

The North Branch Democrat.

HARVEY SICKLER, Proprietor.

"TO SPEAK HIS THOUGHTS IS EVERY FREEMAN'S RIGHT."—Thomas Jefferson.

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Select Story.

MY MARRIAGE, OR THE DREADFUL WIDOW.

I was making my way through a crowd in a by-street which I supposed had collected for the contemplation and enjoyment of some trifling and contemptible disturbance, but into which at the time I was not in the mood to inquire, when my course was arrested by a pair of beautiful black eyes under a lady's veil, which met mine with a mute appeal which I could not for a moment resist.

"What is the matter?" I demanded of the possessor of the black bright eyes.

A remarkably sweet voice replied, "I have ventured to interfere in behalf of a child I saw the people abusing, but I am afraid that, without some assistance, my effort will be unavailing."

"Wasn't abusing it," cried several rough voices together. "She was only fighting with little Mike, and she'd got the best of him, too, if you'd let her alone."

"It is quite enough," said the lady with spirit, her splendid eyes flashing as she spoke, "that your sex should disgrace itself in this way. I shall not allow mine, especially such a little creature as this, to make a savage brute of itself, if I can help it."

"You are right, madam," said "The man who would see your sex dragged into the prize-ring must have little respect for his own mother. You are Quixotic, however, to assume the duties of this child's natural protector. Where are its parents?"

"Dead," cried three other little children in chorus.

"Where—how does the little girl live then?"

"She lives with Miss Fanny Flink, and does errands for her."

"What sort of a person is this? I inquired the dark-eyed lady.

"She dresses finer than you do, ma'am," replied one of the female bystanders; "but she is not exactly the person to bring up a child in the way it should go, as she has strayed a long way out herself."

The pointed truthfulness of this remark raised a laugh among the acquaintances of Miss Fannie Flink.

The lady, in the meantime, had not let go her hold on a half-clad, sturdy little girl whose face was flushed with passion, and discolored with blood, dirt, and tears.—She stooped down to her, raising her veil, and said, "Little one, if you go with me I will find you a good home. You shall have nice clothes, enough to eat, and be taught to read and write. What do you say?"

The sweetness and beauty of the lady's face surprised me; the child seemed quite overpowered by her gentle influence, and replied: "Yes, ma'am, I will go with you anywhere."

At this juncture a policeman arrived on the spot, and the lady at once addressed herself to him, explaining the case and shortly afterward she walked away, leading her little charge, escorted by the guardian of the peace. Although much pressed for time, I lingered to look after her till she turned the corner; for never had I seen a face which seemed to me half so lovely as hers, and it haunted me ever after.

I had, however, at that time too many troubles of my own, to afford time to look after those of others. A very long and expensive lawsuit exhausted the once handsome fortune that had long kept my family in so enviable a position, and left me nothing but fallacious hopes and illusive expectations. My father died during the slow progress of the litigation; the lawyer who had conducted it also died before its conclusion; and it appeared too probable that my mother, too, would pass away without the satisfaction of knowing that so much money, thought, anxiety and suspense had not been entirely thrown away. She was very ill; and I foresaw with certainty that the slender thread which held her to this life would snap, if the final decision in our cause, which it was believed would soon be rendered, should be against us; for it would necessitate the sale of all that remained to us, and leave us little better than beggars.

It was our last stake, upon which all our hopes and confidence had gradually concentrated; and if that were lost we had nothing more to lose—nothing but black despair to encounter, which we durst not anticipate.

The lawyer who at the time conducted our suit was an old friend of my father's—successful, rich, independent and surly;—and, as he had undertaken the case more from friendly than pecuniary motives, did not attempt to disguise the truth and probabilities from me. But I could not, would not look forward to anything but triumph, and chose rather to disregard his discouraging tone as one of the means he employed to enhance the value of his service in achieving success. He was a good man at heart, that old lawyer, and his penetration was wonderful; but he was not apt to spoil his medicine by over-sweetening it, and my pampered palate rebelled not a little against its disgusting but not unwholesome bitterness.

I had a long hunt after an important female witness whom I found at last in a garret, dying of consumption. And whom should I find, sitting like a ministering angel at her bed side, but the beautiful black-eyed lady whom I had lately met, the companion of the little orphan girl!

"It is in such a place as this, where a good angel is most needed, and not in the circles of gayety and fashion, that I must

seek you, I see," exclaimed I, gazing upon her with irrepressible admiration.

The lady blushed deeply; and as soon as she had recovered from her momentary confusion, observed quietly, that she was simply performing a duty to which an old friend of her mother's was fully entitled.

While obtaining the deposition of her patient, I had several opportunities of conversing with this excellent beauty; and her modest elegance and graceful ease captivated my soul.

One evening I was permitted to accompany her in search of a conveyance; and as I had resolved to express my sentiments freely to her on the first available occasion, I was, as is usual in such cases, much embarrassed when it presented itself.

"Your patient is dying, I fear."

"She is conscious of the approach of her deliverance; and as such she regards it."

"It is an angel's office you fill in smoothing her path to the grave."

"Do not flatter me, sir. It is but little I can do, and flattery seems to me to make that little less than nothing."

"I assure you I express my admiration in most stunted terms; were I to tell you all I think and feel I might indeed surprise you."

"Then let me entreat your forbearance."

"It is unkind, not to say harsh, in you to forbid the utterance of a heart so sincere and full as mine."

"It is my kindness, my consideration for you, that induces me to check this excessive language, because I know you will repent it."

"Impossible! I not only admire you more than any being I ever saw, but I feel that you are worthy of my worship, and that I love you."

"Say no more, I entreat. If you know who and what I am, you would confess the folly of which you are guilty. You tell me you are unfortunate and unhappy; I pity you—but there is a gulf between us, and you would only render yourself more wretched by attempting, blindly and rashly to cross it."

"Are you married?"

"Do not ask. Here let our acquaintance cease. You have no more occasion to visit my patient; and you surely would not deprive her of her last remaining friend, as you will do if you persist in intruding upon her. Here then—let us part and forever."

She stopped a cab and allowed me to help her into it, and left me in mystery and gloom. She had crossed my path like a heavenly apparition; and her disappearance rendered everything about me hopeless and dreary as despair.

The treacherous law, after having lured us on to ruin, decided against our claims, and extorted the last remnant of our property to pay its costs. To communicate this fact to my mother would have been inflicting her death blow; and after meditating long upon the subject, I found myself unequal to the painful task, and went once more to our old lawyer, to ascertain whether there was no possibility of compromising the matter so as to postpone the evil day, and leave my mother awhile in possession of her home and comforts.

I met a lady descending the stairs who had just come out of his office, whose physiognomy was of that unusually repulsive character which imprisits itself indelibly on the memory, and ever after, in dreams and reveries, in sleep and wakefulness, rises from time to time to our mental vision with horrid distinctness, shocking us with the fullest sense of the dread ugliness of human malformation. I thought of the wonderful contrast between this creature and the delicate beauty I loved in vain.

The old lawyer was in, and grasped my hand with sympathetic cordiality. I stated the object of my visit.

"Well, my young friend," said he "I have anticipated your wishes, and have just been talking with the successful party. She is by no means inexorable; but to tell you the truth, there is no ground of compromise left. You have lost all—the widow has won all. If she accords you anything it will be simply a donation—nothing more or less."

"Is there no recourse left by which I can, for a time, ward off this final, and to my mother, I fear, fatal blow?"

"None in law."

"In what, then?"

"In yourself."

"How in myself?"

"In your person. You are young and handsome. I don't say so to flatter you, but to make my meaning clear."

"Well?"

"Well, marry the widow."

"Marry her? I would rather hang myself at once."

"You should know best how fit you are to die. I am afraid your education and habits have totally unfitted you for business and usefulness."

"But this marriage is absurd; impossible—"

"I am not in the habit of proposing absurdities and impossibilities. If you will authorize me to act, you will find it no such thing. Will you do so?"

"Not for the world."

"Understand that I have not urged this matter on your behalf, but for the sake of your mother and sister—especially on account of your mother, for whose life you pretended a moment ago to feel an amount of solicitude that would enable you to make any sacrifice."

"For the moment I did not think of them."

"It is time you did. Since my counsel is so very unpalatable, perhaps you will condescend to inform me what you propose to do."

The old lawyer turned his chair round, and commenced writing at his desk as coolly as if he had been an ingenious machine invented for no other purpose. I thought on his proposition till I grew sick and faint. The recollection of the consummate charms of her I loved added horror to the aspect of hate, such as she wore whom I was invited to make my own, and I could not bring my heart and lip to say yes to such a destiny. At last I rose and said:

"I will call to-morrow and give you my decision."

"Very well," replied the old man, without turning his head or ceasing to write.

I went home and attempted to prepare my mother for the ruin that had befallen us, but in approaching the subject found it was more than she could endure, and I relinquished the effort in despair. To my sister I ventured to tell the truth; and she wept bitterly, not for herself, but for our only parent, who she assured me would inevitably expire on hearing the news.

"Is there nothing on earth that you can do, Edward, to prevent this?"

"Yes."

"And want you do it?"

"I cannot bring my mind to it."

"Is it dishonest?"

"No—o, I don't know that it is, but very repugnant to my feelings."

"I am sure I would do anything for mamma."

"Would you marry the man you abhor?"

"To save mamma's life—yes."

"Well, then, I will not be outdone by you in filial affection."

"What do you mean Edward?"

"I will tell you to-morrow. In the meantime cheer up. I will save our mother and you, but at great sacrifice—Heaven only knows how great."

My sister flung her arms around my neck, kissed me affectionately, called me by many endearing names, and I felt as if I almost deserved them, exaggerated as they were.

I communicated my decision to my lawyer the next day, telling him that since I could not marry for love, I would marry for hate.

He uttered a sort of grunt, and replied: "Few marriages begin in that way; but with too many love is merged in antipathy as soon as the honeymoon is well over. Your prospect of connubial happiness is the brighter, as it cannot change but for the better. If you knew the lady as well as I do, you would entertain no misgivings on the subject."

On the second day after this interview I received Mrs. Barrington's card, and a written request from my lawyer that I would call upon her without delay, as he had settled the preliminaries in the most satisfactory manner. I did not fly on the wings of love to the stately mansion of my bride elect, as there had been little choice in the matter, but walked thither like a man who had volunteered to be hanged.

On my arrival I was ushered into a handsome drawing room, in which I was kept waiting for about a quarter of an hour when at last the lady appeared. She did not look handsomer than when I met her on the stairs leading to my lawyer's office. On the contrary, the relation in which she now stood with respect to myself, and the finery she had piled upon her person, rendered her, in my eyes, more hideous than ever.

I responded to her salutation, and remained silent for a few moments. She appeared desirous of manifesting a certain measure of maidenly coyness, and I was not indisposed to allow her all the leisure she required for the performance of the part. When she had enacted the role of her satisfaction, and lost a little patience, she opened upon me with the voice of a dying screech-owl, that made me shudder: "Well, Mr. Ingleton, the object of your visit is, I presume—"

"Yes, madam, it is as you say, to propose for your hand and heart; they are conventionally supposed to go together."

"My hand and heart?" she exclaimed laughing.

What a laugh it was! a ruined burdurgurdy, a maniac's scream, and the sere music of a starving cat, combined, were made to it.

"Yes, madam; and does this appear so absurd to you?"

"Extraordinarily so."

"My lawyer has been authorized by me to make a proposition, which he has given me to understand has been favorably received. Has he deceived me?"

"No, not at all; but you have made a slight mistake in the person."

"Are you not Mrs. Barrington?"

"That is my name; but I presume you refer to my niece."

"This is very ridiculous. Shall I have the pleasure of seeing the right lady?"

"In a moment. She sent me to prepare you for her coming."

"I do not see the necessity."

"I presume not. I will explain, although the subject is a delicate one to handle. A better-hearted girl than my niece, Clara, never lived, but she has some personal defects which perhaps only the eyes of affection can overlook. I mean to say, for instance, that she does not enjoy the same personal advantages as myself."

I looked at the speaker's moment in amazement, and an involuntary groan escaped my lips.

"It cannot be possible! Is she deformed?"

"O, no; she is as perfectly shaped as I am."

"Indeed! What is it then?"

"A slight obliquity of vision, which adds a puzzling expression to the eyes. Her hair is of that color against which there is a very unmerited prejudice; but, for myself, I think I never saw a finer or more brilliant red. With these exceptions, there exists a strong family likeness between us, especially as respects the width of the mouth, the roundness and height of the shoulder, and the size of the feet."

What an image of horror was conjured up before me!

"Say no more!" I exclaimed wildly.—"This suspense is too dreadful. Let me see the woman herself, though the sight kill me!"

"Then turn and look upon your death!" cried a sweet voice behind me, in a mock tragic tone, followed by a silvery ring of laughter.

I turned, and to my inexpressible delight, beheld my adored black-eyed beauty.

"And you—you are—"

"Not Miss Eastburn. That was my maiden name; but Clara Barrington, widow."

I fell at her feet, half-disposed to worship her—covered her hand with kisses, and, finding no resistance offered, sprang to my feet and clasped her in my arms.

Clara Barrington, will you become Clara Ingleton?"

"In what excellent practice you are!—We shall have you proposing to the whole family. You have begun bravely—first to the aunt and then to the niece within five minutes. Aunt has fled, as well she may, from so dangerous a creature. What would have become of her had I not rushed to the rescue, Heaven only knows!—I promise you I shall be dreadfully jealous of her and the superior personal advantages she enjoys."

"Oh, you have been playing a rare game with me!"

"A fair one. I have won your love fairly, and learnt at the same time that there was right on your side as well as mine, and I will be my own court of inquiry, and do justice more even-handed than the law."

"May I not praise you now?"

"No; but you may—"

"Do what?"

"Love me just as much as you please."

WOMEN IN PARAGUA.

The author of "Sketches in Paraguay" gives us this fragrant morsel: Every body smokes in Paraguay, and nearly every female above thirteen years of age, chews, I am wrong. They do not chew, but put tobacco in their mouths, keep it there constantly except when eating, and instead of chewing, roll it about with their tongues and suck it. Only imagine yourself about to salute the rich, red lips of a magnificent little Hebe, arrayed in satin and flashing diamonds she draws from her mouth a brownish black roll of tobacco, quite two inches long, looking like a monstrous grub, and depositing the savory morsel on the rim of your sombrero, puts up her face, and is ready for your salute. I have sometimes seen an over delicate foreigner turn with a shudder of loathing under such circumstances, and get the epithet *el serico* (the savage) applied to him by the offended for his sensitiveness. However, one soon gets used to this in Paraguay, where you are perforce of custom, obliged to kiss every lady you are introduced to and one half you meet are really tempting enough to render you reckless of consequences. You would sip the dew of the proffered lips in the face of a tobacco battery—even the double distilled "honey dew" of old Virginia.

THE DEVIL RIGHT.—

Dr. —, who was pastor of the Orthodox church, had been for some time annoyed by the forwardness of a lay brother, to "speak" whenever an opportunity was offered, to the frequent exclusion of those whose remarks had great tendency to edification. This had been carried so far that the pastor, whenever he stated that an "opportunity would now be offered for any brother to give an exhortation," had always been a secret dread of the loquacious member. On one especial occasion, the latter prefaced a prosy, incoherent harangue with an account of a conversation he had been carrying on with the great adversary. "My friends," said he, "the devil and I have been fighting for more than twenty minutes; he told me not to speak to-night, but I determined I would; he said some of the rest could speak better than I, but still I felt that I could not keep silent; he even whispered that I spoke too often, and that nobody wanted to hear me; but I was not to be put down in that way, and now I have gained the victory, I must tell you all that is in my heart." Then followed the tedious harangue aforesaid. As they were coming out of the session-room, the good pastor inclined his head so that his mouth approached the ear of the militant member, and whispered: "Brother, I think the devil was right!"

Artemus says:

"As for the Wards they are known all the world over, and every big city in the blessed Union has its little divisions called after them. In New York and Boston there is the first Ward and the second Ward, and so on to the one hundredth Ward, and in Paris and London and everywhere, we are honored with the remembrance. I guess that's some honor. And even down South, its more than probable, they have some Wards in their villages; and we are so popular, that even the workin' apartments in the penitentiaries are named in the same way."

A short time after the death of

Andrew Jackson, Senator Corwin and a friend who were riding together in a stage coach, fell in conversation concerning the hero of the Hermitage, and after speaking of the General's indomitable perseverance, Corwin's friend asked him if he tho't the General was in Heaven. I don't know said Tom, his marked countenance relaxing at the conception of the joke. "I don't know, but if the General made up his mind to go to Heaven all—could not prevent him."

A CORRECT ANSWER.—

The late Governor Mattox, of Vermont, was Chairman of a Committee appointed to examine candidates for admission to the bar of Caledonia county, Vermont, and reported that one of them was not qualified for admission for he had answered but one question right which the Committee had asked him.

"And what was that question, brother Mattox?" inquired the presiding Judge.

"We asked him, your Honor, what a freehold estate is, and he answered he DIDN'T KNOW."

A little Swedish girl

while walking with her father on a starry night, absorbed in the contemplation of the skies, being asked of what she was thinking, replied: "I was thinking, if the wrong side of heaven was so glorious what must the right side be!"

A toast at an Irish Society's dinner

at Cincinnati: "Here's to the President of the Society, Patrick O'Rafferty, an' may he live to ate the hen that scratches over his grave."

A darkey's instruction for putting

on a coat were: "First de right arm, den de left, and den give one general convulsion."

In the report of a down east agricultural fair

occurs the following: "Best bed comforter—Miss Mary Hall."

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