

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

FROM BELL'S "MY OLD PORTFOLIO."

## THE DILEMMA.

A TALE.

"By St. Agatha! I believe there is something in the shape of a tear in those dark eyes of mine, about which the women rave so unmercifully," said the young Fitzclarence, as, after an absence of two years, he came once more in sight of his native village of Malhamdale. Standing upon the neighbouring heights, he watched the curling smoke coming up from the cottage chimneys in the clear blue sky of evening, whilst a little farther off, the last beams of the setting sun were playing upon the western walls of his father's old baronial mansion, and, about a mile to the right of it, he could distinguish the trees and pleasure grounds of Sir Meredith Appleby's less ancient seat. Then he thought of Julia Appleby, the Baronet's only child, his youthful playmate, his first friend, and his first love; and, as he thought of her he sighed. When they parted, two years before, sanctioned and encouraged by their respective parents (for there was nothing the old people wished more than a union between the two families) they had sworn eternal fidelity, and plighted their hearts irrevocably to each other. Fitzclarence thought of all this, and again he sighed. Different people are differently affected by the same things. After so long an absence many a man would, in the exuberance of his feelings, have thrown himself down upon the first bed of wild flowers he came to, and spouted long speeches to himself out of all known plays. Our hero preferred indulging in the following little soliloquy. "My father will be amazingly glad to see me, and so will my mother, and so will my old friend the antediluvian butler, Morgan-ap-Morgan, and so will the pointer bitch, Juno, and so will my pony Troilus;—a pretty figure, by the by, I should cut now upon Troilus;—in this gay military garb of mine, with my sword rattling between his legs and my white plumes streaming in the air like a rainbow over him! And Sir Meredith Appleby too, with his great gouty leg, will hobble through the room in ecstasy as soon as I present myself; and Julia—poor Julia, will blush, and smile, and come flying into my arms like a shuttlecock. Heigho! I am a very miserable young officer. The silly girl loves me; her imagination is all crammed with hearts and darts; she will bore me to death with her sighs, and her tender glances, and her allusion to times past, and her hopes of time to come, and all the artillery of a love-sick child's brain. What, in the name of the Pleiades, am I to do? I believe I had a sort of a *penchant* for her once, when I was a mere boy in my nurse's leading-strings; I believe I *did* give her some slight hopes at one time or other; but, now—O! Rosalind! dear—delightful!—Here his feelings overpowered him and, pulling a miniature from his bosom, he covered it with kisses. Sorry am I to be obliged to confess that it was not the miniature of Julia. "But what is to be done?" he at length resumed, "The poor girl will go mad; she will hang herself in her garters; or drown herself, like Ophelia, in a brook under a willow. And I shall be her murderer! I, who have never yet knocked a man on the head in battle, will commence my warlike preparations by breaking the heart of a woman! By St. Agatha! it must not be: I must be true to my engagement. Yes! though I myself become a martyr, I must obey the dictates of honour. Forgive me, Rosalind, heavenliest object of my adoration! Let not thy Fitzclarence"—Here his voice became inarticulate; and, as he wended down the hill, nothing was heard but the echoes of the multitudinous kisses he continued to lavish on the little brilliantly-set portrait he held in his hands. Next morning, Sir Meredith Appleby was in the midst of a very sumptuous breakfast, (for, notwithstanding his gout, the baronet tried to preserve his appetite,) and the pretty Julia was presiding over the tea and coffee at the other end of the table, with the long-eared spaniel sitting beside her, and ever and anon looking wistfully into her face, when a servant brought in, on a little silver tray, a letter for Sir Meredith. The old gentleman read it aloud; it was from the elder Fitzclarence: "My dear friend, Alfred arrived last night. He and I will dine with you to day. Yours, Fitzclarence." Julia's cheeks grew first as white as her brow, and then as red as her lips. As soon as breakfast was over, she retired to her own apartment, and thither we must, for once, take the liberty of following her.

She sat herself down before her mirror, and deliberately took from her hair a very tasteful little knot of fictitious flowers, which she had fastened in it when she rose. One naturally expected that she was about to replace this ornament with something more splendid—a few jewels, perhaps; but she was not going to do any thing of the sort. She rang the bell: her confidential attendant, Alice, answered the summons. "La,

Ma'am," said she, "what is the matter? You look as ill as my aunt Bridget." "You have heard me talk of Alfred Fitzclarence, Alice, have you not?" said the lady, languidly, and, at the same time, slightly blushing. "Oh! yes, Ma'am, I think I have. He was to have been married to you before he went to the wars."

"He has returned, Alice, and he will break his heart if he finds I no longer love him. But he has been so long away; and Harry Dalton has been so constantly with me; and his tastes and mine are so congenial;—I am sure you know, Alice, I am not fickle, but how could I avoid it? Harry Dalton is so handsome, and so amiable!" "To be sure, Ma'am, you had the best right to choose for yourself; and so Mr. Fitzclarence must just break his heart if he pleases, or else fight a desperate duel, with Mr. Dalton with his swords and guns." "O! Alice, you frighten me to death. There shall be no duels fought for me. Though my bridal bed should be my grave, I shall be true to my word. The bare suspicion of my inconstancy would turn poor Alfred mad. I know how he doats upon me. I must go to the altar, Alice, like a lamb to the slaughter. Were I to refuse him, you may depend upon it he would put an end to his existence with five loaded pistols. Only think of that, Alice; what could I say for myself, were his remains found in his bed some morning?"

History does not report what Alice said her mistress might, under such circumstances, say for herself, but it is certain that they remained talking together till the third dinner-bell rang. The Fitzclarences were both true to their engagement. Notwithstanding every exertion, however, on the part of the two old gentlemen, they could not exactly bring about that "flow of soul" which they had hoped to see animating the young people. At length after the cloth was removed, and a few bumpers of claret had warmed Sir Meredith's heart, he said, boldly, "Julia, my love, as Alfred does not seem to be much of a wine-bibber, suppose you show him the improvements in the gardens and hot-houses, whilst we sexagenarians remain where we are, to drink to the health of both, and talk over a few family matters."

Alfred, thus called upon, could not avoid rising from his seat, and offering Julia his arm. She took it with a blush, and they walked off together in silence. "How devotedly he loves me!" thought Julia, with a sigh. "No, no, I cannot break his heart." "Poor girl!" thought Alfred, bringing one of his whiskers more killingly over his cheek; "her affections are irrevocably fixed upon me: the slightest attention calls to her face all the roses of Sharon." They proceeded down a long gravel walk, bordered on both sides with fragrant and flowery shrubs; but, except that the pebbles rubbed against each other as they passed over them, not a sound was to be heard. Julia, however, was at length observed to hem twice, and we understand that Fitzclarence politely coughed an acknowledgment of the said hems. The lady stopped and pulled a rose. Fitzclarence stopped also, and plucked a jonquil. Julia smiled, so did Alfred. Julia's smile was chased away by a sigh, Alfred immediately sighed too. Checking himself, however, he saw the absolute necessity of commencing a conversation. "Miss Appleby," said he, at last. "Sir?" It is two years, I think since we parted. "Yes, two years on the fifteenth of this month." Alfred was silent. "How she adores me!" thought he: "she can tell to a moment how long it is since we last met." There was a pause. "You have seen no doubt, a great deal since you left Malhamdale?" said Julia. "O! a very great deal!" replied her lover. Miss Appleby hemmed once more, and drew in a vast mouthful of courage. "I am told the ladies of England and Ireland are much more attractive than those of Wales." "Generally speaking, I believe they are." "Sir?" "That is—I mean—I beg your pardon—the truth is—I should have said—that—that—you have dropped your rose." Fitzclarence stooped to pick it up; but, in so doing, the little miniature which he wore round his neck escaped from under his waistcoat, and, though he did not observe it, it was hanging conspicuously on his breast like an order, when he presented the flower to Julia. "Good heavens! Alfred, that is my cousin Rosalind!" "Your cousin Rosalind! where? how? the miniature! It is all over with me! The murder is out! Lord bless me! Julia, how pale you have grown; yet hear me! be comforted. I am a very wretch; but I shall be faithful; do not turn away, love; do not weep; Julia! Julia! what is the matter with you? By Jove! she is in hysterics; she will go distracted! Julia! I will marry you! I swear to you by—" "Do not swear by anything at all," cried Julia, unable any longer to conceal her rapture, "lest you be transported for perjury. You are my own—my very best Alfred!" "Mad, quite mad," thought Alfred. "I wear a miniature too," proceeded the lady; and she pulled from the loveliest bosom in the world the likeness, set in brilliants, of a youth provokingly handsome, but not Fitzclarence. "Julia!" "Alfred!" "We have both been faithless!" "And now we are both happy." "By St. Agatha! we are; only I cannot help wondering at your taste, Julia;

that stripling has actually no whiskers!" "Neither has my cousin Rosalind; yet you found her irresistible." "Well, I believe you are right, and besides, *de gustibus*—I beg your pardon, I was going to quote Latin."

DEBUT OF ROBESPIERRE.—I have but an imperfect recollection of the early proceedings of the assembly, during the dispute of the orders; but I cannot forget the occasion on which a man, who afterwards acquired a fatal celebrity, first brought himself into notice. The clergy were endeavouring, by a subterfuge, to obtain a meeting of the orders; and for this purpose, deputed the Archbishop of Aix to the *tiers etat*. This prelate expatiated very pathetically upon the distresses of the people, and the poverty of the country parishes. He produced a piece of black bread, which a dog would have rejected, but which the poor were obliged to eat or starve. He besought the *tiers etat* to depute some members to confer with those deputed by the nobility and clergy, upon the means of bettering the condition of the indigent classes. The *tiers-etat* perceived the snare, but dared not openly reject the proposal, as it would render them unpopular with the lower classes; when a deputy rose, and after professing sentiments in favour of the poor still stronger than those of the prelate, adroitly threw doubts upon the sincerity of the intentions avowed by the clergy. "Go," said he to the archbishop, "and tell your colleagues, that, if they are so impatient to assist the suffering poor, they had better come hither and join the friends of the people. Tell them no longer to embarrass our proceedings with affected delays;—tell them no longer to endeavour by unworthy means, to make us swerve from the resolutions we have taken; but, as ministers of religion—as worthy imitators of their masters, let them forego that luxury which surrounds them, and that splendour which puts indignity to the blush;—let them resume the modesty of their origin—discharge the proud lackeys by whom they are attended—sell their superb equipages, and convert all their superfluous wealth into food for the indigent." This speech, which coincided so well with the passions of the time, did not elicit loud applause, which would have been a bravado and out of place, but was succeeded by a murmur much more flattering: "Who is he?" was the general question; but he was unknown; and it was not until some time had elapsed, that a name was circulated which three years later, made France tremble. The speaker was Robespierre. Reybaz, who was seated next to me, observed, "this young man has not yet practised; he is too wordy, and does not know when to stop, but he has a store of eloquence and bitterness which will not leave him in the crowd."—*Dumont's Recollections of Mirabeau.*

DECAY OF SAILORS' SONGS.—"We'll Sam," resumed the interlocutor, who has been already introduced to the reader by the applicable cognomen of "Knowing Ned."—"as I was a goin' to tell ye,—for the whole three years I sarv'd in that *March-o'-Mind man-o'-war* I was telling ye about,—I never hears as much as a sailor's song—a song as ye cou'd call a reglar built seaman's stave." "No, Ned, you doesn't now often hear the staves as we used to sing in the war—You never now hears—*Will-ye-go to Cawsin-Bay-Billy-Bo-Billy-Bo!*"—nor—the '*Saucy Arethusa*'—nor the '*Bold Britanny*'—'*Black colours under her mizen did fly*'—'*From Ushant to Scilly is thirty-five leagues*'—"*an' many more o' the sim'lar sort*." "No, no Sam,—your right enough—your *March-o'-mind-Men* hav'nt, you may depend on it, the *mind o' men*—they think far more like people as rig in petticoats, nor they as tog in trowsers. Now what looks more young ladyish, nor to see a fellow with a fist like a shoulder o' mutton, flingin' his slipper about, an' suitin' his antics to his song, as he snivels out—'*Strike, strike the light guitar!*' "What, Ned, comin' what ye calls your forty-poney-fingers over a fellow?" "Exactly—for all the world like one o' your Spanish ladies—one o' your Cadiz craft. Then again we'd another chap—a chap too, as big an' as bulky as a bullock—easin' it off—an' mincin' it out like a lank boardin' school miss—'*Pd be a Butterfly, born in a Bower*'." "In a bower-tier, I s'pose Ned?" "No, bo, born in a bush, an' flut'ring away wi' a pair of silk summer wings, as change colour as fast as a dyin' dolphin." "Well, I'm blest if I would'nt like to see *Big Ben* buzzin' about in a bush, with a pair o' reglar ringtails bent to his shoulders, an' hauled out taught to both his heels." "Well then, Sam, we'd another fellow as 'ould 'ave made you laugh more than ever *Big Ben* buzzin' about in a bush—There was the captain of the mizen top, a cap-struck chap as was all day long pesterin' people about his '*dear Sue*'—his '*fond Sue*' and his '*best o' wives*'—well, that there chap, as was all day long teazin' a tormentin' every man and boy aboard 'bout his cro-jack-eyed craft—could never at night be got o' sing no other stave but '*Oh no, we never mentions her!*' Why, I was obliged at last, to chalk out a sort of stave for 'em, to see if I

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