

# 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 TEST OF LOVE, BY L. H. M.

Oh, what was Love made for, if 'tis not the same  
Through joy and through sorrow—through glory  
and shame!

I know not—I ask not if guilt's in that heart,  
I but know that I love thee—whatever thou art.

MOORE.

'That is the way I wish to be loved in!' exclaimed Laura Graham, passionately dashing down the book as she read the above lines, 'I wish my grandfather had died a pauper, rather than had left me that hateful fortune: I wish I had the small pox as a lump on my back, sooner than be loved as a plaster of Paris doll, for my white and red complexion; I should be delighted if my father had driven an ash-cart and my mother sold truck, because I should not have been then courted for my family respectability.'

'Gently, gently, my dear,' replied her aunt looking up from her knitting, with a benevolent smile, 'what has so suddenly convinced you that fortune, beauty, and birth are unwelcome appendages?'

'Oh, aunt because I want to be loved for myself—to be loved as I could love in return—when the beauty of an Antinous or the ugliness of a Gergon could nothing change the purity of affection—when it would be equally unchanging and true in a royal palace or an Esquimaux hut—a love that would rise superior to poverty and sorrow—that would exist through neglect, disease, dishonor and death.'

Aunt Greyville laid down her stocking, placed the several needles in their proper place, pulled on her mittens, and prepared to reply.

'Laura, you talk more like a romantic boarding school miss, than a sensible girl as you are; depend upon it, though you may be loved well enough, without all those deceptions well greedily heighten the attachments.'

'Then, I won't marry at all!' said Laura positively.

'Hush me out, and don't interrupt, for that's not mannerly. I say your first position is silly and unnatural; but your last is positively wicked. The love which could continue the same through a conviction of unworthiness and dishonor, is too characteristic of an ill organized mind to be desired or prized.'

Now Aunt Greyville was fond of making long speeches; with neatly turned off periods; but her niece sometimes thought them rather tiresome, and just now, very particularly so—so she just repeated, in a low voice, to herself—

'I know not—I ask not if guilt's in that heart,  
I but know that I love thee—whatever thou art.'

'Very well, Laura; I know that young ladies generally retain their own opinions, whether opposed to the advice of their seniors or not; but it is on the account of Major Donwoodie that you seem so anxious?'

'No, indeed—Major Donwoodie loves my bank stock too much for us to love him at all.'

'It is then for your cousin, Washington Merton, that your feelings are interested,

and I rejoice to think your choice so sensible.'

'Aunt,' said Laura, hesitatingly, 'don't you think Mr. Merton has too much sense to love very ardently?'

'That is a poor compliment to love, Laura.'

'Well, I don't exactly mean sense, but judgment—no, nor yet precisely judgment—only a cold reasoning discernment, that is very foreign to warmth of feeling.'

'I fear, my dear, you have taken that idea from the rhetorical passion of that haughty Englishman; whom you do very wrong to encourage at all.'

'And why, aunt?' asked Laura, quickly, with a crimson cheek. Mrs. Greyville looked attentively at her niece over her spectacles, then shook her head.

'Oh! I see, this Honorable Mr. Walsingham is at the head of the pole, and I am sorry for it; depend upon it, that imperious man will never act with that moderation and gentleness, that desirable consistency, so requisite to insure the happiness of the wedded life—ahem!'

A knock at the door stopped the answer of Laura Graham. 'It is Washington Merton and his sister; aunt; if you love me, do not contradict what I say, be it what it will—I am resolved to know how far I am loved for myself or for my money.'

When the first salutations were past, Laura bent down her head attentively over a small writing case near her, and seemed as if much engrossed by the contents of an open letter.

'Does that note contain tickets for Miss Kemble's benefit, that it engrosses you so?' asked Mr. Merton, with a smile.

'No, it is of rather more consequence; it is a petition to advance a sum of money for placing a disreputable family in business westward.'

'Are you acquainted with the persons?' asked her cousin.

'Not at all; but I hear the man has been very impudent.'

'What capital do they ask?' gravely inquired he.

'Ten thousand dollars. Would you advise my doing it?'

'Most assuredly not; it would be the act of an insane person.'

'Is money, then,' asked Laura, contemptuously, 'of more value than humanity?'

'No, not if it were humanity; but money is a heavy charge committed to your care, and you are responsible for its prudent and useful appropriation.'

'But my heart is set upon this; I am deeply interested for the family, and shall be myself the sufferer in denying them.'

'Then do it by all means, Miss Graham,' said a full-toned voice behind her, 'the Philadelphia Bank is not worth as much as your slightest wish; let the one be vetoed and welcome, but not your smallest desire.'

'Mr. Walsingham! when did you come in?' and Laura Graham said the words with a faltering voice, 'will you support this silly fancy of mine, even at the risk of a ten thousand dollar loss?'

Walsingham gazed with unrestrained admiration on the sweet countenance raised to him, and replied, in a low tone, 'Aye, at the risk of every dollar you own; it would be my gain; for I would love you far dearer without than with it.'

'But my prudent friend here,' says no, said Laura, turning away to conceal the glow of pleasure that rushed over her brow. Washington Merton watched the glance, and felt a pang to his inmost heart; but it could not shake his principle.

'Undoubtedly, Miss Graham, I should be unworthy to call myself your friend, if I did not tell you that in squandering away your money, you violate the will of the venerable man who it left you, and prove yourself an unfaithful stewardess in the sight of God.'

Laura turned away coldly at his words and Aunt Greyville gave a long groan.—'Dear me,' said Miss Merton, 'you talk so much about this nonsensical family, that I have not had time to ask you what you will wear at Mrs. Dashway's ball!'

'It is of little enough consequence,' said Aunt Greyville with some asperity, 'what she wears, she is driving hard down the road to ruin, and a fine gown will never cover and aching heart.'

'What is not Laura dressed for Mrs. Dashway's said the Hon. Mr. Walsingham to Mrs. Greyville, in the evening of the same day; she has been above two hours at her toilette, and every one will be taking leave as she goes in.'

'No wonder,' replied Aunt Greyville, 'she has pulled down her hair five times, and broken her pearl bandeau by flinging it at Mauritia's head.'

'Indeed she is not over amiable, then, this evening?'

'Mercy on me, no; I can't say a word but she catches me like a snapping turtle; hark at her again, what is the matter now Laura?'

'What is the matter, indeed?' exclaimed Laura, flouncing into the room with a crimson face, holding up the blonde on her satin dress all torn to pieces; 'enough is the matter, that good-for-nothing stupid fool of a mirror-maker has left the blonde too low on my dress, and I have put my foot on it and torn it!'

Washington Merton, who was sitting quietly reading at the other end of the room looked up with grave surprise.

'Do not let so trifling, so trumpery a circumstance discompose you, Miss Graham,' said Walsingham, rising to meet her.

'Trifling do you think it? pray, what am I to do for a dress?'

'Have you none other? the simpler the better—for beauty undorned is adorned the most, you know.'

'I know fiddlesticks,' interrupted the young lady, in no very amiable tone.

'I won't go if I am not the best dressed in the room; I know this blonde would have given that envious creature, Susan Wouldbefine, a heartach, and that's why I bought it, for it cost twenty dollars a yard.'

Merton rose and took his hat.

'Pray, where are you going?' demanded Laura.

'Where I may not see you disgrace yourself by conduct unworthy of a lady and a rational being,' replied he severely.

'I think, Mr. Merton, you presume upon your relationship,' said Walsingham, haughtily. 'Come Miss Graham, banish your anger, and the only harm done will be their rifling of your lovely brow with a shade; if the United States can supply your loss, it shall not be for long.'

'Don't go, Walsingham, said Mrs. Greyville, 'Alas! Laura never needed your friendship more than now, for all his deceit and ill humor is only—'

'Very true,' interrupted Laura, hurriedly and casting a beseeching look towards her aunt; 'it is only preliminary to asking your advice and assistance upon a very troublesome affair.'

'Laura,' answered Walsingham, with a softened tone, 'you know you may command me in any thing for your service.'

'Will not Miss Graham honor me with her commands, said Walsingham reproachfully.

'Either it is no great matter,' answered Laura, with a flirting air, 'you most know that that dear delightful treacherous thing, Ecarte,' has played me false and I lost a horrible load of money the other night at Madame Ombre's.'

'Great God!' cried her cousin, 'can it be Laura Graham that I hear speaking?'

'What matters it, dearest girl, said Walsingham, 'play is fashionable, every lady of fashion plays Ecarte.'

'Varyety is charming,' continued Laura, gaily 'and really the contrast between you two is quite amusing; but you must know my dividends were all drawn, I had not a cent belonging to my my name, and so I let Madame Ombre raise the money from some broker on my bill, bond, or some such thing; and I want it to be paid—that's my distress.'

'Laura, Laura Graham! did I ever expect

to hear you own yourself a gambler and see you behave like a coquette and a virago? Fare you well madam; I will not interfere to aid you through an affair so dishonorable—not, much as I have loved you will I see you again until you are properly repentant and ashamed of your conduct.'

'Mr. Merton, you must answer to me for this insolence to Miss Graham; no man shall dare to offend her while I am by,' said Mr. Walsingham, proudly.

'Duelling air,' replied Merton, with cold dignity, 'is against my principles; but when I know your claim to be Miss Graham's champion, I will account to you for my words. Laura, I leave you with pity rather than anger; farewell.'

'Stop, nephew,' cried aunt Greyville 'it's not true, I tell you; don't be a fool.—Laura's the best girl in Philadelphia.'

'I thought so once; farewell, aunt.'

There was something of manly pride—of open, honorable dignity—in the cold, reproving manner of her cousin, that struck to Laura's heart; in spite of her oft repeated assertions, she felt his conduct to be that of dignity and honor, and the thought of how proud that man's wife might be of him, rose unconsciously in her mind.

'Come, dear Laura! do banish that troubled look—it impairs that beauty of which I am so proudly, so passionately fond.—Come, think of the past.'

'I wonder, Walsingham,' said Laura, thoughtfully, 'if you would love me, were I very ugly?'

'I love an ugly woman! no indeed! but you—ah! never shall be tried—give me but this little hand, and I will triumphantly present you at the court of England, where very jaded bells and made up drowager shall tremble at the sight of your surpassing loveliness! Say yes—sweet Laura.'

'To-morrow I will answer that important question, and now for Mistress Dashaway's.'

Who in Philadelphia does not know Doctor—! Who has not some time or other been under his gentle influence, and felt his soft, persuasive manners almost as efficacious as his prescription?—How many young damsels have assented him that the pain in their sides was not from tight lacing—how many portly old bonvivas have declared that turtle soup and Madeira had nothing to say to their gout; yet been both persuaded to give them up his gentlemanly eloquence. Oh! what a jewel is a doctor like him—Physic itself becomes delightful when he is by. It was at this learned gentleman's door that ringing-ding went the bell before breakfast, the morning after Mrs. Dashaway's ball.

'The Doctor was wanted immediately a Mrs. Greyville's in Chestnut street, for Miss Graham was taken dangerously ill.' Now Miss Graham was a favorite, and had been since she was high as a table; so away went the Doctor, with an unfinished breakfast. 'Why, my dear lady, what is the matter?' asked he of Mrs. Greyville.

'Oh, Doctor—here's a fine ado—here's a silly piece of business; but Laura will tell you. It's my belief that she is gone stark, starting mad, with all her lovers.'

'Is that all?' said the Doctor, with a quiet smile, 'well, I will go in and settle this menomania.'

Mrs. Greyville pursed up her mouth like the string of a misse's purse, just with a sort of declaiming look that she would hold her tongue in despite of temptation.

The Doctor entered (Miss Graham's room; it was darkened, and she was in bed, folded up in the white linen that was not purer than herself, her eyes was clouded with tears, but it shone through in its brightness like a star reflected in sleeping stream; her cheek was glowing like the sunset of a foreign clime, while a fair tress of hair lay cloud-like shading its richness.

'Why, pretty Laura, my little, gentle good-daughter, what is the matter? Is you

lap-dog sick, or did not the last dress fit as well as usual?'

'Oh! dear Doctor, I am so glad you are here: I have something very particular to say to you—I am not ill! but I want to be so.'

'That's a singular fancy.'

'Not at all. Listen to me, and I will tell you all!'

'Mercy on me,' said Dr.—'when he had heard all that Laura had to say, 'what a silly, romantic child you are; but, like all women, you must suppose have your own way, and live the longer. Love you for yourself, do you say—why loving you for your pretty face is loving you for yourself, isn't it?'

'Oh! no—for were I to lose it after marriage, I should lose his affections also. Do, dear Doctor, serve me in the one thing, will you?'

'Oh, yes! I will do him, and tell him as many lies as you please. He is below, I hear—and for it!'

'Great God! what do I hear, Doctor,' said Walsingham, as the doctor entered the parlor, 'has Miss Graham in reality the small-pox?'

'Ahah!' answered the Doctor, consequently, taking a huge pinch of snuff, and generously a portion to his handkerchief, 'do you take Irish Blackguard, sir?'

'Answer me, pray! can it be possible that—'

'Are you afraid of infection, Mr. Walsingham? Because the symptoms are very strong.'

'Good God! said he, retreating, 'and will it injure her beauty?'

'Life is before beauty sir,' answered the Doctor, solemnly, 'she may die beautiful, if the corruption strikes inward, or live homely, if the contrary; but I hope and believe that the last is not probably. What signifies her beauty, if she do but recover.'

'Why will you say so? Not signify—good, God, it signifies more than money, health, or even life. To be ploughed up by small pox—to be scathed and plead like a country wench!'

'Oh! that will be certain; there is an idiosyncrasy about small pox that gives no hope of sparing the face. Wont you come up and see her—take some viagerat you had better, Mr. Walsingham!'

'No—I will but hurt my feelings. Poor Laura, is it possible?'

'Madam Greyville, have you any short-rate of time?' said the Doctor, 'there seems to me infection in this air.'

'Do you think so, and the elegant Walsingham made for the door, for the present; farewell. I will call or send regularly, are you quite sure that Laura's face is ruined, Doctor?'

'Certain—if you will see her, you will soon perceive it to be the case.'

'What a pity! Good morning, Doctor; Mrs. Greyville, your servant.'

'Good morning to you, sir—for a cold-hearted scoundrel,' added the benevolent Doctor, as the door closed 'not one cent would I give for that lover of Laura's, but hullo—here he comes back again, I suppose—mercy on the bell—what an a roar.'

'Speak!—for the sake of God! how—how is Laura?' exclaimed Washington Merton, rushing into the room, with an appearance or the deepest emotion.

'She's got the small-pox dreadfully,' grunted the Doctor. 'God forgive the he,' added he, sotto voce.

'Gracious heaven! and her life, is it in danger! Oh God, say that her life is not endangered, and I will bless you.'

'Well, I hope not, but her beauty is lost entirely.'

'Is here blessed life safe?'

'I guess so,' responded the Doctor. 'God Almighty bless you, sir,' exclaimed Washington, wringing his hands and bursting into tears 'let, oh let me see her—I am her cousin and—Doctor I am a fool—but let me see Laura.'