

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

## The British Magazines.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

## RECOLLECTIONS OF A POLICE OFFICER.

## THE WIDOW.

In the winter of 1833 I was hurriedly, and, as I at the time could not help thinking, precipitately despatched to Guernsey, one of the largest of the islands which dot the British Channel, in quest of a gentleman of, till then, high character on the Stock exchange, who, it was alleged, had absconded with a very large sum of money intrusted to him for investment by a baronet of considerable influence in official quarters. From certain circumstances, it was surmised that Guernsey would be his first hiding-place, and I was obliged to post all the way to Weymouth in order to save the mail packet, which left that place on the Saturday evening, or night rather, with the Channel-Island mails. Mr — had gone, it was conjectured, by way of Southampton. My search, promptly and zealously as I was aided by the Guernsey authorities, proving vain, I determined on going on to Jersey, when a letter arrived by post informing that the person of whom I was in pursuit had either not intended to defraud his client, or that his heart had failed him at the threshold of crime. A few hours after I had left London he had reappeared, it seems, in his counting-house, after having a few minutes previously effected investment of the money in accordance with his client's instructions, and was now, through his attorney, threatening the accuser and all his aids and abettors with the agreeable processes that in England usually follow sharply at the heels of such rash and hasty proceedings.

My mission over, I proposed to retrace my steps immediately; but unfortunately found myself detained in the island for nearly a week by the hurricane-weather which suddenly set in, rendering it impossible for the mail or other steam-packets to cross the Channel during its continuance. Time limped slowly and heavily away; and frequently, in my impatience to be gone, I walked down to the bleak pier, and strained my eyes in the direction in which the steamer from Jersey should appear. Almost every time I did so I encountered two persons, who, I could see, were even more impatient to be gone than myself, and probably, I thought, with much more reason. They were a widow lady, not certainly more than thirty years of age, and her son, a fine curly-haired boy, about eight or nine years old, whose natural light heartedness appeared to be checked, subdued, by the deep grief and sadness which trembled in his mother's fine expressive eyes, and shrouded her pale but handsome face. He held her by the hand; often clasping it with both his tiny ones, and looking up to her as she turned despondingly away from the vacant roadstead and raging waters, with a half-frightened half-wondering expression of anxious love, which would frequently cause his mother to bend down, and hurriedly strive to kiss away the sorrowful alarm depicted in the child's face. These two beings strangely interested me; chiefly perhaps because, in my compelled idleness, I had little else except the obstinate and angry weather to engage my attention or occupy my thoughts. There was an unmistakable air of 'better days' about the widow—a grace of manner which her somewhat faded and unseasonable raiment rendered but the more striking and apparent. Her countenance, one perceived at the first glance, was of remarkable comeliness; and upon one occasion that I had an opportunity of observing it, I was satisfied that, under happier influences than now appeared to overshadow her, those pale interesting features would light up into beauty as brilliant as it was refined and intellectual.

This introduces another walking mystery, which, for want of something better to do, I was conjuring out of my fellow-watchers on the pier. He was a stoutish, strongly-set man of forty years of age, perhaps scarcely so much, showily dressed in new glossy clothes; French-varnished boots, thin-soled enough, winter as it was, for a drawing room; hat of the latest *gent* fashion; a variegated satin cravat, fastened by two enormous-headed gold pins, connected with a chain; and a heavy gold chain fastened from his watch waistcoat-pocket over his neck. The complexion of his face was a cadaverous white, liberally sprinkled and relieved with gin and brandy blossoms, whilst the coarseness of his not overly-clean hands was with singular taste set off and displayed by some half-dozen glittering rings. I felt a growing conviction, especially on noticing a sudden change in the usual cunning impudent, leering expression of his eyes, as he caught me looking at him with some earnestness, that I had somewhere had the honor of a previous introduction to him. That he had not been, lately at all events, used to such resplendent habiliments as he now sported, was abundantly evident from his numerous smirking self-surveys as he strutted jauntily along, and frequent stoppings before shops that, having mirrors in their window, afforded a more complete view of his charming person. This creature I was convinced was in some way or other connected, or at any rate acquainted, with the young and graceful widow. He was constantly dogging her steps; and I noticed with surprise, and some little irritation, that his vulgar bow was faintly returned by the lady as they passed each other; and that her recognition of him, slight and distant as

it was, was not unfrequently accompanied by a blush, whether arising from a pleasurable emotion or the reverse I could not for some time determine. There is a mystery about blushes, I was, and am quite aware, not easily penetrable, more especially about those of widows. I was soon enlightened upon that point. One day, when she happened to be standing alone on the pier—her little boy was gazing through a telescope I had borrowed of the landlord of the hotel where I lodged—he approached, and before she was well aware of his intention, took her hand, uttering at the same time, it seemed, some words of compliment. It was then I observed her features literally flash with a vividness of expression which revealed a beauty I had not before imagined she possessed. The fellow absolutely recoiled before the concentrated scorn which flushed her pale features, and the indignant gesture with which she withdrew her hand from the contamination of his touch. As he turned confusedly and hastily away, his eyes encountered mine, and he muttered some unintelligible sentences, during which the widow and her son left the spot.

'The lady,' said I, as soon as she was out of hearing, 'seems in a cold, bitter humour this morning; not unlike the weather.'

'Yes, Mr Wat—I beg pardon, Mr What's-your-name, I would say?'

'Waters, as I perceive you know quite well. My recollection of you is not so distinct. I have no remembrance of the fashionable clothes and brilliant jewelry, none whatever; but the remarkable countenance I have seen.'

'I daresay you have, Waters,' he replied, reassuming his insolent, swaggering air. 'I practice at the Old Bailey; and I have several times seen you there, not, as now in the masquerade of a gentleman, but with a number on your collar.'

I was silly enough to feel annoyed for a moment at the fellow's stupid sarcasm, and turned angrily away.

'There, don't fly into a passion,' continued he with an exulting chuckle. 'I have no wish to be ill friends with so smart a hand as you are. What do you say to a glass or two of wine, if only to keep this confounded wind out of our stomachs? It's cheap enough here.'

I hesitated a few seconds, and then said, 'I have no great objection; but first, whom have I the honor of addressing?'

'Mr Gates. William Gates, Esquire, attorney-at-law.'

'Gates! Not the Gates, I hope, in the late Bryant affair?'

'Well—yes; but allow me to say, Waters, that the observations of the judge on that matter, and the consequent proceedings, were quite unjustifiable; and I was strongly advised to petition the House on the subject; but I forbore, perhaps unwisely.'

'From consideration chiefly, I daresay, for the age and infirmities of his lordship, and his numerous family?'

'Come, come,' rejoined Gates with a laugh; 'don't poke fun in that way. The truth is, I get on quite as well without as with the certificate. I transact business now for Mr Everard Preston: you understand?'

'Perfectly. I now remember where I have seen you. But how is it your dress has become so suddenly changed? A few weeks ago, it was nothing like so magnificent.'

'True, my dear boy, true: quite right. I saw you observed that. First-rate, isn't it? Every article genuine. Bond and Regent Street, I assure you,' he added, scanning himself complacently over. I nodded approval, and he went on—'You see I have had a wind-fall; a piece of remarkable luck and so I thought I would escape out of the dingy, smoky village, and air myself for a few days in the Channel.'

'A delightful time of the year for such a purpose truly. Rather say you came to improve your acquaintance with the lady yonder, who, I daresay will not prove ultimately inflexible?'

'Perhaps you are right—a little at least you may be, about the edges. But here we are; what do you take—port?'

'That as soon as anything else.'

Mr Gates was, as he said, constitutionally thirsty, and although it was still early in the day, drank with great relish and industry. As he grew flushed and rosy, and I therefore imagined communicative, I said, 'Well now tell me who and what is that lady?'

The reply was a significant compound gesture, comprising a wink of his left eye and the tap of a forefinger upon the right side of his nose. I waited, but the pantomimic action remained uninterpreted by words.

'Not rich apparently?'

'Poor as Job.'

'An imprudent marriage probably?'

'Guess again, and I'll take odds you'll guess wrong; but suppose, as variety is charming, we change the subject. What is your opinion now of the prospects of the ministry?'

I saw it was useless attempting to extract any information from so cunning a rascal; and hastily excusing myself, I rose, and abruptly took my leave, more and more puzzled to account for the evident connection, in some way or other, of so fair and elegant a woman with a low attorney, struck off the rolls for fraudulent misconduct, and now acting in the name of a person scarcely less disreputable than himself. On emerging from the tavern, I found that the wind had not only sensibly abated, but had become more favorable to the packets leaving Jersey, and that early the next morning we might reasonably hope to embark for Weymouth. It turned out as we anticipated. The same boat which took me off to the roads conveyed also the widow—Mrs Grey, I saw by the cards on her modest luggage—and her son. Gates followed a

few minutes afterwards, and we were soon on our stormy voyage homewards.

The passage was a very rough, unpleasant one, and I saw little of the passengers in whom, in spite of myself, as it were, I continued to feel so strong an interest, till the steamer was moored alongside the Weymouth quay, and we stood together for a brief space, awaiting the scrutiny and questionings of the officers of the customs. I bowed adieu as I stepped from the paddle-box to the shore, and thought, with something of a feeling of regret, that in all probability I should never see either of them again. I was mistaken, for on arriving early the next morning to take possession of the outside place booked for me by the coach to London through Southampton, I found Mrs Grey and her son already seated on the roof. Gates came hurriedly a few minutes afterwards, and ensconced himself snugly inside. The day was bitterly cold, and the widow and her somewhat delicate looking boy were but poorly clad for such inclement weather. The coachman and myself, however, contrived to force some rough, stout cloaks upon their acceptance, which sufficed pretty well during the day; but as night came on rainy and tempestuous, as well as dark and bleak, I felt that that they must be in some way or other got inside, where Gates was the only passenger. Yet so distant, so frigidly courteous was Mrs Grey, that I was at a loss how to manage it. Gates, I saw, was enjoying himself hugely to his own satisfaction. At every stage he swallowed a large glass of brandy and water, and I observed that he cast more and more audaciously triumphant glances towards Mrs Grey. Once here, though studiously I thought averted from him, caught his, and a deep blush, in which fear, timidity, and aversion seemed strangely mingled, swept over her face. What could it mean? It was, however, useless to worry myself further with profitless conjectures, and I descended from the roof to hold a private parley with the coachman. A reasonable bargain was soon struck: he went to Mrs Grey and proposed to her, as there was plenty of room to spare that she and her son should ride inside.

'It will make no difference in the fare,' he added, 'and it's bitter cold out here for a lady.'

'Thank you,' replied the widow after a few moments' hesitation; 'we shall do very well here.'

I guessed the cause of her refusal, and hastened to add, 'You had better, I think, accept the coachman's proposal: the weather will be dreadful, and even I, a man must take refuge inside.' She looked at me with a sort of grateful curiosity, and then accepted, with many thanks, the coachman's offer.

When we alighted at the Regent Circus, London, I looked anxiously but vainly round for some one in attendance to receive and greet the widow and her son. She did not seem to expect any one, but stood gazing vacantly, yet sadly, at the noisy, glaring, hurrying scene around her, her child's hand clasped in hers with an unconsciously tightening grasp, whilst her luggage was removed from the roof of the coach. Gates stood near, as if in expectation that his services must now, however unwillingly, be accepted by Mrs Grey. I approached her, and said somewhat hurriedly, 'If, as I apprehend, madam, you are a stranger in London, and consequently in need of temporary lodgings, you will, I think, do well to apply to the person whose address I have written on this card. It is close by. He knows me, and on your mentioning my name, will treat you with every consideration. I am a police-officer; here is my address; and any assistance in my power shall, in any case, and I glanced at Gates, 'be freely rendered to you.' I then hastened off, and my wife an hour afterwards was even more anxious and interested for the mysterious widow and her son than myself.

About six weeks had glided away, and the remembrance of my fellow-passengers from Guernsey was rapidly fading into indistinctness, when a visit from Roberts, to whose lodgings I had recommended Mrs Grey, brought them once more painfully before me. That the widow was poor I was not surprised to hear; but that a person so utterly destitute of resources and friends, as she appeared from Roberts' account to be, should have sought the huge wilderness of London seemed marvellous. Her few trinkets, and nearly all her scanty wardrobe, Roberts more than suspected were at the Pawnbroker's. The rent of the lodgings had not been paid for the last month, and he believed that for some time past they had not had a sufficiency of food, and were now in a state of literal starvation! Still, she was cold and distant as ever complained not, though daily becoming paler, thinner, weaker.

'Does Gates the Attorney visit her?' I asked.

'No—she would not see him, but letters from him are almost daily received.'

Roberts, who was a widower, wished my wife to see her; he was seriously apprehensive of some tragical result; and this, apart from considerations of humanity, could not be permitted for his own sake to occur in his house. I acquiesced; and Emily hurriedly equipped herself, and set off with Roberts to Sherrard Street, Haymarket.

On arriving at home, Roberts, to his own and my wife's astonishment, found Gates there in a state of exuberant satisfaction. He was waiting to pay any claim Roberts had upon Mrs Grey, to whom, the ex-attorney exultingly announced, he was to be married on the following Thursday! Roberts, scarcely believing his ears, hastened up to the first floor, to ascertain if Mrs Grey had really given authority to Gates to act for her. He tapped at the door, and a faint voice bidding him

enter, he saw at once what had happened—Mrs Grey, pale as marble, her eyes flashing with almost insane excitement, was standing by a table, upon which a large tray had been placed covered with soups, jellies, and other delicacies, evidently just brought in from a tavern, eagerly watching her son partake of the first food he had tasted for two whole days. Roberts saw clearly how it was, and stammering a foolish excuse for having tapped at the wrong door, hastened away. She had at last determined to sacrifice herself to save her child's life! Emily, as she related what she had seen and heard, wept with passionate grief, and I was scarcely less excited: the union of Mrs Grey with such a man seemed like the profanation of a pure and holy shrine. Then Gates was, spite of his wind-fall, as he called it, essentially a needy man! Besides—and this was the impenetrable mystery of the affair—what inducement, what motive could induce a mercenary wretch like Gates to unite himself in marriage with poverty—with destitution? The notion of his being influenced by sentiment of any kind was, I felt, absurd. The more I reflected on the matter, the more convinced I became that there was some villainous scheme in process of accomplishment by Gates, and I determined to make at least one resolute effort to arrive at a solution of the perplexing riddle. The next day having a few hours to spare, the thought struck me that I would call on Mrs Grey. I accordingly proceeded towards her residence, and in Coventry Street happened to meet Jackson, a brother officer, who I was aware from a few enquiries I had previously made, knew something of Gate's past history and present position. After circumstantially relating the whole matter, I asked him if he could possibly guess what the fellow's object could be in contracting such a marriage?

'Object!' replied Jackson; 'why, money of course: what else? He has by some means become aware that the lady is entitled to property, and he is scheming to get possession of it as her husband.'

'My own conviction! Yet the difficulty of getting at any proof seems insurmountable.'

'Just so. And, by the way, Gates is certainly in high feather just now, however acquired. Not only himself, but Rivers his cad, clerk he calls himself, has cast his old greasy skin, and appears quite spruce and shining. And—now I remember—what did you say was the lady's name?'

'Grey.'

'Grey! Ah, then I suppose it can have nothing to do with it! It was a person of the name of Welton or Skelton that called on us a month or two ago about Gates.'

'What was the nature of the communication?'

'I can hardly tell you: the charge was so loosely made, and hurriedly withdrawn. Skelton—yes it was Skelton—he resides in pretty good style at Knightsbridge—called and said that Gates had stolen a cheque or draft for five hundred pounds, and other articles sent through him to some house in the city, of which I think he said the principal was dead. He was advised to apply through a solicitor to a magistrate, and went away we supposed, for that purpose; but about three hours afterwards he returned, and in a hurried, flurried sort of a way said he had been mistaken, and that he withdrew every charge he had made against Mr Gates.'

'Very odd.'

'Yes; but I don't see how it can be in any way connected with this Mrs Grey's affairs. Still do you think it would be of any use to sound Rivers? I know the fellow well, and where I should be pretty sure to find him this evening.'

It was arranged he should do so, and I proceeded on to Sherrard Street.

[To be concluded.]

## TRUE SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

THE reason why men are unhappy, is because they do not act in harmony with the Divine mind. While all the planets revolve round the sun as their common centre, their movements all harmonize; but let their laws of attraction be broken, and the most direful confusion would ensue. Now, in the world of mind, while all finite minds are bound to the infinite mind, and act in harmony with him, their conduct harmonizes with each other; but, when that attraction is broken, and each one acts according to his own separate will, their ways must constantly be coming in contact with God's ways and with one another, and disorder and misery ensue. Now the Gospel shows man how he may be a worker together with God. It tells us that God's order is an order of uniform benevolence. His great object is to do men good; and he who labours to do men good, sympathizes and harmonizes with God, and will as certainly be happy as God himself is happy. Selfish men have often, almost by accident, done deeds which harmonize with the divine plan, and have experienced emotions to which they were before strangers. A young man, who had inherited a princely fortune, was still so extremely wretched that he determined to go down to the river and plunge beneath the dark waters, and put an end to his miserable existence. On his way a deep groan fell upon his ear; and, led by the pale rays of the moon, he passed through a narrow and dark alley till he came to a wretched hovel. He bowed and entered the door of this miserable abode, and a sight fell upon his vision such as he had been unaccustomed to behold. There were a poor man and woman with several children, lying upon the ground in a state of starvation. For the first time, it seems that the bosom of this young man began to