

Poetry.

THE SHADOW ON THE PILLOW.

Borne helpless from the field of fight,
Hewn deep with wounds and scars,
I prayed—"Heaven come and help the right,
And end the cruel wars."
I swooned, I dreamt an angel band
Bore me o'er ocean billow;
I woke, and lo! an angel hand
Was smoothing down my pillow.

Was smoothing down my pillow.

"Twixt death and life, through day and night,
My wounds unconscious kept me,
Of all, except those eyes so bright
That kindly watched and wept me.
And over me, in yon far land,
Had waved the weeping willow,
Had it not been the angel hand
That smoothed the soldier's pillow.
That smoothed the soldier's pillow.

O earth but once heard such a tale,
So heavenly and so human,
As that of Florence Nightingale,
The angel type in woman.
What marvel that a soldier tell!
A poor but grateful fellow,
He kissed her shadow as it fell
At midnight on his pillow.
At midnight on his pillow!

Select Tale.

A STORY OF ENGLISH LAW.

Concluded.

Is it not strange that often something which we deemed an annoyance should at the moment of its removal become precious in our eyes? Stuart had been inexpressibly annoyed at Mr. Morgan's inquisition, yet now he felt a sort of disappointment.—Besides, was he not leaving him under a false impression, though perhaps somewhat altered from the original one? With a strong effort, he requested his friend to stay.

"Resume your catechism, my dear sir," he said, "and I will answer you faithfully up to a certain point. Beyond that I cannot go."

Mr. Morgan twirled his gloves, scarcely knowing what to say.

"Well," Stuart persisted, "will you begin?"

"Why, my dear fellow, you puzzle me excessively. I was inclined to charge you with coldness and want of feeling."

"That is nothing new," said Stuart, with a look half sad, half scornful; "that has been my imputed character for years."

"But in this particular case, George! To come to the point at once: I am sure you liked Mrs. Herbert once."

"I have always highly esteemed the lady you mention."

"You could not, then, intend to show her disrespect."

"Disrespect! What can you mean?"

"Have you not to-day, for the third time, declined seeing her? Supposing this were known, what would be the impression produced? I fear, one more favourable to your fastidiousness than to her delicacy."

"You may be right," Stuart replied, after a while; "nevertheless, I could only do as I have done. Of two evils, I have chosen the least."

"Explain yourself."

"It is not easy for me to do so. I felt it my duty to break off an intercourse which might perhaps—"

"I understand. But why your duty?"

Stuart was silent.

"Excuse me. Are you set against marrying?"

"My dear friend, you have reached the point at which I told you that your questions or my answers must cease."

Mr. Morgan looked disappointed and sorry.

"My confidence would only give you pain, Mr. Morgan," said Stuart, replying to the look.

"Then you will not tell me? You will not let me know what this is that burdens your heart and shadows your countenance—that is crossing your forehead with wrinkles, and streaking your hair with gray?"

Half smiling, yet sadly, Mr. Morgan rose from his seat. Stuart rose too, and walked to the window; then, after some moments reflection, he turned again, with a firm, though slow movement, and walked back to his seat.

His story was soon told: he made but a simple statement of a few sad facts, leaving his hearer's imagination to fill up the outline. Even so let me tell what he told: few words will suffice. He had loved unwisely, married rashly; had trusted first, to doubt afterwards; had wondered, feared, suspected. Alas for the suspicion which cannot be allayed, except as his had been! Not long had he

to endure suspense. Conviction forced itself upon him, and the sunshine of his life was ended.

He had loved, I said, unwisely, for the living object of his love was not like the ideal. With the enthusiasm of boyhood, he had attributed to her all the virtues he wished her to possess, and believed that her love for the noble and the good was as ardent as his own. Oh, how many heart-wrung tears, how many hours of unknown anguish, do these crushed hopes, and deadened aspirations cost us!

In low tones, with eyes bent to the ground, Stuart and his friend conversed.

"Where is she now?" asked Mr. Morgan.

Stuart told him.

"And how does she subsist?"

Stuart explained that he had made arrangements for her receiving a small annuity, on condition that she never in any manner intruded herself upon him. The letter he had received lately was a breach of that agreement.

"Does she write as a penitent, George?"

"Simply as a person transacting business."

He gave the letter to Mr. Morgan, who perused it carefully, and on laying it down, muttered half aloud: "And almost seeming to think herself the injured party!—You never sued?" he asked a moment afterwards; "you never sought a divorce?"

"No."

"Why did you not?"

"There were several reasons," said Stuart, evasively.

"The exposure?"

"Ay, who likes to himself and his wrongs in the hands of every newspaper editor?—at the mercy of every idler who amuses himself with the contemplation of misery and guilt?"

"And yet, George, I should have thought that your proud, high spirit would have borne all this rather than"—He paused.

"You are right, Mr. Morgan, I would have encountered any amount of present pain, if by so doing I could have redeemed the future from its abiding shame. I would have braved publicity, ridicule, everything, to have rescued my name from dishonor—to have regained the proud freedom I had lost. You are right in judging me so; but I was hindered."

"What could hinder you? In such a case your own judgment only should have been followed.—You only had suffered, and no one, no one had a right to restrain you!"

A smile—but how bitter a smile—curled the lip of Stuart, and his proud nostril expanded with a look of wearied scorn.

"My friend," he said, "you are a lawyer; you should know something of the English law of divorce. Do you not understand?" he added, as Mr. Morgan looked up inquiringly. "Doubtless my cause was good—doubtless I should have gained a decision in my favour; but"—his lips and his hand closed quickly—"I could not pay for it!"

III.

The letter Stuart had opened in Mrs. Herbert's presence was speedily followed by several others, to none of which he thought it expedient to make any reply. But after a short interval came one to which he felt disposed to pay attention. It was an offer from the wretched woman who had worked him so much woe, to the effect that she would, on the receipt of a certain sum of money, at once emigrate to America, whither some of her friends were shortly to sail. Stuart was more than willing to acquiesce in this arrangement, and speedily signified his consent. With the Atlantic between them his spirit might feel lightened of some part of its burden; he could walk freely through the world without fearing at every step that the cause and evidence of his infamy—so he called it—would start up and shame him. Her departure made no change in his position; yet, when the vessel which contained her quitted the shores of England, George Stuart felt himself a happier man.

Six weeks afterwards he was startled by the intelligence that that ship was lost. It is not in human nature not to rejoice at deliverance, no matter how effected, and Stuart may be forgiven if his strongest feeling for that disaster was one of thankfulness. In the list of passengers lost was that one name. Mr. Morgan made no scruple of expressing his satisfaction, and noted with excessive pleasure, that though as quiet in his manner as ever, the relaxed lip and softened eye of Stuart betrayed far more than his words confessed.

Both, however, knew that a possibility of mistake existed. The list of persons saved might have been incomplete, others of the missing passengers might turn up elsewhere. For some months Stuart waited, in readiness, if not in expectation, for evidence contradictory of the report; and, not content with waiting only, he caused careful inquiries to be made in every accessible quarter, nor till these proved fruitless, did he consider himself free.

Is he to be blamed, it in those months his thoughts sometimes reverted to, and dwelt upon her whom he loved, and who, he well knew, loved him? His love now was very different from the impetuous, ungovernable feeling of his boyhood. Experience, sharp and bitter, had taught him how to curb the torrent, and in the furnace of affliction many passions had been sorely tried. But neither experience nor affliction can annihilate those passions in a noble mind; and though strangely altered and subdued, the gushings of his heart were stronger now than ever. He was no longer a boy, but he had found that of which his boyhood had been disappointed—a pure and gentle spirit to sympathise with his.

As months wore on, and Stuart grew satisfied of his own safety, it is no wonder that he relaxed somewhat in his strict self-government, and every man knows, or ought to know, that when this is the case, a crisis is not far off. The crisis came, and Catherine Herbert listened to the strange story of his life ere he would permit her to answer the avowal by which it had been prefaced. But it was soon answered afterwards, and Catherine felt that, if possible, she loved him better for that very silence which had previously so much distressed her.

My tale is not ended, but I must hasten towards its close. This will bring me to a period more than a year after the loss of the emigrant-ship *Ashbourne*, and a very few weeks after Catherine Herbert had given her hand to Stuart.

It was morning, and Stuart prepared to go out, when he was informed that some person wished to see him immediately. Ordering the applicant to be shewn into his study, he presently repaired thither himself.

How little do we know what lies before us! Stuart walked into the room carelessly drawing on his gloves, and thinking so little of his visitor that he had closed the door and taken two steps forward ere he perceived who was there. Then he stood still. Speechless, motionless, while his heart leaped with a terrible agony, he gazed upon her whom a moment before he believed the waters had engulfed! He asked no questions—he wished for no explanations—it was enough that she was there. No explanation could do away with the fact of her existence—her living, moving presence on that earth which held him and—his wife.

His wife? Who was she? To whom did the title belong? To her who had long ago forfeited her right to bear it, and had covered herself and him with dishonour? Yes: in the eye of the law that creature was still his wife. And she, the pure and irreproachable being, the very impersonation of true confiding wifehood, who had lately cast in her lot with his—what was she?

"Good-morning," said the visitor, perceiving that Stuart did not seem likely to break the silence. "I don't wonder you are surprised to see me, for I daresay you heard of the wreck?"

Stuart said "Yes" calmly—it was the calmness of desperation: the "cup of trembling" seemed full for him.

"The fact is, I was picked up by an American vessel the morning after the wreck. I had taken a 'life-preserving cape' with me, and it kept me afloat beautifully. Capital things those life-preservers, are they not?"

The easy nonchalance of the speaker was not without its effect upon Stuart. Something like indignation empowered him to ask: "Why have you been so long in discovering the truth to me?"

"About my being alive, you mean. Oh, how could I? The ship that took me up was not coming to England. We went to some place in South America, and then, after a while, back to New York."

"You might have written."

"Well, I never thought of that; or if I did, you know you made me promise not to write to you again."

"You promised also that I should never see you again."

"Yes"—the reply was accompanied by a spiteful laugh—"but then I wasn't expecting to be wrecked. Shipwrecks are sad things for upsetting arrangements."

"Why did you not stay in America?"

"The idea! When every one of my friends was drowned!—Good-morning, ma'am, how do you do?"

Catherine, believing that Stuart was gone to the office, had come in search of some trifle which had been mislaid, and opened the study-door before she was aware of the room being occupied. The word "shipwrecks" caught her ear, and a horrible suspicion darted through her mind. It was speedily confirmed, for, as Stuart, hastily turning, when the stranger greeted her, would have hurried her from the place, his tormentor exclaimed, with the same levity as before: "So, then, this is the mistress in my husband's house?"

Stuart tried to lead Catherine away, but she was fainting on his shoulder. He lifted her up, and carried her to her room. Presently he returned. "Why are you here?—what do you seek?" he asked in a voice husky though unbroken.

It was money that was wanted, and obtained.

"Go now," said Stuart, "and come to this house no more. At the office you may see or hear from me, but here it is not safe for you to come."

The dark, almost fierce glitter of his eyes seemed to startle his auditor. She took the money silently, and departed at once. George wrote a couple of lines to Mr. Morgan, begging him to come immediately, and then returned to the room where Catherine still lay helpless. The sudden shock had completely unsettled her nervous system; and the doctor, who had been hastily summoned, said gravely that she must be kept quiet. Quiet she certainly might be, so far as the body was concerned, but it would perhaps have been better for her if the fainting-fits which continually returned upon her had been more profound or of longer duration. As it was, the intervals of consciousness served to remind her that some dreadful event, she scarcely knew what, had occurred, and that its consequences were still impending. It is well known that this kind of consciousness is very dangerous to persons of delicate organization: before the night closed in, "Mrs. Stuart" was pronounced to be suffering from brain-fever.

Who can describe the agony of him who bent over her couch, listening to her wanderings, and feeling that this was his work! Oh, how deeply he regretted the weakness which had permitted him to accept the love she gave!—how he repented the frenzied rashness of his youth!—how, in the bitterness of his spirit, he cursed the iniquitous law which, while offering deliverance to the wealthy, condemned him to this everlasting bondage of shame. In vain, in vain! She for whom he would gladly have given his own life, was dying before his eyes, the victim of his errors. Yet, was it so? Was he indeed to blame? Partly—not at all.—Again, with the fierce wrath of a revengeful, deeply injured man, he execrated that mockery of justice, that solemn puppetry which only gold can set in motion—the English law of divorce.

Mr. Morgan had been with Stuart more than once or twice, but could do but little to quiet the tumult of his feelings. Several days had passed ere he began to speak decisively of what he thought advisable.

"Everything must be risked now, George," said the kind old man: money must be had, and I will undertake to say it shall be."

"My kind, good friend!" said Stuart, sadly; "but it is too late."

"I confess we shall be under several disadvantages; but I do not despair, nor must you."

Again the other murmured, "It is too late;" and Mr. Morgan took his leave.

George slowly sought the chamber, from which he could scarcely bear to be absent, though it agonized him to be there.

"The fever has abated," whispered the doctor, whom he met on the stairs.

"Will she recover?"

The doctor paused. "Unless she is too weak to rally," and he passed on.

With a noiseless step Stuart approached the bed where Catherine lay quite still, with her eyes partly open. Presently her lips moved, and it was his own name they formed, but scarcely uttered. As he bent down, and lightly kissed her forehead, a faint smile played over her lips. "George, dearest," again she murmured, and with a sudden effort she threw her right arm round his neck.

That effort was the last; in another moment the arm relaxed its hold, the last faint breath escaped, and the lips pressed with his were those of a corpse.

There is no stone by Catherine's grave, but Stuart knows it well; and sometimes when the streets are quite still, when the moon is down, and only the stars glimmer faintly on the tombstone, he wanders among the graves, and perhaps passes a minute beside one undistinguished hillock—sometimes, but not often; for to nourish and indulge such grief as his would be madness, and he is no repining, melancholic man. The proud spirit is wrung, the strong heart is nearly broken, but his burden of bitter memories is borne calmly; the duties of the dull present are performed uncomplainingly, and what he suffers, he suffers in silence.

Men may lose by being too communicative. The great laconic philosopher, Shirk, says: "Keep shady, and if you see a quarter on the ground, put your foot on it."

A St. Louis paper says that the grasshoppers have eaten up the entire tobacco crop of Franklin County, and the last that was heard from them, they were seated on the corners of the fences, begging every man that passed for a chew.