

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

THE KAFIR TRADER.

BY ISABELLA MUNRO.

YEARS, with their summers and winters, their joys and sorrows, have passed away since the Cleopatra, her long and wearying voyage over, cast anchor in one of the extensive bays of South Africa. How eagerly and anxiously her many passengers looked across the belt of heaving waters towards the land, which, low at first, gradually rose into ranges of lofty hills, stretching far into the distance. For most of them had crossed the ocean and bidden adieu to their remotest kindred, in the hope of finding amidst its secluded valleys some 'forest sanctuary,' where the bonds of the world that had hitherto chafed them might be unfelt, and their efforts at earning a livelihood for themselves and little ones be better rewarded.

Foremost among them stood a man, the eagle keenness of whose eye bespoke him to cope, and successfully, with the world, in whatever phase it might present itself. But it was not so; and Robert Tryon, despite years of unwearying effort, now stood gazing on the shores of the far south, a world-worn and almost penniless man, and one whose spirit was embittered and his heart hardened by seeing others, whom he deemed less worthy victors in the arena where he could achieve nothing.

While thus he stood pondering with contracted brow on what might be the result of this last decisive step of emigration, a sweet childish voice by his side exclaimed—

'Let me see, too, father.'

Immediately the stern expression passed away, and with a bright smile he raised the little girl to stand where she might easily look over the bulwark. Robert Tryon was devotedly attached to his wife and family; and the more the chilling blasts of adversity had frozen his heart towards the world, the more did it gush forth in warm affection to those surrounding his own humble and sometimes ill-supplied fireside; and he felt that to see them possessed of the comforts of life befitting their station—more he asked not, wished not—would be a happiness that would in his estimation render even the labor of a galley-slave light.

But dearer than all was his little fairy Kate, as fair and beautiful a child as the eye need wish to rest upon, with soft dark earnest eyes, looking forth from among her brown clustering curls as though the misfortunes of her parents had dispelled the joyous beams of childhood, and awakened her already to the realities of life, and a sweet smile played upon her rosy lips, as if, in the buoyancy of her innocent spirit, hoping and trusting a brighter future.

And the child's trust seemed not misplaced, for brighter days soon began to dawn upon them. Robert Tryon obtained a small farm in one of the deep fertile hollows branching off from the great valley of the fish river; and though it needed both time and labor to render it productive, both were ungrudgingly bestowed; and some five or six years after his arrival, Willow Dell (so named from the fringe of Babylonian willows that swept the little streamlet murmuring through it) was as fair a scene of rural promise as the wide frontier could show.

And for a while Robert Tryon was a happy and contented man; his loved ones were growing up beautiful and joyous around him, and the humble competence he once had sighed for was now theirs: few indeed are they whose wishes are so fully gratified! But it sufficed not long. With prosperity loftier desires awake in Tryon's breast; and after a time he began to pine for riches to bestow on the children whom every succeeding day rendered yet dearer, and whom he felt assured wealth would grace so well. How, as he wandered at evening beside the willows, he would dream of the proud future that—could his wishes be realised—might be in store for his promising sons and beautiful daughters, in some higher sphere; and how in years to come they might revisit their fatherland, and look scornfully down on those who in other days had despised himself.

Occupied with such visions, discontent began to take possession of his heart. It would be many years ere by his farm he could hope to attain such results; and ere that his children's youth would be passed—their lot in life decided, and riches not so precious; and again he felt that he could toil as man never yet had toiled, to bestow wealth on his children.

Of the many objects man pursues with avidity, gold is not the one that most frequently eludes him, for there are many modes by which it may be obtained, and one of these presented itself to Tryon.

He was riding with one of his neighbors into Graham Town, when on their way they passed an extensive and beautiful farm, and on a rising ground saw a large well-built house peeping from among the trees. Robert Tryon commented upon the beauty of the scene.

'Its owner's name is Brunt,' observed his companion; 'some twenty years ago he was sent out by the parish.'

'How did he make his money?' asked Tryon.

'As a Kafir trader,' answered his companion.

A Kafir trader!—It was strange that had never occurred to him, though he was aware

that large fortunes had been made, were constantly being made, by taking into Kafirland various articles of British manufacture, and bartering them with the natives for ivory, skins, &c. This was a mode of acquiring wealth that, amid all his search for a shorter road to riches, he had altogether overlooked.

The farm at Willow Dell had so far improved Tryon's circumstances that there was no difficulty in carrying out his new resolve; and a very short time saw him depart into Kafirland with two waggons heavily laden, two trusty drivers and two boys, on the first of many journeys that brought more gold beneath their roof than had ever been there before.

Tryon was on his return from one of these expeditions. Evening was coming on; but he felt that by riding fast and using a nearer ford to cross Fish river than that by which the waggons must pass, he might reach home that night, and he longed to see those for whose sake all this exertion was made. Therefore, leaving directions for his people to go round by the upper and shallow ford, and setting spurs to his horse he started for the nearer one, well known on the frontier as the Kafir Ford, and as being nearly or quite the most dangerous along the border, consisting merely of a ledge of rocks across the bed of the deep and turbid river, considered scarcely passable save when the tide is low and in attempting which at undue seasons, many an unwary traveller had met his death.

The light was so dim, that when Tryon stood on the steep hill overlooking the valley, he could not discern the state of the river so far beneath him, and it was not till he emerged from the trees and stood beside the brink that he was aware that the tide was up, or rather just beginning to ebb. But he knew that with due caution the river might be crossed in safety even then by one accustomed to it, and he accordingly prepared to take advantage of the remaining daylight by passing without delay.

His horse's fore-feet were already in the water, when a man started up on the opposite bank and called aloud to him. Tryon paused.

'Do not attempt it; it is dangerous,' cried the stranger.

'I'm not afraid; I'm used to the ford,' replied Tryon.

'But it is a spring-tide,' again replied the other.

Tryon looked again at the river; it was certainly higher than was its wont, but not sufficiently so to alarm him who had crossed it so often that he thought he knew every stone of the way; and, imitating as much to the stranger, he spurred his horse in. But his knowledge was less accurate, or the tide was stronger than he deemed; for scarce had he reached the middle of the stream, when the good steed lost his footing, and both horse and rider were borne down among the eddies of the impetuous current towards the sea, which, at a short ten miles' distance, was breaking in giant surges on its rocky bar.

His idolized children! they were provided for, but not too well! was Tryon's last thought, ere the waters overpowered him; and, with a wild rushing in his ears, both sense and sensation passed away.

But the stranger on the southern bank was not one to stand idly by and see a fellow creature perish without making an effort for his rescue, even though that effort might involve him in a like danger; and when Walter Hume threw himself into that dark troubled water, he knew the chances were equal that he would never tread those banks again. But Walter's was too generous and fearless a heart to be chilled by such selfish considerations, and he exerted himself to the uttermost in his arduous task. His efforts were successful; and Tryon was drawn to the shore some distance down the river, insensible, but still living; while the steed, whose fate he had so nearly shared, was borne more and more rapidly towards the waves that seemed roaring so impatiently for their victim.

After this, Walter Hume was a frequent guest at Willow Dell, and a most welcome one to all save the master, for he soon divined that but for the dark eyes and sweet tones of his beautiful and gentle Kate, Walter had been less often seen. And Tryon destined not his Kate, the fairest flower in his fair parterre, to share the humble fortunes of a frontier farmer; though in bygone days he would have rejoiced to think so comfortable a home—and shared by one so worthy—would ever be hers. But now his hopes were higher far for her, his best beloved one; and though he might not receive otherwise than cordially the man who had risked life to save him from certain death, yet he looked with a displeased eye on Walter's evident devotion to Kate, and with a secret resolution that not even the weight of that obligation should induce him to sacrifice his daughter's welfare; rather, far rather, would he have perished in the river.

Absorbed in his ambitious dreams, Tryon never thought of asking himself whether the true sacrifice to Kate might not consist in giving up one to whom, in the warmth of her gratitude and the worthiness of its object, her young heart was becoming deeply attached. And when at length he suspected that it was so, his regret and mortification knew no bounds; yet he shrunk from wounding the feelings of his child by any allusion to the subject, and contented himself by resolving that, even if redoubled efforts were required, they should be made to hasten the hour when he might be able to efface from his daughter's mind the impression which Walter Hume had made, by removing her to a sphere he

considered more suited to her and her improving fortunes. Again he began to repine that wealth was so slow of attainment, and again he felt that he would willingly encounter any toil, any trial, ay, even any danger, to secure to his children riches and consideration.

With these feelings acting as a fresh incentive to exertion, Tryon started on another expedition into Kafirland. He had gained the territories of the chief Turu, and was bartering with him some snuff for ivory; when in the midst of the discussion that attends every mercantile transaction with the avaricious Kafirs, the chief turned pettishly away, exclaiming—

'You want too much for the brown powder; I will not give it; but I will give you ten times as much for black!'

He stopped abruptly, and fixed his bright dark searching eye upon Tryon, as though eager to discover if his meaning was understood, and how the proposition was received.

The trader turned aside as if he heard it not. Nevertheless it was both heard and comprehended. So the quick-witted Kafir suspected.

'Yes,' he resumed, 'I would give much ivory, white as the clouds in yonder sky, many skins, many horns, to him who will bring me the black powder and the fire sticks. His waggons will be so heavy his oxen will scarce be able to draw them away, and he will never need to cross the rivers any more, but he may sit before his kraal, and make his women hoe his corn.'

Still Tryon answered not, but the Kafir's words struck a wild chord in his heart. Could he bring himself to do the chief's bidding, the gold over whose tardy coming he had lately sighed would at once be his; his children would no longer be buried on a frontier farm, and his daughter would go where Walter Hume would be forgotten. But he shrunk from the means by which all these objects, which he had so much at heart, must be obtained; for by carrying powder and arms across the border, save for self defence, he would infringe the laws of the land wherein he had prospered far more than he had ever hoped when he had landed on its shores. Tryon had been eager in his pursuit of riches; he had bought cheap and sold dear, and he had exacted from every one to the uttermost; but he had broken no law save that of leniency, and now he shrunk from doing so, and bade the temptation stand off from him but it would not. The spirit of gain that he had so long cherished, entered into this new form, and haunted him day and night, filling his waking thoughts, and shedding a golden hue over his visions.

When Tryon next entered his dwelling at Willow Dell, the first object that presented itself was the smiling happy face of Kate, the next the almost detested one of him who had drawn him from the depths of Fish River. It required but little penetration to see that Walter Hume was now the declared lover of Kate; and as soon as might be Walter confirmed Tryon's suspicions by entreating his sanction to the already given consent of Kate.

The father was silent for a few moments. But it was only to consider how he might best reject the man to whom he owed so much, and what effect that rejection would have on the happiness of Kate; but on this latter point he soon satisfied himself that once removed to other scenes, this ill-placed (for so he considered it) prepossession would soon pass away, and Kate be a far happier and more prosperous woman than if he had yielded to what he knew were her present feelings. Then, rising from his seat, he turned to the anxious suitor, and spoke kindly but firmly:

'I owe you much, very much, Hume, even a life, and believe me I do not underrate the service, nor the risk at which it was rendered; and had you asked me almost any other gift, it had been given with pleasure; but I cannot put my own life in comparison with my daughter's welfare.'

Whatever may be your decision, Mr Tryon, said Walter proudly, though he turned deadly pale with apprehension, 'and I much fear it is against me. I do not wish an act of common humanity due from one man to another to be remembered, far less looked on as a claim. But your daughter has given me her heart,' he added earnestly; 'and if you will trust her to me, it shall be the study of my life that she will never repent the gift.'

'Her heart,' said Tryon, lightly. 'Pooh!—she is scarce of an age to know that she has one. But I have other hopes for her,' he continued seriously; 'higher hopes, far higher; and the once poverty stricken man drew himself up proudly, as he thought on his wealth.'

Hume felt that those words and that manner sealed his lips to further entreaty, near as was the object to his heart; and simply expressing a hope that Kate might be happier in the future her father designed for her, than he could have made her, he bowed, and left the house with a crushed and embittered heart.

But however great might be Walter's sorrow, it did not exceed that of Kate, when she learned her father's unlooked-for decision regarding one towards whom she felt so much of affection and gratitude. But all her tears and the yet more touching eloquence of her pale cheeks, and faded smiles, were unavailing, and it seemed as if nought could shake Tryon's resolution.

And yet the father's heart was only less sad than those of the lovers. For Robert Tryon loved his daughter too fondly to look

on her grief with indifference; and it was but the hopes of a proud future, when Walter Hume's name should have lost all interest for Kate, that enabled him to remain steadfast to his resolves.

Meanwhile he was occupied with preparations for another journey into Kafirland. At length the day on which he was to depart arrived.

'Let me see more rosy cheeks on my return, child,' he said fondly, as he took leave of her. 'Don't you know I mean to make my Kate a lady?'

'I have no wish to be a lady, father,' said Kate with a subdued smile; 'if I can do my duty in the state to which I am called, it will suffice for me.'

'Tush, tush, girl, you know not what you talk about,' replied Tryon, rather hastily; 'ere long my beautiful Kate will be rich and happy.'

Kate sighed, as though she had no such gladdening dreams; but her father heard her not—he was already watching the departure of his waggons, and for whose safety he had never before appeared so solicitous. Little did those around him suspect they contained a secret whose discovery would prove their owner's ruin; whose safe keeping and success he hoped would well nigh complete the building up of his fortunes. It might have been that Tryon had withstood the temptation longer, nay, perhaps might have overcome it altogether, had it not been for the attachment of Hume, and his anxiety to remove Kate from Willow Dell, where of course her recollection of him would be stronger than elsewhere.

Thus the voice of ambition spoke loudly within Tryon's heart, overpowering all others, and he no longer hesitated to avail himself of the opportunity fortune cast in his path; but at once applied himself to making the needful preparations for complying with the wish of Kuru.

'Oh, Kate, Kate,' he thought, as he rode into Kafirland after his waggons, whose chief contents were contraband, 'while you are weakly mourning over your girlish disappointment, you little know the risk your father is running for your advantage; but perhaps you will have cause to thank him for it.'

The speculation turned out better than even Tryon had ventured to hope. The guns and powder arrived unsuspected at the kraal of Kuru, and in the joy of his heart at obtaining such treasures, the chief was liberal beyond what the trader had anticipated. The finest ivory and the most valuable skins were given almost without limit; and Tryon departed from the kraal a far richer man than he had entered it.

'Oh, Robert Tryon, Robert Tryon,' he murmured, as he mounted his horse, 'you are now a happy and an enviable man, for you have lived to gain all your ends! and in his exultation he recked not that to obtain them he had offended against the laws of the land, and placed deadly instruments in the hands of savages.'

In the same spirit of self congratulation he entered his home. There the sight of Kate's dark mournful eyes checked his gladness for a moment; but he rallied quickly, and gaily reproached her with being so sad when there was such cause for rejoicing, and then he told them that his journey had been most successful, without confiding any more.

'The greatest blessing in life, father, is happiness, and that we may enjoy without riches,' said Kate.

Poor Kate felt that but for this vaunted wealth, the current of her love had been allowed to flow unchecked on.

How, then, could she rejoice at the announcement that gave such pleasure to all the rest? Gold might gild their lot, but it had cast a chill upon hers, and blighted it; and while they surveyed with pleasure the transfer of the rich lading of the waggons to the house, Kate Tryon wept bitterly in her little chamber, with the sound of light laughter from without ringing in her ears. They laughed and she wept, and both from the same cause.

And now Tryon had resolved on relinquishing the trade by which he had reaped so rich a harvest, and removing himself and family to some place where their former humble station would be unknown; but ere that could be done he must dispose of the immense quantity of Kafir produce in his house; and with that view he left Willow Dell for Graham's Town.

He was on his return, and again he was proud-hearted and glad, as he was wont to be of late, for again he had prospered in his dealings. How different he was from the Robert Tryon who had landed on the South African shores a few years ago, poor, sad and desponding. Now he was joyful and elated, not only with hope but with success; and as he rode along his thoughts wandered afar into the future, where he saw now no harder toil awaiting his children than to gather flowers in the world's bright sunshine, and the fairest were gathered by his Kate, his beautiful and then his joyous one. At length he started. Absorbed in those bright visions, he had not heeded whether he went, and had strayed far from the right road. Further on, however was a path that led from another direction to Willow Dell.

The sun was sinking low in the heavens as he cantered over the flat beyond whose further edge lay the Dell; and in the coolness of coming evening all the inhabitants of the wilds seemed arousing themselves to activity and joy. The birds were darting among the trees, the insects were floating in the sunshine, and the antelopes springing high into