

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.

NIAGARA.

A STORY OF FASHIONABLE LIFE.

BY T. HAMILTON.

Sly. 'When will the fool come again?'
Sim. 'Anon, my lord!—Taming of the Shrew.'

'Well, I do say,' said a puffy elderly gentleman, puffing and blowing as he mounted the steps at Niagara, 'if this is what they call travelling, then I'd stay at home. Here's my wife and three daughters, have been plaguing the life out of me these two years to come to Niagara, and now when we're here, they can't stay quietly at the hotel, but must be dragging me about, to see this, and to see that, 'till I'm almost worked to death,' and pausing upon the landing, he wiped his heated face with his handkerchief, looking down the hill at his spouse and her three daughters, toiling unaided up from below.

'Oh! pa,' said his youngest child, as she reached the landing, 'why did you leave us to climb up that long flight of steps alone. I'm almost tired out, and I'm sure ma looks quite faint.'

'Can't help it—people that will go a travelling must expect to get tired,' said Mr. Bowen snappishly, wiping his face as assiduously as ever.

'Oh!—my—dear—John,' gasped his partner, as she in turn arrived at the landing, 'lend me your arm or—I—shall die.'

'Die at this place ma'am! Die at Niagara! Die after spending five hundred dollars.'

'Pray, Miss Ellen,' said a young man, who met the group on his descent at this moment, 'let me assist you up—recollect how often I have been down—will you accept my arm?'

The beautiful girl blushed—for Ellen Bowen was really beautiful—and perceiving that her father had at length undertaken to assist her mother, she took the proffered aid of Edward Seymour, her elder sisters meanwhile finding beaux, in the two companions of the young lawyer.

'It is a trite question, Miss Bowen,' said Seymour, 'but I cannot resist asking you how you like the falls—do they equal your expectations?'

The young barrister would scarcely have put such a question to Ellen's parents, or to either of her sisters, but, in the little conversation he had enjoyed with her, since the arrival of the Bowsens at the falls, he had perceived in her remarks the evidence of a refined, and highly imaginative mind.

'Oh! yes! they far surpass my expectations,' said Ellen, coloring the next breath, at her own enthusiasm. 'There is a sublimity about them I cannot describe: they create an awe which deprives one of words: I could feel their grandeur and their majesty forever, but I could never give expression to the sentiments they create in one's bosom.'

'You are right. They fill one, like eternity, with unutterable awe. They kindle up all the poetry of one's heart, but they overpower one at the same time. For my part, were I a poet, I could look at Niagara forever, but yet would always find it impossible to write upon it.'

'And why?'

'Because I could never satisfy myself

with what I had written. Nothing but inspiration,' said Seymour, enthusiastically, 'could do justice to so sublime a wonder.'

'That agrees with what I have been thinking the whole morning. I used to admire one or two pieces written on Niagara, but since I have seen the falls, they all appear tame.'

'And well may they; for next to the presence of the great I AM himself, what is so awful as this eternal cataract? Think only for what countless ages it has thundered its hallelujah! How many races have gazed and died beside it since it first hurled its ocean of waters into the abyss below, shaking the earth, and filling Heaven with its might; and yet it still pours forth its eternal incense, fit companion for the cherubims who continually shout beside the throne of God!'

There was something in such rapt expressions which found an echo in Ellen's bosom, and as she looked into the kindling eye of the speaker, she experienced an emotion as yet unknown to her heart.

Their conversation, however, was brought to an end by the arrival of the party at the hotel, where the gentlemen and ladies separated to dress for dinner.

There was to be a ball that evening, and consequently the ladies generally retired to their rooms immediately after the meal.—Ellen saw nothing therefore of Seymour, though she longed to renew the conversation of the morning.

The ball-room was crowded to excess,—for besides the regular boarders at the hotels, there were numerous guests from the families of the vicinity, as well as several British officers from the neighboring Canadian shore. Ellen's beauty attracted general admiration.

Among those who paid her the most marked attentions, and who in fact had done so since her arrival, were Edward Seymour, and Sir Theodore Phipps. The former had nothing to recommend him, but his talent and appearance; the latter had a train of servants, and drove splendid bays. Yet though envied the attentions of her titled admirer by all, Ellen would willingly have turned from his flattery to listen to the deep voice of Seymour, breathing the lofty aspirations, beneath which every chord of her heart trembled in sympathy. The baronet, however, assiduous; he even forced himself upon Ellen despite her manifest repugnance to him; her mother, moreover, insisted again that she should dance another set with Sir Theodore; until at length Seymour, either blinded to the truth, or indignant at Mrs. Bowen's conduct withdrew from Ellen's side, nor did he rejoin it during the rest of the evening.

The congratulations which showered upon Ellen, by her mother and eldest sister, when they had all retired to their parlor after the ball, were nearly endless. Her second sister, Julia, however, having not yet lost all hope of an eligible match, was silent and sullen. At length she gave vent to her spleen.

'Really there is nothing to admire so much in Sir Theodore,' said she, with a toss of the head, 'to be sure he calls himself an English nobleman, but who knows that he is not an impostor?'

'An imposture,' said Mrs. Bowen, 'why Julia, how can you go on in such a way? You're envious envious, child, or you wouldn't talk so. No, Sir Theodore, is a real nobleman, and has his seat, I'll venture to say, in the House of Lords with the best of them. An imposture! fy—fy on you Julia.'

The haughty daughter, however, only answered by a curl of her lip, as if in scorn of her mother's ignorance; but the eldest sister now took up the conversation.

'For my part,' she said, 'its clear Sir Theodore is serious; and I'm glad Ellen will form an alliance. How it will pique the Misses de Sibra!'

'But, sister,' said Ellen, for the first time uttering a word, 'I am not yet married to this proud foolish Englishman. Nor do you,' she added, fondly putting her arm round the neck of her mother, for with all

her petty vanity, her parent had generally a kind heart, and Ellen loved her devotedly, 'dear mamma wish me, I am sure, to marry him,' and she kissed her mother's cheek.

Now, if Mrs. Bowen disliked anything, it was to be thwarted in her darling wish of elevating her daughters by marriage. How completely she was interested in the Baronet's success, the reader has seen from her conduct at the ball. She replied, therefore, with unusual harshness.

'You astonish me, child—you do. What! not marry a nobleman! There now, you needn't fondle on me, for I saw who you was making love to to-night—'

'Mamma, dear mamma!' said Ellen imploringly, and then burst into tears.

'Well, I do say!' ejaculated the eldest sister.

'Who ever saw the like?' responded the second one, forgetting her pique in the revenge she was thus enabled to take on Ellen.

'Oh! it won't do for you to cry,' said her mother, thus countenanced by the elder sisters, and steeled on this occasion to her daughter's feelings, 'for I've seen it all, and know best what's good for you. Yes! she added, warming into a passion as she proceeded, 'marry Sir Theodore you shall, and that too instantly—'

'But Sir Theodore has not yet even proposed,' said Mr. Bowen, appearing suddenly to awake from the doze in which he had been seemingly indulging himself, as he lay extended upon the sofa, 'and I don't see the use of worrying Elly until he does so. Mind daughter,' said he, shaking his head reprovingly at the imploring, yet thankful look of the poor girl, 'I don't mean to say your mother won't be right if Sir Theodore should propose, for though I don't like a true American, care a sumachee for a Baronet, as a son-in-law, and though I know every Englishman to be a haughty fool, when yet money isn't to be laughed at when it comes in heaps, and a guinea is at any time better to live upon than love. But we've talked the matter over enough to-night, and you've almost worried me into a fit of the gout. If I'd staid at home now, like a sensible man, we'd none of us have had any of this fuss. But people that will travel must expect to get into trouble.'

This decided expression of opinion silenced the group. Ellen was grateful; the sisters were sullen; and Mrs. Bowen flung herself out of the room. But the pillow of her heroine, was that night, wet with some of the bitterest tears she had ever shed.

The next day, on descending to the breakfast room, the first person that met the eye of Ellen, was Seymour, conversing gaily with one of the prettiest girls of the company, who had been his partner during the latter part of the preceding evening. He bowed with some haughtiness to Ellen, and continued his conversation without interruption. Poor Ellen felt a strange pang shoot through her heart, at the coldness of the only one of the company for whose esteem she had cared. But, returning the salutation with equal pride, she moved to a neighboring seat, and was soon, to all appearance, deeply engaged in conversation with several gentlemen, who the instant she made her appearance, crowded around her.

An excursion had been planned that day, for the purpose of visiting a point some miles below the falls, from which they might be seen to peculiar advantage, and both Seymour, and Sir Theodore, signified their intention of joining the party.

It was a beautiful day, and the whole landscape was smiling beneath an unclouded sun, as the party pursued its way to the point of destination. Mounted on horseback Sir Theodore constantly maintained his place by the side of Ellen; attempting to amuse her by his conversation, made up of pretended descriptions of noble life, and stale anecdotes without point. Hurt as she felt at Seymour, she could not avoid contrasting him favorably with her assiduous suitor, nor prevent herself from glancing involuntarily, now and then, in the direction of the young lawyer, who was riding, in the midst of a gay party, of which he ap-

peared to be the life. Perhaps the pang that shot through her bosom at his avoidance of her society, did more towards acquainting her with her own feelings, than a month of the usual intercourse of visitors at the Falls would have done.

At length the party arrived at the end of their journey, and after viewing the Falls, dispersed themselves into groups, and sauntered about preparatory to returning. Ellen was soon surrounded by a numerous suite of gentlemen, for she was unquestionably the belle of the party. But still Seymour avoided her group, except occasionally. He seemed to be chained to the side of the beautiful Bostonian, to whom he had been so assiduous on the preceding evening, and who was evidently flattered—as who would not be?—at his attentions. Ellen felt again that pang at her bosom, but suppressing her emotion by such an effort as woman only can command, she launched out the gayest conversation, nor was it long before she had enchained those suitors by her wit, whom, at first, she had attracted by her beauty. Yet even then she could not regard her titled admirer with any sentiment except disgust. She knew that, but for him, Seymour would not be at her side. But she could not avoid reproaching him for deserting her, when neither by word nor action had she herself slighted him, whatever others might have done.

What a strange thing is the heart! It suffers itself often to become inextricably involved in the meshes of that master passion, Love, long before it discovers to its owner how utterly its liberty is gone. And then, when the victim would endeavor to regain its freedom, how subtly, and slowly, and surely it resists every attempt, and perhaps ultimately triumphs. No thing can be more profound than the deception it often practises upon its victims. It suffers them to love, yet persuades them they are still free. A word, a look, a gesture will be treasured up in the memory, and this too will continue, day by day, and week by week, and yet the victim is made to believe that there is nothing in it but friendship until some sudden remark, some unexpected train of events, brings on the denouement, and the victim discovers at once its deception, and its love.

Meantime, the party had set forth in its return, and Ellen was again surrounded by a troop of admirers on horseback. Seymour still, however, kept aloof, until an incident occurred, which, in a few rapid moments, altered the whole face of events.

The party had not proceeded far, when they passed near some workmen engaged in quarrying stone, and just as Ellen and her group approached, an explosion took place in a dangerous proximity to the riders. The consequence was, for the moment, a general consternation. Several of the horses began to rear frightfully, and the one on which Ellen sat, after plunging for a few seconds, took the bit in his mouth, and darted furiously ahead.

The alarm now became universal, and the screams of the ladies, and the shouts of the male portion of the company only served to increase the speed of the frightened steed. Meantime none knew what to do. The terrified animal was careering toward the river's side, at that point terminating in an abrupt precipice, and though every one cried out to save her, none made the attempt, Ellen, however, still kept her seat firmly, though the imploring look that she cast backward upon the company betrayed her consciousness of her peril. But at this instant Seymour, who had been some distance behind, perceiving her danger, instead of calling to others as the rest were doing, gave spurs to his horse, and dashed in pursuit of Ellen.

For a few minutes the pace at which they went was tremendous. Nothing stayed their progress. Now crashing among the forest trees, and now leaping over seemingly impassable barriers they soon gained the precipitous banks of the river. They were yet within a few paces of it when Seymour, perceiving the imminency of Ellen's danger, shouted,

'To the right!—to the right!'

Almost mechanically the fair girl made a sudden jerk at the reins, and succeeded in partially altering the course of the affrighted animal, so that instead of plunging over the precipice, he ran for a few paces almost parallel with, but in fearful proximity to it. The momentary delay of the crisis saved Ellen's life. A few feet further on the precipice took a turn, and the maddened animal was now galloping right on to the abyss; but before it could reach the edge, Seymour overtook Ellen, and with consummate dexterity, catching the rein of her steed, threw it, at a powerful effort, back on its haunches. The second relief was enough for Ellen; with admirable presence of mind to spring from her seat. For an instant longer Seymour endeavored to restrain the frightened animal, but it plunged so dangerously, that his own steed, though under the most complete training, began to grow infected, and he was forced, from regard to his own safety, to let go the rein of the snorting steed. With one plunge it sprang forward, and almost as rapidly as the eye could follow it, went crashing over the precipice, falling a mangled mass of flesh and bones, upon the jagged rocks below.

Without pausing to look after the fate of the terrified animal, Seymour hastened to the relief of Ellen, who, although maintaining her presence of mind up to the moment of her rescue, had fainted away the very instant that she touched the ground. Throwing the bridle over his panting steed, her lover—for we must now call him such—raised her in his arms, and scarcely knowing what to do; threw off her bonnet, letting those rich, luxuriant curls, on which so often he had gazed in delight, fall in massy tresses upon the breeze. As he gazed on her inanimate face, and felt her form reposing in his arms, he could not longer restrain his long concealed passion, but kissing her snowy brow, he said,

'Ellen, dear Ellen—awake.'

As if aroused by his impassioned words, the maiden slowly opened her eyes, and gazed a moment enquiringly around; but when she recognised, in the one who bent over her, the person of Edward Seymour, she blushed and would have risen, if her strength had not proved too little for the endeavor.

'Ellen—Miss Bowen—forgive me,' said Seymour, perceiving her design; and fancying she resented his words.

'Forgive you!—oh! how can I sufficiently thank you?' eagerly said the artless girl. 'The words, the tone, but more than all, the look, filled the bosom of her lover with tumultuous joy. His voice was eager and hurried as he replied.

'You have nothing for which to thank me!' and perceiving that the color mounted into Ellen's cheek, and her bosom heaved, while her eyes fell to the ground, he continued, 'I—only ought to be grateful for having saved so pure a being as you.'—The eyes of Ellen still sought the ground, and her form trembled, as Seymour emboldened by her emotion poured forth, in a few burning words, the tale of his love.—And when he had done, and Ellen, unable from her agitation to reply, sank unresisting upon that bosom, to which she was so gently drawn, could any, even the most selfish and calculating, blame her for thus blessing so pure a suit as that of Edward Seymour.

But the *lete-a-lete* of the lovers was soon interrupted, by the arrival of the remainder of the company; and after a thousand felicitations on her escape, Ellen was provided with a seat in one of the carriages, and the whole party returned to the hotel.

'God be praised, my dear girl,' said Mr. Bowen, clasping Ellen to his heart, and moved for a moment out of his usual cynical mode of expression, by the knowledge of her danger and escape, 'you have had a narrow escape. But then people that will travel, must expect to get into scrapes.'

The joy of the mother we will not relate. With all her faults, Miss Bowen loved her daughter ardently, and for once, she was led by her gratitude to believe, that Ed-