

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.

A VENITIAN STORY.

It was the carnival in Venice, and gaiety was at its height. The doge was giving his last ball, at the close of the merry season, and the beauty and nobility of the "Island-throne-city" were gathered in his princely halls. The masked crowd thronging the splendid apartments, presented a singular appearance to the casual spectator. Look beneath the gorgeous curtains of yon golden tall and powerful looking Turk, very much as if he were endeavoring to wean from heaven the affections of the sylph-like nun at his side! Or, mark yon holy father whispering spiritual comfort into the ear of the stately duenna, bending to his words. And that harlequin dressed fortune teller prophesying the destiny of the full, voluptuous figure whose hand he holds. Why he must be near-sighted; or perhaps cannot see well through his mask; for look! he bends lower and lower, and now his mask is pushed to one side for a moment, as his lip presses the snowy little hand that trembles within his own. Aha! call you that palmistry, signor!

Apart from the motley crowd, in the embrasure of one of the windows, stood two maskers, both apparently female; the taller was evidently on the shady side of "sweet sixteen," if one might judge from a rather large and yellow wrinkled hand, which was exposed with an elegant carelessness that would have gone far to win the heart of an antiquary. The perfectly erect back, and the curbed-like position of the head, plainly marked duenna.

The other, a shorter and slighter figure, wrapped in a plain domino, which served to conceal (as a dew drop conceals the blush of a rose) a full and rounded bust, the general outline of a most exquisite form, and from beneath the robe peeped forth,

O, such a foot!
It could have trod upon a violet,
Nor bruised the beauty of its perfumed petals.

And what lips must those have been which gave birth to those mellow tones that murmured from behind the mask!

"Benedetta! dost thou know yon gallant in the black doublet, leaning against the porphyry pillar! See how the dark plume of his hat is blended with those long jetty tangles that cluster over his shoulder. Is he not of a noble presence?"

"Holy Mother! signorina," replied Benedetta, "my eyes would need to be as young and even sharper than thine, to pierce yon mask; nor neither do I see aught in the plain looking dress that might mark a great nobility. Look to yon proud Brunelli, with all the diamonds of his house glittering on his velvet trappings, looks he not bravely? See, ton—Blessed St. Catherine!" cried she interrupting her own eloquence, "one might as well be talking to the ugly old statue of San Marco there; it would give as much attention at least.—Come, signorina, it is time we were departing, the ball will soon break up. They left the window; but as the younger figure glided along, she vanished entirely, she cast one look at the pillar, but it was unoc-

cupied, and with a half sigh she followed the duenna.

The mask over, the palace of the doge was deserted, and the Lagoon thronged with gondolas.

Italy showed as dark a day as ever Greenland boasted; Cynthia had taken this night to play Hecate, and probably the stars were attending her, for not one of "the angel lit lamps of Even," shed its trembling radiance on the earth. The dark waves of the Adriatic rolled on, with a deep gushing sound, their course just shown by the faint phosphorescent light of their foam-crowned tops, and night wore a veil of intense darkness that was oppressive to the heart. The Lagoon was disturbed by the ceaseless dash of oars, and the cutting sound of the prows, as they moved through the curling waves.

Hark that crash! a gondola has been crushed by another. A shriek ran through the stillness of the night; the clouds, as if pierced by its sound, suddenly severed above, and the moon looked dimly down upon the dark waters. A gondola was swimming amid a confused mass of wreck. Upon its side stood a tall manly form; the slight plank quivered as he sprang from its side, and sunk into the dark flood; he rose again and bearing something, swam towards the bark; the faint light of heaven served to show his burden; a young and fair girl was placed in the gondola, a pale, rigid, but exquisitely lovely face; when placed upon the cushions inside, the lamp showed the form and features of the lady; a long and flowing dress, saturated with the water, displayed the symmetrical proportions of the former, and the small snowy hand, and the face shadowed by long wild tresses of a dark hue, although apparently insensate, possessed that beautiful life with which a statue glows.

"Blessed St. Catherine!" sputtered some body in the water, at the side of the boat, "will he not help me?" and our old acquaintance Benedetta was assisted on board, still firmly grasping the top of the cabin that form the interior of the Venitian boats. After fully comprehending that she was safe, she began to look about, and after another invocation to St. Catherine, she turned towards the interior of the bark, saw the apparently lifeless form of her lady and sprang to revive her.

She was quickly restored, and soon, in her father's palazzo, dreamed of the face of him who had saved her; for he had knelt beside her while assisting the duenna, and as the life current began to tinge the lip of the maiden, he stooped and did something, I would not tell for the world, but it restored the bloom of that pale cheek to a miracle.

About three or four weeks after the commencement of our story, in the window of an old castle, sat a beautiful girl, clustering tresses of the dye of a rich, ripe chestnut, parted simply over her beautiful brow, fell in wavy silken curls over her shoulder, shadowing one of these faces which we seldom see out of sunny Italy; rather oval in shape, with features cast in a beautiful, although not a perfectly regular mould, glowing with such an expression as Raphael must have dreamed of in imagining his Madonna.—Her cheek had that delicate blush which the setting sun gives to a snowy cloud; on her soft and perfumed lip, love might have pillowed his brow; and thought it his own birth-rose; but the brightest charm of that glorious face was the eye, dark, soft, and intensely bewitching, for her soul beamed from it. The purest spirit might have gazed upon those orbs, as they melted into the softness or sparkled with joyous light, and worshipped them without sin. The heart on which one glance fell, became that moment hers; and with that look would arise those dreams that make the bosom of all poetry, those hopes that glow with softness that passion only knows—those spells that could take

—The imprisoned soul,
And lay it in Elysium.

Behind her stood an old lady, whose

withered face, twisted into a most determinate fault-finding look, when joined to the prim, old maidish air of the whole body, plainly introduced Mrs. Benedetta—I don't know who.

"If I saw correctly, signorina," said the duenna, "they were like mine, of a golden color."

"For shame," cried the lady, "thine are red! and his were as dark as the plumage of the raven, and soft and silken, for they drooped upon my cheek when the signor—" and the maiden hesitated and blushed.

"Pressed his lips to thine," finished Benedetta, "a bold undertaking truly! to dare to kiss a signorina Virginia Contavalle.—Blessed St. Catherine! had he attempted to do the like with me," added she, drawing up her prim form, still more primly, and pursing up her mouth as if she were eating a crab-apple.

"What wouldst thou have done?" asked the lady.

"Served him as I did my lord's servant, on the night of the eruption, when the peasantry were running all to the villa; and I had gone down for a moment to speak to them, when this Luigi—"

"Hush," interrupted the lady; as the chords of a guitar were struck under the window. Scarcely was the song finished, when, assisted by the fellwork placed near the house, a form, in all probability that of the singer, sprang upon the balcony and soon, with its plumed bonnet doffed, knelt at the feet of the lady.

His figure seemed perfectly symmetrical. Long tresses, "black as night," hung clustering on his shoulder, and warm and very dark eyes looked into those of the maiden; and as her cheek suffused beneath his intense gaze, he appeared like the Persian kneeling in worship the last rosy blush of the setting sun.

He attempted to take her hand; when she arose and looked about the room for her attendant; but the duenna had vanished; and when the handsome signor murmured "Lady! dear Lady!" and looked so imploringly upon her, and when she called an unusual frown to her fair brow; and then looked down into his dark eyes and felt that fading most rapidly away, what could she do? Why, she did what any sensible maiden would do in such a case, she smiled and sat down again.

But scarcely had he again murmured "Lady!" when, with such a "hem" as waiting-maids and duennas alone can give, Benedetta opened the door, and pushing aside the hangings, ushered in an old gentleman, with a diamond top snuff box in his left hand, and a diamond hilted, unsheathed sword in his right.

The maiden and lover started to their feet; the old gentleman placed himself in a fencing attitude, and requested the youth to draw, he laid his hand upon his sword; but demanded a moment's parley, which advance his adversary politely answered by shouting "one." The youth drew his sword in time to receive the "two."—"Three," shouted he of the diamonds, and made a desperate plunge at his opponent, who caught the thrust in his guard. Whip! went the sword to the ceiling; and the victor springing to the balcony, was soon like the gay young knight of the song.—

"Away, away, away."

I'll Cente Contavalle, for it was no less a personage than the father of our heroine, with a rather heightened contour, helped himself first to a pinch of snuff, and then to his sword, that lay on the floor before him, and then placing it under his arm with a most significant "humph," he turned to gaze upon his daughter.

The lady stood with erect form, gazing with curling lip and flashing eye, on the duenna; for the soul of woman was roused at the betrayal; and the beautiful Italian, with all the pride of her noble line, stood in the proud halls of her father, the very impersonation of beautiful scorn.

The attendant cowered beneath the eyes of the insulted lady, and obeyed her haughty motion as she waved towards the door.

Scarcely had she departed, when the maiden, the full idea coming at once upon her, that she of the line that had given monarchs to Italy, the representative of the pure, unalloyed blood of the noblest family of her clime, was betrayed, insulted by a slave; giving way to the softer feelings of a woman, sought a woman's refuge—tears.

The father waited patiently until she had become calm, and then demanded an explanation.

The lady then described to her father.—[who had already heard it from his valet, who in turn had received it from the duenna, who was not the best authority imaginable for any thing.] the scene upon the lagoon, the brushing of the gondola, sink into the deep quiet waters, the sensations she experienced as they closed over her head, the dreadful agony, the whole pain of death which can be known short of actual dissolution, the call on Heaven, and the feeling that was all over—and then her language became milder and less impassioned, as she spoke of her rescue from the wave, of the gondola, of the firm bending over her, endeavoring to bring her back to life and light, and of her happy dreams, when restored to consciousness, and conveyed to her home; and then she told of the music and the song, and the signor springing on the balcony—and then you know, my dear father," added she, putting her hands upon his shoulders, "and then you know, you fought and were disarmed, and—"

"Get out!" interrupted her father, and departed muttering, "Diavola! the young puppy! how dare he save my daughter! and proffer love to her, and disarm me! which is the worst of all."

The road leading to the villa of Count Contavalle, passed about a mile from the dwelling, through a thick forest much infested by banditti. This hot-headed old count had summoned all his retainers, to endeavour to route them from the fastnesses of the wood; they had not proceeded very deep into the forest, when a volley of three or four muskets was heard, and the Count's troops, with the characteristic bravery of the Italian peasantry—fled.

The old noble would have scorned to fly from a thousand banditti, and therefore drew his sword and waited for the approach of five men who advanced towards him; they evidently expected an easy victory, and were, therefore, somewhat surprised when the foremost received a thrust from the delicate rapier of the Count, which laid him quietly on the grass—dead; the remaining four immediately set upon the old man, who defended himself stoutly; but in vain, it was going hard with him, when a voice behind exclaimed "Corpi di Baccho! four upon one! and he an old man? cowards!" A pistol shot accompanying this, sent a second bandit to accompany his friend, and a young man springing to the Count's side cut down another; the remaining two fled, and the old man turned to thank his deliverer.

"Signor, you have given me timely aid—Corpo di Dio!" cried he, as he started at the handsome youth by his side, "why I think we've met before—but it is not at all to my credit to remember the rencontre; you have shown good spirit to-day; come to my villa, where I will give you a good glass of old monte-pulideno that might warm the heart of an anchorite—and hark ye! I like you; and you shall, if so please you, have my daughter, were you the poorest Sir in Christendom. That you are noble your bearing plainly shows."

"But will the lady be quite willing?" asked the cavalier. "There is no doubt of it," answered the father, "who could resist one who sings such songs, if he has more-over saved the life of the listener. For that too I have to thank you, but come along."

They reached the villa, and ere long the beautiful valley was gladdened by the nuptials of the signorina Virginia Contavalle and the young Prince Pampili Borghese.

Birds, Canker Worms.—I see it stated in your paper of Friday, that the probable reason why the canker worm commits small ravages in Floh, is found in the care with which the birds are protected. I was reminded of a remark in Peabody's Life of Wilson:—

"He enters into a deliberate calculation of the exact value of the services of the red-winged blackbird, which certainly bears a good reputation on the farm, showing allowing a single bird fifty insects, a which would be a short allowance, a gle pair would consume 12,000 in four months, and if there are a million of pairs of these birds in the United States, the amount of insects is less by twelve thousand millions, than if the red-wing were exterminated." Let any person during the brooding season of robins or other birds, rise by break of day and count the number of times old ones return in one hour with worms and insects, or, if he can, let him count through the day, and the number will be found to be almost incredible. The practice of killing birds for mere amusement is not merely indicative of cruelty and want of feeling, but is exceedingly detrimental to the interests of the community.

And, now that I am upon the subject of insects and worms, let me add that there is a very unreasonable prejudice against toads. They are exceedingly valuable in gardens and other places, in consequence of the exterminating warfare they are constantly waging against bugs and worms. Any person who has them in his garden has a treasure there; and if he will watch them closely, he will find them accomplishing more in the way of preserving his squash and cucumber vines and other vegetables than he does with all his troughs of liquid.—Boston Courier.

COMING THE DELICATE.

We saw a couple of yellow darkeys on Sunday, a stout boy and his sweet heart, and the way they tortured the Queens English would have given Dr. Johnson the hysterics. They were returning from church, and as we passed them the "fair nigger," who was resting languishingly upon Sambo's arm, exclaimed:

"Dar! look dar: dat's de berry ossif whar de gen'lman distracted one of my teef."

"Which! you doesn't say so, Miss Rosetta!"

"Yes, but I does though."

"Poor ting! Dib'nt pe operation gib you uncommon seruciation?"

"Not berry. I only fainted tree times, and the doctor gib me camfire and fetch me too. You eber had any ob you teef sacrificed, Sambo?"

"Yes, dear, seberal!"

"And did'nt you swoon like I did?"

"Neber, not the fuss time."

"Dat's bekos you belong to de hard seck! If you was soft, like I is, you would hab fainted, shun."

Oh, Miss Rosetta, I believes you speaks the truf. When I comes to disiract your soft tenderness wid my hard disabilities, den I make stragvant spressions. But if you'll allow me de solicious pleasure ob presenting the painful subject on which we's been taking for a more lubly them?"

We'em off then.—Pica-yune.

Slander.—'Gainst slander there is no defence. Hell cannot boast so foul a friend nor man deplors so fell a foe. It stabs with a word—with a nod—with a shrug—with a look—with a smile. It is the pestilence walking in darkness—spreading contagion far and wide, which the most weary traveler cannot avoid; it is the poisoned arrow whose wound is incurable; it is the mortal sting of the deadly adder: murder its employment; innocence its prey; and ruin its sport.

Passion is a sort of fever of the mind, which ever leave us weaker than it found us.

But, above all, observe it in resentment; for there passion is most extravagant.