

# Democratic Banner.

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## AMY GRAY.

BY MARY DAVENANT.

### CHAPTER I.

How strong the love.  
The first, warm love of youth!

It was the last ball of the season, and all that taste could plan and wealth could execute, all that could intoxicate the senses and lull them to forgetfulness of the many varied ills that flesh is heir to, was brought to minister to the gratification of the fashionable circle that was assembled in one of the most splendid establishments in B—.

The light from the glittering chandeliers fell upon fair and graceful forms, whose beauty rivalled that of the lovely flowers which in gay profusion breathed their odors around them. Here was one like a spotless lily bending her proud head in sweet acceptance of the homage of fond admirers, there another like a queenly rose blushing sweetly upon all beholders; here a modest violet veiling her soft blue eyes from the glance of admiration, there a gay carnation flaunting in her brilliant beauty, and taking hearts by storm. That tall and stately feigness may image the camelia; and the gentle girl beside her, not striking to gaze upon, but rich in all the noble charms of soul and intellect, in the fragrant heliotrope; while my heroine, sweet Amy Gray, is the blue forget-me-not, transplanted from the dewy meads, where till now she has bloomed in sweet seclusion, to the close and heated atmosphere of Mrs. Granville's crowded ball-room.

Amy had left the home of her childhood a few short months before, on a visit to a wealthy aunt and uncle between whom and her parents there had been for some years but little intercourse. She had been admired, caressed and flattered in society, and now, on the eve of her return to her native village, her heart was sinking at the thought of leaving the scenes of gaiety she has learned to love too well, and with them one whose presence had been to her their greatest charm. She was standing alone, absorbed apparently in painful thoughts—for these, alas! will intrude even amid the most favored haunts of pleasure—when her hand was claimed by a tall, distinguished looking young gentleman, and in an instant she was whirling round in the bewitching waltz, the centre of an admiring circle.

There were prouder and more striking figures on the floor than Amy Gray in her dress of soft blue gauze floating like an azure veil round her graceful form, but when the music ceased, and with her cheeks flushed and glowing with the excitement of the rapid movement, she raised her beautiful eyes to Clarence Seymour's face, there was such tenderness, such sensibility in the glance that the young man thought he had never beheld any thing on earth more lovely. He bent over her, and whispered something that suffused her cheeks with a still deeper hue, and they were soon threading their way amidst the crowd, and passed through a window that opened from the floor of the apartment into the spacious garden. It was just such a scene as youthful lovers would delight in. A bright, unclouded moon was shedding its soft rays amid lofty trees and graceful statues, and murmuring fountains, while the music softened by the distance swelled in harmonious cadences with a sweetness that might

"Take the prison's soul, and lap it in Elysium."  
Here Clarence and Amy wandered for nearly an hour, for there was no vigilant chaperon to guard Amy's movements. Her aunt was a quiet, stay-at-home woman, and the young friends she had accompanied to the ball were too much absorbed in their own concerns to notice her absence from the ball room. She re-entered it but for a moment to bow her adieux to Mrs. Granville, and then, unconscious of anything but the parting pressure of Charles Seymour's hand, as he placed her in the carriage, and his whispered assurance that he would see her early on the morrow, Amy was soon in the solitude of her own chamber.

Dismissing the maid who was in attendance upon her, and curious as dressing maids usually are to hear how and all about the ball, Amy threw herself upon a chair, and hiding her face in its cushioned depths, wept the first tears of happiness she had ever shed. "He loves me—he loves me!" she exclaimed at length, clasping her hands and raising her tearful eyes—"oh! the bliss of certainty, after the harrowing doubts of the last few weeks!"

And Amy again strove to recall each look and tone of the beloved one as he had poured his passionate vows into her willing ear, and the grey dawn of morning found her still in her gala dress, with the pearls gleaming in her light brown hair, living over and over again the hour in which she had listened to the first avowal of affection from him who had captivated her youthful fancy.

Deeply agitated as Amy had been by the interview at Mrs. Granville's, she was

scarcely less so by her hurried tele-tele with Clarence during the short time they were able to be alone on the following day. She was to leave town early the next morning, friends were calling to bid farewell; there was shopping to be done, trunks to be packed, directions given. Amid all these distractions, Clarence could gain but a few moments, during which he portrayed so feelingly his misery at her approaching departure, and deplored so bitterly the entire dependence of his own position which chained him to his father's counting house, and would prevent his following her immediately, that Amy was completely overcome by his unhappiness and her own. "Ever love brings sorrow," sighed Amy, as she contrasted her present feelings with the dreams of unalloyed felicity. Alas, she little knew what sorrow love can work to those who, like herself, give themselves up to its bright, but often vain illusions.

Our heroine was soon at home—the home she had left so reluctantly to visit her almost unknown relatives, and to which she returned with such a divided heart. All was unchanged there—every chair and table in its wonted place, her father at his writing desk, her mother at her work-table, her little brother at his lesson, just as on the evening before she left them. But all how different did it look to her. The room seemed to have grown smaller, the carpet duller, the furniture plainer when contrasted with the splendor that had surrounded her. Even her parents seemed to have grown old-fashioned during her absence, and the quiet home, once the shrine of all her earthly joys, felt like a dull and cheerless place.

Unfortunately for Amy, neither her father nor mother were very observing characters. Both were entirely absorbed in their respective avocations, and satisfied that their daughter looked as blooming as when she left them, and that her relations had been all kindness, (which the handsome gifts they showered upon her had not sent to her family, most abundantly proved,) they seemed entirely blinded to any other change, made no effort to gain her confidence, and thought everything was going on as before her visit. It is true Amy's brow was still unclouded, her eyes bright, her smile winning. The ready blush mantled over her fair face and neck with even more than its wonted frequency, she was once more her mother's ready assistant in her usual duties—all was outwardly as before. But in that inner world—the home of feeling, of thought, of memory—of all in short which constitutes our real life—what a revolution those few short months had produced! Amy could hardly realize that she was the same being who in her laughing, careless glee had hitherto lived but for the present moment. Now the present seemed annihilated, while memory was busy with the happy past when Clarence was daily at her side, or hope pictured a still happier future, when he would come and claim her for his own.

### CHAPTER II.

What have I to do with thee  
Dull, unjoyous constancy!

A small party of gentlemen were sitting round the dinner-table, the wine was circulating freely; and the song and merry jest showed that the company were all in high good humor.

"Come, Sedly, another song," cried one. "I am as hoarse as a raven already," said Sedly, "and cannot sing another note. It is your turn Clarence, now."

"Clarence! you can't expect Clarence to sing—his charmer has flown off to her sylvan shades, and he has been duffer than the fat weed that grows on Lethe's bank ever since."

"Nay, Clara," said Sedly, "were you really so smitten with that pretty country girl? I thought you had more taste. She was as simple-looking a little thing as I ever saw—no air, no style about her, one of Byron's 'bread and butter girls.'"

"Still she was very pretty, and Clarence made desperate love to her—I heard him myself," said the first speaker; "but it was not serious—eh, Clara?"

"Serious!" exclaimed Clarence, "I should hope not. How could such a poor devil as I make serious love to any woman? We had as nice a little flirtation as you ever saw, and indeed for a week after she left town I was so dull that I was almost afraid I had gone too far, and stung myself a little—but the fit is off now."

"I wonder if the fit is off with the young lady too, Mr. Seymour?" said a grave-looking man in the corner, who had hitherto said but little.

"Most likely it is, doctor," said Clarence, laughing—"that is provided she ever caught the infection. Even supposing she did, I am not such a coxcomb as to suppose she would break her heart for me—to say nothing of broken hearts being out of fashion now."

"Antediluvian," said Sedly. "Hearts now-a-days being made of catchouc which cannot be broken, or of asbestos, which cannot be burned—so we can set fire to them with perfect impunity."

"So some young gentlemen appear to think," said Dr. X., "quickly. 'Tis true the disease of a broken heart does not appear on our bills of mortality, but the

number that sink prematurely into their graves, victims of blighted hopes and disappointed affections, is enough to make a conscientious man hesitate before he throws the fire-brand in sport which may destroy in earnest."

"Stop, doctor, or you will give me the blue devils," said Clarence, rising and pulling out his watch. "Come, Sedly, will you walk with me?"

"We must all speak from our own experience—my peccious organ," said Sedly, placing his hand upon his heart with a theatrical gesture as he was leaving the room, "has been made a fool ball of for ten years at least, to say nothing of being set on fire at least fifty times during the same period, yet still performs all its functions admirably at the present moment. Come, Clarence, my boy, confess," continued Sedly, as he passed his arm through that of his friend, and led him up the street, "had you any notion of the little Gray? you looked so gloomy when the doctor spoke, that I am afraid it is all over with you."

"My conscience gave me a slight twinge I confess," said Clarence, "I certainly did make desperate love to her, and had she stayed a week longer, her sweet, confiding manner would have won me entirely. Now I think I am safe."

"But you did not propose?"

"No—I can't say I did exactly," said Clarence, "but I cursed my poverty which prevented my doing so, and made her promise a thousand times she would not forget me, which from my soul I hope she has done by this time. To break her heart!—oh, God! I could not stand that!"

"Better first than last, my dear friend," said Sedly. "Fancy yourself married to her—both of you as poor as rats, and tell me the result."

"Madness—misery to us both—it is not to be thought of."

"Then it is *une affaire finie*," said Sedly, "and we may talk of the Miss Hamiltons."

"I detest them," said Clarence.

"So do I," said Sedly, "but I mean to marry one, and I think the best thing you can do is to marry the other. A cool money thousand each—I have seen the father's will and know how it is inserted. Marianne Hamilton thinks you the handsomest man she ever saw; as your friend, I advise you to marry her and forget the sylvan nymph, Amy Gray, with all convenient speed."

"Ah, she is so beautiful, so gentle, so confiding, and seemed to love me. This Marianne Hamilton is as proud as Lucifer, and plain and ill-tempered too."

"Not another syllable on your allegiance," cried Sedly, "we will go there at eight." Clarence consented, and the friends parted.

### CHAPTER III.

Das Blumlein hat mich zum meinam Leben  
Und hat mich fabelhaft schön's vor mir logen.

"Amy, my child! speak to me," said Mrs. Gray, who, a few moments before, had entered her daughter's room, and found her stretched senseless on a little couch, which of late had been her constant resting place. The anxious mother had applied the usual restoratives, and Amy had given some signs of returning consciousness. It was but little more than a year since Amy's return from B—, and oh! the change it had wrought in the brilliant beauty that had then been pressed in joyous pride to Mrs. Gray's maternal heart.

Amy's head rested heavily on her mother's supporting arm, and the rich folds of her hair were pushed off her temples, while Mrs. Gray's tears fell fast over the thin, pale face and corrugated brow of her suffering child. But Amy's beauty though dimmed, was not destroyed. It had assumed a more spiritual, a more intellectual character. Though her cheeks were sunken, and the ruddy glow of health was faded, the perfect contour of her features, of the fine, straight nose and still beautiful mouth, was perhaps more striking than before. And when she lifted the long lashes from the cheek that shadowed, and raised her soft blue eyes to her mother's face with such a look of woe as pierced her very soul, Mrs. Gray could command herself no longer, and with a burst of grief, passionately exclaimed—

"My child, my Amy, you will break my heart if you do not tell me what is breaking yours!"

Amy tried to speak but could not. She only moaned piteously and hid her face in her mother's bosom. Further restoratives were given her, and she at length motioned that her mother should bring her a newspaper that had fallen beside her, and pointing to a paragraph, said—

"Read it to me again, mother, that I may be sure it is true, and when I am stronger I will tell you all—"

Mrs. Gray took the paper and read, "married on Thursday evening, by the Rev. Dr. D—, Clarence Seymour, Esq., to Marianne, daughter of the late Richard Hamilton, Esq."

Amy pressed her lips firmly together, as one gathering strength to bear a heavy blow. She faintly whispered, "leave me alone, dear mother, I will not faint again, and her mother quietly left the room.

When she returned to it Amy still lay upon her little couch, her white hands raised, and clasped as if in prayer. Through

the windows above her head clusters of rich roses and fragrant honey suckles were bending their blossoms from amid the vine leaves, as if in sympathy with the sufferings of one beautiful and transient as themselves. And the mother recalled the words of the patriarch, "man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of sorrow. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower, he fleeth as it were a shadow and continueth not." And felt that her own sweet flower would soon be transplanted into the region where sorrow could not again blight its bloom.

It was not until the next morning that Amy was sufficiently recovered to tell her mother her short and simple story. How she had loved, how trusted, even when months had passed and brought no token of remembrance from him to whom she had given her whole heart. How at length like a dark shadow doubts of his truth began to gather round her—how she heard rumors of his attentions to another, which at first she cast from her as treason against all that was noble and good in man. How doubt by degrees settled into conviction, until at last life seemed robbed of all that gave it value. How when she first began to waver in her trust (and oh! how long it is before a deeply loving nature can believe its trust a vain one?) she had ventured to enclose in a blank envelope a faded forget-me not, which he had given her on that memorable evening in Mrs. Granville's garden, but it had brought no response, no sign of remembrance from him. How each day for many, many weary months she had risen from her sleepless bed, cheered by the vain hope of seeing him, and each night had lain her aching brow upon her pillow, with dark and dull despair creeping closer and closer round her heart. How she had wearied of her employments, how even the fair face of nature seemed one vast, cheerless blank to her, how she forgot her duties, her pleasures, her very prayers in the one weary, wasting expectancy of tidings of her beloved.

"I saw, dear mother," she concluded, "that you thought me ill, I knew that the doctor could not tell what was the matter with me, I knew that I was growing weaker and thinner, and paler every day, and I was glad that it was so far I wanted to die. Nay, do not cry so, mother, I wish it still, though now I feel how weak and sinful I have been in my idolatry. You must pray for me, mother—we will both pray that I may be forgiven, and made fit for the great change that must soon come upon me."

But Mrs. Gray could not give up her child without an effort to save her life. The physician advised a change of air, and as her aunt and uncle were most urgent that Mr. and Mrs. Gray should come to them, and place Amy under the care of their own medical adviser, they at once prepared to convey the pale sufferer to the hospitable abode that had before received her in all the radiance of her early beauty.

### CHAPTER IV.

Sickness of the heart  
Hath done its work on her."

We now return for a while to Clarence Seymour, whom we left half repentant of his heartless conduct toward Amy, and half persuaded by his mercenary companion, Mr. Sedly, of the expediency of making his bow to the wealthy heiress, who had already distinguished him by her favor. Clarence was vain, selfish, extravagant, and fond of pleasure. He had been captivated at first by Amy's beauty and simplicity, and the unfeigned happiness with which she received the avowal of love which rushed from his heart to his lips, even before he was aware of what he was uttering, had made a deeper impression on the worldly minded man of fashion than he cared to acknowledge—even to himself.

A hundred times during the course of his heartless wooing of the heiress he neither loved nor esteemed, did he feel tempted to give up a pursuit from which his better nature revolted, and throw himself at the feet of the only woman for whom he had felt a sentiment of real love. But then his poverty—his love of pleasure, of show, of fashion, of ease, must all be sacrificed. He must live, as Sedly represented it to him, as a galleys slave at the oar, in order to put bread into the mouths of his family—and the selfish indolent man of fashion shrunk from the sacrifice.

Sedly chanced to be present when Clarence received the enclosure by which Amy hoped, without compromising her dignity, to recall the wandering heart of her lover, and so powerful was the appeal that Sedly almost feared his victim would have escaped him.

"To do justice to Mr. Sedly, we must say that he believed himself to be doing right. That according to the code by which he was governed, he was acting the part of a true friend, in preventing Clarence, in a moment of enthusiasm, from throwing himself away on a poor country girl, when a wealthy and fashionable heiress (to whose sister he had just been united) was to be had for the asking; and as we have seen, Sedly succeeded in his plans. Clarence wedded the heiress, and the honeymoon had not passed before he discovered—as all do sooner or later who build on a foundation of falsehood—that

he had made a great mistake, and taken to his home a proud, imperious and selfish mistress, instead of a gentle, a loving and beloved wife, such as his heart still whitened, Amy Gray would have been to him.

A violent altercation had just taken place between the newly married pair. It was just six weeks from their wedding day—and Clarence had shut himself in his private apartment, and was pacing the floor, cursing bitterly his own cupidity which had fettered him with a chain he loathed, when Dr. X— was announced as wishing to see him on business, and a few moments afterward the gentleman entered the room.

"I have come, Mr. Seymour, on a painful errand," he said. "Miss Gray is in town, at her uncle's, extremely ill, and has expressed a strong desire to see you."

"Miss Gray—Amy Gray!—strange! I was this moment thinking of her. She is ill, you say—not seriously so, I hope."

"She has probably but a few days to live. Her disease is one of those mysterious ones which so often baffle our medical skill—a total prostration of all the vital energies, the result of excessive and protracted nervous excitement acting upon a frame naturally delicate."

"My God!" exclaimed Clarence, "excessively agitated, and the cause, doctor the cause?—speak it out—I can bear it."

"You seem already, Mr. Seymour, to have anticipated my communication. From herself I have learned nothing. But her mother, whom of course I questioned closely as to the origin of her daughter's malady, informed me that she had believed herself engaged to a gentleman here, whose subsequent neglect preyed upon her health. My own observations at the time, and the recollection of a conversation at Mrs. W—'s dinner-table supplied what was wanting in her very guarded statement. To-day Mrs. Gray inquired if I knew you, and added that Amy could not die in peace without having seen you. I objected to the interview as being too agitating in her present weak state, but she implored so earnestly to be allowed to look upon you, if not to speak to you, that I could not oppose her wish."

"Another instance of the ruling passion strong in death, Mr. Seymour." "And is it a heart like this that I have thrown from me, crushed and broken?" said Clarence, seizing his hat, and scarcely waiting for the doctor as he rushed from the house.

All was still in the spacious chamber of Mrs. C—'s splendid mansion, where Amy Gray, in her youth and loveliness, had laid down to die. Mrs. Gray was watching by her child's bedside as Clarence entered, but she withdrew to a distant part of the room as he advanced with noiseless step toward her. Amy was apparently sleeping, and Clarence gazed long and fixedly upon her still beautiful face. There she lay like a faded flower, with her hands folded upon her bosom, and nothing but her short quick breathings disturbing the death-like picture. The strong man's heart was bowed within him, and he covered his face and wept in all the bitterness of an unavailing repentance.

At length Amy opened her languid eyes and a gleam of happiness irradiated her face as she said, as calmly and as composedly as though she had seen him but a day before, "Mr. Seymour, this is kind, indeed, and she stretched forth her thin, pale hand to him.

"Amy, my Amy!—can you forgive me?" said Clarence in a broken voice.

"I do," said Amy looking upward, "even as I hope to be forgiven. But tell me, Clarence, tell me truly—for all is over now—did you ever love me, or was it all delusion—a sweet tho' fatal dream? My mother says your vows were false when given, but I cannot believe it. You loved me once—it was necessary—it was poverty that separated us?"

"As there is truth above I never loved but you. Oh, Amy! I have sold myself for wealth—and I am wretched as I deserve to be."

"May God forgive you, Clarence!—my fate is happy when compared with yours. I go where all is love—all truth. For you, Clarence, I once forgot even my Maker—but that is past and gone. Forgive my troubling you to come to me, but I longed to look once more upon you, and learn from your own lips that it was not all falsehood." And Amy, completely exhausted, closed her eyes, and motioned him to depart.

A few hours after, just as the last rays of the setting sun were lingering in the chamber of the dying, her gentle spirit winged its way to rest. But there seemed no rest, no peace for the unhappy Clarence. Dissatisfied with himself, his home, his wife and all about him, he is a morose, unhappy man; but he still cherishes the faded forget-me-not, his first and last gift to Amy Gray, and often when dwelling on their final interview, he exclaims— "she may well say her late is happier than mine! She died of a broken heart—it is far harder to live with one."

Who indeed would exchange the fate of the victim for that of him who strikes the blow?

Courting, according to Bishop Obederdonk, is done on printing principles, there being a good deal of hand-press work about it.