

Literature, &c.

The American Magazines
FOR MARCH.

From Graham's Magazine.

WE ARE GROWING OLD.

We are growing old—how the thought will rise
When a glance is backward cast
On some long remembered spot that lies
In the silence of the past:
It may be the shrine of our early vows,
Or the tomb of early tears;
But it seems like a far-off isle to us,
In the stormy sea of years.
Oh! wide and wild are the waves that part
Our steps from its greenness now,
And we miss the joy of many a heart,
And the light of many a brow;
For deep o'er many a stately bark
Have the whelming billows rolled
That steered with us from that early mark—
Oh, friends! we are growing old!

Old in the dimness of the dust
Of our daily toils and cares—
Old in the wrecks of love and trust
Which our burthened memory bears.
Each form may wear to the passing gaze
The bloom of life's freshness yet,
And beams may brighten our latter days
Which the morning never met.
But oh! the changes we have seen
In the far and winding way
The graves in our paths that have grown green
And the locks that have grown gray!
The winters still on our own may spare
The sable or the gold;
But we see their snows upon brighter hair,
And, friends, we are growing old!

We have gained the world's cold wisdom now,
We have learned to pause and fear,
But where are living fountains whose flow
Was a joy of heart to hear?
We have won the wealth of many a clime,
And the lore of many a page;
But where is the hope that saw in time
But its boundless heritage?
Will it come again when the violet wakes
And the woods their youth renew?
We have stood in the light of sunny brakes
Where the bloom is deep and blue;
And our souls might joy in the springtime then,
But the joy was faint and cold;
For it never could give us the youth again
Of hearts that are growing old!

From the Columbian Magazine.

PAUL JONES AND MERRAN BLAIR.

BY MISS MARTHA RUSSELL.

It was morning. The wreaths of mist, which hung in many a fantastic shape around the summits of Corsica and Criffie, were fast melting away in the sun-beams which transfused them, the gentle waves of the Solway were breaking on the beach, and, like a train of white-cloved friars, murmuring in a low undertone matin orisons of thanksgiving. Near the mouth of the Nith, the 'lovely Nith' of Burns, on one of the most beautiful and picturesque points of the Frith, stood a little cluster of houses belonging to the village of Arbigland, in the parish of Kirkcubbin. Humble as most of them were, they had that air of cleanliness and comfort which is peculiar to Scotland—and, what was better still, life was there—human life, with its manifold hopes and fears—its tears and its laughter—its clouds and its sunshine—its morning and evening stars.

Eastward from the hamlet there is a small cove, shut in by rocky, shrub-covered bluffs. Here, where the waves gurgle longingly over the smooth shingled beach, on the morning of which I speak, a group of children had collected. Some were gathering shells and polished pebbles—some, with their busy fingers, were drawing houses, boats, and dogs in the wet sand; while some half a dozen boys were launching their fairy frigates and giving orders to the imaginary crews with the air of veteran commanders. At length one vessel, which was built with seamanlike skill and precision, shot ahead of the rest, whereat a loud hurrah arose. One sturdy little fellow clapped his hands with delight, as he exclaimed, 'Leuk! boys luck! Dinna I tell ye she'd beat anything?' His words were scarcely uttered when a stone, flung by some concealed hand, whizzed past him and struck in the midst of the fleet. The boys started and looked round inquiringly, when another stone, aimed with more precision, struck the 'bonnie Prince Charlie' midships, and the beautiful little frigate went to the bottom. They raised a fierce cry of anger. 'Come out here ye mean, dirty, cowardly skellum,' cried one of them, 'come out here, and we'll gar ye to gang a different gate frae that.'

A flight of stones and a low malicious laugh was the reply. Presently a stout boy, twelve or fourteen years old, emerged from behind a rock, and began to skulk among the shrubs towards the village. The boys gave chase, ex-

claiming, 'Tis Andrew Kerr, the cowardly loon! Catch him! Stop him!' Kerr quickened his pace in fear. 'Ower the rocks there! ower the rocks and cut him off, Robie Blair!' cried one of the boys to the owner of the 'bonnie prince Charlie,' as Kerr entered the footpath which led to the village. Robie and two or three other boys turned to the right and began to scramble over the rocky point by a shorter way. Kerr hurried on and feeling sure of escape began to laugh and shout maliciously, when another boy, who, from the top a rock close by the narrow path, had eagerly watched the chase, suddenly leaped to the ground and brought him to a stand.

'How now, Andrew Kerr,' said he, 'what is the matter here?'

'Get out of the way, John Paul, and mind your own business will ye?' was the sullen reply.

'I'll stand in your way till I know what all this clatter means.'

'Hurrah!' shouted the approaching boys. 'There's John Paul! Haud him tight, John; haud him tight, the villain!'

Kerr attempted to spring past him, but his antagonist caught him by the shoulder and sent him staggering almost into the arms of his breathless pursuers, who cried, 'Haud him fast! Dinna let him go! We'll gar him to fling stones and sink our boats!'

'Get along with your boats, ye ragged beggars!' exclaimed Andrew, in a rage of anger and fear, 'get along and let alone your betters. Get out of my way, John Paul, ye villain!' he cried, aiming a fierce blow at his head.

By a sudden movement John avoided the blow, and its whole weight fell on the head of Robie Blair, who had gained the front and stood at his side.

The little boy reeled, and John Paul, in whom Kerr's words and manner had wrought a sudden change from calmness to flashing indignation, sprang upon the offender, who was older than himself, and hurled him to the ground. 'Ye villain,' he cried, 'do ye think because your father has become rich by dint of scrimping and cheating, and I don't know what else, that ye are better than other folks, and that ye can treat boys like us as if we were born scoundrels of your own kith and kin? I'll teach ye a new lesson, an ye were the laird's son himself.'

Suiting the action to the word, he raised his clenched hand to strike, when a little girl sprang through the shrubbery to his side, caught his arm, and pleaded in tones which must have caught their music from the wimpy burnies of her native land: 'Don't strike, John! Oh! let him go! For the love of Heaven let him go!'

'Away with you, Merran! why are you here?' cried John Paul, turning to her almost fiercely, 'do you get away from us, for I'll give the coward his due!'

'And will ye strike a coward, John Paul?' 'Give it to him, John,' cried the boys, 'he calls us ragged beggars, and thinks he has a right to sink our boats. Give it to him!'

'No! no! John,' pleaded the excited girl, in a tone between terror and tears, 'for your mother's sake—for my sake, let him go. I know he is a cruel, bad boy. But he has no mother, no sisters. Oh! let him go!'

John Paul's passions when excited were vehement and powerful. Probably there was not another voice on earth that could have checked him at that moment. He cast an enquiring glance round the circle until his eyes met Robie's.

'Merran is always right, John,' said Robie, who stood pressing his hand to his head, 'and father says cowards and fools are not worth beating. He sank my new boat and is always doing some mean thing; but let him go.'

'Go then,' said John, as Kerr sprang to his feet, 'and you may thank Merran for your escape this time.'

Kerr did not wait for a second bidding. He sprang into the bushes and disappeared, followed by groans and execrations.

'Where about does your boat lie, Robie?' asked Merran, 'perhaps we can get it again. I will not mind wetting my feet. You know I can swim like a kelpie.'

'I believe you are a kelpie, Merran, for somehow you always contrive to make me do just as you please,' said John, scornfully.

'See that you always obey, then, for the Kelpies are a mischievous race,' she answered, laughing.

And it was indeed true, that the voice of Merran Blair had a strange influence over that self-willed impetuous boy. As he walked on beside, or rather before her, carefully bending aside the protruding branches and removing every obstacle out of her way, no one would have dreamed that his now joyous face had so lately worn the scowl and glare of ferocious anger. Merran was much to all who knew her, but she was more to him, and her voice even then had the first music of a true woman's, and whoever is thus gifted, has a power of which neither witch nor kelpie can dream, though they hold their commissions direct from Odin himself.

John was about to be apprenticed to Mr. Younger of Whitehaven, and as they finally turned homeward he was still by her side, talking of the voyages he should make, the strange countries he should visit, and the many rare and beautiful things he should bring her from abroad.

CHAPTER II.

Eight years past away and Merran Blair was seventeen. Where shall I find words to describe her sweet face—or to what shall I liken the mischievous gaiety—the dancing, foaming effervescence of her spirits? Shall I say that her dark hazel eyes had caught their limpid lustre,

where her voice had its music, from the mountain streams of her native land? that her pale, brown hair seemed always full of sunbeams? that her cheek was like the lily? no, no, that is too pale, too languishing—like the first white rose of summer, with the blush of sunset glowing on its breast? and that her lips, round which the dimples hovered like humming birds around a flower, were richer than the purest and sweetest red rose buds. Her spirits were as elastic and capricious as an April atmosphere. In short, a creature alternating between laughter and tears, somewhat intractable and a little self-willed, it must be acknowledged, was Merran Blair—the idol of her old father, the torment of the old housekeeper and the favorite of John Paul, the young sailor of Whitehaven.

John Paul was now nineteen years old, and no braver or more skilful a seaman could be found between the Pentland and Frith and the Land's End. Bold, and fearless and enterprising, he was passionately attached to the active and perilous life of a mariner; yet his restless love of adventure was tempered by a strict sense of justice, an unshaken integrity of heart and mind, and a chivalrous devotion to truth. To these qualities were joined those other traits, which gave his whole life such a tone of romance—that tendency to poetry, that love of books, and that wakefulness to the ideal, which brought continual dreams of solitude, and, to use his own favourite quotation, of a 'life of calm contemplation and poetic ease,' in some sheltered nook, far away from the bustle and turmoil of life. Need we add that the beautiful Merran Blair was the orb round which all the wishes hopes and dreams of this young imaginative heart revolved? She had been his companion and playmate in childhood; and his romantic passion, born at first of the youthful necessity of loving, had been nurtured by their frequent meetings during his short and hurried visits to his native place, and still more, by his habit of living so much with the ideal. As is usual with those of his peculiar temperament, this passion gained strength and intensity during those long and uncertain voyages which separated him from the Egeria of his dreams.

While in Jamaica he had shipped as chief mate on board a vessel engaged in the slave trade. But he soon became disgusted with this horrible traffic and left the ship. After an absence of two years, with a bounding heart he stepped on board the vessel which was to convey him to Scotland. He had left Merran in her fifteenth year an opening rose of womanhood, with little society save that of his sisters and a few school mates, and with little care or anxiety for anything save parting with him. But time brings changes, and Merran Blair was now the acknowledged beauty of the whole stewarty of Kirkcubright. And, sooth to say, her pride and vanity were not a little flattered by the admiration she excited and the attentions she received.

About this time there came a Mrs. Bradshaw into the neighbourhood, on a visit to her relative, the father of Andrew Kerr. She was the wife of Captain Bradshaw, who, with his company, was quartered at Dumfries. She was a fine looking woman of thirty, polished and clever, and with an insatiable mania for patronizing every thing she thought likely to attract attention. Merran soon drew her notice. She was delighted with the girl's beauty and grace, and immediately resolved to take her under her protection. Merran's love of admiration began to be intoxicating; she was delighted with Mrs. Bradshaw, and with the prospect of spending the winter at Dumfries, though it required their united eloquence to gain her father's consent to this project.

It was settled that she should spend the Winter with Mrs. Bradshaw. On the afternoon previous to their departure, Old David Blair was surprised to see his daughter come almost flying across the fields from dame Paul's cottage, and enter the house in great haste. He followed her to the house and went up stairs to the little room she called her own. She sat on the floor by the side of the clumsy trunk from which she was unpacking the contents.

'Hoot!' cried the old man, at the sight of the finery scattered around her, 'what ails ye, bairn? Are ye delirious?'

'No, father,' she answered laughing as she rose, 'but dame Jean says John Paul will be here to-morrow.'

'And so ye maun fling about the braw gear, as if it were no more worth than a bundle of dry kail stalks? But the Lord be thankit who has brought the laddie free ayont the seas. An' now ye will bide at hame and nae gang wae the gay leddy,' said the old man, archly.

'Why, yes, father,' she replied, 'I can go to Dumfries at some other time. John has been gone so long,' she continued, 'and besides dame Jean might think hard of me, if I should go away now.'

'Ye're a vera considerate bairn, and dame Jean will be muckle obliged to ye,' said the old man with a quizzical look as he left the room. Presently he looked in again and added, 'but ye're a gude lassie, and I am glad ye will bide at hame.'

Merran blushed, and went on arranging her disordered wardrobe until she was interrupted by the housekeeper, old Nannie Henderson, who put her head through the door, crying, 'Hart o' grace lassie, here comes the leddy herself, linkin ower the lea as blithe as a birdie!' Merran ran down and met Mrs. Bradshaw as she entered the spence or parlor.

'How is this, my dear?' the lady began; 'Your father tells me you have changed your mind and will not go with me to Dumfries. May I know the reason?'

Merran had entirely forgotten the necessity of framing an excuse to Mrs. Bradshaw; and now she was embarrassed. What could she say? How might her refusal be construed? She blushed, and in confusion, murmured something about 'disappointment—unexpected news—and old friends.'

The lady's large eyes opened with inquisitive surprise: 'And what old friend has appeared to interpose between us and keep you from the advantages and pleasures of a Winter in town?'

'My old school-mate, John Paul, who has been absent a long time, will come here to-morrow, and I thought—'

'Indeed! Pardon my ignorance,' interrupted the lady in a tone of sarcastic railery, which Merran had already learned to dread, 'I was not aware that any old school-mate held supreme control over the fair Merran. But those blushes tell me I was mistaken.'

'Then they do not tell you the truth. John Paul is nothing more to me,' she continued in reply to Mrs. Bradshaw's incredulous smile, than Willie Morris, or Allan Sanderson, or any other old acquaintance. But dame Jean has been like a mother to me; I know she wishes me to stay at home, and I do not like to grieve her.'

'Pshaw! if that is all, buy the good dame a new gown, or a nice coi, and that will settle all difficulties. As for these old school-mates, forget them as fast as you can; or if this gentleman in question merits a place in the memory of the beautiful Merran Blair, let him come to Dumfries. What is he like? I hear it said that he is very gallant and ambitious young sailor. Perhaps we shall see how he looks and what we will do.'

Merran loved John Paul better than any one else in the whole world, but she was weak enough to be afraid to have Mrs. Bradshaw think so. Therefore she took refuge in that system of denial which is practised by many of our sex on all like occasions. The next morning she departed for Dumfries with smiles on her lips and tears in her heart.

Alas, how dangerous sometimes is the gift of beauty! How fatal is the love of admiration! How soon is a woman's heart spoiled when she breathes the air of flattery! It is not long before she lacks courage to be true to herself. Her spontaneous reverence for what is true and holy is checked. She learns hypocrisy, and becomes ashamed to manifest enthusiasm for beautiful realities. To escape the world's dread laugh, we become mere echoes and decorous falsehoods, and speak lightly of that law which we inwardly acknowledge; that mystic ladder on which the angels are constantly ascending and descending, whose top, albeit the feet rests on the earth, is lost amid the brightness of the everlasting light.

CHAPTER III.

John Paul stood with the crowd in a brilliantly lighted ball-room in Dumfries, and gazed gloomily at the animated faces and graceful movements of the dancers, among whom beauty and fairy grace of movement made Merran Blair conspicuous. 'This is the Merran whom I have worshipped so long,' he murmured bitterly to himself, as he sank into the deep recess of a window. 'This is the return to her of which I have so dreamed! This is the hour for which I have so earnestly longed, hoped and prayed.'

The music ceased, and Merran was conducted to a seat near Mrs. Bradshaw, by her partner, the dashing Col. S——. Mrs. Bradshaw and her party were soon surrounded by a group of gentlemen, and John Paul's brow became darker and more contracted, and something like scorn worked in the restless expression of his mouth, as he watched the group and occasionally caught glimpses of Merran's face as she received the flattering attentions of these around her.

He was presently interrupted by a young man, who with some difficulty made his way through the crowd, and seized him by the hand, exclaiming:

'By the trident of Neptune, messmate, when did you come ashore? But, bless my soul,' he continued, 'what's in the wind now? Your face is as long as a parson's in a gale of wind.'

John returned his hearty greeting, and was saved from undertaking to account for his 'long face,' by his mercurial friend, who at that moment whispered, 'look yonder! is not that Andrew Kerr? That fellow in the long toggery leaning over the lady's chair?'

John looked keenly at the whiskered, mustached gentleman, who was leaning carelessly on the back of Merran's chair. At length he said, 'It must be—and yet how can it be possible? Was he not lost in the Haley, off the coast of Africa, five years ago?'

'I'll swear it is either Kerr or his ghost. But as I have never heard that ghosts wear whiskers like Spanish pirates, it must be that the devil has saved him and sent him ashore again.'

They were right. It was indeed Andrew Kerr, who, to the astonishment of his friends who believed him dead, had returned some weeks previously, much improved in his personal appearance and manners, and, apparently, the possessor of immense wealth. His wealth made him an object of interest to Mrs. Bradshaw, who claimed him as a relative. He was constant visitor at her house, and, as he manifested none of those disagreeable qualities of his boyhood, Merran was disposed to treat him cordially as an old acquaintance.

They saw him present his hand to Merran, as if to lead her out. John Paul led his companion forward, and as they approached Mrs. Bradshaw's party Merran was standing with her hand in that of Kerr, while he was reply-