

Poet's Corner.

[Published by Request.]

VALENTINE.

He tells me I am dear to him,
And in that precious vow
Is more than music—more than life,
I never loved till now.
This heart will break with too much joy,
Ah, me! my maiden pride
It strives in vain to hush my sighs,
To still my spirits tide;
And I may watch his dear dark eyes,
Nor shrink to meet his gaze!
And list to all he says,
'Twill not be wrong to care for nought
But him in festive hall;
'Twill not be wrong to dream of him
And love him night and day,
To smile on him when he is here,
And bless him when away,
To sing the song he loves the best
I learned it long ago,
But never dared to tell, because
I blushed to love him so;
And I may think his blessed smile
The loveliest on the earth,
And glory in his noble mind,
And in his manly worth,
And I, perhaps—I cannot tell—
Perhaps some day I'll dare
To lay my hand upon his brow
And smooth his glossy hair!
But no! I dare not think of this,
For still the story ran
That she whose love is lightly won
Is lightly held by man.
Oh! will it not be joy enough
To know I have his heart,
To feel, 'e'en when he's far away,
Our souls can never part;
To hear his gentle praise or blame—
For 'e'en reproof of his
Seems dearer, sweeter, far to me
Than other's flattery is—
To whisper to him all my thoughts,
To share his joy or woe,
To read to him, to pray with him,
To love and tell him so.
I wonder what will Mary Ann
And what will Mother say?
They said I must not think of him,
That he was light and gay;
They said his fond devotion
Was but an idler's whim;
I knew, I know he loved me,
And, oh! I worshipped him.
He's not like any other
That I have ever seen;
He has a purer, truer smile,
A loftier manlier mien;
His soft hair waves upon his brow
In clusters light and free,
His soul is in his hazel eyes
When'er they gaze on me,
And when he speaks and when he sings
His soft melodious tone,
With love's deep sacred meaning thrills
From his heart to my own!
He does not stoop to flatter me—
I do not wish him to,
I should not think he loved so much
Did he as others do:
But once he laid his darling hand
Upon my drooping head,
Because he saw my soul was pained
By something he had said—
Some warmer word to Mary Ann
Than he had dared to me,
And, oh! that light and timid touch
That no one else could see,
How eloquent of love it was!
It soothed my very soul.
My eyes were filled with happy tears
That nothing could control.
And from that moment well I knew
His full warm heart was mine,
Ah! how shall I deserve that heart,
Deserve his truth divine?

[From Harper's Magazine.]

PROMISE UNFULFILLED.

A TALE OF THE COASTGUARD.

(Conclusion.)

The sudden unmasking of a loaded battery immediately in my front could not have so confounded and startled me as those words did, as they issued from the lips of the man before me. The curling black hair, the dark flashing eyes, the marble features were those of Lieutenant Hendrick—of the gallant seaman whose vigorous arm I had seen turn the tide of battle against desperate odds on the deck of a privateer.

"Hendrick!" I at length exclaimed, for the sudden inrush of painful emotion choked my speech for a time—"can it indeed be you?"

"Aye, truly, Warneford. The Hendrick of whom Collingwood prophesied high things is fallen thus low; and worse remains behind. There is a price set upon my capture, as you know; and escape is, I take it, out of the question."

I comprehend the slow meaning tone in which he last sentence was spoken, and the keen glance that accompanied it. Hendrick, too, instantly read he decisive though unspoken reply.

"Of course it is out of the question," he went on. "I was but a fool to even seem to doubt that was. You must do your duty, Warneford, I now; and since this fatal mishap was to occur, I'm glad for many reasons that I have fallen into our hands."

"But I am not; and I wish with all my heart you had successfully threaded the passage you essayed."

"The fellow who undertook to pilot us failed in the attempt at the critical moment. Had he not done so we would have been long beyond your reach—at the past is past, and the future of dark and uncertain time will be swift and brief."

"What have you especially to dread? I know a reward has been offered for your apprehension, but not for what precise offence."

"The unfortunate business in St. Michael's Bay."

"Good God! The newspaper was right! But neither of the wounded men have died, I hear, so that—"

"The mercy of transportation may, you think be substituted for capital penalty." He laughed bitterly.

"Or—or," I hesitatingly suggested, "you may not be identified—that is, legally so."

"Easily, easily, Warneford. I must not trust to that rotten cable. Neither the coast guard nor the fellows with me know me indeed as Hendrick, ex-lieutenant of the royal navy; and that is a secret you will, I know, religiously respect."

I promised to do so; the painful interview terminated; and in about two hours the captain and surviving crew of *Les Trois Freres*, and Mr. Samuel Sparkes, were safely on board the *Rose*.

Hendrick had papers to arrange; and as the security of his person was all I was responsible for, he was accommodated in my cabin, where I left him to confer with the Guernsey authorities, in whose bailiwick Jethon is situated. The matter of jurisdiction—the offences with which the prisoners were charged having been committed in England—was soon arranged; and by five o'clock in the morning the *Rose* was on her way to England, under an eight-knot breeze from the southwest.

As soon as we were fairly underway, I went below to have a last conference with the unfortunate Hendrick. There was a parcel lying on the table directed to 'Mrs. Hendrick, Lostwithiel, Cornwall, care of Captain Warneford.' Placing it in my hands he entreated me to see it securely conveyed to its address, unexamined and unopened. I assured him I would do so; and tears, roughly dashed away, sprang to his eyes as he grasped and shook my hand. I felt half choked; and when he again solemnly adjured me, under no circumstances, to disclose the identity of Capt. Pickard and Lieutenant Hendrick. I could only reply by a seaman's grip, requiring no additional pledge of words.

We sat silently down, and I ordered some wine to be brought in.

"You promised to tell me, Hendrick," I said, "how all this unhappy business came about?"

"I am about to do so," he answered. "It is an old tale of which the last black chapter owes its color, let me frankly own, to my own hot and impatient temper as much as to a complication of adverse circumstances."

He poured out a glass of wine, and proceeded as slowly and calmly, but gradually, as passion gathered strength and way upon him, with flushed and impetuous eagerness to the close.

"I was born near Lostwithiel, Cornwall. My father, a younger and needy son of no profession, died when I was eight years of age. My mother has about eighty pounds a year in her own right, and with that pittance, helped by self-privation, unfelt because endured for her darling boy, she gave me a sufficient education, and fitted me out respectfully; when, thanks to Pellet, I obtained a midshipman's warrant in the British service. This occurred in my sixteenth year. Dr. Redstone, at whose school I acquired what slight classical learning, long since forgotten, I once possessed, was married in second nuptials to a virago of a wife, who brought him, besides her precious self, a red-headed cub, by a former marriage. His, the son's, name was Kershaw."

"The doctor had one child about my own age, a daughter, Ellen Redstone. I am not about to prate to you of the bread-and-butter sentiment of mere children, nor of Ellen's wonderful graces of mind and person: I don't, indeed, if I thought her very pretty at the time; but she was meekness itself, and my boy's heart used, I well remember, to leap as if it would burst my bosom at witnessing the patient submission to the tyranny of her step-mother; and one of the greatest pleasures I ever experienced was giving young Kershaw—a much bigger fellow than myself—a good thrashing for some brutality towards her—an exploit that of course rendered me a remarkable favorite with the great bumpkin's mother."

"Well, I went to sea, and did not again see Ellen till seven years afterwards, when during my absence on sick leave, I met her at Penzance, in the neighborhood of which place the doctor had for some time resided. She was vastly improved in person, but was still meek, dove-eyed, gentle Ellen, and pretty nearly as much dominated by her mother-in-law as formerly. Our child-acquaintance was renewed; and, suffice it to say, that I soon came to love her with a fervency surprising even to myself. My affection was reciprocated; we pledged faith with each other; and it was agreed that at the close of the war, whenever that should be, we were to marry, and dwell together like turtle-doves in the pretty hermitage that Ellen's fancy loved to conjure up, and with her voice of music untiringly dilate upon. I was again at sea, and the answer to my first letter brought the surprising intelligence that Mrs. Redstone had become quite reconciled to our future union, and that I might consequently send my letters direct to the High School. Ellen's letter was prettily expressed enough, but somehow I did not like its tone. It did not read like her spoken language, at all events. This, however, must, I concluded, be mere fancy; and our correspondence continued for a couple of years—till the peace, in fact—when the frigate, of which I was now second lieutenant, arrived at Plymouth to be paid off. We were awaiting the admiral's inspection, which for some reason or other was unusually delayed, when a bag of letters was brought on board, with one for me bearing the Penzance postmark. I tore it open and found that it was subscribed by an old and intimate friend. He had accidentally met with Ellen Redstone for the first time since I left. She looked thin and ill, and in answer to his persistent questioning, had told him she had only heard once from me since I went to sea, and that was to renounce our engagement; and she added that she was going to be married in a day or two to the Rev. Mr. Williams, a desecrating minister of fair means and respectable character. My friend assured her there must be some mistake, but she shook her head incredulously; and with eyes brimful of tears, and shaking voice bade him, when he saw me, say that she freely forgave me, but that her heart was broken. This was the substance, and as I read, a hurricane of dismay and rage possessed me. There was not, I felt, a moment to be lost. Unfortunately the captain was absent, and the frigate temporarily under the command of the first lieutenant. You knew Lieutenant—?"

"I did, for one of the most cold-blooded martlets that ever trod a quarter deck."

"Well him I sought, and asked temporary leave of absence. He refused. I explained, hurriedly, imploringly explained the circumstances in which I was placed. He sneeringly replied that sentimental nonsense of that kind could not be permitted to interfere with the king's service. You know, Warneford how naturally hot and impetuous is my temper, and at that moment my brain seemed literally aflame; high words followed, and in a transport of rage I struck the taunting coward a violent blow in the face—following up the outrage by drawing my sword, and challenging him to instant combat. You may guess the sequel. I was immediately arrested by the guard, and tried a few days afterward by court martial. Exmouth stood my friend, or I know not what sentence might have been passed, and I was dismissed the service."

"I was laid up for several weeks by fever about that time," I remarked; "and it thus happened, doubtless, that I did not see any report of the trial."

"The moment I was liberated I hastened, literally almost in a state of madness, to Penzance. It was all true and I was too late—Ellen had been married something more than a week. It was Kershaw and his mother's doings. Him I half killed; but it is needless to go into details of the frantic violence with which I conducted myself—I broke madly into the presence of the newly married couple: Ellen swooned with terror, and her husband, white with consternation, and trembling in every limb, had barely, I remember, sufficient power to stammer out, 'that he would pray for me.' The next six months is a blank. I went to London; fell into evil courses, drank, gambled; heard after a while that Ellen was dead—the shock of which partially checked my downward progress—partially only. I left off drinking but not gambling, and ultimately I became connected with a number of disreputable persons, among whom was your prisoner Sparkes. He found part of the capital with which I have been carrying on the contraband trade for the last two years. I had, however, fully determined to withdraw myself from the dangerous though exciting pursuit. This was to have been my last trip; but you know," he added bitterly, "it is always upon the last turn of the dice that the devil wins his victim."

He ceased speaking, and we both remained silent for several minutes. What on my part could be said or suggested?

"You hinted just now," I remarked after a while "that all your remaining property was in this parcel. You have, however, of course, reserved sufficient to defray the expenses of your defence?"

A strange smile curled his lip, and a wild brief flash of light broke from his dark eyes as he said—

"Oh yes—more than enough—more than will be required."

"I am glad of that." We were again silent, and I presently exclaimed, "Suppose we take a turn on deck—the heat here stifles one."

"With all my heart," he answered, and we left the cabin.

We continued to pace the deck side by side for some time, without interchanging a syllable. The night was beautifully clear and fine, and the cool breeze that swept over the moon-lit waters gradually allayed the feverish nervousness which the unfortunate lieutenant's narrative had excited.

"A beautiful, however illusive world," he by-and-by sadly resumed, "this Death—now so close at my heels—wrenches us from. And yet you and I, Warneford, have seen men rush to encounter the King of Terrors, as he is called, as readily as if summoned to a bridal."

"A sense of duty and a habit of discipline will always overpower in men of our profession, the vulgar fear of death."

"Is it not also the greatest fear of disgrace and dishonor in the eyes of the world, that outweighs the lesser dread?"

"No doubt that has an immense influence.—What would our sweethearts, sisters, mothers say if they heard we had turned craven? What would they say in England? Nelson well understood this feeling and appealed to it in his last great signal."

"Aye, to be sure," he musingly replied; "what would our mothers say—feel rather—at witnessing their son's dishonor? This is the master-chord."

We once more relapsed into silence; and after another dozen or so turns on the deck, Hendrick seated himself on the combings of the main hatchway. His countenance, I observed, was still pale as marble, but a livelier and more resolute expression had gradually kindled in his brilliant eyes. He was, I concluded nerving himself to meet the chances of his position with constancy and fortitude.

"I shall go below again," I said. "Come, it may be some weeks before we have another glass of wine together."

"I will be with you directly," he answered, and I went down.

He did not, however, follow, and I was about calling him, when I heard his step on the stairs. He stopped at the threshold of the cabin, and there was a flushing intensity of expression about his face which quite startled me. As if moved by second thoughts, he stepped in.

"One glass with you, Warneford: God bless you!" He drained and set the glass on the table. "The lights of the corner of the Wight are just made," he hurriedly went on. "It is not likely I shall again have an opportunity of speaking with you; and let me again hear you say that you will under any circumstances keep secret from the world—my mother especially—that Captain Pickard and Lieutenant Hendrick were one person."

"I will; but why—"

"God bless you," he again broke in. "I must on deck again."

He vanished as he spoke, and a dim suspicion of his purpose arose in my mind; but before I could act upon it, a loud, confused outcry arose on the deck, and as I rushed up the cabin stairs, I heard amid the hurrying to and fro of feet, the cries of 'Man overboard'—'bout ship'—'down with the helm.'

The cause of the commotion was soon explained. Hendrick had sprung overboard: and looking in the direction pointed out by the man at the wheel, I plainly discerned him already considerable astern of the cutter. His face was turned towards us, and the instant I appeared he waved one arm wildly in the air: I could hear the words—"Your promise," distinctly, and the next instant the moonlight played upon the spot where he had vanished. Boats were lowered, and we passed and repassed over and near the place for nearly half an hour. Vainly: he did not appear.

I have only further to add that the parcel entrusted to me was safely delivered, and that I have reason to believe Mrs. Hendrick remained to her last hour ignorant of the sad fate of her son. It was her impression, induced by his last letter, that he was about to enter the South American service under Cochrane; and she ultimately resigned herself to the belief that he had there met a brave man's death. My promise was scrupulously kept, nor is it by this publication in the slightest degree broken; for both the names of Pickard and Hendrick are fictitious, and so is the place assigned as the lieutenant's birthplace. That rascal Sparkes, I am glad to be able to say—chasing whom made me an actor in the melancholy affair—was sent over the herring-pond for life.