, or some other in whose veins the pulse of youth is leaping, such a task must be left for me; it must be enough to say, in one word, she was beautiful. A dash of foreign blood in her race had given her the spotless paleness of a warmer clime, without robbing her of her golden hair and blue eye of her native land. Grace and symmetry of form go to the completion of this picture, which I cannot look upon in the gallery of memory, even at this distant time, without a thrill. Her voice was softness and music, an excellent thing in woman, and there was an artlessness of manner which lent tenfold effect to its tone. See! I have made a sketch, at the moment I vowed it should be left to you.

As fathers are sleepy companions, my conversation with Miss Merion was almost uninterrupted, except by the delays incidental to a well travelled road. Little as I had previously known of her opinion or predilections, a few hours sufficed to place us on terms of the most perfectly apparent intimacy; we had passed, with the steps of light and playful criticism, over the regions of literature usually cultivated by a feminine intellect, and the kind smile was the signal for recall when either was straying where the feet of the other were unable to follow; we talked of love, with the calm candor of two philosophers, little fearing that a few short days would change the tone of our remarks, and add the intensity of personal interest to the warmth of the theme. I well remember the sense of undefined pain with which I received an impression drawn from her manner rather than from her words, of the interest she felt in the destinies of a certain mutual male friend, then in a foreign land, and soon after in his grave. This sense of pain should have warned me, as indeed in subsequent days it would, that something was growing up between me and Aura Merion, which would soon be unredicable by all efforts on my part. Was it madness or infatuation that led me on to love, where I saw I must either occupy a second place, a divided heart, or wait for the expiration of a former passion, ere I could hope to excite the new? As was said, the hand of fate was laid on Aura's lover, and in a week or two the news of his death removed the external part of the barrier; the internal remained to be dealt with. Could anything, however, be more damping to the young ardor of affection than the knowledge that Aura's love was elsewhere bestowed? To mine it was not damping, more than the rain-drops to a blazing forest. In her presence, reason and cold calculation of chances were lulled to sleep, and passion and intoxication awake. Then first did I learn to appreciate the caution of the old men in Homer, who demand the removal of the war creating, beautiful Helen, lest her presence should influence the deliberation, and sway the voice of the councillors.

Our journey terminated, but not its consequences. A few miles of separation alone lay between our homes, and my feet or my bridle rein turned offener towards hers than was at all consistent with the change of scene, the search after which had been the ostensible cause of my visit to Cumberland. Whether she delighted in the saddle, or loved that particular path, we met daily. The tale is told—I deeply loved her.

I feel that I am gossiping, and know that those who have never fallen victims to that soft passion (a very soft passion it is,) and those who fondly hope they never will, may alike turn over these pages with disdain. You, my young friend, will not do so, because they will at least interest you as coming from one you have known and loved. For other and remoter readers, I shall look for my recompense among those whom Eros has rendered docile and greedy of knowledge of the passion that devours them. Even these I shall spare the details of meeting after meeting, of the thousand little endowments of love's currency that circulated between us, of the songs copied or written, the flower gifts never for a day neg-

lected, (some of Aura's are in my desk still) the many silly nothings which, to those alone most deeply interested, acquire a local habitation and a name.

To this forbearance an exception must be made. Some miles from the scene of my sketch was the ruin of an ancient abbey, placed in a patch of scenery, such as here and there in the wide world, Nature decorates in the highest of her skill, as if for her own peculiar abode. A couple of moons had waned upon my intercourse with Aura, when a party was made up for the purpose of visiting this ruin, and duly chartered, we set off—one of the vehicles, in which was Miss Merion, with some others of the party being entrusted to my pilotage. Everything, the season, the drive, the scenery, was delightful, and tended to inspire the thoughts and emotions most favorable to love. We gazed our fill on the ruin, wandered around it until the sun had glided with his latest glory; and then, with the sombre yet not unpleasing melancholy such a sight must inspire, we left the place. The aged pile had told us his story; we saw him in the backward eye of fancy, when the pale and white robed sister was gliding through his happy cloisters, and we heard the organ pealing till his pointed windows trembled at its sound—and now all was decay. A starry night clothed the heaven to light us homeward. From the disposition of our party I could converse with Miss Merion unheeded and the neglected rein hung from my hand as I poured into her ear all that fancy could supply or love dictate. We looked up the sapphire vault, and she quoted the poetry of Italy with a tone of feeling and expression entirely irresistible. I, on my part, spoke what I knew of Chaldean and Egyptian lore, that read that sky like a book of prophecy; then of Aratus, and his starry imaginings, whose fancy had covered the mazy heavens with regular and life-like pictures. Like a lark, weary of soaring, our converse at length turned homeward, and we spoke of ourselves. I told her of my love, my mon than love; and she recorded a certain night when I appeared to her in sleep—recounted the things I said, and the pleasure they gave her. Her pressure of my hand when I drew up the horses at her home, gave me assurance of the warmth of her heart—and it was a lying assurance—but mark the sequel!

The poetical temperament (without meaning the mere faculty of versifying) is peculiarly dangerous to one under the influence of love. It sheds a light of tenfold brilliancy over each lovable attribute in the object, and, by dazzling the eyes of the subject, precludes the chance of his perceiving anything else. All drawbacks, all shadows of character, are concealed; and as the illusion thus formed is perfect in beauty, so is the displacement of it dreary and full of sorrow. To say that in Aura I detected no fault, were even to say less than the truth. I had throned her as my idol, and in the intensity of my worship shunned rather than courted that weakness of mind by which the wood, earth, and stone might have been seen and estimated. A somewhat too high valuation of rank and birth seemed to my eyes the only foible of Miss Merion's character; she seemed little to feel Edmund Spencer's dictum that 'love is nobility'; but having it in my power to claim the worthless distinction of a belted earl as my great-great (I know not, how many greats) grandfather, I viewed this taste of hers as an additional tie. See the blindness throughout!

Aura's departure for Scotland on a short visit filled me with grief, heightened by a strong presentiment of longer separation. We parted in all tenderness, and—so slow over this painful portion of the narration rapidly, in three weeks she returned. We met again in one of her accustomed walks; she was not alone, but the glad words of greeting and welcome were springing to my lips. Could it be? her soft eye wandered above, around, across me, without meeting the passionate glance it should have been ready to return. She passed—she who three short weeks before had told

me how I was the subject of her dreams, without the solution due to a common acquaintance; and words cannot describe the stupified misery she left behind. I was awake; a thousand things came back from the past to tell me I had given my heart and soul to one, whose affections were doffed and donned as easily as a cloak or bonnet. And yet it was hardly credible; and when I saw her at a ball, I could not refrain from asking her hand for a dance. It was not withheld, and the tact with which her soft voice spoke of indifferent subjects, without trenching on explanation, or even touching the past, was admirable, if not admired.—Sick and wretched, with a lump in my throat like a peach, choking with excessive and conflicting passions, I left the room—the house, and strode through a smoking rain and tempest of wind to my home.

The demanded and reluctantly granted interview of explanation—the heartless false jargon about unmeaning attention, her ignorance of my motives, and the like—are better omitted. Our farewell took place late one evening, and the next sunrise found me on the box of a south mail, on my way to bury my sorrows, and, if possible, my remembrance, in the sober studies of Cambridge. What was the real cause of Aura's changed demeanor? An English gentleman named Pentegru, the owner of a beautiful house and broad lands in the part of Scotland whither Aura went, had seen her, loved, proposed, and—won. True, three weeks was a short time!—true; former passions must be banished or forgotten;—true, Mr. Pentegru possessed no single recommendation beyond a very honest, well-meaning simplicity; belonging to a class—the uneducated country gentleman—now almost extinct. True—all these things militated against his suit—the proposal was made beneath his own stately roof, and in the night of his own blood—his fields, his Merion's mother, too, was there, and he was successful. It was Aura's third attachment within four months!

My heart was schooled to calmness. I had, indeed the bachelor's gown, and completed my academic course, before I ventured near the scene of the above adventure. The little town of—was gay and noisy on the night I entered it, with all the glories of a race ball, or some such festivity. As the mail rattled past the windows of the illuminated hall-room, I felt a longing to enter its precincts, which was too easily gratified to be resisted. Miss too, all bows and smiles, told me what steps were necessary towards gaining admission, and an hour saw me ascending accounted for the scene of revel. A waltz was in progress as I entered the door, and that very moment Miss Merion was being whirled past by a tall and strikingly handsome officer, most unlike the only man she should have been waltzing with, Mr. Pentegru.

'Who is that gentleman?' asked I, of a friend stood near.

'Captain Etheling. Miss Merion has been waltzing with him the whole evening.'

I turned away and moved onward, caught her eye, and threw as much meaning as possible into the distant bow that I gave her.

Captain Etheling was a young man, who had recently changed his name on his accession to an immense fortune; handsome and accomplished, little requisite to make him an universal favourite in the little circle of the town of—. Accordingly, he had scarcely been three weeks there, when every female and most of the males, were ready to join loudly in his praises—the rather, as his demeanor was marked by the most polished courtesy and affability, Miss Merion, not insensible to the value of such a conquest, and undeterred by principle and respect for her engagement to Mr. Pentegru, had used every endeavour to bring him to her feet, and had succeeded fully, if one might believe the accredited judges of such things in—. The two appeared inseparable, and many an envious glance was directed at the supposed future husband of Aura, her previous betrothment to

Pentegru being unknown. Military duty however, having summoned Captain Etheling away, without any formal proposal having transpired, the circumstances were fast wearing out from the memory of the good people of—

Not many days elapsed before a carriage, furiously driven, stopped at the door of Miss Merion's residence, and out of it leaped Pentegru. To his demand of a private and immediate interview with Aura, her mother, to whom the demand was made, offered no opposition. They were left alone for some time, until Mrs. Merion, alarmed at the fierce loudness of Pentegru's tone, opened the door that led to the room, to interrupt or prevent anger so strange and unseemly.

'You told Captain Etheling, too,' was saying in a tone tremulous with suppressed passion, 'when he said he loved you; that of him you had thought with sentiment such as you can never feel towards any other man.'

A deep sob was the reply.

'That his image was next to your heart; sleeping or waking, and that you loved none other.'

The same inarticulated answer was returned.

'And yet during the time you were betrothed to me! Is it—is it really all true?'

'Most true,' faintly answered Aura, 'and true, that if Captain Etheling had the feeling of a man of honor, he would never have addressed, solely to insult and deride me.'

'Woman! Henry Etheling loved you with the warmest affection of a good man; he told me all, that I might advise him respecting your immediate union.'

'Told you all,' replied Aura, 'that you might advise?'

'Are you ignorant that Etheling is my brother?'

Mrs. Merion stepped forward to prevent her fainting daughter from falling on the floor, whilst Pentegru, having violently rung the bell, rushed out of the house like a man distracted; and the sound of his retreating carriage-wheels had died away before Aura had opened her eyes to sadness and sorrow. When she did so, she appeared totally changed; her useful graceful pride of demeanor was vanished forever; she seemed crushed and humbled, and walked about more like some passionless spectre than a young and high-spirited woman. Whatever she might have said to Etheling, whose reserve respecting himself had caused this strange incident, I believe that, as far as she was capable of loving, she was devoted to Pentegru. The want of that consistency of character, for which we must look to principal, to religion, not to impulse, led her to violence, to this devotion, rather perhaps for the sake of display and indulgence in a sickly sentimentality, than of any thing baser; and the consequence was the loss of him whose regard she most wished to cultivate and attract.

Pain and sorrow now follow every word I write. Two days after this took place, I had drawn my chair to a cheerful fire, and had opened a volume of the Republic of Plato, determined to beguile the hours thus till bed time, for the evening had closed in; when a knock at my door (I was lodging in a snug house near—) made me start from my chair in alarm—so loud, so violent was it. No time was left for surmise, for a young surgeon of—, named Jones; rushed abruptly into my apartment. 'For God's sake!' he said, 'for God's sake, my dear sir, do you know any thing of Miss Merion's movements to-day?'

Mr. Merion's carriage passed my door this morning, towards—,' said I, trembling at every joint, as if a palsy had struck me, 'and I think she was in it with her mother.'

'Oh! merciful Heaven forbid! I left my surgery early this morning, and the boy who should have remained in went out too! On my return I found a box containing a vital of poison missing, and a guinea left in it'