

Literature, &c.

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THE SILVER SPOONS.

A TALE OF DOMESTIC LIFE AND AMERICAN MANUFACTURE.

By the Author of 'Key West and Abaco.'

'HERE we go, up, up, up—and here we go, down, and down, down,' is a quotation not more applicable to the movements of children in a swing, than to the same children in after life, when they are tossed about by the rude hands of unsteady fortune. In all countries and in all times, it has been so to some extent, but never, and no where, in the degree in which it may be observed in the land or age in which we live.

James Elliot, it is very pleasant for me to state, was an exception to this general rule: he was a rich man, his father before him was rich, and his grandfather, who founded the family in this country, was richer still.

My friend Mr. Elliot lived in a fine old house that had been standing for two generations; and he lived in a style worthy of a man who owned a river plantation, and who knew the baptismal name of his grandfather. You Philadelphians and Knickerbockers cannot be expected to understand what I mean, or rather the emphasis of my language when I say *river plantation*; and therefore I take the trouble to explain that a river plantation is as different a thing from a sand hill plantation, or even a creek plantation, as property in Water street or Wall street is from a lot up town. There is many a man among us who is undisputed master of hundreds of acres, who can scarcely pay his taxes; whilst his neighbor, who owns only half as much, but of a different sort, goes to the springs every summer, and sends his children into the north to school. You have seen the 'Songs of the South,' I suppose, and I doubt not you liked them: but let me, as a friend, warn you against forming your opinions of us and ours from them. They were written by a poet, and if you have any idea of speculating in southern property do not trust Mr. Simms.

The land of the pine, the cedar, the vine!
O! may this blessed land ever be mine!

Now for a summer's residence this is all very well; health oozes from the resinous bark of the pine, the coolest breezes are playing amidst its leaves, and the most limpid water bubbles from beneath its roots: but the fine equipages which dash through your cities, and the well-dressed ladies who occupy them, would not shine long if they trusted to nothing better than such 'land' to support their bravery. O! no, you must ask for river bottoms, or rich uplands, and then I will go your security for the cotton they will grow.

Jane Elliot sings her songs remarkably well. I was with her last summer at Saratoga, and one would think to hear her, that she was dying to get back, from the pathos with which she would pray—on the guitar—

'Hide not from mine eye the blue of its sky,'

whilst at the same time I was perfectly aware that she was night and day teasing her father to spend the whole summer in the north, and then go to Paris in the fall.

The beaux knew nothing of this however; and one whispered to another, I say Bob what a sweet little patriot she is. Would she not make a capital wife, so domestic?

'I have a great mind,' says Bob, as they walked to the other end of the saloon, 'to try and make an investment in the same 'land of the pine'; do you know any thing about the old man, 'Is he rich?'

'Rich!' ejaculated the dandy, with that upward and downward inflection of the voice which indicates a good deal of surprise, and indignation 'a great deal too rich to own such a man as you for his son-in-law. No, no, my fine fellow, that's my game. You could not spend half her income, whereas I flatter myself that I can do that easily, and run the estate in debt by the end of the year.'

Edward Neville was quite in earnest in what he said about his intentions, and I do not think that any of his friends would differ with him as to his capacity of getting into difficulties. He had inherited a small property, enough to educate him, bear his expenses in a few years' travel, and launch him with a good library, upon the wide ocean of the law; but he inherited none of the perseverance or plodding industry that had elevated his father to the bench, and made him regarded as the best read lawyer of the day; and after struggling awhile with his virtuous impulses, he carefully locked the door of his office, writing upon the outside 'Gone to court,' and commended the ignoble trade of a fortune hunter. This was his first season, and Jane Elliot was the first divinity he had encountered, whose shrine was golden enough to bring him to his knees.

So far, however, he had made no impression. In fact, I hardly think he did himself justice. The part was new to him; and the girl herself seemed worthy of so much purer a feeling, that he was constantly struggling with himself. 'By heavens, I do love her for herself alone, he would mutter to himself. 'I could die for her, fight for her, do any thing under heaven for her, except work.' And then a sense of his meanness would overcome him with shame, and he would allow any one else to take his place in conversation, whilst

he would wander off by himself to renew his struggles.

My sweet young fortune-hunter, who art reading this page, think what a poor devil thou art making of thyself. How much more honourable and noble would it be to labor for thine own support as a street-sweeper even. How contemptible to coin the heart's best affections, to degrade the holy state of matrimony to a matter of bargain and sale, to sell thyself of thine own will, as an eastern slave is by her masters. O! go to work, and be a man!

But for this, I should have liked Neville well enough; not however as a suitor to Jane Elliot. I had other views in relation to that matter. Tom Barton is a friend of mine, and though the son of a silversmith, or rather, shall I say, because the son of a silversmith, he is one of the worthiest fellows I ever knew. I went to school with him, and so in fact did Jane Elliot. We were in Latin and Algebra, and all that, when she was only beginning to read, but our old master had a fashion of making the whole school form a ring in the afternoon, and young and old were compelled to spell a page of 'Dictionary.'

What a speller Jane was! The little thing was sometimes far ahead of some of the largest scholars, and it was a caution to hear how her little tongue would rattle off the letters of any word in the column, from 'chatter' to 'chevaux de frise.' Tom used to be always just next below her, never getting above her, and never suffering anybody to get above him.

It was very curious how they stuck together. Tom always missed when she did: I have known him to spell 'caper' with two 'p's,' though a better speller than he was I never met. It was a long time however before I found out the secret; but one day as we were all going to our seats, I overheard Tom saying, rather reproachfully, 'Jane what did you do that for?' 'Why, Tom, you did not speak loud enough.' 'Aha!' said I to myself, I understand it now. I thought there must be some prompting going on, or that little girl would never have stood so high in the school.

I was very old fashioned as a boy; they used in fact to call me the old bachelor; and certainly I had one of the habits of the tribe—a greater pleasure in watching the developments of the hearts of other people, than in attending to the beating of my own. Any one, however, might have taken a delight in observing the present case. Jane I shall not describe, she has always been a pet of mine, and I should be certain to overdo it if I made the attempt: but Tom, I shall let you know was a fine looking boy, with fair hair, an open countenance, and a muscular knit frame, and he has grown up to be decidedly the best looking lawyer that practices in our circuit.

All our village had watched the progress of this affair with interest, and we had all settled down into a calm certainty that it was to be, and even the envious were prepared to wish them joy. The Elliots had always been popular; and the Bartons by correct deportment, hard work for themselves, civility to their neighbors, and kindness to the poor, had gained the good will of all.

There was malice among us, to be sure, and there would have been the usual ebullition of it had the affair come off suddenly; but it was too gradual: Tom and Jane had been lovers from childhood; it was an understood matter, and each man began to feel that he had a particular vocation to help to bring it about.

Mr. Elliott decidedly gave into the general way of thinking; but no ears had never heard his wife say a word on the subject. She was of Huguenot descent, and rather too fond of mentioning that circumstance; but still no one disliked her on that account; every one has a perfect right to think of his grandfather if he likes, and even to speak of it whenever he can find a listener who is willing to endure it. On the whole, I confess, I took pleasure to hear her talk. How she used to bridle up! how firm her voice grew! and how patronising her manner! I could listen to her for hours—especially when Jane was sitting by me.

But that is all over now. I hate the Huguenots, the edict of Nantz, the Revocation and every thing else; and I wish to heaven old Adam's blood in flowing down to the Elliots, had come through some other veins than those of that same fierce French faction.

What do you think? About four years ago, when Tom and I came from college, both having graduated with honor, he decided that it was time for him to make open and resolute approaches towards the great end upon which his hopes were fixed. Consequently all the time he could spare from the study of law, and his excellent family, he used to spend with Jane; and so far as I could judge, from occasionally playing the part of Monsieur de trop, in a ride or walk, or at the piano, she was entirely satisfied to have it so.

But one night after Tom had been making himself particularly agreeable, as he thought, to the old lady, and had listened to the tale of the Huguenots for the fortieth time, with exemplary patience, though his brain was boiling and he was wishing to the very bottom of his heart, that all her ancestors had passed 'that bourne from which no traveller returns!' that very night, after he had taken his leave, Mrs. Elliot called her daughter, and said in a calm and serious voice, 'My dear I must request that you will not be quite so familiar with Mr. Barton. I begin to fear that you are liking him too well.'

'Why mother, we all like Tom.'
'I know that; and I am very well satisfied to have him here as often as the other young

gentlemen of the town. His mother is a very proper person and so is his father, but there has never been any thing farther than a street acquaintance between us, and I do not mean that there shall.'

'But mother why so? they are very good people surely.'

Mrs. Elliot did not answer directly, but walked to the centre table, upon which some refreshments were still standing, and taking up one of the spoons from a waiter, she placed it in her daughter's hand, with an air of quiet satisfaction, directed her to read aloud what she saw on the handle.

'A. Barton, and some hieroglyphics which I cannot make out, is all that I see.'

'Do you know who A. Barton is, my dear?'

'Of course it is old Mr. Barton; Tom's father. Why mother I have read this a hundred times before. It is printed on my pap spoon, and on all the new fashioned silver we have in the house. But what of that?'

'Simply this Miss Jane Elliot, I shall never give my consent for you to receive as a lover, the son of a man who makes our spoons, and cleans our watches, and who in short is only a mechanic. Good night.'

Jane was too much surprised and grieved to say any thing, and she went to her room, her heart cruelly divided between the duty she owed to her mother and the love that she had so long cherished for her betrothed.

I ought not to have written that word. I am not a good novelist, or I would have been brought to my confession at a slower rate.

However it is a fact. There is the rare case, in which neither the language, nor the feelings of childhood had ever changed. They had vowed themselves to each other at least a hundred times. More and more solemn the pledge that had grown at every repetition; and when Tom came from college a few weeks before, it had been cemented with tears.

Ah! she was a noble girl, that Jane! Why did not fate give me a chance at her, or rather, why did not I, instead, of flirting with all the pretty faces that I saw, why did not I love her, and cherish her, as Tom did from the first.

However, that is nothing to any body but myself. Jane rose next morning unrefreshed from her sleepless couch, and the first thing she did was to write the following note:

'DEAR TOM.—My mother is angry with me for the intimacy to which I have admitted you, and has directed me to break it off. So you must not come here so often. Nothing in my life has grieved me more than this, but I am sixteen only, and my mother's will is mine. Wont you travel? I prefer not seeing you at all, than not to see you as of old. But be assured, wherever you go, and whatever may be your fortune, one heart will be with you, that of yours ever,

JANE ELLIOT.'

Now was not she a dear girl. She wept when she wrote it, and she wept when she sent it, and she had not dried her tears when little Cesar brought back this answer:

'DEAR JANE.—Your letter was like a thunderbolt to me, and I am hardly able to pen a reply. But I see the wisdom of the course you suggest, and shall make my arrangements at once to go to the law school at Cambridge. I knew my own heart so well that I can have no doubts concerning yours; and if labor, and toil, and success can win your mother's approbation, it shall be mine. But in any case I am yours till death.

THOMAS BARTON.'

Accordingly, Tom went off to Cambridge, and devoted all his strength to the herculean task of piling up his legal knowledge 'higher than one story'—Everett has said so many witty things in his day, that he need not mind lending one occasionally—whilst I, with envy in my heart was still playing the part of a faithful friend, and keeping Jane advised of all his movements, and of all his success.

But neither his success in his studies, nor the reputation which one year's practice at the bar had given him, softened the prejudices of the Huguenot lady; and it was as much with a view of keeping them apart as any thing else, that she traveled with her daughter every summer.

Edward Neville was precisely to the taste of the old lady. She favoured him in every way—gave him a seat in her carriage to Lake George, invited him to her private parlour, told him at what hour in the morning she drank the water—in short, turned me completely adrift, and adopted him as her constant attendant.

I feared the result and wrote to Tom about it. In reply he thanked me for the interest I had manifested, but assured me that he had no fears, that he had the most perfect confidence in Jane, that he was labouring with assiduity, to improve the little fortune he had inherited, for he was sorry to add that there was every possibility, that the Elliot's would be in need of the assistance of their friends, and that very soon.

This intelligence very much surprised me, I knew that the old gentleman had endorsed much imprudently for a friend who was speculated in western lands, but I had heard only the day before of the most glowing accounts of the value of these lands.

However the season ended; and when leaving the springs, Mr. Elliot, at his wife's earnest solicitation, invited Mr. Neville to pay him a visit during the winter. He accepted it gladly, went to New York, sold his books, rented his office, and told his friends that he had given up law and was thinking of making an investment in the south.

But the denouement of this true history presses upon me, and I must hurry its narration.

About the merry Christmas time, our court-house door and village papers informed the people that the sheriff would sell 'all that valuable, &c., &c,' enumerating every earthly thing that Mr. Elliot possessed.

It was a melancholy truth. His friend's debts came upon him with such suddenness that he was overwhelmed. He gave himself up for lost, refused every offer of assistance from Tom and myself, and every one else, and determined to let the law take its course. He confessed that all he wanted was time, but he declared he would not suffer any of his friends to endanger themselves for him.

Tom and I sat up nearly the whole night laying our plans; and it was determined that I should bid off every article, and that he would be prepared to pay for them.

On the day of the sale one might have thought that there was to have been a funeral instead of a vendue. The bell seemed to toll in melancholy notes, and the red flag that the old negro was hobbling about the village with, one would have thought by the countenances of those who looked upon it, was rather the forerunner of a pirate's visit, than of a sheriff's sale.

The northern stage had just driven up to the tavern door, and a handsome man was stepping from it as the flag was passing. He caught it from the negro's hand, and exclaimed, 'Good God! driver what Elliot is this who is to be sold out to-day? Not Mr. James Elliot the rich planter!'

'Well, I reckon it is,' was the cool reply, as he handed down hat-box and dressing case, and a couple of large trunks.

The handsome stranger walked with a very unsteady step into the bar, and took up an old paper, which one might have supposed that he was reading, if he did not notice that he was holding it upside down. He appeared to be dreadfully agitated, but at length he started up and asked if the stage had gone.

The barkeeper told him that it had driven round to the stable to change horses, and would be back in an instant.

The stage soon came with a new driver and fresh horses, and into it the handsome man tumbled with bag and baggage as before. As he wheeled off, the old driver said to the barkeeper,

'That 'ere is a quare chap. He rode on the top with me a while to day, and told me he was gwine to spend the winter here and 'preaps to live.'

'Did he let you into his name or business. No but that infernal big trunk of his'n, was marked in white paint 'E. Neville.'

Meantime the sale went on. The property realised more than enough to pay all that Mr. Elliot was bound for, and yet was struck off for one third of its value.

I settled with the sheriff, and then went to Mr. Elliott, and offered to put the property again in his hands, and give him his own time to pay for it.

He accepted my offer with tears in his eyes and although I felt mean for taking, even for a moment, the credit which belonged of right to Tom, yet I stood it like a man.

All would have gone on very well but the man from whom Tom borrowed the money for the purchase was a gossip, and could not keep to himself any thing he knew; and very soon the true state of the case was known to the Elliots.

For a while Tom was very anxious about the result, but he came to me one morning with this note in his hands.

'DEAR SIR.—I have behaved very foolishly. If you can add charity to generosity, come and see us, and you will find me very truly your friend.

EMILE NEUCHATEL ELLIOT.

It did not take Tom long to go. It did not take me long to explain to parson Harris that his service would be wanted in the chancel one of these mornings. The service itself was short, though from my boyhood up, I never saw Mr. Harris offend against a rubric. And it was a short ride from the church to the plantation. Mr. Harris said a short grace, and the dinner was delightfully long.

At the end of it I noticed Mrs. Elliot playing with one of the silver spoons, and then suddenly dropping it when she perceived that I was observing her.

This emotion drew general attention to her, but though embarrassed for a moment, she recovered herself and said with a pleasant smile 'I must confess my dear Jane, that I am entirely happy in retracting a speech which I made to you some years ago. You shall have all the new fashioned silver in the house, and I am sure it will be doubly valuable in your eyes, because the name you have adopted is already stamped upon it.'

This happily ended the true story of the Silver spoons.

From the Nashville Union.

THERE'S DANGER IN OLD CHAIRS.

By the author of the Snakebit Irishman.

A most amusing incident took place not long since at one of the first class hotels in a western city, which if it reads only as well as it appeared, will most certainly raise the price of buttons, and depress doctor's truck, in a proportionate ratio. The chairs in the dining room were of the first quality, and most fashionable style; but there being an overflow of guests at the time a draw was made upon some depots of odds and ends, among