

Literature.

Three Times at the Altar.

(Concluded.)

It was some twelve months after the catastrophe which had wrecked Bertha's happiness, when, after an unusually long absence, Gaspar made his appearance at the Fir Grove, and requested a private interview with the fair heiress.

Bertha's color rose at the special request.

Could it be that some news had been received of the missing one, whom she had so long persisted in believing to be yet, by some miracle, in life?

But Gaspar's face gave no sign of any such discovery; it was grave and embarrassed, but by no means either joyful or agitated by any powerful emotions.

"May I speak freely to you, dear Bertha?" he said, in a low, calm voice. "I have that to say which is important to us both. Will you try and listen to me patiently?"

"Yes," she said. "Why should I not? I cannot suppose you would say anything I ought not to hear; only do not keep me in suspense. I am sadly, sadly nervous now."

"I will try," he said, quickly. "Bertha, you perhaps know that I am the heir-at-law of my late cousin's property, and, as I am informed, of that secured to him by settlement from you. But it was repugnant to take what was so generously given by your sweet self, so I came to place it in your hands, dearest, now that the time for doing so has arrived. It seems like robbing you to take it."

Bertha made an impatient gesture.

"No, no!" she said, "it is nothing. What use is it to me? I have more than enough for my wildest wants, and I shall never marry now," she went on, hastily.

"Forgive me, that is just what I must dare to ask of you to think of as possible," he said, softly.

"Bertha, suppose I could prove to you that it was HIS wish that you should do so—that you should find safety and happiness with another? What then, dear Bertha?"

She averted her beautiful eyes in a look of pure amazement and horror that was not very promising to his hopes; but he went boldly on in the path into which he had plunged.

"Yes, Bertha, so it is. I have a letter in his own hand which expresses that wish. Will you try—can you not comply with the desire of the beloved and the dearest one?" he went on.

Still the look of incredulous horror was on her face.

"It cannot be—it is impossible," she murmured.

"Will you believe the evidence of your senses—the proof of his own handwriting?" he returned. "Look here. They are his words from the very grave!"

And he handed her a folded paper, that gave a shudder to her frame as she took it in her fingers.

It was in the handwriting of the dead and the mourned, and her hand trembled as she opened and perused it.

"Where did you find this? Surely he could not have given it to you!" she faltered, with a convulsive lip-quivering.

"He left it among his papers, Bertha. Probably it was the last arrangement that he made—a possible presentiment of death—for there was every sign of foresight and method in all that he left behind him."

"But that is of little moment—why he did it. It is rather to be considered whether he has done it, and what is your feeling about it."

"Shall these wishes be disregarded? Shall they be disobeyed by you who loved him so much?" he continued, softly, bending down and gazing into her face with passionate tenderness.

"Do not—do not! It is too soon! I cannot even think of it!" she said, faintly.

"It will not change with time. You will not learn to mourn him less, and I will not ask it; I will only grieve with you, dearest, as well as love and cherish you. Why should your life be lonely and wretched when it was his earnest wish that it should be otherwise?"

Still she sat pale and trembling, and doubtful even whether to believe the stunning tidings, and her first words were:

"Give me time!—give me time!"

"Tell me what time, my dear one, and I will promise to observe your behest even to the hour," he said; "yes, and without any impatient worrying of your feelings by importunity. When may I look for my answer?"

"Give me a week—at least a week," she said; "then I will tell you. Now leave me!"

"And he silently and tenderly pressed her hand, and left the room and the house."

Bertha threw herself on her knees as he closed the door, and sobbed in agony of spirit.

"What shall I do? How can I best show my love for him that is gone?" she murmured from within her closed hands.

"It cannot be for long. I feel that it is impossible I can survive my Egbert more than a few brief months. Life will become too wearisome for me to endure. How can it matter how it is spent?"

Then she reperused the letter that had

been left in her unconscious grasp by Gaspar.

It was well nigh in shreds from the tight hold her fingers had kept of the fragile paper; but still the words were but too legible.

"They burnt, as it were, into her soul."

"If you love me bear my name—accept the love and care of him who is nearest to me in blood. It will at least save me from the maddening idea that I shall pass away from your thoughts," it ran. "It is not for me to dictate where I ought to be a suppliant; but, Bertha, if I am able to know what is passing on earth, I shall bless you with thus complying with my wishes."

And Bertha pored again and again over that fatal paragraph; and had it bidden her meet death, it could scarcely have sent a deeper pang or a more chilling sickness to her heart.

"It must be—it shall. Poor Egbert! He shall never reproach me, if I ever meet again, with selfish disregard of his wishes to gratify my own," she murmured, "only, please Heaven, that it may not be for long."

And then she lay down on her couch, and sobbed nearly to temporary forgetfulness of her misery.

Weeks had passed, and once more Bertha Gascoigne was preparing to stand at the altar as a bride, but how differently from the last time, when the solemn and irrevocable ceremony was so near at hand!

She was simply calm and resigned, as if going to execution; but yet the strictest vigilance could not have found fault with her gentle, sweet bearing, nor the presence of anything that could even look like murmuring or complaint.

Only she refused to allow the very slightest vestige of anything like rejoicing or gaiety at the festival.

She wore white, for that alone was not inappropriate to a sacrifice and a victim; but that was all the outward signs of the character she was about to bear.

The day came for the dreaded event. Accompanied by the guardian who was to give her away, and one young and early friend as bridesmaid, she quietly walked up the church to the altar, where once more Gaspar waited her, not this time as a substitute, but the actual bridegroom.

Bertha was very pale, and an evident shudder ran through her frame, as her future husband took his place by her side.

But the clergyman was there. The service began, and if it was only like a dream to the sad, still bride, yet it was a dream of terrible and permanent significance.

The preliminary sentences had been said, the solemn exhortation pronounced, and the clergyman was just taking Bertha's hand to place it in that of the bridegroom, when a quick, agitated step was heard advancing along the aisle, and a hollow but familiar voice exclaimed, hoarsely:

"Stop—stop! I forbid it! She is mine; she shall not be snatched from me!"

It was Egbert Burgoyne, haggard, pale, wild-looking, but still his own well-remembered self; and with a shriek of mingled joy and terror, Bertha fell into his arms, as if to find shelter and safety in his dear embrace.

"It is false—false!" exclaimed Gaspar, fiercely. "She has consented to be my wife; she cannot draw back because you have chosen to play this wretched farce! Unhand me, man, and let the ceremony go on! I claim her as my promised bride!"

"No, no, no. It was only because you wished it. I would endure anything for your sake, Egbert. Save me—save me!" murmured the girl.

"With my very life, my beloved. What do you mean by my wishing it, Bertha? I who was on the eve of the happiness he has dared to snatch?" said Egbert, with mingled reproach and tenderness.

"It was your own letter. Oh, Egbert, forgive me! it was almost worse than death, but yet I did it solely for your sake."

Egbert's brow darkened; but the clasp of that soft hand, the touch of the dear lips, melted his wrathful indignation to tenderness and joy.

"Villain that you are," he said, turning to the flushed and angry Gaspar with a look of lofty dignity and content, "I shall know ere long the extent of your wicked treachery; but for the present I advise you to be wise and go at once, before I forget that the same blood flows in our veins. I tell you so!" he thundered, as Gaspar hesitated; and Bertha's pale form lay on his shoulder with a threatening agitation that might end in yet more painful consequences.

There was that in his eye and his clenched hand that warned the disappointed and detected intriguer to obey the behest.

"Conscience does make cowards of us all," and Gaspar Burgoyne had that in his breast that might well quail the stoutest heart.

Egbert carried the half-unconscious bride into the vestry, where she had lain in that long swoon which had succeeded the stunning news of his supposed death.

But joy does not kill; and though Bertha never had been too severely tried to rally on the instant, yet the voice that sounded in her ears, and the arms that supported her, would well-nigh have re-

called her from the grave. And ere long she was in a state to hear briefly—what was the long theme of many an after hour—the tale of his escape and restoration to life and health.

He had in truth been persuaded by Gaspar to bathe in a strong sea, and had been carried away by the current till his senses failed him.

He knew no more till he woke up to consciousness on board of a foreign vessel, surrounded by men whose language he could not understand, but who had rescued him at some risk to themselves, and also had tendered him carefully in a long illness which succeeded to the shock of his accident.

In truth he was friendless, and without clothes or friends, on his way to the distant shores of —, and it was not till after several weeks that he was able to get a passage to work his way back to England.

He had written more than once but his letters had been intercepted by his treacherous cousin, whose scheme had practically gained strength and unscrupulousness as his unmanageable passion for the beautiful heiress was fired by increasing hope of success.

The forged letter that had well-nigh accomplished his end was the crowning point of his guilty intrigues; and had Egbert been less frantically eager to rejoice in his beloved Bertha, and an hour's delay in his arrival ensued, it would have been too late to baffle the deep plot. But, thanks to Providence and his own un-mindfulness of rest or food till he once more held his betrothed in his arms, the danger was averted and Bertha saved; and when she stood a third time at the altar, some few weeks after, no misadventure occurred to prevent the pronouncing of her willing and joyful vows to him so long loved and lost.

D.

The End.

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

Contributed by the I. O. G. T.

All lodges, and others interested in temperance work, are earnestly solicited to contribute for this column. Correspondence to be sent to Secretary, Cambridge Union Lodge; McDonalds Corner.

"Let all who love our Order and desire its progress—who love our Order and desire its maintenance—who would extend a knowledge of our beautiful organization, and perpetuate its principles, which aim to promote fraternity, to unite men and women in acts of benevolence and incite them to a generous emulation for the good of all mankind, that our Charity may be co-extensive with the universe, winning by gentle influence and example the erring and unfortunate victims of the tyrant alcohol to a place in our inner sanctuary, where sweet Peace sits enthroned, and Purity has an abiding place, and Love is the guiding star, unite in a determination to sustain and support this Temperance column.

(W. E. B.)

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE.

As we look forward hopefully, to future legislation in connection with the liquor traffic it may be well to glance back at past legislative measures. These have dealt mainly with the raising of revenue for national purposes. Licenses are issued to distillers, brewers, malsters and compounders. Excise duties are imposed upon the product of distilleries and malt houses, and custom duties upon all intoxicating liquors imported. This seems a wide field for revenue gain and this is one strong argument used in favor of the continuation of the traffic.

The earliest form of license law was simply the imposition of a fee from revenue standpoint, but soon attention was drawn to the evil results of the traffic. That then was the proper time to prohibit. But instead higher fees were exacted and greater restriction imposed. These kept increasing and power was gradually given to provincial or municipal authorities to thus restrict.

About the middle of the present century a prohibitory agitation sprang up in the United States and spread to Canada. A number of the states enacted prohibitory laws and so did our own Province but it was repealed before there was time to judge of its effectiveness. If instead it had been enforced, along with it what untold miseries and degradation would have been prohibited.

It has been said of the prohibitory law of Maine, that despite defects and many infractions, it has greatly reduced the consumption of liquor; has created a strong public sentiment against both making and selling; has banished drink shops from fully three-fourths of the state; has degraded the traffic so that no respectable person engages in it; has been more effectual than any other system and has been attended by peace, plenty and prosperity.

But to return to our legislation,—in 1884 the Dunkin Act was passed and in 1878 the Canada Temperance Act (more commonly known as the "Scott Act") came in force. Nine counties in New Brunswick have been under the act for more than ten years and these contain about 61 per cent of the population of the province. Coming to facts again, statistics show that out of 22,841 convictions there were 8,738 in the Scott Act counties and 14,103 in the others. Of these convictions 13,598 were for drunkenness and 8,612 in the license counties.

So while the Scott act does not produce an ideal condition, yet it shows what might be done under proper legislation throughout our Dominion.

Some favour high license, and, while all must see the principle is bad, it may seem to some a source of limitation. But here are extracts from a letter written by Peter Tler, the leading distiller in New-braska and one who is also interested in retail trade:—"High license does not hurt our business, but on the contrary, has been a great benefit. It acts as a bar against prohibition. It gives the business more of a tone and legal standing and places it in the hands of a better class of people. I believe that high license is one of the grandest laws for the liquor traffic."

While his opinion of a "better class of people" may not agree with ours (for a runseller deserves no such adjective), yet there is no doubt truth in the statements of the advantages of high license.

Now we hear people saying that of the results of our approaching Plebiscite favours prohibition, we shall not obtain it for the revenue must have its accustomed share. The first I would say, God only knows when prohibition shall be ours; but be that as it may it does not excuse one of us from striving for the right or of being an accomplice in the wrong. As to the latter I do not believe there is one right thinking, intelligent man or woman who really believes our country cannot stand without the support of the liquor traffic.

No doubt there may be difficulties in getting the right start after so long indulgence in the wrong, but the fact remains that it should be done. We might compare it to many systems of bad financial management but no figure is strong enough; literally it is the most accursed source of revenue any government could devise. Soon it is your opportunity to sanction or condemn.

Oh brothers, shall the priceless gift Of a redeemed soul Be left exposed, to lightly drift Or heaven let have control? Shall we as men let pass this hour And license full and free? Or shall we rise in manhood's power, And strike for liberty.

Humorous.

Not Proven.

A patient in an insane asylum imagined himself dead. Nothing could drive this delusion out of the man's brain. One day the physician had a happy thought and said to him:

"Did you ever see a dead man bleed?"

"No," he replied.

"Did you ever hear of a dead man bleeding?"

"No."

"Well, if you will permit me, I will try an experiment with you, and see if you bleed or not."

The patient gave his consent, the doctor whipped out his scalpel and drew a little blood. "There," said he, "you see that you bleed; that proves that you are not dead."

"Not at all," the patient instantly replied, "that only proves that dead men can bleed."—Tid-bits.

Husband (angrily, after a somewhat heated argument with his better half)—Do you take me for a fool?

Wife (soothingly)—No John but I may be mistaken.

Simkins—There is nothing in this world that equals the friendship of a man that you can trust.

Timkins—Oh, I don't know! What is the matter with a friend that will trust you occasionally?

Judge—And what did the prisoner say when you told him that you would have him arrested?

Complainant—He answered mechanically, yer honor.

Judge—Explain.

Complainant—He hit me on the head with a hammer.

On American day a visitor at the exhibition from across the border asked a Canadian friend if Canada had a national flower.

"Oh, yes," was the reply, "Ogilvie's."

What is co-operative housekeeping? Well, a lot of women club together so their husbands won't dare say anything hateful about the cooking.—Chicago Record.

"I like this pattern well enough," said the customer who had dropped in to look at some gingham, "but I'm afraid the colors will run."

"Run, ma'am!" indignantly answered the salesman. "Red, white and blue? They never run!"

Whereupon the woman with the flag pinned to the lapel of her jacket rose patrimonically to the occasion and bought 45 yards.

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