

Part's Corner.

(Selected for the Carleton Sentinel.)

THE CHILD'S FIRST GRIEF.

O, call my brother back to me!
I cannot play alone;
The summer comes with flower and bee,—
Where is my brother gone?
The flowers run wild, the flowers we sow'd
Around our garden tree;
Our vine is drooping with its load;
O, call him back to me!

He would not hear thy voice, fair child!
He may not come to thee;
The face that once like summer smiled,
On earth no more thou'll see.
A rose's brief, bright life of joy
Such unto him was given;
So, thou must play alone, my boy!
Thy brother is in heaven.

And has he left his birds and flowers?
And must I call in vain?
And through the long, long summer hours,
Will he not come again?
And by the brook and in the glade
Are all our wandering o'er?
O! while my brother with me played,
Would I had lov'd him more.

W. M. C.

Select Story.

A BREACH OF PROMISE.

SKETCHED FROM LIFE.

BY A BARRISTER.

I had just laid down a lengthy abstract, which had occupied my attention for some hours, and weary and yawning, I had seized the poker for the purpose of putting out the fire, that I might retire to my pillow. It was nearly twelve o'clock. The night was bright and frosty, when, preparing to enter my room, a knock at the door disturbed me. My servant was already abed. I shuffled on my slippers, and hastened to answer the summons. A respectable looking man said he wished to consult me, and apologized for disturbing me at so unseasonable an hour. Clients never come to me at unseasonable hours, so I invited him to take a seat in my office, and state the object of his coming. There was no delay in obtaining it; but I must relate the previous circumstances, as I learned them afterwards more at length from the lips of the other parties concerned. Time, diligence, and honesty, had exalted the man who called upon me to the station of head clerk in a public office, at a salary of £80 per annum. He was a widower, his helpmate having died in giving birth to a daughter, on the very day that announced to him his increased dignity and income. Thenceforth all his thoughts and cares, that were not claimed by his situation, were given to his child. At home she was seldom out of his sight. An hour after the office had closed, he was to be seen strolling with his infant charge in the neighboring fields, a beautiful black water-spaniel bounding before them, in pursuit of whom the little Mary ran, with a shriek of delight, the glad father following, to break the fall which her fearlessness threatened, and sometimes brought about—in the early morning, too, in the summer time, he visited with her the hay-fields, and sported with her, like a child among the fragrant hillocks. The girl was everything to him. He seemed to live but for her; he drooped when she was ill, and in his own seasons of sickness, his cheek would flush, and his eyes kindle, when he heard her laugh, and saw her healthy face, as if there was a strange sympathy between them, and he caught from her the mood of the moment. He had been all his life a steady, industrious man. He had never been known to take more than one day in the year for a holiday. It chanced, however, that on one occasion he was absent from his duties for a week. It was concluded that nothing but severe sickness would detain him from his task. A junior clerk was despatched to inquire kindly after his health. He found him sitting by the bedside of his daughter, pale and disordered; he had not slept for four nights—scarcely had he stirred from the spot, except for medicine and food. The child was passing through the terrible ordeal of the measles. He watched the progress of the disease with a fearful anxiety. The favorable crisis came, and he returned to his usual task. But this was a solitary instance. Mary was blessed with robust health, and in a few years she was able to repay by her assistance the devotion of her widowed parents. He loved his home more than ever; for her inexhaustible spirits put to flight all gloomy thoughts.

Her smiles, her song welcomed him, as he crossed his own threshold; and he departed with perfect confidence that in his absence she would discharge the domestic duties of the house as zealously and as ably as many of maturer years, who have been compelled by necessity to call forth their mental energies. And the happy father numbered sixteen of her birth-days, celebrated by a plum-pudding and a bottle of wine, at an evening party of friends. In truth, Mary well deserved the love that her father lavished upon her. She was a sweet girl. Some called her pretty, though that was a contested point. For my own part, I thought her beautiful; but then my taste is somewhat peculiar. Her features were not modelled according to the sculptor's beau ideal—they were not regular, and cold. Nay, examine each feature apart, and no one was faultless. But then they were full of life and mind. All smiles and sunshine, good temper was in every glance, feeling in every accent that breathed from her lips. She had few companions in her childhood. The hours that were not devoted to her domestic duties and to her father, were employed in the attainment of useful learning. She was passionately fond of reading, and the little book-shelf in the parlor supplied her with the elegant essays of Addison, the poetry of Thomson and Cowper, and more recently, the libraries of useful and entertaining knowledge. Thus she entered upon that delightful but dangerous era of human life, when a thousand feelings and passions, as pleasing as news, fill the ardent mind with a thousand strange emotions, before reason has taught us to guide, or the cold precepts of experience to subdue them.

Hitherto her existence had been all serenity. The fondness for nature, and the fields and flowers, first infused by her father in their morning and evening walks, and formed by the volumes which he had judiciously placed before her, as food for a youthful mind, had led her to the study of botany, and she knew every one of the many flowers which adorn our luxuriant hedges.

In her rambles in search of these, she was usually accompanied by her father; but sometimes she went alone into the fields that immediately surrounded the town, dreading nothing and regarding nothing but her favorite pursuit.

Her plain and simple attire, her features, rather homely than otherwise, attracted not the notice of the passer-by, and she continued her study without molestation.

Some few months before the time which made me acquainted with her history she was gathering cowslips in a field near the town, and dreaming not of danger, she was alarmed by the menaces of a very ferocious cow.

The animal pursued her while she was yet far from the gate. Mary fled precipitately—but the self-possession and intrepidity of a gentleman who was accidentally strolling in the same field, saved her from its fury. He rushed forward and with his stick met the enraged beast, and turned it from its pursuit. Gratitude for aid so timely, lighting up a cheek flushed with the returning blood, made her for the moment really beautiful. The stranger was evidently pleased, and behaved to her with a respect and gentlemanly bearing to which she had been little accustomed.

She was soon composed enough to tell him the object of her research—and after a conversation of some length, in which he discovered that the being he had saved possessed no common mind, he bade her adieu, breathing a wish that they might become better acquainted. Her heart intuitively echoed that wish. When she returned home, Mary related the occurrence to her father, who, with tears in his eyes, thanked God for her deliverance. She did not know the name of her preserver; and he could not, as he desired, hasten at once to express to him a parent's gratitude. But her thoughts dwelt continually on the stranger, and his image was in her dreams that night. Her father had warned her to avoid for the future walks so dangerous; but for the first time in her life she culpably neglected his advice. The very next day she proceeded, with a fluttering pulse, to the same meadow, to see, as she said, how the accident had happened. The first object that she there beheld was the gentleman who had saved her. He hastened to accost her. She thanked him again. He turned the conversation to her favorite study—it was one which he had not neglected, and she gathered from him much useful information. She ventured to ask his name, saying that her father was desirous of personally expressing his thanks for the favor he had conferred upon him. The gentleman instantly presented his card—Mr. Henry Hartrow. The conversation became so interesting, that neither seemed inclined to part, until the approach of the dinner hour compelled Mary to tear herself from society that was but too fascinating. She did not know that there

was anything wrong in this. He had saved her life, and therefore was entitled to her warmest gratitude. She did not know that any other feelings mingled with her thoughts.

The next day her father called on Mr. Hartrow. The tears were in his eyes as he poured forth all the eloquence of gratitude. He was received with a respect and kindness unusual between persons holding such different stations in society, for Mr. Hartrow was a gentleman of family and fortune. An only child, the early death of his father had put him in possession of a considerable property. He expressed great interest for her welfare, and promised with her father's permission, to inquire after Mary's health at her own home. Our head clerk was flattered by the condescension of so wealthy a gentleman as Mr. Hartrow, and bashfully accepted his self-invitation. On his return he told Mary of this, and praised her preserver to the skies. He did not notice the blush that bloomed upon her face as she spoke. The very same evening the bright metal tea-pot and neat china tea-cups were on the table, and Mary and her father were seated before the cheerful board.

She was pouring out the tea, when through the window, she saw Mr. Hartrow approaching the house. The tea-pot almost fell from her hand. She turned pale. Her father had not time to ask the cause of her emotion, when a gentle tap at the door announced a stranger. He entered, shook hands cordially with both, and invited by the eye as well as by the words of the delighted and admiring Mary, he took a seat by her side, and shared their homely meal. His kind and friendly manner made them soon forget the difference of rank. His demeanor towards Mary was so respectful, that the father was flattered by it, and she herself entranced. He sat with them till the moon was up. When he arose to depart, Mary could not speak. When he was really gone, her heart sunk within her. I would be tedious, and it is not necessary, to detail the history of the affection that grew up between them. They met as they at first would fain believe, casually—then by appointment. He was almost constantly at the tea-table, and lingered later every evening. Her eye continually watched his coming, and looked brighter when he came. He was daily more fond of reading aloud to her the choicer works of Lord Byron. He wrote a note on some trifling subject requesting an answer. She, of course, replied—Discussion once awakened we'll know is endless. Others followed in quick succession. It was strange that they should exactly agree in all their tastes and likings and dislikings. They at length became engaged. He obtained from her a promise that her father should not be informed of their engagement, and so for four months they contrived to keep their faith a secret from him. An officious friend, who had met them in one of their morning walks, first opened his eyes to the real object of Mr. Hartrow's constant visit. He resolved to employ at once a parental authority, and for that purpose accompanied Hartrow on his return home one evening. Having heard the remonstrances, and bold demand to know what were his own intentions, Hartrow replied satisfactorily, but suggested the necessity of caution, lest his friends should thwart his purpose.

From this time forth Henry and Mary regarded each other in a new light. No longer reserve pained one or the other. This intended union had a father's permission and a father's blessing—When Hartrow became of age, Mary from the hill side beheld, with proud and palpitating heart, the manifestations of joy which spread far and near over his vast estates, and secretly longed for the day when as mistress of that humming multitude she would dispense kindness, smiles, and comfort over all her husband held dear.

But all these pretty hopes, all these dear dreams, were on the eve of a sad disappointment. No sooner did Hartrow's intended union get noised abroad—it was impossible to guard the secret inviolable—than his friends upbraided him, called him degenerate, and at last avoided intercourse with so incorrigible an invader of aristocratic purity. Although none of the weakest of men, Henry Hartrow could not stand long against the continual force of derision which from all sides poured upon him. Even his very self spoke of it as a thing demeaning. Finding the rancour of envy so stern amongst his menials, and the horror of 'contamination' so rife amongst his friends, he at length resolved—not without calculating the difficulty—to relinquish his object.

He prepared not to see her again. He snatched a pen, and after flinging a half dozen half-written epistles into the fire, at length completed one, in which he candidly explained the delicate situation in which he was placed; that his intended connexion with her was so decidedly opposed by his friends, that they threatened to abandon

him—and that a union under such circumstances could only be a source of misery to both. He professed unalterable attachment but he appealed to prudence and good sense, whether the matter ought not to rest as it was. This letter he despatched by his servant. It was like a thunder stroke to the unsuspecting Mary. She had never suffered a doubt of his truth to cloud her affection—and now when she expected to become his wife, to find him faithless! She did not weep—the fountain was dried up—she was stunned. Her father found her with her eyes glazed and starting from their sockets, her cheek white as marble, and the fatal letter fallen from her stiff hand. He glanced his eyes over it. The truth was evident. After vainly endeavoring to recall her to sense and feeling, he took from her drawer the letters of Henry Hartrow, and with them hurried to my office, to seek, without any delay, the avenging aid of the law.

As he finished his story, he flung upon my table the letters alluded to. They were carefully packed in a huge bundle. It was to be my task to pursue them, and glean sufficient evidence for an action for breach of promise of marriage. Having endeavored in vain to soothe the irritated and disappointed parent, I advised him to seek repose, promising to look into his case without delay. I rose early the following morning, and commenced my task. There was ample proof of promise, and I did not feel myself justified in indulging any curiosity by a survey of all these singular documents. I wrote to Mr. Hartrow, politely informing him that I had been instructed to commence an action against him, and trusting that he would yet spare my client the painful task of pushing so wantonly a breach of faith. I received an immediate reply repeating the objections urged in his letter to Mary, and adding, that he must abide the consequences, however painful—for his sense of duty to his relations and friends dictated the conduct which he admitted was, in the first place, deserving blame. No alternative now remained. I issued a writ. About a fortnight before the Assizes, I received a note, requesting an interview with myself and client at my office, to endeavor to compromise the difference. I seized the opportunity, fixed the following day, and prevailed on the father to bring Mary with him. I arranged that she should remain in another room until a fit moment should occur for introducing her.

The several parties arrived accordingly. Mr. Hartrow bowed to the father, who did not return the recognition; and I could see his lips trembling with ill-suppressed rage. I opened the conversation by asking the object of the meeting. He wished to offer terms; he cared not at what cost, so that the case was not dragged before the public. He concluded by asking what compensation we demanded.

'Compensation, sir?' said the father no longer able to control his feelings: 'what can compensate my child for the loss of health and happiness? What gold will buy the peace of mind you have destroyed for ever? Before she knew you, she was the gayest creature under the sun. You saved her life, and we were grateful; but you took advantage of our gratitude to rob us of our domestic quiet. You, rich, presumed that our poverty marked us as fit and passive objects for your sport. Think, you, sir, I deem any paltry excuse or bribe a compensation for my daughter's peace?'

'My good sir, believe me, I always intended to act honourably; for my regard for Mary was not an unworthy one.'

'Then prove it, by acting like a man whose conscience is not blunted.'

'I would not have thought to wrong you, but circumstances have placed me in this unenviable position. Now I will settle on your daughter a fortune—anything at all, say—'

'Tush, young man!' exclaimed the father wildly. 'Do you also insult me thus? Think you a woman's heart is saleable? think you a true maiden is thus purchasable? Away! you are worse than evil!'

Seeing my client so greatly exasperated, I interposed. 'Am I, then, to understand you decline giving the only just compensation?'

Hartrow paused for a moment in evident agitation. 'I would, I would,' he murmured; but my friends—my family—how can I become reconciled with them?'

'Are these narrow prejudices, this pride of home better than honour and justice?' Having put this question, I gave a sign to my client, who left the room, while I continued:—Mr. Hartrow, I fear a worse crime still is in store for you, and that is if this young lady—as I foresee, in case you persevere pine away, you will be a MURDERER!'

'What mean you?' he exclaimed in terror.

'The best explanation I can give is here!' I continued, pointing to Mary, who at that moment entered the room, almost carried by her father. Hartrow