



LITERATURE.

REBECCA PARTING WITH JACOB.

My youngest born, my pride of heart, thou must, thou must away;
Thy brother's wrathful hand is raised, and here thou canst not stay.
O, I have deeply sinned for thee! the chastisement be mine,
And I will bear it all, my son! the blessing shall be thine.

What though my childless years in grief and pain pass on?
Thou wilt be safe from danger's hour, my own, my darling son!
And like the fountain sending forth a sweet and murmuring sound
Thy pleasant voice will come to me, from some far distant ground.

Go bear thy mother's blessing back, to those from whence she came;

My kinsmen's hearts will leap with joy, to hear Rebecca's name.
Say to them, Haran's shade well, and flocks that near it stray,
Come to me in my midnight dreams as fresh as yesterday,

Speed on—and when thy nimble feet, have brought thee to the place,

And when thou stand'st an exiled one, before my brother's face,
Tell him thou bear'st thy mother's soul, and therefore wilt not twine,

Around the savage olive tree a strong and noble vine.

And if, of all my kinsman's house, a maiden bright there be,
Of lofty soul, with heart to seek thy father's God with thee
And if there be, O! say to her, "Rebecca left her all;
The Father of the faithful spake, and she obeyed the call."

The angel of the covenant, protect thee, precious child!
Defend thee from the covered snare, direct thee in the wild!
O! I shall weep in darkness oft, to think thy houseless head
Must pillow on the stony ground or seek the foxes' bed.

But glory, breaking on the gloom, my grief to joy shall turn;
Proud mother of a favour'd race, ah! wherefore shouldst thou mourn?

Go then fulfil Jehovah's word, the blessing is for thee,
And joy and pride, and thankfulness, beloved son! for me.

THE EXECUTIONER.

A NARRATIVE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BY C. A. ALEXANDER.—(Concluded.)

It may well be imagined that I did not fail to testify to my new confederates, by every means in my power, the sincerity of my conversion. With the motives of those with whom I was now associated, mine had nothing in common; yet though I cared neither for church or conventicle, for personal or party aggrandizement, I gave myself to this new cause, both in counsel and action, with a devotion which left me no rival, even among the most eager of the zealots who daily inflamed their political malignancy by draughts from the poisoned chalice of religious fanaticism. I stood singled out and separated from mankind, as I believed, by the extent of my injuries, and cared only to counterpoise them by the extremity of retaliation. Had I continued in this course of open and undisguised hostility toward him from whom I supposed my injuries to proceed, I should at least have been acting in conformity with the sentiments of candor and directness which had heretofore governed my conduct. But circumstances soon made it necessary to adopt a different policy, and accident opened to me an unexpected path to the accomplishment of my wishes.

It is well known that at the crises when the affairs of the king appeared most desperate, circumstances generated by that crisis itself suddenly diffused a gleam of safety over the wreck of his fallen fortunes. From the vastness and entrenchments of his ruin sprang up the phantom of a better hope. Success upon the part of his enemies had wrought its usual effect in producing a diversity of counsels, an antagonism of interests. From the moment that resistance was at an end, every selfish passion of the heart, and absurd chimera of the brain, which had been thus far repressed by the common danger, sprouted at once into unrestrained luxuriance. Sects and parties, which had stood by one another in the hour of adversity, now obeyed the laws of their nature, and went off into irreconcilable disunion. At this juncture, therefore when the balance of the state was lost amidst opposing views and interests, was it not probable that the returning loyalty of Englishmen, roused to a sense of the public danger, might once more recur to the old constitutional check upon the ebullient passions of the demagogues and mystagogues of the day? Did not the master-spirit of Cromwell himself manifestly hesitate and waver as the hour drew near which must force upon him the ultimate fate of the king, and place him once more face to face with the spectre which in early life had entered his humble chamber, and summoned him, with prophetic warning, to the task of sovereignty? As the gulf opened at his feet, was there not an evident recoil in his feelings and purposes? Such certainly appeared to be the case. And even if the mighty hunter himself should not eventually tear away the meshes from his royal prey, and restore him to liberty, yet the

same result might be effected by some of the subordinate agents of public confusion, whom restlessness had raised into temporary consequence, and who stood ever ready to take advantage of any circumstance which might depress their rivals or aggrandize themselves.

Such then, after all, might be the termination of the great struggle; such the ultimate discomfiture of the hopes which I now entertained, and which could only be realized in the ignominious death of the royal criminal.—Charles himself was evidently aware of the perplexity of his adversaries, and never did the inherent presumption of his character more strikingly evince itself than now, when entirely disarmed and defenceless, he stood the centre of innumerable plots; a prize for which Cromwell himself, in view of the anxieties and perplexities of his position, might not improbably be persuaded to barter his own high aims and secret aspirations.

For my own part, all these chances for the king's escape were gloomily pondered, as I listened (now that the sword was sheathed) to the interminable wranglings of the Puritan Parliament, or paced the streets of London, catching with greedy ear the expressions of public feeling and conjecture. It was while thus engaged, that I wandered one evening into a little-frequented part of the city, beyond the Tower and the ancient wall, which seemed in the disorder of the times to have been abandoned to ruin and the wretches who commonly hang upon its traces. Here and there a loftier pile than common gave intimation that enterprise had once endeavoured to force itself in this direction, but had probably been repressed by the tyrannical and absurd enactments which from time to time had aimed to confine the swelling bulk of the city within its ancient enclosure. Of these structures, one which rose immediately upon the river-side had attracted a peculiar share of popular distrust and superstition. It was reputed to have been of old the abode of a prelate, who at a period of cruel scarcity had contrived to fill its vast subterranean galleries with grain, which neither the love of God nor his fellow man could induce him to distribute. But the wretch had perished with his horde, and those who essayed to enter had been dismayed by a voice which echoed through the vaults! "Touch not the corn! the archbishop and all that is his are accursed!" With so evil a reputation, the place was little likely to be disturbed, and imposture had probably favoured and perpetuated the legend, in order to cover and protect one of its chosen retreats.

I had approached this building on the occasion spoken of, with little thought of such matters, when my attention was arrested by two persons standing before the door.—They were evidently in disguise, and bent on some purpose which courted concealment. At a signal given, the door, by some invisible means, swung open for their admission, but instead of closing after them, as might have been expected, remained open until I also reached it.—No motive of mere curiosity had then any weight with me; but I had remarked, as I thought, something in the carriage of these strangers which denoted a superiority to the usual frequenters of such resorts: and it immediately occurred to me that this mysterious visit might not be without its connection with the political movements of the time. Neither puritan nor royalist, I knew, was fastidious in the choice of instruments, or unwilling to take counsel with darkness and infamy, when such auxiliaries gave promise of being in way useful. The justification of means by the end was the favourite ethics of the age. As I was now constantly possessed by a hope that from some quarter a suggestion might arise which would enable me to see in what manner my efforts could be most successfully directed to bring about the issue of public affairs which I wished, but had almost begun to despair of, I did not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity which here seemed to offer itself. No sooner however had I stepped across the threshold, than as if my approach had been waited for, and entrance the signal, the door closed heavily behind me, and I stood within, alone and in darkness.

There was now no declining the adventure. I proceeded therefore to group my way cautiously forward, along what seemed a vaulted gallery, which from the gradual descent and the dampness of the air might, I judged, open upon a river. But before I had advanced far, a light glimmering from another and narrower passage, at right angles to the first, turned my steps in that direction. The position of this light had prevented its being seen from the entrance. The second passage terminated in a pannelled recess, or cabinet, furnished with a small open easement, by means of which I became the spectator of a scene scarcely more unexpected than startling, and which little corresponded with the extreme desolation of the building.

Somewhat below the level on which I stood, appeared a large circular room, hung on all sides with heavy crimson drapery, and brilliantly illuminated, though by what means it was impossible to discern. On one side stood a massive table, supported by sculptured figures, and covered scrolls of parchment and various implements of mystic significance, distinctive of the then prevalent arts of alchemy and astrology. Adjoining this was an elaborately carved and antique chair, surmounted by a stately canopy. As my eye wandered around, I perceived the two persons whom I had noticed in the street, standing at the opposite side of the room, still retaining their disguise, and apparently in an attitude of suspense or expectation.

The purpose of the visit might now be conjectured, and I determined to await its issue. Thus far no visible agency had interfered in the arrangements or incidents of the scene. But now a fold of the drapery was lifted up, a female advanced, and without appearing to notice those who were present, occupied the vacant chair. If the spectacle had been calculated before to impress the mind with a sense of illusion, this was carried to its height by the sudden entrance and striking appearance of this woman, who seemed to preside in solitude over the mysteries of this place. Her form was of the finest proportions, and her features, which were of an oriental caste, arrested the attention not more by their extraordinary beauty than by something in their serene and noble

expression which tempered the admiration at first excited into sympathy and respect. She was clad in a robe of sacerdotal whiteness, and a white veil floating backward over her shoulders, while it well relieved the glossy blackness of her hair, gave to view a smooth and lofty brow, on which no earthly passion seemed ever to cast a shade.

The two visitors to this strange *adytum* seemed to hesitate, but they were summoned forward by the enchantress herself. "Approach," she said, in tones of singular sweetness, but without lifting her eyes; "here there is no necromantic art; no compact with the powers of evil; nothing to awaken suspicion, or to justify apprehension.—The Highest in His mercy has poured forth the fountain from the lowliest valleys: truth may flow from the lips of the humblest and weakest of His creatures."

The parties addressed advanced, but still without removing their masks. "It matters not," said the woman, for the first time looking up: "those to whom heaven has revealed the heart, have no need to scrutinize the features. You Lambert, and you Fleetwood, can have but one interest at heart in thus venturing to seek truth in the suspected asylum where the wise of this world affect to scorn and the vulgar fear to find it."

I could not but be startled when the persons thus named withdrew their masks, and discovered two of the most thorough-going puritans and determined republicans of the age; men who had knelt in fanatical zeal at the head of kneeling armies, and their hatred of every thing which they deemed superstition, not only imbued their hands in blood, but vented their undistinguishing rage upon senseless walls. Yet was there in reality no cause for surprise at this exhibition of a weakness, from which the sectaries of that day had by no means disenthrall themselves, when they declared war on the mass and the surplice. On the contrary, never was the belief in the possibility of a direct preternatural intercourse with the spiritual world more general than then; the highest minds stooping on this subject to the level of the lowest. The popular rage which pursued the professions of occult wisdom was the effect of common credulity.—In the wild ferment of the times the eyes of all were strained to catch a glimpse of the future in the magic mirror which the adept professed to hold up before them; though like children they trembled as they looked, and in a paroxysm of fear and anger, dashed it to pieces.

"They who fear the Supreme," said Fleetwood, in reply to the last remark, "neither fear nor scorn to seek truth wherever it may be found. They wisely distrust and utterly abhor all, however seemingly true, which proceeds from the equivocating oracles of him who was a liar from the beginning. But gifts have been aforesaid conferred, for the purpose of enabling the righteous to baffle their enemies. And it is held that even now some traces of this power have been permitted to linger among men for the guidance of those who discreetly seek, with the purpose of righteously using, the knowledge it confers."

"Faint," replied the woman, "faint indeed are the glimmerings of that light which still lingers among men: a twilight dimly disclosing the events of a few coming hours; not the broad blaze which threw its light over the transactions of ages. Yet what if some traces of this spirit remain with me? Shall I refuse to utter that which is given me, because bloody laws confound the guilty and the innocent, and involve true science in the same doom with accursed necromancy? Behold even now, as beneath their disguise your persons were not unknown to me, so before your lips have uttered it, the motives of your coming lie clearly unveiled before me."

"Spare us the disclosure then," said Fleetwood; "declare what your knowledge suggests concerning them."

"A man of renown," she resumed, "a man terrible in war, subtle in counsel; such a one once dreamed that a crown lay temptingly in his path. Even now, he would fain stretch forth his hand to it, though it hath not yet fallen. You would know if the glittering bauble shall ever encircle his head. I have looked into futurity; no crown shall ever rest upon it."

This prediction could not but be so far satisfactory to the two republicans. After a moment's pause, the conversation was resumed by Lambert.

"If this be true, still there are interests dearer to the hearts of God's people than the destinies of any individual. All is at stake; success itself has disarmed the successful; the faithful waver in their counsels, and brethren plot and counterplot against each other. The Ark of the Covenant totters, and there is no hand bold or pure enough to stretch itself forth to uphold it."

"Your secret thoughts," said the female, "though your words are designedly vague and ambiguous, aims at an event which, while England might yet be called a kingdom, it was death to imagine. Yet have I turned my eyes in that direction; but it is as though they became filled with blood, and the solemn future, whatever it be, refuses to give up to me its mystery."

"Nay," said Lambert, "it is you yourself who now speak ambiguously and darkly."

"It is nevertheless as I say. There are events in the future around which gathers a darkness so thick that the unassisted eye of the seer can never penetrate it. Yet are there resources in science sufficient to extort even these secrets from the mystery that shrouds them; but it must be in behalf of others to whom heaven permits them to be visible, while to him who is the feeble instrument of the revelation, they remain unseen and inscrutable.—But why talk I of the depths of science to those who falter even in its shallows? Was not Doctor Lamb torn to pieces in the streets of London upon bare suspicion of having cultivated that sublime art which explores the mysteries of the universe, not as the vulgar falsely suppose by diabolic intercourse, but by lonely watchings beneath the pale stars, by silent contemplation, by wasting study pursued through every form of privation, self-denial and reproach? Worldly men who deal in no arts but those which cozen and betray for the furtherance of their selfish interests, do well to hate and despise those who toil only for wisdom, and find their reward in contempt