

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

MARRIED AND SETTLED.

I HAD finished my story, and albeit a man of sufficient courage on ordinary occasions, felt exceedingly nervous and uncomfortable. I was painfully conscious of a very irregular and rapid pulse, and my face and ears glowed and tingled with a feeling compounded of apprehension, dismay and shame.

'I understand you to say, began Mr Sergeant Benton, after permitting me the silent enjoyment of those delightful emotions for several moments. 'I understand you to say, Lieutenant Herrick, that Fanny—that my ward, Miss Herbert, is still ignorant of the important conquests she has made?'

'Mr Benton?' 'That Miss Herbert, I repeat,' continued the imperturbable barrister, 'is still unconscious that a young lieutenant in Her Majesty's naval service, with not a farthing in the world but his pay, and just about to join the squadron on the salubrious coast of Africa, admires her to such a flattering degree that he is quite willing to share his splendid position with her in exchange for her graces of mind and person, and the clear six hundred a year to which she is entitled under Mr Herbert's will.'

'Mr Benton, what am I to understand by this tone of sarcasm—or insult rather?' I stammered out, my face and ears becoming hotter and hotter.

'My words are sufficiently plain,' said Mr Sergeant Benton. 'If you had annoyed Miss Herbert with the idle bombast I have just heard, I should have addressed you in a very different tone. Be off to sea, to your duty, young man! Earn a legitimate title to the hand and affections of an amiable and beautiful girl. If, having escaped the coast-fever—which is just possible—you, at the termination of the usual period of service, secure captain's rank, and a few thousand pounds prize money—also possible, if very unlikely,—and moreover find Miss Herbert single, unpromised, and willing to have you—the most improbable postulate of all—there may not then perhaps exist any insuperable objection to your, at present, very absurd and very audacious proposal, and which, till then, we will at once dismiss.'

Remonstrance or lamentation, pathetic sentiment or fervid indignation, would, I knew, be utterly thrown away upon the caustic, wiry old sergeant; and after blustering out a few incoherent sentences, assertive of the entire selfishness, the extreme disinterestedness, etcetera, of my motives, all of which were heard without remark by Mr Sergeant Benton save that conveyed by the sarcastic glance of his keen, grey eye, and the expressive curl of his lip, I took my leave in a tumult of indignation, rendered all the fiercer that I was not permitted one parting word with the lady.

This interview took place on a Sunday, in the library of Oak-lodge, Mr Benton's residence at Hammersmith. My father and he had been intimate friends, and a short time before my appointment to the 'Wasp,' I had been invited to spend a few weeks there—with what results the reader already knows.

I gradually cooled down after leaving the house; and no wonder, for a stinging north easter was whistling round the corners of the streets, and almost freezing the blood in one's veins with its chilling, icy breath.

As the flush of passionate anger passed away, I could hardly help admitting that the astute barrister was, after all quite right.

I had been, I now perceived, guilty of an act of gross and presumptuous folly, in so early lifting my eyes to such a bright particular star, and worse still in asking the crusty guardian of such excellence to leave to wed it. Long before I reached my present immediate destination in the city, I had, thanks to the sobering influence of the weather, and the rational train of thought into which I had glided, become comparatively calm and composed—all the more readily, perhaps, for certain remembrances, trifles light as air, viewed by themselves, and under other aspects, which one by one broke through the gloom of disappointment and dejection, and like points of starry light, disclosed the silver lining of the passing cloud. Three days afterwards I sailed from Portsmouth in Her Majesty's brig of war, 'Wasp,' in search of glory and gold on the pestilential shores of southern Africa; and spite of the sinister auguries of Mr Benton, the imaged memory of the adorable Fanny glittered in changeless beauty on the receding horizon, and threw over the dull waste of waters a path of light by which, so whispered youthful hope and faith, I should one day return to home, and peace and happiness.

My immediate destination on leaving Oak-lodge, was, as I have said, the city, where dwelt Mr Moon, an uncle of mine on the maternal side, and a highly respectable bacon and cheese factor. My mother, on account of her personal attractions, I have heard—she died a few hours after I saw the light—married above her sphere as far as related to social rank and connexion, my father being at the time, a lieutenant in the royal navy, and the only son of a distinguished sea-officer, who unfortunately happened to lose his life just at the time, my honored parent the most urgently needed his influence with the admiralty. The gallant veteran bequeathed his son—it was all he had—his name and blessing, priceless jewels both, but in the eyes of the dispensers of naval patronage, inferior in value to a peer's proxy, or the whispered

suggestion of a steady house of commons partisan. My father died a luff, after living on for a score of weary, impatient years, and the same barren heritage bequeathed to him passed to me.

Between the Moons, who were very worthy people, and my father, there had always existed a strong feeling of mutual regard. To me also my excellent uncle and aunt had rendered substantial kindness, and besides the duty of bidding them farewell, I had to thank them for a very recent service. They were both at home, nodding at each other from opposite sides of the cozy fire place, and when awakened up were found as friendly, good natured and cheerful as when I had last seen them, as well as considerably stouter. Their son and only child, Theophilus Moon, a pale, Byronic young gentleman, strongly marked by plaintiveness, poetry, and the small pox, of whom I shall presently have much to say, happened to be out. It had been the settled conviction of my cousin Theophilus for many years past, that he was an individual of great spiritual gifts—unfortunately, as unnaturally placed amidst the cross materialism of Cheshire cheese, Bath chaps, and Hampshire bacon. So false a position—his favorite phrase—preyed of course upon an organization attempered to fine issues, and he was now, and had been for some time, so exceedingly melancholy and mysterious, as to render his poor mother perfectly miserable. The good lady was quite convinced that her darling boy was one of those unfortunate people known as geniuses—a race whose inevitable fate it is, she had always understood, to live in want and destitution, and die God-abandoned suicides. Theophilus read his poetry many times over to her, after the manner I have noticed of gentlemen similarly affected, much to the worthy woman's terror as well as admiration—arsenic, razors, and prussic acid, and leaps from the monument gleaming to her disordered fancy in every line. One only effective cure for genius had she ever heard of—matrimony; and although Theophilus was as yet barely twenty, she was vehemently desirous of seeing him as soon as possible married and settled. Fate had recently appeared propitious to her wish, Miss Mary Sawkins, the eldest but one, and much the prettiest and sharpest of the four daughters of a respectable widow, living at no great distance from the establishment, was her favorite, and, there were indications, that also of her son.

The widow Sawkins and her daughters, by some wonderful alchemy, contrived to make seventy five pounds per annum do the legitimate work of at least a hundred and fifty. Mary, in Mrs Moon's opinion, was the most notable of this notable family, and she wisely concluded that if Theophilus were once fairly united to a young lady of such keen common sense and business qualities, starvation and suicide, spite of all the genius in the world, must be totally out of the question. Miss Sawkins herself was not, I had noticed, by any means insensible to the value of the extensive stock in trade and flourishing business, coupled with the indisputable fact that the younger Moon, upon whom her bright black eyes and winning ways had unquestionably made a strong impression, was the direct and only heir thereto. It remained to be seen whether, as his patron genie portended, he was given to change—a question belonging solely to the future, to which I must for the present adjourn the story of my gifted cousin's matrimonial adventures, my attention in the long interim having been concentrated upon quite other than love chases. Theophilus had not yet returned when I pressed for time, exchanged a hearty farewell with the old folks and departed.

The three years I had passed on the slave coast glided away much more pleasantly and swiftly than I had anticipated. The Wasp was a clipper, and a suspicious sail once sighted, escape was almost impossible. The varying changes of such a pursuit, sometimes continued through several nights and days, during which every resource of seamanship, skill, energy and cunning were called into play on both sides, exciting a tumult of eager enthusiasm to which the coldest temperament can hardly remain insensible. The coveted step in the service was officially announced to me a few days after the arrival of the Wasp in Portsmouth, in a very complimentary letter by the Secretary of the Admiralty. I was entitled to a large sum for prize and head money, so that two, at least of the conditions jestingly stipulated for by Miss Herbert's guardian were fulfilled—but the others! Did Fanny still remember me with tenderness, or rather had not perhaps imagination vainly mocked me with illusions from the first, unreal and fanciful—nay, might she not—for it was several months since I had received news from England—be already married? A few hours would determine.

They were anxious nervous hours. The railroad speed at which I flew towards a solution of my doubts but increased this agitation, and my pulse was beating thick and fast when I reached Oak-lodge, and knocked with feverish impatience at the door. 'The family are from home,' The announcement was a positive relief. 'But,' added the servant, 'they are expected home in a day or two.'

I entered the house and asked to see the housekeeper, a shrewd woman, and a privileged member of the household; who, I knew, would instinctively divine the information I sought without the help of *viva voce* questioning.

'The sergeant and Miss Benton,' said the housekeeper, 'will return to Oak-lodge the day after to-morrow; and,' she added, a barely perceptible smile gleaming from under her

grey eye-brows, 'Miss Herbert will accompany them.'

'Ha!' The relief was unspeakable. 'And all well,' I added presently.

'Quite so. And—and,' the light from the keen eye was broader now, 'and both the ladies still unmarried, and as I think, unpromised, although—'

A worthy soul! I could have kissed her, but as that would scarcely have been decorous, I merely drowned her 'although' in an irrepressible burst of exultation, and hurried from the house.

Two or three hours afterwards, as soon in fact as I felt the common earth again, and common things reacquired a portion of their old value and significance, I determined on visiting my old friends the Moons. On reaching the shop, I found it was 'Rogers, late Moon,' and on further enquiry ascertained that my relations had retired from business some two months previously, and were at present domiciled at Mangolia villa, Hammersmith.

'Mangolia villa, Hammersmith!' It was not difficult to find, and I knocked at the elaborately grained red door with a decision very different from the tremulous summons at Oak-lodge.

My unfeeling uncle and aunt were at home, and, jolly as ever, as far as size went, and a trifle over, good humoured, hospitable as in the old time. They greeted me cordially, and listened with a touching resignation to my congratulations upon their escape from the toil and moil of business. I soon found that the gentility and quiet of Mangolia villa had proved a sad exchange for the vulgar hubbub, and profitable bustle of the city.

'A bad business,' said my uncle, 'and all in consequence of Theophilus finding himself, as he said, in a false position; and now he seems worse off, in that particular, than ever. The plague of it is,' continued this gentleman, 'that there is nothing to be seen about, nothing to do except eating and drinking—drinking and eating, going to bed and getting up again. I almost fancy at times that I must turn radical.'

'Mr Moon!' interjected his wife with emphasis.

'Or,' persisted the husband, 'vestryman or tract distributor—or agitator for the six points, or—'

'Mr Moon! Mr Moon!' again broke in my aunt, 'don't you go on in that wild way. We may be driven to something desperate, it is true, but things are not so bad yet as that comes to. If Theophilus could only be brought to hear reason, why with Mary and her sisters, and the widow, and baby caps and christenings, we might be as merry as crickets yet.'

This speech was somewhat too extensive for immediate comprehension in its entirety, but I made a sufficiently good guess at the meaning.

'Well,' I asked, 'and Theophilus, he is of course the happy husband of pretty Mary Sawkins?'

I had touched upon the master-grievance. The young man, though relieved from the false position of the shop, had not in the least degree subsided into cheerfulness and common sense. He had become worse, in fact—was openly unfaithful to Miss Sawkins, and persisted in shutting himself up, half in disdain, half in fear of Mary, whenever any of the family called at Mangolia villa. We were in the full heat of discussion upon the interesting subject, when the young gentleman's muffled knock was heard at the door.

To say the least he was quite as melancholy and gentleman-like as when I left England; still a kind of pale, spare, diminutive Lara, constantly brooding upon the heartless antagonism of circumstances and his own suppressed merits. His very fingers had a lugubrious dampness about them, which whoever shook hands with him could not help feeling. He was, however, very glad to see me, and we managed to get on very well till bed time, my adventures enabling us to easily avoid all unpleasant topics; my excellent relatives, insisting that I should, for the present, at least make Mangolia villa my home. I retired somewhat early to rest.

[To be continued.]

From the London People's Journal.

LIFE ABOUT US.

In the cottage as the palace, in the clown as in the king,

Infinite, endless passions reign, and with them change and conduct bring;
Love whose strength doth vanquish sorrow;
Freedom wealthy with his crust;
Truth the servant; Faith the martyr; Hope that soareth from the dust.

THERE is no age like the present. To-day! What time so like to this? It is an age of warm faith in the promises of future glory; and though memory hath garnished her secret chambers with many a sad picture and history of the past, yet

There's a fount about to stream,
There's a light about to beam,
There's a warmth about to glow,
There's a flower about to blow,
—There's a midnight darkness changing
Into grey:

and the age is hopeful. The dark clouds are moving off; already are patches of the blue sky to be seen; and the bright warm sun rays are threading their way through the scattering cloudlets. Whilst we note our own as an age of faith, may we not say for it, it is also an age of earnest action, of honest manly work? Whilst it is called to day are the workers for humanity laboring with whole

heart and soul, knowing that 'the night cometh when no man can work,' that in due time they shall reap if they faint not.

Our cares are all to-day; our joys are all to-day;
And in one little word, our life, what is it but to-day?

What is the past to us? About it there has been thrown a halo of false glory, which has too often deceived us. 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view; not only of natural scenery but also of moral and spiritual objects. It makes the rough places smooth, and the crooked it causes to appear straight; the valleys seem exalted, and the hills to be brought low; things repulsive in themselves are beautified, or have at least their deformity softened down; and what is little and mean we see not, only the great and majestic do we behold. So is it with all things that are afar off.

We see not the littleness, the petty tyrannies, the dark deformed oppression of the past 'golden ages'; yet did they then exist, so surely as the men of those days were fashioned like as we are.

Yes, in those past ages, where too many are prone to fix their tents, as in a land flowing with milk and honey, dreaming fondly that they have come to a country where the fields are very green, and the flowers very fair; where the skies are very blue, and the sun shines very brightly; where by the margin of rivers and babbling brooks the trees cast a right pleasant shade; even there dwells the fierce, the untamed lion and all terrible beasts of prey, having for their home the jungle and the morass, seeking whom they may devour, even on the half-cultivated and ill protected lands and homesteads of the trembling people. Truly, it is time that the world should cease to look with admiration on the days of its childhood. Why seek the beautiful and the true in the far off past alone? Dwell they not around us and within us? Well sings the author of 'Peter Bell':

Long have I loved what I behold,
The night that calms, the day that cheers;
The common growth of mother earth
Suffices me—her tears her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.

The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power.

These given, what more need I desire
To stir, to soothe or elevate?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospects find,
May find or there create?

Can we say that in 'life's daily prospect' there is no heroism equal to that of the ancient times? Is not John Smith, as he triumphs over the evil propensities of his own heart, quite as heroic, quite as noble, as ever conqueror who scaled Alps, sacked towns, or pillaged whole provinces? Breathe there not in the men of these times the same spirit of heroic daring as that which animated him who

So valiantly kept the bridge
In the brave days of old?

as moved Regulus to die at Carthage rather than purchase his life with one spot of dishonor on his country? Yes, there must be—there is. Even to day there are brave, heroic souls stepping valiantly up to the general cities and high places of oppression, wickedness and ignorance, and vowing by all that is holy and true, down to the dust they must come. Even to-day are there men standing alone and single handed in the narrow passes through which the hordes of untruth and tyranny would fain rush to lay waste and destroy the goodly land of truth.

Yes, the beautiful, the noble and the good are all about us; even on our every-day path, the life which is about us lacks not of the poetry which filleth all things. How many-phased is this life about us! Here we may read tales of high chivalrous devotion, of deep-souled earnest heroism. It, too, has its tales of true and tenderest pathos, its sorrows too deep for utterance, its tragedies stern and terrible. Mystery is about it and in it. Now you hear a wild exulting shout of jubilation and glee, and in a moment a prolonged and agonising wail of most tragical sorrow. You see the bright beaming face covering perchance the gnawed and cankered heart. There is the seemingly sad, staid countenance, hiding, it may be, a soul full of secret, hypocritical gladness. And all about you you see a dread struggle and battle of life—some combatants with closed lips, and firm unblenching eye, others with trembling aspect, giving vent to oft-repeated sighs and groans.

Oh, the mystery of the burden of life! We pace our busy, crowded streets, our thoughts the while winging their way through old historic lands, and scenes, and ages, recking not the sad sorrow which is eating away the heart of the maiden who has just passed us, spite of her heroic struggles to forget the cause of all her misery; nor of the soul conflicts of that young man, as he nightly tosses on his restless pillow, in vain endeavoring to solve the mystery that surrounds him; nor of the desolateness of that old man who has just buried the last friend of his youth, and whose sorrows heavily press upon his bowed head. And how we miss the gladness which abounds in the world, spite of sin and sorrow, when we transport our thoughts to some far distant clime and age! Beautiful nature is everywhere present, and that to make us glad.