

Literature, &c.

The American Magazines.

FOR APRIL.

From Graham's Magazine.

TRUE LOVE A HUNDRED YEARS.

AGO.

BY MRS. EMMA C. EMBURY.

GENTLE reader, do you like a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end? If so turn the page; for this will not be to your taste. I am weary of treading the same track. I will tell my tale in my own way, even if it be like a child's first experiment in knitting, where, though the thread is left unbroken, many a stitch is dropped—or, like old Dr. —'s sermons, which contain broken bits of a golden chain of thought, but are always wanting in connecting links. My story begins in the middle, and finishes after the end; now read if you will, I have given you an honest warning.

In a spacious apartment, whose low ceiling and carved panels were in keeping with the quaint and cumbersome furniture which the Partisans of Albany fancied at the beginning of the last century, sat two persons engaged in deep and earnest conversation. The lady was young and very beautiful, but there was pride in every motion of her stately form; pride in the curve of her graceful neck, pride in her broad, high brow, pride in the cold clear light of her superb eyes, pride in every lineament, save in the curve of her sweet mouth—that only feature which cannot be educated to false seeming. There was an expression of exquisite tenderness in the full softness of her lips, which was strangely at variance with the calm and status-like character of her commanding beauty. It needed but little skill in physiognomy to discover that she was one to whom the world had early taught its lessons of concealment, and that whatever might be the impulses of her strong nature, yet the power of repression was stronger still than they. Her companion was a man in the prime of early manhood, with a tall, commanding figure and a face full of noble ingenuousness. Even the most careless observer might have discovered how much more easily the seal of worldliness is stamped on the ductile character of woman, than on the less impressible nature of man; for his cheek flushed and paled; his lip quivered; his eye flashed and filled with tears, while the calm, earnest gaze of the lady seemed to reproach him for such unrestrained emotion.

"You must learn prudence," Horace said she, in a low clear voice. "I love you, and have been weak enough to confess to you my regard for you, but remember, that my pride is as strong as my affection. You drew upon us the eyes of a gaping crowd by your vehemence, and I cannot submit to be a laughing stock of fools."

"Do you mean to say, Gertrude, that I must tamely submit to see others claiming rights where I dare not ask privileges? Why did you refuse me your hand, and then, five minutes afterward, allow that puppy Saunders to lead you to the dance?"

"It might be sufficient to say that such was my pleasure; but I will give you another reason. Your attentions to me have been so marked, so exclusive all the evening, that something very decided was necessary in order to silence the tongues of gossiping friends."

"Then we must forever play each other false, lest the world should suspect our truth?"

"Nay, Horace, let us understand our position. We are both poor and proud—we have been nurtured in high notions, and we have to secure our position in society—you by your talents and your education—and I, by my poor beauty and my woman's tact. Your family are ambitious for you, and they anticipate your future marriage with wealth, as an essential means of acquiring distinction. Something of the same kind is expected of me. Nay, never frown and shake your head—it is even so. They would fain barter us for that which they most need, nor do I blame them for trying to preserve their time-honored station in society, by all lawful and proper means."

"Even by the sale of true hearts, I suppose," was the bitter reply.

"You forget, Horace, that they know nothing of our real feelings, and that therefore they anticipate no such sacrifice. But such being the plan with regard to us, you well know what fierce opposition we might expect if our secret were suspected. It may be that I carry my womanly pride too far, but I am sure that I could never endure the ridicule, or the contemptuous pity of the world. I am content to wait for better times, Horace, and I only ask you to be as patient as myself. With me love is a sacred and holy thing; it must not be blazoned before the eyes of every one; I will cherish it in my heart, but will not bear its badge upon my breast."

"You mean to say, Gertrude, that you would rather sacrifice me to the world than give up the world for me?"

"You talk of giving up the world as if we lived in the days of romance. We must live in the world, and as the world does, at least as far as appearance goes. I will not sacrifice a principle to the whims of society, but I will always repress an impulse in order to avoid its censure."

"How can you reason so coldly, on a matter which to me involves something dearer than life?"

"I tell you, Horace, that all affections richest store of gifts could not repay me for the loss of that dignity which is only to be preserved by self-governance."

"Good Heavens! Gertrude, how can you place the cold cavillings of a set of gossips, in

competition with love, and hope, and happiness?"

"I must be frank with you; I love you with my whole heart, yet I will not risk the world's dread laugh for you. Anything else I would do—the sacrifice of my life—the slow martyrdom of the heart—all would I suffer, but not the contumely of those among whom I live. I may be wrong, but education has confirmed the innate pride of my nature. You must trust me, Horace, trust my love, and my word, but there must be no bond between us, which can be converted into a letter, clanking in the ears of society. I will not be pitted as a loveless damsel pining with hope deferred."

"Gertrude, you never loved me, you do not now love me, or you could not reason thus."

"If you think so, Horace, we had better never recur to the subject," was the calm rejoinder.

"Only let me appear before the world as your lover, Gertrude, and I care not for every trial. I will go forth and win the means which can enable me to claim your hand; but I cannot bear this stifling of all true emotion, this daily acted lie. Let us at least be true to our natures."

"I am so, Horace; I tell you, pride with me is as strong as love; our secrets must be buried in our own hearts, and each must be content with a consciousness of recognition, that allows of no outward sign. If this contents you not, it is better that we part at once."

The young man gazed earnestly on the fair face before him, but not a trace of emotion was upon it. The position of her delicate hand hid from his view the pained sorrowful expressions of her tremulous lip, while her cold, calm eyes looked quietly out, as if they were never illumined with other than external light. His impetuous temper could bear no more.

"Be it so, madam," he exclaimed, "you speak of parting as if the thought were a familiar one. It shall be as you will; I will no longer thrust myself between you and your hopes of worldly honors. We will part at once."

He turned toward the door as he spoke, but the lady sat still as a statue. "You had better not leave me in anger, Horace," said she, in a voice as unflinching as if she had been bidding him to a banquet. "You had better not leave me thus; there are some things which cannot be forgiven."

"Yes, there are things which the heart can neither forgive nor forget," exclaimed Horace, vehemently. "Proud, cold, unfeeling woman, may you yet learn the value of the true affection you now cast from you; my presence and my hopes shall no longer trouble your repose."

He turned, gave one look at the wonderful beauty of that calm face, and then, the heavy closing of the door signalled his hurried departure. With a pale face almost to ghastliness, yet with unflinching step, the lady slowly arose and left the room. On the staircase a servant detained her by some household question. She answered it as calmly and collectedly as if no deeper subject had ever occupied her thoughts, and then, entering the sanctuary of her own apartment, and securing herself from all intrusion, she flung herself upon the floor, in all the bitter anguish of despair. Fearful was the power of passion in that woman's heart—more fearful still that almost superhuman power of repression.

TEN years have passed away since the scene already depicted, and we will once more lift the curtain.

In a magnificent library, fitted up with all the appliances of taste and luxury, sat Horace L****. His companion was a woman, fair and delicate, and bearing that high refinement, both of look and manner, which makes one so readily pardon the want of symmetry of feature. She was much younger, and far less striking in personal beauty than he, yet there was a similitude, rather of expression than of lineament, which betrayed their relationship. Horace had been gazing abstractedly in the fire, for some moments, when he suddenly turned to his sister, and said:

"Will you answer me one question frankly, Julia?"

"Certainly, did I ever hesitate to do so?" was the immediate reply.

"No, my sister, you have ever been full of truthfulness, but tell me—this new admirer of yours, who comes armed with all the powers of intellect and courtly grace—your traveled friend—what do you really think of him?"

"That he would be one of the most captivating of men to most of my sex."

"Have you found him so, Julia?"

A merry light shone in her eyes as she looked up from her needle-work, but the sad earnestness of her brother's countenance checked her gaiety. She arose, and laying her hand on his shoulder, said:

"He does not reach my standard of perfection, Horace, he is some inches shorter, both in bodily and mental stature."

Horace smiled mournfully. "I have long wanted to speak to you on this subject, Julia, and yet I have shrunk from it with a kind of childish dread. I am afraid that time has made me selfish, and I will not yield to so mean a feeling. The frosts of forty winters have chilled my heart far more than they have silvered my brow; I am weary of the hollowness of society, but to you, who are yet in the early season of womanhood, it may still offer charms. It is wrong in me to suffer you thus to devote your best years to a wayward brother."

"I am happy, perfectly happy with you, Horace."

"But, are you not resigning, for my sake, the hopes so dear to every woman's heart? Tell me—and mind, I must be answered truly

—have you never felt the stirrings of an impressionable nature—never recognized the first dawning of an affection which might have brightened into happiness?"

"Never, dearest brother, never have I known that bewildering emotion which is called love. From my childhood I revered you as a being of lofty order, you were my girlish ideal of all that is beautiful, and good, and noble in manhood. I worshipped your image instead of fashioning for myself some hero of romance, as maidens do. As I grew older and saw something of society, I found that there was none other like you; all other men shrunk into pigmies beside you—you were the King of Israel, towering above his future subjects, in physical as in moral grandeur. I cannot love where I do not reverence, Horace, and you already possess the deepest veneration of my spirit. I have loved you with all a sister's affection, with all a woman's devotedness. The whole thought of my nature has been expended here, and never has a thought proved traitor to you. At your side I would fain live and die. One thing only sometimes overshadows my spirit; mine is a jealous love, and I dread lest a being unworthy of your high excellence should at some future time claim, as a wife, the privilege of ministering to your comforts, while I shall be cast out."

"Fear not that, Julia; I have no faith in woman; I know your truthfulness, your nobleness, your unselfish devotion; but you are the only being of your sex whom I would trust. You are one, but the name of the false is Legion. Yet is it not strange that the same vague fear of future separation should have come to the hearts of both of us, my sister? Among all that have loved you, I have found none worthy of you, and I have sometimes doubted whether I was not blinded by my selfishness."

"Let us then quiet all such anxieties, Horace; let us make a spiritual marriage—let me bind myself to be the companion of your future life, the partner of all your fortunes, sharing with you every sorrow and every joy."

She knelt before her brother as she spoke, and her countenance was almost beautiful, illumined, as it was, by the pure enthusiasm of affection. The eyes of Horace were suffused with tears as he bent forward and pressed his lips to her fair and open brow.

"Be it so, sweet sister," he said, "we will live for each other. It shall be my privilege to guard you from every sorrow, while you shall share my every joy. With smiles on her lips, while tears yet stood upon her cheeks, Julia, half playfully, half seriously drew from her finger a plain gold ring, and exchanged from an antique chased one, worn by her brother.

"Now we have pledged our truth," said she, "death only can sever us if we are true to our pledge;" and the words uttered in jesting mood were remembered by both during many future years.

ANOTHER period of ten years has passed away.

Horace L**** reclined in his easy chair, his gony foot rested on a cushion, and beside him sat his devoted sister. Time had touched both with a gentle hand, and the brow of Julia was still as smooth as in days of girlhood, for there had been no passions to deepen the light foot prints of quiet years. Her brother's noble bearing was still unchanged, his eyes were still bright, his forehead wrought over by the intersected lines of thought, rather than of age, and the almost womanish beauty of his mouth was still unimpaired.

The door opened, and a handsome youth entered, with a merry laugh and joyous greeting. "Ah, uncle Horace, is your foot still wrapped in 'decey hosiery?' you must fling off those fetters next week; your presence cannot be dispensed with at Elmstead."

"So you are really going to be married, next week, Frank?"

"I hope so."

"Well, well, boy, I do my duty by you all, in the way of warning and remonstrance; but I don't see that it is of much use. Pray what do you want of a wife?"

"I want some one to love, some one to love me all my life."

"Natural enough; but do you expect this in a wife? Then, take my word for it, you never were more mistaken. A woman is brought up even from the nursery to the belief that it is her destiny to be married. For this she is trained, for this she is ushered into society. Mind you, I did not say she was educated to be a wife; she is instructed in the art of getting married. She sings, and plays, and dances, and dresses, and looks pretty, until some flat is taken in the net, and no sooner is he hooked and fairly caught, than she has fulfilled her vocation."

"You are too general, uncle, in your remarks," interrupted Frank.

"I tell you, Frank, there is no faith in woman," was the reply. "She is a creature of moods and impulses; there is no stability in her feelings, no duration in her sentiments. Trust to the waves of your richly freighted bark, waste upon the winds, your richest music, and your sweetest perfumes, and you will yet be wise, compared with him who puts faith in woman. She will, she must disappoint your trust. Her nature is full of variability, and until the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, women must ever be faithless and fickle."

"You are severe, uncle, I wonder how you dare utter such heresies in the presence of such a sister."

"She is the exception that proves the rule. Do you remember the saying of Solomon? 'One man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found. I have known hundreds of women, but I never found one who could keep her faith.' Ambition

on, pride, the love of display, the petty vanity of personal decoration, all such mean, base feelings mingle with a woman's love. She offers not to the thirsting soul the full rich draught of unmingled tenderness; the eye may sparkle, and the head drop may woo the lip, but there are bitter dregs beneath."

Frank bit his lip, and with difficulty suppressed his vexation at his uncle's unusual mood.

"No, Frank, there are plenty of people in the world, who look not beneath the surface of things; people who sail smoothly over rocks and quicksands, and escaping them all by the aid of that especial providence which always takes care of children and fools. Let such marry, and incur the risks of shipwreck; they have not much to lose, even if they are stranded. But one like you, boy, who will send forth so much in the adventure, should never dare the treacherous element. Love is a very pretty ornament of one's life, but then it must be worn only as gold lace upon a garment, which can be thrown off when it becomes tarnished."

"If you were anything more than a speculative philosopher in these matters, uncle, you would almost make me forswear matrimony; but I think you love your freedom too well to be able to judge correctly of the pleasantness of married life. You should remember that your bachelor's life has been one of peculiar enjoyment. You have been for the last five and twenty years, a man of independent fortune; the resources of books and travel have been open to you; the society of a sister has saved you from the isolation which usually falls upon a single man as he advances in life. Your affections, your tastes, your very caprices have been the study of one who was devoted to you, and how then can you know any of the necessities of the heart?"

A shadow gathered over the brow of Uncle Horace as he replied:

"No one can judge another's heart; the distrust which you seem to regard as the vague moodiness of a recluse, is the result of my experience. I have lived much in the world, Frank; I have seen its allurements through the rose colored medium of youthful hope, as well as in the sober, gray tints of later life. I know well the worth of woman's love, and bitter indeed was the lesson that taught me my present skepticism. It was a bitter lesson then, but I am thankful for it now. I was an ardent, passionate being, full of deep, strong, fierce emotion, but one single blow changed my whole nature, and crushed all my refined sentiments of love, all my yearning sympathies. The fountain was not frozen in its flow—it was dried up—wasted on the sands of worldliness, and I do not now regret its loss."

There was a deep and thrilling earnestness in the voice of the speaker which went to the hearts of those who listened. Tears glittered in the eyes of Julia, while a shade of sadness dimmed the joyous face of the young lover, as he rose to take his leave.

"Don't look so grave, Frank; I'll come to your wedding, my boy, and dance with the bride, notwithstanding my gouty foot. You deserve to be happy, and you will be so, if you don't expect too much. But remember an old man's words; let the love of women be only one of the luxuries, not one of the necessities of your being."

AGAIN another ten years fled by, and for the last time we lift the curtain that veils one of life's mysteries. Horace L**** had not reached the palmist's span of life, but he had numbered more than three score years when, like a shock of corn, fully ripe, he was gathered into the garner of Heaven. The respect of worldlings, the regard of nobler minds, the love of sympathizing hearts had been his, and many a brow was clouded with grief when it was known that he was no more. He had won for himself the highest of all titles—he was truly a Christian gentleman, for in his character were combined the purest elements of love to God and good will to men.

In a dimly lighted room—the room in which he had read, and studied, and reposed—surrounded by all those familiar objects on which his eyes had daily rested for more than twenty years, laid the lifeless form of Horace L****. His brow was furrowed, his hair was silver white, and time had deepened though it could not harden the lines of his fine face. Yet beauty, the noble beauty of spiritual being, lingered on his countenance, as if the freed soul had left upon his brow the last earthly trace of its lofty destiny. It was the day preceding that appointed for the funeral, and Julia, worn with excitement, had prayed to be left alone with her grief for a few brief hours. Every thing had been prepared—there was nothing more to do until the last sad rites should be performed, and a stillness, like that of the grave, pervaded the whole household.

Suddenly the quiet was broken—a carriage drew up to the door, and a lady, muffled and veiled, so as to defy all scrutiny, asked to be admitted to the chamber of death. The old housekeeper, who had been for years in the family, had no disposition to refuse such a request, and the stranger was accordingly conducted to the apartment where lay the cold remains of the once gay and gallant bachelor. At the threshold the lady paused:

"I would be alone," she said, "alone with the dead; give me one hour of unbroken communion with my own thoughts in this silent chamber. You surely do not fear to trust me in the presence of death," she added, as the old servant hesitated; "go to your lady and ask her to admit me to her presence when I have finished my task here."

With these words she entered the apartment, the key turned in the lock, and the strange visitor was safe from intrusion.

Shall we follow that heart-stricken mourner into the solemn presence of the dead? Shall