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 Democratic Review.

THE YEOMAN'S REVENGE.

The events of the following story occurred in England, about fifty years ago, the principal persons concerned being well known to the writer. The established rule of fiction, when an ignoble lover is brought on the stage in conjunction with a high born mistress, is to compensate for his inferiority of rank by an inverse ratio of superiority in all the truer nobility of nature. If this rule is not strictly adhered to in this instance, it is not her fault but that of the fact.

The sweetest creature in all Cheshire was young Alice B——, the pride of one of its proudest old families, and the delight of one of its happiest and most splendid homes. It was one of those families of very ancient and pure descent, and vast landed wealth, in which, though not within the pale of the peerage, the sentiment of aristocracy of birth and blood is perhaps stronger than in the highest ranks of the latter. Her father, Sir Wilmot B——, was a mighty hunter before the Lord—a regular, glorious old fox-chasing squire of the most thorough breed, such as there are but few to be found, lingering like last roses, at the present day. With the finest pack in the county, the places of the numerous retainers in his hunting establishment were no sinecures; and a week rarely passed that the Hall did not ring from foundation to roof-tree with the loud and long revelry that wound up the sports and fatigues of a hard day's hunt.

Next to the chace, his second passion was his beautiful and lovely child. He could never tolerate her absence from his side or sight for many hours at a time; so that from her earliest years he had so trained her up to a participation with him in the sports of the field, that there were few better shots or bolder riders in all the country around, than the fair young girl, who under all other circumstances, was every thing that was delicate, feminine, and refined, in womanly sweetness and loveliness. She had never breathed any other atmosphere than one of idolatry and happiness. The early death of her mother had been the only grief she had known. She had an independence of character and of habits amounting sometimes to a wild wilfulness, which was almost her sole imaginable fault and to a proud contempt for the opinion of the world, which was the most threatening danger that seemed to await her in life.—Romantic, generous to a weakness, with a deep and impetuous tide of affections, not only was there no sacrifice of which she was incapable in obedience to the impulses of any noble passion, but she would be rather likely to find a pleasure in such a sacrifice proportioned to its magnitude, and to the high disinterestedness of her own efforts in making it.

She had a brother, about two years older than herself, who was at Cambridge—a young man of less high and noble natural mould than Alice—proud and passionate, yet withal affectionate and not ungenerous, though possessed with a morbid jealousy, of his family dignity, as also of his sister's charms and claims to the most splendid rank and distinction in society, whenever she could condescend to bestow the priceless treasure of her heart upon any of the applicants who had thronged to aspire to her hand. A very respectable old maiden aunt, the baronet's only sister, as stiff as buckram in a straight-lacing of etiquette & propriety, though kind hearted and simple, completed the family at the Hall.

But there was another person whose intimacy made him almost an inmate there, though occupying a peculiar and somewhat equivocal relation to the family. It was a young farmer, whose property, very considerable in extent; and held in his family for many generations, adjoined the B—— estates, the successive owners of which had frequently in vain attempted to purchase the former, but had always met with a peremptory refusal. The Fletcher farm happened to occupy a situation in which it seemed a very inconvenient intrusion on the completeness and symmetry of the lands surrounding the Hall. Whether from this cause, or from any other, a certain ill feeling seemed to have subsisted for two or three generations between the great people of the Hall, and the yeoman family of the farmstead. In another way, the latter, themselves at the head of their own class in the country round, were probably not less proud than the former—toward whom, from the immeasurable social distance that separated them, they looked up with a kind of envious though hopeless jealousy, which was almost a family hostility, angry and even bitter, though smothered and without ostensible excuse. There had been several displays of ill-will between them, on some of the various occasions created by the relations of such close neighborhood; and the scornful superiority with which the pride and power of the B——'s had borne down the humbler and weaker party in such collisions, together with the contempt with which the dogged independence set up by them was treated, and rankled down deep on the side of the latter. This had been especially the case with the father of the young Edward Fletcher above alluded to, now the present owner; and almost from his infancy the latent terms of this malignant poison of hereditary bad feeling had been planted among his earliest associations and impressions.

However, no trace of their existence was apparent to any eye, not indeed to the consciousness of the young man himself, at the period here referred to. On the contrary, notwithstanding the wide disparity of birth and social position, circumstances had brought him into a close intimacy at the Hall, which seemed to have obliterated even all recollection of the old feud, if so it may be called, of former years. About eight years before, he had happened, at great peril to his own, to save the life of the young heir of B——, while swimming by an extraordinary effort of courage, strength, and self-possession, having plunged into the water with all the encumbrance of his clothes. He was then less than fourteen years old, being about a year the senior of the boy he so gallantly rescued.—The feat was witnessed by Sir Wilmot himself, as also by the little Alice, who already, child as she was, was the frequent companion of the latter in his rides, herself mounted on a little pony especially trained for so gentle a service. The bold young farmer's son, his own brave and handsome face glowing with the excitement of the moment, and his stout frame easily supporting his slight and now insensible burthen, had borne the boy he saved in his arms, the pallid face of the latter drooping upon his own ruddy cheek, till he delivered him into those of the distracted father himself—from whom, as also from the beautiful girl who shared all the intensity, first of despair, and then of rapture, that marked the moment, he received such demonstrations of gratitude as would well have tempted and repaid—so felt the delighted boy—a hundred fold greater efforts and dangers.

The consequence of this was, that Edward Fletcher became the constant companion and playmate of George and his sister; he was admitted to share their education, under the guidance of an excellent tutor and masters, at the Hall; while from his boldness and dexterity in all the sports to which the life of the old baronet was chiefly devoted, he became the peculiar pet and attendant of the latter, a special aid-de camp, as it were—a service which the youth discharged with the less unwillingness, because, in addition to the charms of the various sports themselves, it threw him more constantly than any other opportunities could have done, into the society of Alice, who was growing up through this period a perfect flower of loveliness, and a perfect star of brightness. His own parents having been dead many years, he had no restriction at home upon the course of habit into which he insensibly ran, of almost living at the Hall. Every thing went on smoothly and happily. In the easy and affectionate familiarity of the relations in which he lived with the family of which he seemed all but a member, his own natural pride and imperiousness of temper found nothing to chafe or cross its grain. When George went to college he did not accompany him. Sir Wilmot never dreamed of such an idea; and though for George, a "gentleman," and the heir of B—— and its baronetcy, it was proper, as a matter of course, he would have as soon imagined the propriety of sending a colt of one of Edward's own plough horses to Cambridge as their young owner and destined driver. Besides "Ned" was to himself an absolute indispensible—especially in George's absence—and so, nothing loth to remain in his present relation to the *one* inmate of the Hall, who had long been all in all to his secret heart, Edward remained behind; though the proud ambition which was the second—perhaps the first—passion in his nature, made him a hard student at home, with the benefit of the library of the Hall, in all the intervals of time he could command, from the constant round of the sports which were there the chief employment of life.

It was, perhaps, a singular infatuation, but such was the fact, that no thought of alarm for the possible consequences of so close and constant an intercourse between so handsome and gallant a youth and a maiden so lovely in herself, and so ardent and generous in her own affections, even for a moment seemed to cross the mind of either Sir Wilmot or his sister, the presiding personage of the Hall, so far as regarded the department of female concern and control. They would as readily have imagined a similar danger between Alice and the "Man in the Moon," as conceived the idea that the young yeoman who was made a *quasi* gentleman only by the kind patronage of B—— Hall, and who was no where else known or recognised as any thing more than his father and grand father had been before him, would ever think of raising so bold an eye as to aspire to such a star;—still less that the star could ever cast down on such an aspiration any other look than a twinkle of infinite contempt. However, they did not think of either boldness or contempt in the matter—they did not think about it at all. any more than they would concern themselves with speculations on the possibility of that long prophesied falling of the skies, at which, as is well known, so many larks are to be caught. What would have been the rage of the old Baronet!—what the dismay of prim and stately Aunt Edith!—had they known that their Alice loved the presumptuous peasant with all the fervor of her tender and generous nature, that she was to him the object of a passion in which was concentrated all the fiery force of his high-toned and energetic character—nay more, that for nearly a year from the time to which this narrative refers, they had been self-betrothed to each other, with all the solemnity that vows can add to the sacred meeting and mingle of hearts. But so it was. How it had come to pass, I cannot afford the time to tell—nor would it much matter if I could.

One evening, after a morning of a most glorious run in which Edward Fletcher had met with his frequent fortune of carrying off the brush, while Sir Wilmot had returned home with one of the fox's paws in his cap as a trophy and proof that he had got in at the death, the former made his escape, at an earlier hour than was often permitted, from the table at which the Baronet dispensed a flowing and rather uproarious hospitality to the hunt of the day. The company breaking up and dispersing about a couple of hours afterward, Sir Wilmot himself followed him to Alice's parlor with a step steady enough, it is true, for all practical purposes, but with the habitual hale and hearty ruddiness of his complexion flushed to a more than ordinary hue, and his faculties not quite so clear and distinct in their intelligence as they had been before breakfast, and as they probably would be again to-morrow morning. As he approached the door he paused a moment to listen to the beautiful effect of the mingling of the two voices of Alice and young Fletcher, in one of the fine old English duets which they often sang together.

'Bravo, Ned—bravo, my boy!' was the exclamation with which he interrupted them—with a slap on the shoulder of the young man which was a much more energetic demonstration of affections than would have been at all agreeabld to a less stout and stalworth frame. 'And as for, you, you dear little bird, your voice is almost as sweet as your kiss to your foolish old father. Your humble servant, Madam! he then added, turning round to Madam Edith, with a bow and flourish of mingled gallantry & gravity which were highly comical. 'But Ned, you ought to have been down there—why they unkennelled you after you had gone, and were off in a full cry on the scent, with a regular tally ho! You ought to have been there to see how I stood up for you. They talked of your station in life, and all that sort of thing. But I stood up for you, that I did—and swore it was all envy, because you got the brush which Sir Harry Horn had vowed should be his, with that new hunter he sported this morning.—and because you cleared so handsomely those five bars which young Lord Maurice Page. was compelled after all to get down and open on their hinges, And I swore, too. what none of them could gainsay, that even though you weren't a gentleman—and that's only your misfortune too, Ned, and no fault of your's—'egad, I wish you were though, Ned, 'pon my soul I do!—yet this I said for, you that you were the best shot, the best rider, the best troutfisher, and the best *swimmer*, too,—hav'nt forgot that, Ned!—no, we never forget that, do we Alice?—and altogether, except in blood and all that, you know, altogether the best fellow in general, in the whole country."

If Alice could have dared to give the utterance of words to the thought sprang quick and warm from her heart as she listened to her father's category of Edwards' manifold superiorities in his eye, she could have added, 'the best lover,' Whoever could have looked down yet deeper in the derker elements of his character, than either father or daughter had gone, might have seen that which would have taught them that he could become 'the best *hater*' too.

During this speech; most cruel when meant to be most kind; the face of the young man had alternately flushed and faded into a deadly paleness. In her pain and mortification, Alice had not ventured even to steal a glance at it. With a strong effort mastering the passion that shook his very soul, he commanded his voice so far as to ask, with a tone that strove to be calm, but which betrayed the futility of the effort even to the not very delicate ear of the Baronet at the present moment. "Your high blooded and high bred guests have done me too much honor, sir, in taking for their topic an humble farmer and farmer's son who claims to be nothing more than a man. I regret indeed that I was not there, to take some slight part in such a discussion; but I should be glad to know who it was in particular who thus indulged himself in my absence?"

'Nonsense, Ned,—Why, they were most of them pretty well agreed, I believe; and there was after all nothing you've any right to take offence at; and all that was to be said and all that could be said, I did say—and [illegible] too, you known—and it's myself who told you—I thought you'd be glad to hear what I said. Pooh, pooh! there's nothing for you to quarrel about—and then, you know, you could not expect or ask any of them to fight you, or any of that sort of thing. But 'egad, Ned, you ought to have been born a gentleman, as well as a good fellow as you are—and what's more, I wish from my heart you had been! You and George together could then—by the way, Alice, I've got a leter from George, and he'll be here in three or four days' and that same handsome Cantab chum of his who was with him before, Lord Frank Forester,—it is you he comes to see, Alice, much more than my hounds and horses'—ah, yes it is, you little mischeif, you!'

The old gentleman kept all the talk to himself for some time longer, and went on with the most perfect unconsciousness, turning the steel round and round, and deeper and deeper, in the wound he had made in the proud and sensitive heart of the youth before him. The latter seized the first moment to withdraw, abruptly, in a tumult of bitter and stinging feelings, which even the gentle whisper added by Alice to her good night—'*to-morrow morning*!' had no power to assuage.

I pass rapidly over all unessentail details. In a long and passionate interview on the following morning, Alice was startled and grieved to observe how deeply and even fiercely the soul of her lover was roused in arms by an occurrence so little worthy of producing such an effect, on a nature so noble and gallant as she loved to consider his. She did not dissemble the effect it had produced on her own mind, not only of pain for him, but of almost despair of ever obtaining her father's sanction to an idea so preposterous as her marriage to this humble 'peasan.' In his impetuous resentment, Edward Flether was strongly bent on making an immediate disclosure to him—of claiming his daughter's hand, boldly, if not even haughtily, by the right divine of the possession of her heart—and of at once speeding the last extremity, when if he should not extort the consent which he now panted for as much for pride as for love, from that antagonist pride which he would freely give life and all it could contain to force down to the level of his despised and insulted position, he would at least make one decisive trial of his dominion over the affections of his mistress; and either quaff at one draught the mingled bliss of triumphant revenge in triumphant love, or if disappointed, casting the latter scornfully forth, surrender his heart to hate, and his whole faculties to the aim of compassing its indulgence. She shrank from thus precipitating all the worst she apprehended. She knew the certain consequence of such a collision between the quick and vehement passions of her father and the terrible temper she trembled to discover in her lover. There was one hope remaining, to which, though with dark misgiving, she clung as the drowning mariner to a straw—George's aid and influence. He owed his life to Edward—had been the affectionate playmate of his childhood and friends of his youth—and his own warm fondness of her would appeal strongly to his heart when he should come to know the extent to which her hopes and happiness were involved.

'We will wait for George's return, 'she urged with an earnestness and eagerness not to be resisted 'He knows you as I know you Edward, for what you are in yourself. He knows you his full equal—nay, his superior in all manhood and true nobleness,' and her eyes brightened proudly through her tears, as she placed her hand confidently in her lover's, 'he loves you too,—he is not ungrateful,—he will not forget that hour when my love for you, you first entered my heart, child as I was through the avenue of my love for him, when the young hero who had saved his life, almost at the sacrifice of his own, brought him to me on the bank nearly beyond recovery, and looked so bright and beautiful to our eyes as he did it! He will not forget, either, that it was your brave and strong arm, dear Edward, that saved my life, too, that terrible day when the the lightning drove poor Towena wild, and you preventing her and me from plunging down the Woll Crag, only by dashing your own horse in between me and it, when it was only a miracle that kept you from going over yourself! He has not forgotten all this—and when I see him—when I tell him all—he will not have forgotten how dear my happiness used to be to him, ought to be to him still! Let us wait for George—he will be home in a few days—and he will not, he cannot refuse to help us, and all will be safe.'

'I fear, Alice, that your own heart overcolors George's feelings in regard to me. We have been much apart of late years. He had been at college, and in the world in the midst of every influence to strengthen his natural pride of birth and rank. I have no very strong hold on his heart now—I saw it when he saw home last—nor has he written me a line since he left. And you know he has his heart set on your being won over to favor the suit of his present friend, Lord Forester. No, Alice—if I have little hope in your father, I have not much more in George. I have only one hope, dearest and sweetest, and in whom that hope is garnered, who knows so well as herself?'—and his arm encircled the fair girl's slender waist, and no resistance repelled the kiss accompanying the look with which he seemed to ask what was to be his reliance on that hope.

'Come what may,' was the beautiful answer of the trusting and enthusiatic maiden, 'the life you saved is justly and rightfully yours—when I confessed to you that my heart was yours also, I told you no untruth and when I added the pledge over my mother's grave, I felt all the sacredness both of the pledge and the place—and never fear Edward, that I shall be the first to forget it.'

Her spirit moved over the dark and troubled elements of his life the wing of a seraph on a mission of peace. He was calmed. and consented to her counsel, though still at the bottom of his heart there was a dull and compressed heaving of the waves of the worst passions, which might yet break forth with a fury which he could not himself calculate nor perhaps restrain.

On the third day from this morning the expected arrival took place. Edward was at first shy of coming in contract with his former friend; and very soon found or fancied reason to feil confirmed in his worst apprehensions as to the relatian and sentiments with which he was regarded by him.

There was a great deal of kindness, and a certain kind of familiarity; but there was something of condescension in it, of conscious distinction of rank and social position; altogether a something which he felt to be very different from the tone and manner of intercourse with his never but more 'noble' friend, whom he brought with him from Cambridge. But he before long found the opportunity he sought. Alice detained George at home one morning that the baronet rode out to show Lord Forester some fine coursing with a favorite pair of greyhounds. The two young men stroll'd together in the park. Edward opened the subject with a fluttering heart, though abrubily, and with a bold and proud manliness, which was almost haughtiness, and which would have done no discredit to any peer or prince in the realm. The other listened for a while, first in incredulity, then amazement, then pity for the insane infatuation which had led Edward even to admit within the range of his wildest fancy, a