

# 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.

### PREDISPOSITION OR FAMILY DISTINCTION.

WRITTEN FOR THE U. STATES SATURDAY MORNING, BY JOSEPH J. MATTHIAS, AUTHOR OF 'CLARA LINCOLN,' 'INDIAN'S REVENGE,' ETC., ETC.

"The mate for beauty should be a mate, and not a money-chest!"—*Richelieu.*

The golden splendor of an autumnal sunset had flung its rays to the gathering twilight, and the night queen, in lustrous beauty, rose upon her trackless path, whilst a merry laughing group of twinkling stars peeped from beneath the snowy drifts that floated lazily along the illimitable dome, showering a glittering light of silver hue, alike upon the magnificent mansion, where Mammon's wretchedness held through the livelong night, or on the low poverty-stricken hovel, where destitution and want gnawed upon the very vitals of its shivering inmates. The radiant beam fell as full and as lovely upon the bowed in spirit, as they crouched within the narrow precincts of their tottering abodes, as it did on the costly robed dwellers of the towering edifices that had exhausted the tact and skill of the architect in its rich masonry and structure. The thronged thoroughfares of the densely populated city presented as vast an army of beauty, mirth, and fashion, as it were possible to behold in the broad glare of the most pleasant day. It was a night on which the vivid imagination of the poet might have wandered through its elysian fields of thought, and gathered in a rich harvest from its visionary source—a night, when the soul soars free from the world's contaminating influence, and roves mid the glorious creations of an infinite Maker—when the spirit of the oppressed breaks from its earth bound thrall, and revels in its momentary ideal bliss—when the enthusiast, forgetting all else of mortal being, stands enrapt wondrous-stricken, lost to all but the glories around him.

Beside a low speckled window, its rustling drapery glistening in figured richness, reclined the graceful, symmetrical figure of a young and beautiful girl. Her long, flowing ringlets fell in glossy curls around a swan like neck, and down over her white rounded shoulders, till they mingled in the folds of a rich cashmere shawl that hung lightly around a form of exquisite loveliness. Her black, flashing eyes shone from beneath their long dark lashes, like gems hid in the soft silk moss, when the moon-beams pierce down into the deep recesses of the abyss. A smile, half wonder, half pleasure, played around her parted lips of coral beauty, and faintly revealed the pearly treasures that lay beneath. Her gaze wandered from the window out upon a beautifully arranged garden, and her countenance glowed with animation as she watched the gentle waving of the linden, when its zephyr moved branches as a terebint autumn tinged leaves to the sparkling ground, adding a fancied redolence to the fast decaying beauties of surrounding shrubbery. As thus she gazed a burst of almost wild enthusiasm broke from her lips.

"Enchanting! The charmed pencil of a Raphael in the choice delineations of his

native hand could find haughtier beautiful to portray! Look, mother!" she exclaimed, as a tall, matronly personage entered the room and came toward her. "Didst ever behold so splendid a sight? What a theme for poetry! And this mortal too, mother!" "Leoline!" interrupted the mother, but the enthusiastic girl heard not the voice as she proceeded.

"Does not your bid oak, a very giant in its aspect, reach to the frailty of human hopes? Look how he bends to the season's mandate, and yields his leafy covering to the imperial winds! And the strown flowers, too, send their fragrances by airy messengers to more genial climes! A very emblem, mother, of our own mortality!"

The fair girl paused suddenly, and turned for reply to the mother—but she had left the apartment. Her bosom heaved with a long drawn sigh as she caught a glance of her retreating form, and Leoline sank sorrowfully upon an uniquely decorated ottoman beside her.

"The same—still the same," she softly murmured, as she hid her face in her hands whilst the tears trickled slowly through her white taper fingers. "Oh mother, thy once generous bosom would have spurned a contact with the false vanity that now clings to the heart!"

A slight tap at the door aroused the fearful beauty from her reverie, and she started to her feet.

"Leoline," said a voice from without.

"Come in, Louisa," she answered as the door opened and a young beautifully arrayed female burst into the room, with a merry, ringing laugh, that contrasted strangely with the melancholy features of Leoline.

"I have been seeking for you this last hour, and here you are moping away your precious moments in this tenacious apartment. Fie—for thee—I greatly fear there is some cause that prompts this sacrifice, other than the love of solitude."

"There is, indeed!" was the reply, in a low dejected tone.

"Then I must know of it," said the other in a more serious voice.—"Come, Leoline, you know you can confide in me."

"I think so, Louisa. You being an uninterested observer, may not have marked the sad change that has fallen upon the once loving disposition and tender feelings of my mother. The time has been when the poor and the needy found a ready advocate for their distress—when the injured and oppressed found in her soothing sympathy.—But now my heart grieves in the consciousness of its truth, she has forsaken her once bright way, and yields herself a ready victim to the heartless gossiping throng, that ever crowd with their sickening, hypocritical homage, round the persons of those who are reputed to abound in the world's wealth. How so degrading an influence should have ever actuated the feelings of my mother, is to me an unfathomed mystery. I cannot think that she acts from any sinister motives, and yet her entire nature appears degenerated. It is now her sole aim and object, and her only pleasure, that I should resign myself to the giddy vortex of an unmeaning fashion talk, smile, flatter, to amuse the insensible crowd of intriguing coxcombs that nightly congregate around us—and for what?—that the result may be in the advantageous union of her daughter, with some one whose only recommendation is, a fashionable exterior, plenty of small talk, and of wealthy repute."

With a graceful wave of her lily hand, the fair speaker motioned her compliance with the request of an attendant, who appeared at the entrance to the apartment, that she should descend to the drawing room, and twining her arm affectionately round the slender waist of her companion, and casting a last lingering look toward the open easement as the moon beams streamed through on the magnificent carpet, with the step of a queen she glided from the room.

A murmur of admiration rose from the guests at Mr. Weston's, as his fair daughter,

Leoline, entered the parlor, and making a graceful obeisance to the company assembled, accepted the proffered seat of a gentleman who rose at her entrance.

Mrs. Weston smiled approvingly, and Mr. Weston appeared delighted.

"There's not such another match to be found in the city!" he whispered to his wife as they stood together, his fingers nervously twitching at an immense watch-chain that hung suspended from a crimson vest.

"Who is he?" anxiously inquired the spouse, in a low tone.

"Who? Why Mr. Theophilus Johnson, to be sure—his father is reported to be the richest man in Jamaica!"

"Delightful!" said the wife, rubbing her hands in ecstasy.

Mr. Theophilus Johnson was most unwilling in his attentions to Miss Leoline Weston that evening, but the young lady showed an indifference to his obsequiousness that perfectly astounded her parents, and put them in a most ungenial pass when at the outrageous conduct of their daughter in not receiving more deferentially the respects of a gentleman of such magnitude as Mr. Theophilus Johnson.

"The girl 'babit be out of her senses!' thought the father.

"It is downright insanity!" said the mother.

At this inauspicious moment a servant announced Mr. Alfred St. Clair. The brows of the parents darkened, and a smile of joy illuminated the now radiant features of Leoline.

"Was St. Clair's presence requested this evening?" said Mr. Weston to his wife.

"No—but now, I recollect, out of courtesy he was invited to call!" was the answer.

"Alfred," said Leoline, familiarly, "will you please to advance an opinion. Mr. Johnson asserts that the excellency of Byron consists in the dignity of his style."

"To me," answered St. Clair, "the dignity of a fallen creature is a perfect anomaly."

"How so?" inquired Mr. Theophilus Johnson timidly, his glowing features evincing a disposition to get out of the controversy as soon as expedient.

"True dignity," answered St. Clair, "contrary to the common opinion that it is an inherent excellency, is actually a sense of the want of it; it consists not in our valuing ourselves, but in a continual feeling of our dependence upon an infinite Being, and an unceasing aim at conforming to his image. Of this feeling I argue the famed poet to be entirely dispossessed!"

Mr. Johnson played confusedly with the back of his chair, and said, "It might be so!" Leoline smiled at his discontent, and St. Clair continued—

"The moral character of the poet will admit of but little or no justification. Thrown, from early youth, into habits which could not meliorate his disposition, he became selfish, opinionated, and vain glorious. What did not serve to gratify his own humor, called for little of his regard. He wished to appear above the common feelings of humanity, for his philosophy was not of a nature to make him the friend of man—and of religion, he knew little more than the splendid theory!"

Attracted by the energetic tones in which St. Clair spoke, several persons drew closer to the scene of argument, if so it may be called, the argument, in fact, being all on one side, and formed a circle round the parties. Mr. Theophilus Johnson appeared ready to die with mortification at his inefficiency to say anything in his own behalf, and had he not been hemmed in on all sides, he would most assuredly have made a desperate effort to clear himself by abruptly vacating his seat. But this being impossible, he was compelled to 'grin and bear' his discomfiture. Leoline smiled encouragingly upon Alfred St. Clair, and glanced contemptuously upon Mr. Johnson.

"Which of the poets are in favor with Mr. Johnson?" asked Leoline, determined to vex the gentleman to the utmost.

"Homer and Milton!" he replied, despairingly.

"Why? In what do their different excellencies consist?" questioned the lovely girl.

"Oh!" said Theophilus, coloring, "the similarity between them is so perfect that—I disagree," said St. Clair, suddenly, and Mr. Johnson twitched convulsively in his seat.

The listeners smiled, and appeared to enjoy themselves prodigiously.

"Why so?" again gasped Theophilus.

"Because," said Alfred, "the moral of Homer is political—that of Milton religious. The former demonstrates the folly of earthly princes, the latter the goodness of the prince of all. Over both poems, it is true, moral and religious instructions are scattered, and episodes, imagery, similes and descriptions checker them with diversity."

"But which of the poets," said Leoline, at last pitying the disconsolate appearance of Mr. Johnson, and turning to St. Clair, "do you assert to be the superior?"

"Neither," he answered, "Milton was a lion who spurned kingly beauties; but Homer 'polished pebbles' with so much skill that they have continued to sparkle for three thousand years; he painted nature newly dressed from the Creator's hand—but Milton had recourse to those repositories of knowledge which have been accumulating for twenty seven hundred years. Homer had no music to enliven his poem, but finer than the notes of Orpheus are the tones of Milton. Both were indeed the high priests of nature, admitted to her inmost recesses, and taught her most sacred mysteries."

A burst of applause fell upon the little circle when St. Clair ceased speaking, in effort to partake of the triumph of his antagonist in his reasoning would certainly have produced with him a far greater opportunity for rejoicing. However, the company appeared not to notice his discomfiture, and it required the most excruciating self denial in the restraining of their risible faculties.

"Who is Mr. Alfred St. Clair?" inquired Mr. Theophilus Johnson, as he stood at the front door in conversation with Mr. Weston long after all the rest of the company had retired.

"Why, in fact, my dear Johnson, it is almost impossible to say who he is! Nor can I guess by what fatality he gained access to our party, as we are generally, very particular in selecting company. Exceptions will sometimes occur in the best regulated families—"

"Oh! I understand—then he is not an accustomed visitor?"

"Dear bless me! by no means, sir. It is a practical part of my life, never, to encourage presumption in the lower classes, and as this St. Clair is—"

"A decidedly vulgar individual!" chimed in Mr. Johnson.

"Just so, sir—you may rely upon never again being annoyed by his presence."

Now Mr. Weston here touched, most inadvertently, upon a sore point to Mr. Theophilus Johnson, and the effect told swimmingly upon the flushed face of the would be millionaire, as he stammered out—

"Good gracious! He didn't annoy me, Mr. Weston—not at all, sir—I assure you I was perfectly at ease!"

"Of course, my friend—you couldn't be otherwise," said Mr. Weston, in extenuation but what I alluded to, was, that persons of distinction usually avoid all contact with the—vulgar!"

"Yes, sir—you are right! and I flatter myself that mine is a family of distinction!" persisted Mr. Johnson, and he drew himself up in the consciousness of his superiority.

"Undoubtedly, sir—most undoubtedly!" said Mr. Weston, emphatically, as he grasped the hand of Mr. Theophilus Johnson, and shook it in the most possible manner.

"The gentleman said 'good night!' and Mr. Johnson walked leisurely down the steps, drawing on his gloves."

"Ah! Johnson!" cried Weston, after his retreating figure, "drop in soon!"

"Certainly!" echoed Mr. Johnson, from the next pavement.

When Leoline retired from the busy commotion of the parlors, she sought longingly the sweet solitude of her own private apartment, which, furnished in a more less costly style than those she had just vacated, afforded every inducement for the cultivation of the noble intellect, as well as the lighter occupations of the high minded girl. A superb gilt harp stood between two exquisitely carved vases of flowers, in such close proximity to the deep window easement, that the splendid drapery gathered in high fold around them, and faint streams of air that now and then crept through the slight crevices, played tremulously upon its fairy strings. A small cut glass lamp flung an even radiance over a beautiful marble centre table, upon which was gathered a variety of velvet bound books, scattered in reckless profusion under every description of fan y articles, forming a rich and delicate bijouterie. In fact, the whole arrangement of the apartment bore a nice assimilation to the most refined taste. As Leoline entered the inviolable precincts dedicated to her fair self, she sank languidly upon a favorite cushioned seat, and fell into a long, deep reverie. A short stifled sigh would now and then break from its throat, with feverish haste she would clasp her hand to her snowy forehead; her eyes wandering, and low mutterings escaping her parting lips.

"Miss Weston!" said a harsh voice beside her.

Leoline started abruptly to her feet.

"Mother!" she cried, "what brings you here?"

before her daughter, whilst a malignant smile of mortified indignation gathered darkly upon her knit brow. It was a fearful spectacle! An active enmity raging in the bosom of a parent towards an only child—a smile that bears no existence save when a false pride and utter selfishness of heart gives it being. The unobservant may call it fiction—he may deem it impossible that in human nature could lurk so foul a stain—and yet truth binds in her immaculate robe the assertion, and stamps its plausibility. It is the impetus which a love of display works on the darker passions—and which, if once acquired, most invariably works its own ruin.

"What is wrong, mother?" repeated Leoline, shrinking from the basilisk gaze of her parents, with an unaccountable horror.

"You—miss—you are wrong!" exclaimed Mrs. Weston, in the most ungovernable rage. This is a pretty requital for the time and money spent in your education, and bringing out! I would have you know that you have most wilfully insulted your parents, that you have gone in direct disobedience to their explicit commands—and that you must either make suitable apology for your outrageous treatment toward Mr. Theophilus Johnson, or 'judge!' and Mrs. Weston stamped most unadvisedly upon the floor to enforce her argument.

Leoline trembled and remained silent.

Mrs. Weston continued—

"Why don't you speak, miss! You found no lack of tongue when using your wits on the rich Mr. Johnson! It is, of course, a base ingratitude, it is daring presumption!"

The daughter trembled more than ever—and softly tremulously murmured, in tones that would have melted all but the heart of an ambitious, match making mother—

"Do not speak so harshly, mother! I knew not that I did wrong in consulting the dictates of mine own feelings."

"Your feelings! I should like to know, miss, what your feelings have to do with so splendid a match! Why would you be so talk and envy of the whole city—"

(Concluded in our next.)