

Poetry.

The Sabbath Bells.

The old man sits in his easy chair—
And his hand is caught the ringing
Of many a church bell far and near,
Their old sweet music singing.
And his hand sinks low on his aged breast,
While his thoughts far back are reaching
To the Sabbath morn of his boyish days,
And a mother's sacred teaching.

A few years later, and lo! the bells
A merrier strain were pealing,
And heavenward bore the marriage vows
Which his manhood's eyes were sealing.
As memory holds before him
The sad, sad picture of later years,
When the tide of grief rolled over him—
When the bells were tolling for loved ones gone.

For the wife, for the sons and daughters,
Who, one by one, from his home went out,
And down into death's dark waters,
But the aged heart is dimming now,
Which his old life daily blesses,
And his eyes grow bright and his pulses warm
Nodding a grandchild's sweet caresses.

And the old man wakes from his reverie,
And his hand old face is smiling,
While the child with her serious eyes reads on,
The Sabbath hours beginning.
Ah! bells, once more ye will ring for him,
When the heavenly hand shall sever
The chord of life, and his feet soil flies
To dwell with his own forever.

Literature.

TEMPTATION:

OR

The Lady of Ashurst.

CHAPTER I.

THE REFORMATION AND MARRIAGE.

As the day wore on, it became slightly overcast, and there were signs of an approaching snow-storm, which filled Wentworth with anxiety.

But Captain Martin declared it would not fall that night; he insisted that he was too much accustomed to watching the signs of the weather to be deceived, and Frank gladly accepted his prognostics as infallible.

The short winter day closed so early, that it was but little after four when the carriage set out on its important errand. Bessie had taken the precaution to send a hood of her own, and her mother's cloak and furs, to Evelyn, for she felt sure she would need them in her nocturnal journey.

For Jane she did not consider it necessary to provide, as her clothing would of course be in her own room; but she was aware that Evelyn was permitted to have nothing more sent to her than she actually required for daily use in her prison.

The close carriage was ordered out, the driver bribed to secrecy by his young master, and in his zeal for the comfort of the runaways, the man placed in it a bear skin and a leopard skin, buttoned up every aperture, and ascertained that his horses were in good condition for the proposed escape.

In the meantime, Wentworth and his companion, in the pony carriage, drove through a private road leading toward the point they wished to gain.

The autumn weather had been uncommonly fine, and the roads were still in excellent order; they made very good time to Arden Place, and drew up near the pond just as the moon was rising.

A thick woodland lay between them and the house, and there was little danger that on so cold a night any one would stray in that direction.

Hunter cheerfully said: "We are in good time, Mr. Wentworth, and we shall have a clear light for our enterprise. I will drive behind the shelter of yonder clump of trees, and wait your return. If you prove successful, I should be on our way back in less than an hour."

"Don't intimate a doubt as to success," said Frank, feverishly. "If my hopes are dashed now, I believe I shall be ready to shoot myself. If I fail to rescue Evelyn to-night, and make her my own before another day dawns, something tells me that I shall never do so—never!"

"My dear boy, don't give way to fancy. Collect all your nerve, act with prudence, and I see nothing to defeat you."

"Evelyn may have been removed to some other place of detention. Her father may cause her to be more strictly guarded. A thousand fears, unthought of before, assail me as I draw near the scene of action."

Hunter said everything he could think of to reassure him, and Wentworth soon plunged into the thick grove of pines which screened the old mansion from the northern blasts. The wind sighed only among them with the melancholy wail only heard in perfection in a pine forest, but Wentworth heeded it not—his mind was too full of other thoughts and other fears.

There was but one point of danger before him. Where the woodland ended, a strip of open ground, about fifty feet in length, lay between it and the evergreens which grew across the tower. This once passed without observation, and he was safe for the present.

Just as he reached this point, a friendly cloud sailed over the moon, and he passed the low fence with a cautious tread. Lights were gleaming from several windows, and the stone-colored mansion arose cold and wintry-looking through the shivering branches of the trees.

Wentworth crouched down as one of the servants came into the yard. The man gathered up an armful of wood, and again went in, and Frank dashed across the open space as the door closed behind him. As he drew near the tower he moved with extreme caution, and his heart beat high with hope when he stood in the high room, amid the wreck of matter that was shut in there.

Wentworth listened intently; he heard no sound of approaching footsteps, and he ventured to allow a gleam of light from the dark lantern he carried to penetrate the gloom around him. Just as he did so, he heard the upper door open, and the voice of old Hagar, at the head of the stairs, exclaimed:

"Oh, Miss Evelyn, de debil! down stairs, sho! for I saw de flash of 'er eyes in de dark. Oh, Lor! 't is a missable night. What have become of 'dat little rascalion, dat aint here to see what's goin' on down dar?"

In a corner of the platform, he waited the appearance of Hagar with such patience as he could command.

At last her courage seemed to revive, and he heard her say:

"You're berry good, Miss Evelyn, an' 't is a poor ole willan to keep you locked up here; but you knows dat I was to let you out, honey, de master'd kill me out-right. But I 'speer de debbel will catch me sho for what I 's done to you."

"Thank you Hagar; I know that you cannot do otherwise than obey my father. But how is it that your grandson is not below, as usual?"

"He's run off a huntin' wi' Marse Maitland, and I jes' thought I'd come up for once by myself. I wouldn't tell you dis, ef I hadn't my heart on de do, 'cause you might try to git me in a fix by gittin' away from me."

As Hagar finished speaking, she suddenly opened the door wide enough to allow her to pass out alone, threw it too again with a crash, and with a rapid hand thrust in the key and turned it in the lock. She carried a small lamp in her left hand, which was suddenly dashed away; a strong grip was laid on her throat, and a resolute voice hissed in her ear:

"Cry out, and a worse deed than I will prove, you will meet me in this world or the next. Where is the key? Did you leave it in the door?"

"Oh, lud a massy!", spluttered the old woman, "quit a diggin' yer claws into my neck, you venemous sarpint, an' I—I'll not make a noise. I'll be as quiet as a lamb."

"You had better, or I will choke the power of speech out of you before any one can get here to help you. Where is the key, I say?"

"What should it be but in de do, Marse Frank; for I knows yer voice now, and I can guess what's brung you here, I reckon. Thar! 'tain't no use; de master can only kill me, an' I don't care much if he do."

Frank loosened one of his hands from the handkerchief around her throat, and with the other turned the key, pushed the door in, and saw Evelyn standing, pale and excited, in the centre of the floor, while Jane had risen from her bed, and was evidently preparing to assist him in his struggle with the negro.

"I'll fix you, madam," she resolutely said, as she advanced to the prostrate Hagar. "You've had your way long enough, but now my turn has come, and if I don't pay you back for making me drink all that poison stuff your master sent me, my name aint Jane Tompkins. Don't trust her, Master Frank, but put a gag in her old mouth at once, and let me tie her fast. I warrant she'll not get away then before somebody comes here to help her."

Before Hagar could utter a remonstrance, Jane had bound a silk handkerchief over her mouth in such a manner as effectually to stifle her cries; she then lifted her, without apparent effort, and threw her on the bed she has just vacated.

Wentworth had brought a strong cord with him, and this the nurse used in the most artistic manner, binding her captive hand and foot, so that escape was impossible without assistance from another.

Jane then turned to her young lady and said: "Come, Miss Evelyn, we must be getting out of this place, for some of the people may miss this old hag, and be coming here to look after her. I'll not let her freeze though she did try to poison me, so I'll just cover her up before we go away."

While Jane had been thus occupied, Wentworth had brought in the things Bessie had sent, and Evelyn tremblingly said: "Dear Frank, how thoughtful you are. But for these I must have wrapped myself in the weather clothes, or taken from Jane what she will need for herself."

"Bessie sent them to you. See will meet us on the way, and go with you—you know where."

She blushed vividly, and hastened to fasten the coquettish little hood and throw the veil over it, while Frank, with eager hands, wrangled the cloak about her, and secured the furs around the charming throat; all the time explaining in a low voice what he had arranged to accomplish that night.

By the time Evelyn was ready, Jane had also donned her bonnet and a heavy tartan shawl; and, turning to the bound woman, Wentworth gravely said:

"You will be quite comfortable there till morning, Hagar, and if you make no attempt to inform any one of your situation, I will hereafter reward you and protect you from the anger of my uncle. Mr. Ashley is not your lawful master, and a new man will soon rule here, so you had better take heed to what you do."

Hagar made no effort to reply, for she felt how useless it would be, and the two passed out, taking the lantern with them; the door was locked; the key thrown among the rubbish below; and the three descended the stairs in breathless joy at the success of this first act in the drama of the night.

As they drew near the outer door, steps were heard approaching, and shrinking back, the fugitives listened in alarm. A childish voice arose and cried out:

"Granny—granny, is dat you a comin'?" "I's feared to come in by myself."

"It is Tom, old Hagar's grandson," whispered Evelyn, "what are we to do now?"

"Be quiet, and he will soon get tired of crying there in the cold. He cannot be easily heard from the house, so there is little danger of any one coming to his assistance. Besides, Maitland promised to care of him, and he will come to the rescue."

In trembling silence she awaited the result; but after a few more calls, the boy retreated, and after satisfying himself that he was actually gone, Wentworth led forth the two rescued captives.

The three made their way through the dense shrubbery and approached the open space before mentioned. Again Wentworth reconnoitred, and seeing no one in the yard, he bade his companion pass over the space as rapidly as possible, while he covered their retreat.

Evelyn fitted over the frozen ground with light steps, but Jane, with limbs stiffened by her long confinement, stumbled and fell.

The door of an outhouse suddenly opened, and a voice from within cried out:

"Is dat you, Aunt Hagar? Missis is a waitin' for you to come her maid. She says I pull it out dat I shan't tech it ag'in."

Evelyn recognized the voice of the girl her stepmother had taken for her maid, and her heart died within her lest Ailsie had also seen and recognized her. But Jane's presence of mind did not fail her, and imitating the voice and pronunciation of the old negro, she said:

"Yes, its me, Ailsie. I is stumbled down, but I aint hurt. Git back's quick as you kin, and tell missis I'll be thar in a minnit."

"Oh, I shall die if I am captured now," exclaimed Evelyn. "Let us fly from this dreadful spot before it is too late to evade pursuit."

"My darling, do not become excited. We have the start, and ten minutes will now place us in safety. Once in the carriage with my friend and myself to guard you, I defy any one to tear you from me."

He passed his arm around her as he thus spoke, and almost carried her through the pine grove. As they drew near the pond, Maitland suddenly darted from the shelter of a tree, and cried out:

"So you've gone and done it, sure enough. Hoony! You are safe, Evely, and I've won the pony, saddle and bridle."

"Oh, Maitland, you're a coward, or you may undo all we have accomplished," remonstrated Wentworth. "You have bravely helped us so far, and carried out the plan I laid down for you this morning pretty well, but why did you let the boy come to the tower at last? I was afraid he would spoil all."

"He slipped away from me because he was afraid old Hagar would whip him for not being at the tower when she came down. I caught him again, and I think after to-night he will think my orders as well worth obeying as his granny's."

"Oh, Maitland, suppose your plans finds out that you have helped us off, what will he do to you?" asked Evelyn, apprehensively. The lad snapped his fingers contemptuously, and said:

"Do you suppose he'd try it on me as he did on a poor little bird like you? The gov'nor is only hard on them that can't turn on him, and let him know that they ain't to be trampled on. I'm one of that spirited class, and he respects my courage, you see."

Agitated as she was, Evelyn could not restrain a smile at this braggadocio, but she kissed the utterer of it with many commendations for his goodness in aiding them.

They presently came in sight of the carriage, and Maitland begged to go with them; but this Frank refused, as his absence, if continued much later, would be sure to be discovered, and perhaps lead to a premature pursuit. He reluctantly took leave of them, with the assurance that he would come over to Ashurst early the next morning to see that they had returned safely, and to claim the pony, with its accoutrements.

The carriage was driven off, and Hunter displayed his skill as a charioteer, as the spirited ponies moved with flying feet over the distance that lay between Arden Place and the cross roads.

At that point they found the carriage from Ashurst, which had drawn up to await their arrival only a few moments before.

Jane took her young lady in her arms, kissed and fervently blessed her, and then permitted Frank to remove her to the larger vehicle. She was received in the embrace of Bessie, who tenderly said:

"You dear, darling Evelyn, I am so glad that you have effected your escape. I have so much to tell you that will astonish you, but we must save all revelations for to-morrow. This is Mr. Delancey, of whom you have before heard; he and I have volunteered to act as attendants to you and Frank."

Evelyn murmured some inaudible words as she sunk back on the seat beside her friend, and Delancey said:

"I think we shall have a pleasant and successful trip, Miss Ashley, for the clouds have floated away, and the night is as clear and bright as I hope your destiny, and that of my friend Wentworth, will be."

"Thank you," said Frank; "I feared very much, at one time to-day, that the weather would be malicious enough to prevent our return to Ashurst to-night."

"That would indeed be a vexation," said Bessie, "for I have ordered a bridal feast to be prepared, and Captain Martin and Mr. Hunter have promised to sit up till we get back."

After a few moments of silence, Evelyn spoke: "You said that you have revelations to make to me, Bessie. Of what nature are they?"

"Oh, I do not mean to-night, my dear. We shall have you all to ourselves to-morrow, and both Frank and I have a wonderful story to relate, so prepare your ears to be astonished."

"I have that to say, too, which will surprise you as much as anything you can have to tell me, that is, unless Frank has already informed you of the singular plot I occupy."

"He has told me enough to enlighten me as to your perfect right to take the step you have done to-night. But let us not talk of those things now; we are a happy bridal party, and must find something merry to say."

At this time, Wentworth and Delancey roused themselves to find such entertainment for their fair companions as the time lay on wings of mirth. They sang, bandied repartees, and by the time they had passed over the ground lying between Ashurst and the small village of Arden, where the accommodations, the magistrate, lived, the young party, with the blessed privilege of their years, had almost forgotten that such things as grief or sadness existed in the world.

Rufus Welby, to whom a note had been sent by Delancey, warning him of what was to happen that night, was already on the spot, and late as the hour was, the magistrate was waiting for them, with lights burning on the table in his office, and a bright fire on the hearth.

Welby assisted Bessie from the carriage, he said:

"Oh, Miss Bessie, I had no idea that a wedding would come off in the neighborhood before Kate's, but I am very happy to assist at this one."

"And we are very grateful for your forethought in having everything ready for us here."

They entered the dingy room used as an office, and gathered a few moments around the fire, which gave brightness and warmth to the dreary place. Mr. Jones's domicile boasted but two rooms, but they sufficed for him in his state of single blessedness, but everything around demonstrated the want of feminine supervision.

But our youthful party were not inclined to be critical, and Evelyn presently laid aside her wrappings and smoothed her hair preparatory to the important ceremony.

Although she was pale from emotion, she looked very charming in her neat grey dress and plain collar.

Delancey and Bessie stood up with her, and Rufus Welby gave her away. Mr. Jones, a raw-boned, grey-haired man dressed in homespun, placed himself in front of the bridal pair, and spoke in a sententious manner:

"My young friends, I hope sincerely that you are not running into misery in coming off to me to make you one. 'Marry in haste, and repent at leisure,' says the proverb; but if such proves your fate, I absolve myself from all blame for putting shackles on you which I have declined to wear myself. You know your own business best, and mine is to join people together for better or for worse. With you I hope it will be all for the better, and no worse in the bargain."

After this quaint address, he at once went on with the brief ceremony, which preceded it. At his close, the young couple received the congratulations of all present, and Welby went to a table in one corner, removed a newspaper carelessly thrown over it, and revealed two champagne bottles with half a dozen glasses, which he had brought with him to drink the health of the newly wedded pair.

After a few moments of lively conversation, Mr. Jones drew Mr. Jones aside and astonished him by presenting him

with three double eagles, a much larger sum than he was in the habit of receiving. It was settled that Welby should return with the bridal party to Ashurst, and he insisted that Delancey should ride in the chaise with him. In accordance with this arrangement, Wentworth with the ladies, took possession of the carriage.

Bessie refused to separate the two so recently united, and she took possession of the front seat, leaving Frank and his bride to whisper the thousand and one things that lovers have to say when they have been so long kept apart as these two had been.

In dreamy reverie, half bright, half painful, the hours passed away, while Bessie pretended to sleep that her companions might find her presence no restraint upon the confidences they had to repose in each other.

At two o'clock the carriage again drew up before the future home of the newly wedded pair, and the two friends, who had anxiously watched for their return, came out to meet them with congratulations and wishes for their future prosperity.

When they were all safe in the warm and brilliantly lighted room, in which an exquisite supper was set out, Hunter anxiously asked:

"Did you meet any one as you were returning hither?"

"No—not a creature," Wentworth quickly replied. "Has any one been sent here in pursuit of us?"

"Yes—a message came from Mrs. Ashley, inquiring if her stepdaughter or her nurse had taken refuge here, as they had both disappeared from Arden Place. It seems that you were missed, Mrs. Wentworth, very shortly after you effected your escape."

At the sound of her new name Evelyn blushed vividly, and eagerly asked: "Did—did Mr. Ashley know that I had fled, or did his wife only send to inquire about me?"

"Mr. Ashley was not made aware of what had happened; he had retired before the discovery was made, and in the precarious state of his health it was thought best not to disturb him. The overseer came here with two white laborers, and he said he had orders to pursue and overtake you if possible, and bring Miss Ashley back to her home."

Frank laughed and said: "They evidently thought 'discretion' the better part of valour for they took good care to avoid coming in contact with us. Aunt Augusta must have thought me a poor knight indeed to yield up the treasure I had won at the command of such emissaries as those."

"Poor lady! I fancy she was in such a distracted condition of mind that she knew not what her husband's rage would be when he awakes to-morrow and hears of the event of the night, that she scarcely knew what she had best do."

"Oh, Frank," said Evelyn, impulsively, "we must go over immediately after breakfast to-morrow morning, and help her to bear his rage. Though she is not to blame, he will treat her as if she is."

"Very well, my love, I will not deny you the first request you have made of me, though I could have wished to spare you any more of my uncle's violence. We must stand between him and my poor aunt, I suppose, as it would not be just to compel her to bear the burden of our escape."

The party gathered around the table, and for the next hour cast away all thought of care. When they at length arose, Hunter took the hand of Evelyn in his right to stand in that relation to you; but I cannot reveal my story to you to-night. It is long and exciting, and you need repose after all you have lately gone through. In the morning you shall learn all I have to tell you."

Evelyn would have remonstrated against this suspense, but Frank laughed and said:

"Can you tell me who I am, Mr. Hunter? from whom I am descended, and on what part of this wide continent I was born? If you can do that, I shall indeed be grateful to you and look on you as one of my best friends."

"I have known for several days that I have the right to stand in that relation to you; but I cannot reveal my story to you to-night. It is long and exciting, and you need repose after all you have lately gone through. In the morning you shall learn all I have to tell you."

Evelyn would have remonstrated against this suspense, but Frank laughed and said:

"It is best so, Evelyn. Show your conjugal submission by taking my word for it and submitting to the delay Mr. Hunter asks."

With a smile and a blush she at once yielded, and soon afterward she and Bessie disappeared.

Late as it was, Evelyn found her nurse in the room that had been prepared for her, and was clasped in the arms which had always been her refuge in grief or joy. Jane poured over her such a torrent of blessings and prayers for her future happiness and prosperity that she drew tears from the gentle eyes hidden on her bosom.

"My darling," she concluded, "I always knew that you were born to something great, and you'll yet find out that you belong to grand people, and you'll have everything that heart can desire. Your old nurse can die now, for her work is done."

"You are not to die, but to live with me, and be my dear old nurse as you always have been," replied Evelyn, with a little laugh that the old woman knew came from a happy heart.

In the meantime Bessie went into her mother's room, and gave her an account of the adventures of the night. When she finished Mrs. Ashley said with a sigh:

"So they are married, and you are safe from all persecutions on Frank's account now. I wonder what that dreadful man will do when he hears of his wife's marriage. Does she yet know that she is really his daughter?"

"Not yet. Frank thought it best to agitate her no further to-night. To-morrow morning Mr. Hunter will reveal to her all the facts which prove that Mr. Ashley adopted his own daughter without being aware of it. I wonder the Ashley mark upon her arm did not lead him to inquire into her origin. That was the only thing about me that could have induced him to believe that an unborn-haired descendant could belong to his dark face. Tell me, how did I come by it, mother?"

"Oh, Bessie, that is another of my sins. I produced it artificially. It was necessary to do so, or I could never have imposed you on Judge Ashley as the daughter of his son. There—I have told you all now, and I wish never to speak of allude to these things again. I am nervous and restless; sleep, leave me to sleep for I must try and sleep. Captain Martin sent a note up to me, which I have exerted myself to answer, and I have been in a state of great excitement ever since."

"Let me give you some composing drops," was the quiet reply; and after administering them, Bessie kissed her tenderly, whispered a few soothing words in her ear, and left the apartment.

(To be continued.)

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