

## Literature, &amp;c.

## The American Magazines.

[Concluded from our last.]

From Graham's Magazine.

## SAVE THE ERRING.

BY FANNY FORRESTER.

"Is it any new trouble, Robert?" she inquired, tenderly, and laying her hand gently on his head, "new—guilt?" she whispered, bending her lips close to his ear, and placing the other arm over his neck. "Tell your mother, Robert—tell her everything—she may help you—she will—oh, Robert! you know she will love you, and cling to you through it all!"

The boy raised his head, and now she saw, for the first time, the change that had come over him. His face was baggy, his eye sunk and bloodshot, that round, rosy cheek, which her lip had loved to meet, had grown pale and thin; and, in place of the gay, careless smile, had risen looks of anxiety and bitterness.

"I shall break your heart, mother," he said, sorrowfully, "and poor little Ella's, too. Oh! it is a dreadful thing to murder those one loves best. I never meant to do it—try to believe that, dear mother, whatever comes."

"I do believe it, Robert."

"Ah! you know only a small part yet; but I could not go away without seeing and telling you. I knew you would learn it from others, and I wanted to hear you say you could love me after all. I knew you would, but I wanted to hear you say it."

"I will, Robert, I will; but surely you have nothing worse to tell that I know already!"

The boy looked down; his lip quivered and the large purple veins upon his forehead worked themselves into knots, and rose and fell as though ready to burst at every throb.

She passed her hand soothingly over them.

"Whatever it is, Robert, you are not before a harsh judge now. Tell it to your mother, my darling boy; perhaps she can assist, advise—she certainly can love you through all."

"Oh, mother you must not speak so, or I can never tell you.—If you talk like this—if you do not blame me, I shall almost wish I had gone away without seeing you. Oh! if I had only listened to you six months ago! but they flattered me, and I was foolish, I was wicked. But I thought of you all the time mother—of you and Ella—and I promised myself, every night when I went to my pillow, that I would break away from the things that were entangling me, and become all that you desired. I was not conscious then of doing anything decidedly wrong; but I knew that my companions were not such as you would approve of, and I knew—I could but know—that I was too much intoxicated by their flatteries."

"At last I resorted to cards, I played very cautiously at first, and only did as others did, then for larger sums, and again still larger; till finally it became my sole object to recover the moneys I had lost, and thus prevent the necessity of applying to my father for more. I still lost and still went on, till finally the discovery which I believe, dear mother, all in kindness, you brought about, was made. Perhaps I was in the wrong, but mother it did seem to me dishonourable to refuse to pay those debts which—"

"Your father was angry, or he would not refuse. You tried his patience, Robert, and then I fear, you were more bold than conciliatory."

"I made one more attempt to better my fortunes that evening, and the time passed before I was aware of it, I promised—I told them—these scoffers, mother—that it was my last evening among them; I promised myself so, and I repeated it to my father, and I would have kept my promise—I would. But you know how it turned. Then I was desperate."

Mrs Lane trembled, and passed her arm caressingly about his neck, as though to reassure him. "I met you several times after that, Robert, and you did not seem so very unhappy."

"I was determined to have the money, mother and I got it."

"How Robert?"

"Not honestly."

The boy's voice was low and husky, and his hand as it closed over his mother's while his forehead again rested on her knees, was of a death-like chillness.

A faintness came over her, a horrid feeling went carding round her heart, and she felt as though her breath was going away from her. But the cold hand was freezing about hers, the throbbing forehead rested on her knees, and every sob, as it burst forth uncontrolledly, fell like a crushing weight upon her bosom. It was the mother's plying heart, that subduing its own emotions, enabled her again to articulate, though in a low whisper, "How Robert?"

"By forgery. No matter for the particulars—I could not tell them now, and you could not hear. To-morrow all will be discovered, and I must escape. Such fear, such agony—oh, mother! what have I not endured? No punishment men can inflict will ever be half so heavy. I deserve it, though—all, and ten thousand times more. But I never meant it should come to this mother, believe me, I never did. I meant to pay it before now, and I thought I could. I have won some money, but not half—scarce a fifth of what I ought to have, so there is nothing left but flight and

disgrace. You do not answer me, mother, I knew I should break your heart I knew—"

Mrs Lane made a strong effort, and murmured brokenly, "To-morrow—to-morrow! Oh my, poor ruined boy!"

"I know that after deeds cannot compensate, mother; but if a life of rectitude—" Robert paused suddenly and started to his feet. "I know that step, mother?"

"Hush my son, hush!" Mrs Lane had time for no more before her husband entered the apartment. A cloud instantly overspread his countenance.

"You here, sirrah! What business brings you to the home you have desecrated?"

"I came to see my mother, sir."

"Nay," interposed the lady, anticipating the storm that seemed gathering on her husband's brow, "let the fault be mine. He is my own child, and I must see him—a little while—you cannot refuse to leave me a little while with my own boy."

"It is the last time, then," said Mr Lane, sternly.

"The last time," echoed Robert in a tone of mocking bitterness.

"The last time!" whispered the white lips of the mother, as though she had but that moment comprehended it; and, as the door closed upon the retreating form of her husband, she slid to the floor, lightly and unresistingly. Robert did not attempt to call for assistance; but he raised her head to his bosom and covered her pale face with his boyish tears.

"I have killed her! my poor mother!" he sobbed. "That I should be such a wretch! I her son!—with all her care and with all her love! Oh! if they had but given me a coffin for a cradle! A grave then would have been a blessed thing; but it is too late now—too late!"

Mrs Lane was awakened by the warm tears raining upon her face; and, starting up wildly she entreated him to be gone. "Every moment is precious!" she exclaimed, gaspingly. "You may not make your escape if you do not go now. Oh, Robert promise me—on your knees, before your mother, and in the sight of your God, promise, my poor boy, that you will forsake the ways of vice, that you will become an honourable and useful man—promise this, Robert, and then go! Your mother, who has gloried, who has doted on you, entreates you to be gone from her forever!"

"I cannot go to night, mother. I waited to see you, and so lost the opportunity; but there is no danger. It is too late to take a boat now. I shall go to some of the landings when I leave here, and in the morning go aboard the first boat that passes."

Again the mother required the promise of reformation; and it was given earnestly and solemnly. Then he again sat down on the ottoman at her feet; and, with one hand laid lovingly upon his head, and the other clasped in both of his, she spent an hour in soothing counselling, and admonishing him. So deeply were both engaged, that neither the merry voice of Ella in the door-way, nor her step along the hall, reached them.

"Has my mother retired?" was her first inquiry.

"No, miss, she is in the back sitting-room," and before the girl could add that she was engaged with a stranger, Ella had bounded to the door and flung it with open.

"Robert!—you here, Robert! If I had only known it, I should have been home long ago. So you are sorry you quarrelled with papa, and you have come back to be a good boy, and go out with me when I want a nice beau, and all that! Well, it does look natural to see you here."

As the young girl spoke she cast hood and shawl upon the floor; and, with one bare arm thrown carelessly over her brother's shoulder, she crouched at her mother's feet, looking into her eyes with an expression which seemed to say, "Now tell me all about it. You must have had strange doings this evening."

But neither Mrs Lane nor Robert spoke. The boy only strained his sister convulsively to his heart; while the poor mother covered her own face with her hands to hide the tears, which nevertheless, found their way between her jewelled fingers.

The eyes of the fair girl turned from one to another in amazement, then, pressing her lips to the cheek of her brother, she whispered,—"What is it Robin? Has papa refused to let you come back? I will ask him, I will tell him you must come, and then you will, for he never refused me anything. Don't cry, mamma, I will go up stairs now, and have it settled. Papa cannot say no to me, of course, for I have on the very dress he selected himself, and he said I should be irresistible in it. I will remind him of that!"

"Alas! my poor Ella!" sobbed Mrs Lane, "this trouble is too great for you to settle. Our Robert has come home now for the last time—we part from him to night forever."

"Forever!" and Ella's cheek turned as pale as the white glove which she raised to push back the curls from her forehead.

"Yes, forever," answered Robert, calmly, "I will tell you all about it, Ella. You seem not to know that it was something worse than a quarrel which lost me my home. I had contracted debts—improperly, wickedly—and my father refused to pay them. I obtained the money for the purpose, and now, Ella, I must escape or—"

"How did you get the money, Robert?"

The boy answered in a whisper.

"You!" exclaimed Ella, springing to her feet and speaking almost scornfully, "you, Robert

Lane! my brother! Is it so mamma? is my brother a villain, a forger, is he—"

"Hush, Ella, hush!" interrupted Mrs. Lane. "It is for those who have hard hearts to condemn—not for thee, my daughter. There will be insults enough heaped upon his poor head to-morrow—let him at least have love and pity here."

"Pity! Whom did he pity or love when he deliberately—"

"Ella! Ella!" again interposed Mrs Lane, almost sternly.

"Nay, mother," said the boy in a tone of touching mournfulness, "do not blame poor Ella. She does right to despise me. I have outraged her feelings, and disgraced her name. She deserves pity, and she will need it, when people point at her and say what her brother is. I have forfeited all claim even to that. Oh mother! why did you not leave me to die in that last sickness? it would have saved a world of wo."

Ella stood a moment, her head erect, and her lip white and tremulous, while tears came crowding to her eyes, and her face worked with emotion; the next she threw herself into the arms of her brother. "Forgive me, Robin! my own dear darling brother! I do pity you! I do love you, and will for ever! But, oh! it is a horrible thing to be a forger's sister! I cannot forget that, Robert, and I must say it, if it break your heart to hear me, it is horrible! horrible!"

"It is horrible, Ella; I never thought to bring it upon you, but—"

"Why are you here, Robert! Will they not find you and drag you—oh, mamma! where shall we hide him?—what can we do?"

It was several minutes before Ella could be made to comprehend the absence of immediate danger; and then she insisted on hearing all the particulars of the crime, even though poor Robert appeared to be on the rack while giving them. She loved her brother dearly, and was distressed for him, but she thought too of herself, and the disgrace of her family, hers was not a mother's meek affectionate heart—a mother's all-enduring, self-sacrificing nature. At last she started up eagerly. "The disgrace may be avoided, papa will of course shield his own name, I will go to him directly."

"But the sin, my child—the conscious degradation?" inquired Mrs Lane with reproof in her mild eye. "What will you do with that, Ella?"

"Poor Robert!" whispered the girl, again folding her white arms about him, "he is sorry for what he has done, and our kind heavenly Father is more ready to forgive than we. You will never do such a wicked thing again, dear Robin, will you?"

Robin answered only by convulsive sobs, and Ella too, sobbed for a few moments in company; then suddenly breaking away from him, she hurried up the stairs. Along the hall she went, as fast as her trembling feet could carry her, and past the room in which she had been so happy while willing hands decorated her pretty person; but when she reached her father's door, she paused in dread. She could hear his heavy monotonous tramp as he walked up and down the room; and, remembering his almost repulsive sternness, she dreaded meeting him. If I had only known it before, thought Ella, all might have been avoided, but now it is almost too much to ask. A fresh burst of tears had no tendency to calm her; and she could scarce support her trembling frame, when repeating to herself he must be saved, she gathered courage to open the door. The old man paused in his promenade, and fixed his troubled eye sternly on the intruder, while Ella rushed forward, and twining her arms about him, buried her face in his bosom. "Oh I am so wretched!" she exclaimed, all her courage forsaking her on the instant, and then she sobbed, as Mr Lane had never supposed his daughter could. But he did not attempt to quiet her; he only drew her closer to him, as though he would thus have shielded her from the wretchedness that was bursting her young heart. At last Ella broke forth, "come down and see Robert, papa, come and save him. They will drag him away for forgery, and you will be the father of a condemned criminal; and I his sister. Oh! do not let him go away from us so, papa—come down and see him, and you will pity him—you cannot help it."

"Forgery, Ella he has not—"

"He has! and you must save him papa, for your own sake—for all our sakes!"

"Do you know this, Ella? it is not true—it is a miserable subterfuge to wheedle money from his mother—money to squander among the vile wretches whom he has preferred to us. No, send him back to his dissolute—"

"Is that the way to make him better, papa? inquired Ella, raising her head, and fixing her sparkling eye upon him resolutely. You sent him back to them before you shut him away from yourself and from mamma; you closed the door upon my only brother—there was none by to say, take care Robin, none to give him a smile but those who were leading him to ruin, and no wonder that they have made him what he is. Be careful papa. Robert has committed a crime; but it was when you, who should have prevented it, had shut your heart against him, when we, who might have prevented it, were obliged to go abroad to see him, and then could give him no more than a few stolen words. It was not just to keep me in ignorance so long for he is my own brother and only one little year older than I. But I know all about it now, and if Robert is put in prison, I had almost as lief be in his place as yours."

"Ella! Ella!"

"I should papa. I know that one like you cannot do wrong without feeling remorse; and when you reflect that poor Robert might have been saved if you had only had more patience with him, you will never sleep peacefully again."

"Ella my child," said the old man cowering in spite of himself, "what has come over you? Who has set you up to talk in this way to your father? I suppose I am to be answerable for this impertinence, too."

"Oh, papa! you know this is not impertinence. I have a right to say it, for the love I bear my only brother; you know that my own heart is all which has set me up to it, and your heart dear papa, is saying the same thing. You must forgive Robert, and you must save him and us the disgrace of an exposure."

"I will avert the disgrace while I have the power Ella, but that will not belong if he goes on at this rate. Do you know the amount of money he asks?"

"He asks none—I ask for him the sum that you refused before."

"Ah, he has gained the victory then. Well, tell him to enjoy his villainous triumph. Give him that and say to him, that if he has any decency left he will drop a name which has never been stained but by him, and leave us to the little peace we may glean after he has trampled our best feelings under foot."

"Thank you papa; and may I not tell him you forgive him?"

"No!"

"That you pity him?"

"No."

"May I not say that when he is reformed he may come back to us, and be received with open arms and hearts?"

"Say nothing but what I bid you and go."

Ella turned away with a sigh. She had scarcely closed the door when a deep heavy groan broke upon her ear, and she paused. Another and another followed, so heart-rending so agonised, that she grew faint with fear. For a moment her hand trembled upon the latch, and then she raised it and gliding up to her father, folded him and pressed her lips to his.

"Forgive me dear papa—forgive your own Ella her first unkind words. I was thinking only of poor Robert, and did not know well what I said. I am sorry very sorry—cannot you forgive me papa?"

"Yes, child yes. Good-night darling!—there go!"

"And Robert?"

"No Answer."

"You will feel better if you see him, papa."

"Go! go!"

Again Ella turned from the door and hurried down the stairs. Still the boy sat with his face in his mother's lap, and his arms twined about her waist. Both started at sight of her slight figure, dressed as it was, for a different scene from this. The pale anxious face, looking out from the rich masses of curls, now disarranged and half drawn back behind her ear, appeared as though long years had passed over it in that one half hour. Poor Ella it was a fearful ordeal for glad, buoyant seventeen.

"There is the money Robert," she said flinging the purse upon the table, "and now you must go back with me and say to our father that you are sorry you have made him miserable."

"He will turn me from the door Ella."

"And do you not deserve it?"

"Ella!" interposed the tender mother.

"I'll do that and more. But perhaps he will think I come to mock him."

"Your manner and words will tell him for what you come. You have very nearly killed our poor father Robert, I have seen his grey hairs to-night as low as the grave will lay them. I have seen him in such agony as none of us are capable of enduring. You ought to go to him Robert—go on your knees, and whatever he says to you, you will have no right to complain."

"Ella child! Ella!" exclaimed Mrs Lane. You have too much of your father's spirit, that is, too much for a woman. Beware how you break the bruised reed.

"Ella is right mother" said the boy rising. I will go to him I will tell him how wretched I have made myself, how I wish that I could take the whole load of wretchedness; and relieve those I love. I will promise him to look some humble corner of the earth and hide myself in it, away from his sight for ever. Perhaps he will bid me earn his confidence by years of rectitude, perhaps he will bid it by does not, Ella is right—whatever he says to me, if he curse me, I shall have no right to complain."

"But I will complain, Robin, exclaimed the girl with a fresh burst of tears: and wherever you go, I will go with you. Poor dear papa! But he shall not separate us—we who have sat upon his knee at the same time; his own darling children! I will never stay here while you are at home Robin."

The excited girl clasped both hands over her brother's arm, and led the way up stairs; while the trembling mother followed, praying in her heart that the interview might terminate more favourably than her fears promised. When they entered Mr Lane's room, the old man sat in his armed chair leaning over a table, and resting his forehead upon his clasped hands. Books were scattered around, but they had evidently not been used that evening, there was a glass of water standing beside him, and his neckcloth was loosened as though from faintness. Had his hair become grey