

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.

THE LONDON APPRENTICE.

FROM MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK.
By Boz.

In the sixteenth century, and in the reign of Queen Elizabeth of glorious memory, (albeit many of her golden days are rusted with blood) there lived in the city of London a bold young apprentice, who loved his master's daughter. There were no doubt within the walls a great many apprentices in the same condition, but I speak of only one, and his name was Hugh Graham.

This Hugh was apprenticed to an honest Bowyer who dwelt in the ward of Cheppe, and was rumored to possess great wealth. Rumor was quite as infallible in those days as at the present time, but it happened then as now, to be sometimes right by accident. It stumbled upon the truth when it gave the old Bowyer a mist of money. His trade had been a profitable one in the time of King Henry the Eighth, who encouraged English archery to the utmost, and he had been prudent and discreet. Thus it came to pass that Mistress Alice, his only daughter, was the richest heiress in all his wealthy ward. Young Hugh had often maintained with staff and cudgel that she was the handsomest. To do him justice I believe she was.

If he could have gained the heart of pretty Mistress Alice by knocking this conviction into stubborn people's heads, Hugh would have had no cause to fear. But though the Bowyer's daughter smiled in secret to hear of his doughty deed for her sake, and though her little waiting woman reported all her smiles (and many more) to Hugh, and though he was at a vast expense in kisses and small coin to recompense her fidelity, he made no progress in his love.—He durst not whisper to Mistress Alice save on sure encouragement, and that she never gave him. A glance of her dark eye as she sat at the door, on summer's evening after prayer time, while he and the neighboring apprentices exercised themselves in the street with blunted sword and buckler, would fire Hugh's blood so that none could stand before him; but then she glanced at others quite as kindly as on him, and where was the use of cracking crown's if Mistress Alice smiled upon the cracked as well as on the cracker?

Still Hugh went on, and loved her more and more. He thought of her all day, and dreamed of her all night long. He treasured up every word and had a palpitation of the heart whenever he heard her footsteps on the stairs or her voice in an adjoining room. To him, the old Bowyer's house was haunted by an angel; there was enchantment in the air and space in which she moved. It would have been a miracle to Hugh if flowers had sprung up from the rush strewn floors beneath the tread of the lovely Mistress Alice.

Never did apprentice long to distinguish himself in the eyes of his lady-love so ardently as Hugh. Sometimes he pictured to himself the house taking fire by night, and he, when all drew back in fear, rushing through the flame and smoke and bearing her from the ruins in his arms. At other

times he thought of a rising of fierce rebels, an attack upon the city, a strong assault upon the Bowyer's house in particular; and he falling on the threshold pierced with numberless wounds in defence of Mistress Alice. If he could only enact some prodigy of valor, do some wonderful deed and let her know that she had inspired it, he thought he could die contented.

Sometimes the Bowyer and his daughter would go out to supper with a worthy citizen at the fashionable hour of six o'clock, and on such occasions Hugh wearing his blue apprentice cloak as gallantly as apprentice might, would attend with a lantern and his trusty club to escort them home. These were the brightest moments of his life.—To hold the light while Mistress Alice picked her steps, to touch her hand as he helped her over broken ways, to have her leaning on his arm—it sometimes even came to that—this was happiness indeed!

When the nights were fair, Hugh followed in the rear, his eyes riveted on the graceful figure of the Bowyer's daughter as she and the old man moved on before him. So they threaded the narrow winding streets of the city, now passing beneath the overhanging gables of old wooden houses whence creaking signs projected into streets, and now emerging from some dark and frowning gateway into the clear moonlight. At such times, or when the shouts of straggling brawlers met her ear, the Bowyer's daughter would look timidly back at Hugh beseeching him to draw nearer; and then he would grasp his club and longed to do battle with a dozen rufflers, for the love of Mistress Alice!

The old Bowyer was in the habit of lending money on interest to the gallants of the Court, and thus it happened that many a richly-dressed gentleman dismounted at his door. More waving plumes and gallant steeds, indeed, were seen at the Bowyer's house, and who embroidered silks and velvets sparkled in his dark shop and darker private closet than at any merchant's in the city. In those times no less than in the present it would seem that the richest looking cavaliers often wanted money the most.

Of these glittering clients there was one who always came alone. He was always nobly mounted, and having no attendant gave his horse in charge to Hugh while he and the Bowyer were closeted within.—Once as he sprang into the saddle Mistress Alice was seated at an upper window, and before she could withdraw he had doffed his jewelled cap and kissed his hand.—Hugh watched him caracoling down the street and burnt with indignation. But how much deeper was the glow that reddened in his cheeks when raising his eyes to the casement he saw that Alice watched the stranger too!

He came again and often each time arrayed more gallantly than before, and still the little casement showed him Mistress Alice.—At length one heavy day, she fled from home. It had cost her a hard struggle, for all her old father's gifts were strewn about her chamber as if she had parted from them one by one and knew that the time must come when these tokens of his love would wring her heart—yet she was gone.

She left a letter commending her poor father to the care of Hugh, and wishing he might be happier than he could ever have been with her, for he deserved the love of a better and purer heart than she had to bestow. The old man's forgiveness (she said) she had no power to ask, but she prayed God to bless him—and so ended with a blot upon the paper where her tears had fallen.

At first the old man's wrath was kindled, and he carried his wrong to the Queen's throne itself; but there was no redress he learnt at Court, for his daughter had been conveyed abroad. This afterwards appeared to be the truth, as there came from France, after an interval of several years, a letter in her hand. It was written in trembling characters, and almost illegible. Little could be made out save that she often

thought of home and her old dear pleasant room—and that she had dreamt her father was dead and had not blessed her—and that her heart was breaking.

The poor old Bowyer lingered on, never suffering Hugh to quit his sight, for he knew now that he had loved his daughter and that was the only link that bound him to earth. It broke at length, and he died, bequeathing his old apprentice his trade and all his wealth, and solemnly charging him, with his last breath to revenge his child if ever he who had worked her misery crossed his path in life again.

From the time of Alice's flight, the tilling ground, the fields, the fencing-school, the summer evening sports, knew Hugh no more. He rose to great eminence and repute among the citizens, but he was never seen to smile, and never mingled in their reveries or rejoicings. Brave, humane, and generous, he was loved by all. He was pined too by those who knew his story; and these were so many, that when he walked along the streets alone at dusk, even the rude common people doffed their caps, and mingled a rough air of sympathy with their respect.

One night in May—it was her birthnight and twenty years since she had left her home—Hugh Graham sat in the room she had hallowed in his boyish days. He was now a gray-haired man, though still in the prime of life. Old thoughts had borne him company for many hours, and the chamber had gradually got quite dark, when he was roused by a low knocking at the outer door.

He hastened down, and opening it, saw by the light of a lamp which he had seized in the way, a female figure crouching in the portal. It hurried swiftly past him, and glided up the stairs. He looked out for pursuers. There were none in sight.

He was inclined to think it a vision of his own brain when suddenly a vague suspicion of the truth flashed upon his mind. He barred the door and hastened wildly back. Yes, there she was—there in the chamber he had quitted,—there in her old innocent, happy home, so changed that none but he could trace one gleam of what she had been—there upon her knees—with her hands clasped in agony and shame before her burning face.

"My God, my God!" she cried, "now strike me dead! Though I have brought death and shame and sorrow on this roof oh, let me die at home in mercy!"

There was no tear upon her face then, but she trembled and glanced round the chamber. Every thing was in the old place.—Her bed looked as if she had risen from it but that morning. The sight of these familiar objects marking the dear remembrance in which she had been held, and the blight she had brought upon herself was more than the woman's better nature that had carried her there, could bear. She wept and fell upon the ground.

A rumor was spread about, in a few days time; that the Bowyer's cruel daughter had come home, and that Master Hugh Graham had given her lodging in his house. It was rumored too that he had resigned her fortune, in order that she might bestow it in acts of charity, and that he had vowed to guard her in her solitude, but that they were never to see each other more. These rumors greatly incensed all virtuous wives and daughters in the ward, especially when they appeared to receive some corroboration from the circumstance of Master Graham taking up his abode in another tenement hard by. The estimation in which he was held, however, forbade any questioning on the subject, and as the Bowyer's house was close shut up, and nobody came forth when public shows and festivities were in progress, or to flaunt in the public walks or to buy new fashions at the mercer's booths, all the well-conducted females agreed among themselves that there could be no woman there.

These reports had scarcely died away when the wonder of every good citizen, male and female, was utterly absorbed and

swallowed up by a Royal Proclamation, in which her majesty, strongly censuring the practice of wearing long Spanish rapiers of preposterous length (as being a bullying and swaggering custom, tending to bloodshed and public disorder) commanded that on a particular day therein named, certain grave citizens should repair to the city gates, and there, in public, break all rapiers worn or carried by persons claiming admission, that exceeded, though it were only by a quarter of an inch, three standard feet in length.

Royal proclamations usually take their course, let the public wonder never so much. On the appointed day two citizens of high repute took up their stations at each of the gates, attended by a party of the city guard; the main body to enforce the Queen's will and take custody of all such rebels (if any) as might have the temerity to dispute it; and a few to bear the standard measures and instruments for reducing all unlawful sword-blades to the prescribed dimensions. In pursuance of these arrangements, Master Graham and another were posted at Lud Gate, on the hill before Saint Paul's.

A pretty numerous company were gathered together at this spot, for, besides the officers in attendance to enforce the proclamation, there was a motley crowd of lookers-on of various degrees, who raised from time to time such shouts and cries as the circumstance called forth. A spruce young courtier was the first who approached; he unsheathed a weapon of burnished steel that shone and glistened in the sun, and handed it with the newest air to the officer, who, finding it exactly three feet long, returned it with a bow. Thereupon the gallant raised his hat and crying, "God save the Queen" passed on amidst the plaudits of the mob. Then came another—a better courtier still—who wore a blade but two feet long, whereat the people laughed, much to the disparagement of his honor's dignity.—Then came a third, a sturdy old officer of the army, girded with a rapier a least a foot and a half beyond her Majesty's pleasure; at him they raised a great shout and most of the spectators (but especially those who were armorers or cutlers) laughed very heartily at the breakage which would ensue. But they were disappointed; for the old campaigner, coolly unbuckling his sword and bidding his servant carry it home again passed through unarmed, to the great indignation of all the spectators. They relieved themselves in some degree by hooting a tall blustering fellow with a prodigious weapon who stopped short in coming in sight of the preparations, and after a little consideration turned back again; but all this time no rapier had been broken although it was high noon, and all cavaliers of any quality or appearance were taking their way towards Saint Paul's churchyard.

During these proceedings Master Graham had stood apart, strictly confining himself to the duty imposed upon him, and taking little heed of anything beyond.—He stepped forward now as a richly dressed gentleman on foot, followed by a single attendant, was seen advancing up the hill.

As this person drew nearer, the crowd stopped their clamor and bent forward with eager looks. Master Graham standing alone in the gateway, and the stranger coming slowly towards him, they seemed, as it were, set face to face. The noblemen (for he looked one) had a haughty and disdainful air, which bespoke the slight estimation in which he held the citizen. The citizen, on the other hand, preserved the resolute bearing of one who was not to be frowned down or daunted, and who cared very little for any nobility but that of worth and manhood. It was, perhaps, some consciousness on the part of each, of these feelings in the other, that infused a more stern expression into their regards as they came closer together.

"Your rapier, worthy Sir!"

At the instant that he pronounced these words, Graham started, and falling back some paces, laid his hand upon his dagger in his belt,

"You are the man whose horse I used to hold before the Bowyer's door! You are the man! Speak!"

"Out, you 'prentice bound!" cried the other.

"You are he! I know you well!" cried Graham. "Let no man be step between us two, or I shall be his murderer." With that he drew his dagger and rushed in upon him.

He stranger had drawn his weapon from the scabbard ready for the scrutiny, before a word was spoken. He made a thrust at his assailant, but the dagger which Graham clutched in his left hand being the dirk in use at that time for parrying such blows, promptly turned the point aside. They closed. The dagger fell rattling upon the ground, and Graham wresting his adversary's sword from his grasp, plunged it through his heart. As he drew it out it snapped in two, leaving a fragment in the dead man's body.

All this passed so swiftly that the bystanders looked on without an effort to interfere; but the man was no sooner down than an uproar broke forth which rent the air.—The attendant rushing through the gate proclaimed that his master a nobleman, had been set upon and slain by a citizen; the word quickly spread from mouth to mouth; Saint Paul's cathedral and every book-shop, ordinary, and smoking-house in the churchyard poured out its stream of cavaliers and their followers, who mingling together in a dense tumultuous body, struggled sword in hand, towards the spot.

With equal impetuosity and stimulating each other in loud cries and shouts, the citizen and common people took the quarrel on their side, and encircling Master Graham a hundred deep, forced him from the gate. In vain he waved the broken sword above his head, crying that he would die on London's threshold for their sacred hopes. They bore him on, and ever keeping him in the midst so that no man could attack him, fought their way into the city.

The clash of swords and roar of voices, the dust and heat and pressure, the trampling under foot of men, the distracted looks and shrieks of women at the windows above as they recognized their relatives or lovers in the crowd, the rapid tolling of alarm bells, the furious rage and passion of the scene, were fearful. Those who, being on the outskirts of each crowd could use their weapons with effect, fought desperately, while these behind maddened with baffled rage struck at each other over the heads of those before them, and crushed their own fellows. Wherever the broken sword was seen above the people's heads, towards that spot the cavaliers made a new rush. Every one of these charges was marked by sudden gaps in the throng where men were trodden down, but as fast as they were made, the tide swept over them and still the multitude pressed on again; a confused mass of swords, clubs, staves, broken plumes, fragments of rich cloaks and doublets, and angry bleeding faces, all mixed up together in inextricable disorder.

The design of the people was to force Master Graham to take refuge in his dwelling, and to defend it until the authorities could interfere or they could gain time for parley. But either from ignorance, or in the confusion of the moment, they stopped at his old house which was so closely shut. Some time was lost in beating the doors open and passing him to the front. About a score of the boldest of the party threw themselves into the torrent while this was being done, and reaching the door at the same moment with himself, cut him off from his defenders.

"I never will turn in such righteous cause so help me Heaven!" cried Graham in a voice that at last made itself heard, and confronting them as he spoke, "Least of all will I turn upon this threshold which owes its desolation to such men as ye. I give no quarter, and I will have none. Strike!"

For a moment they stood at bay. At that moment a shot from an unseen hand—apparently fired by some person who had