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LITERATURE.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Harper's Monthly Magazine.

THE SENSITIVE MOTHER.

All this self-possession seemed to Mrs Gray only intense heartlessness; and she lay there brooding over the indifference of her husband and child with such bitterness, that at last she burst into a fit of hysterical tears, and threw herself into such agitation, that she brought back the bleeding from the ruptured vessel to a more alarming extent than before. She would have been more comforted, ten thousand times, if they had both fallen to weeping and wailing, and had rendered themselves useless by indulgence in grief. Love with her meant pity and caresses.

'Oh, child!' gasped Mrs Gray. 'how little you love me!'

Isabel said nothing for a moment. She kissed her mother's hand, and with difficulty repressed her tears; for it was a terrible accusation, and almost destroyed her calmness. But, fearing that any exhibition of emotion and distress would excite and harm her mother, she pressed back the tears into her inmost heart, and only said, 'Dearest mother, you know I love you more than my life!'

But Mrs Gray was resolved to see in all calmness only apathy. She loosened her daughter's hand pettishly, and sobbed afresh. If Isabel had wept a sea of tears, and had run the risk of killing her with agitation, she would have been better pleased than now. Isabel thought her mind was rather affected, and looked anxiously for her father.

'Don't stay with me, Isabel! Go—go—you want to go!' sobbed Mrs Gray, at long, long intervals. 'Go to your lover, he is the first consideration now.'

'Dear mamma, why do you say such terrible things?' said the girl, soothingly. 'What has come to you?'

'If you loved me,' sighed Mrs Gray, 'you would act differently!'

At this moment, Herbert Gray and Dr. Melville entered. Having examined the patient, the doctor at once said,

'You have done everything, Miss Isabel, like the most experienced nurse. You deserve great praise. Had you been less capable or less self-possessed, your mother might have lost her life.'

He said this to comfort the patient; but she turned away sadly, and murmured,

'My child does not love me; she has done her duty; but duty is not love!'

Mrs Gray recovered from this phase of her illness only to fall into another more dangerous. In a few weeks she was pronounced in a deep decline, which might last for some years, or be ended in complaint for a few days—one of those lingering and capricious forms of consumption, that keeps every one in a kind of suspense, than which the most painful certainty would be better.

Of course Isabel's marriage was postponed to an indefinite time, and Charles Houghton murmured sadly, as was natural. He proved to Isabel in most conclusive logic, that the kindest thing she could do for her mother, and the most convincing proof of love she could give her, was to marry him at once, and then she would have a great deal more time to attend on her; for now his visits took up so much time, and all that would be saved. His logic failed; and then he got very angry. So that between her mother and her lover, the girl's life was not spent among roses. She went on, however, doing her duty steadily; turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, but acting as she felt to be right.

Her mother's querulous complaints used always to be most severe, after some terrible scene with Charles, when perhaps he had been beseeching Isabel not to kill him with delay.

One day Charles came to the house, looking very pale.

'You are ill!' she said anxiously.

'I am, Isabel, very ill.'

She took his hand and caressed it in both her own, looking fondly into his face. He left his hand quite passive. To say the truth frankly, although he looked ill, he looked also sulky.

'Can I do any thing for you?'

'Every thing, Isabel,' he said, abruptly: 'Marry me.'

She tried to smile, but her lover's gravity chilled her.

'You can do all for me, and you do nothing.'

'I will do all I can. But if a greater duty—'

'A greater duty!' Charles interrupted.

'What greater duty can you have than to the man you love and who loves

you, and whose wife you promised to be!'

'But Charles, if I were your wife, I should then have, indeed, no greater duty than your happiness. As it is, I have more sacred ties—though none dearer,' she added, in her gentlest voice.

'I also have superior duties, Isabel.'

'She started; but after a moment's pause, she said,

'Certainly! The young man watching her face intently.

'And how will you feel, Isabel, when I place those ties far above your love, and all I owe you, and all that we have vowed together?'

'Nothing unkind toward you, Charles, Isabel answered, her heart failing her at the accusing tone of her lover's voice.

'But Isabel, you will not let me go alone!' he cried, passionately. 'You can not have the heart to separate from me—perhaps forever!'

He threw his hands round her.

'Go alone—separate—what do you mean? Are you going anywhere? or are you only trying me?'

'Trying you, my dear Isabel? no, I am too sadly in earnest!'

'What do you mean, then?' tears filling her eyes.

'You know that my father's affairs have been rather embarrassed lately?'

'No,' she said, speaking very rapidly.

'Yes, his West India property is almost a wreck. He has just lost his agent of yellow fever, and must send out some one immediately to manage his estate. It is all he has to live on, unless he has saved something—and I don't think he has—when he can no longer practice at the bar. It is too important to be lost.'

'Well, Charles?'

'I must go.'

There was a deep pause. Isabel's slight finger closed nervously on the hand in hers; she made a movement as if she would have held him nearer to her.

'And now what will you do, my Isabel? will you suffer me to go alone? will you let me leave you, perhaps forever—certainly for years—without the chance of meeting you again, and with many chances of death? Will you virtually break my engagement, and give me back my heart, worn, and dead, and broken? or will you brave the world with me, become my wife and share my fortunes?'

'Charles; how can I leave my mother, when every day may be her last; yet when, by proper care and management, she may live years longer? What can I do?'

'Come with me. Listen to the voice of your own heart, and become my wife.'

Isabel sunk back in deep thought.

'No,' she whispered, 'my mother first of all—before you.'

He let her hand fall from his. 'Choose then,' he said, coldly.

She clung to him; weeping now and broken. He pressed her to his heart. He believed that he had conquered.

'Choose,' he again whispered. 'If you have not chosen already; and he kissed her tenderly.'

'Oh, Charles! you know how dearly I love you.'

At that moment her mother's cough struck her ear. The windows were open, and it sounded fearfully distinct in the still summer air. Isabel shuddered, and hid her face on her lover's shoulder, resting it there for many minutes.

'I have chosen,' she then said, after a long, long pause. She lifted her head and looked him in the eyes. Although pale as a marble statue, but quiet and resolved, she never looked so lovely, never so lowly worthy. There was something about her very beauty that awed her lover, and something in the very holiness of her nature that humbled and subdued him—only for a moment; that passed, and all his man's eagerness and strength of will returned, and he would have given his life to destroy the very virtues he revered.

He besought her by every tender word love ever framed, to listen to him and to follow him. He painted scenes of such desolation and of such abject misery without her, that Isabel wept. He spoke of his death as certain, and asked how she would feel when she heard of his dying of a broken heart in Jamaica, and how could she be happy again when she had that on her conscience? And although she besought him to spare her, and once was nearly fainting in his arms from excessive emotion, yet he would not; heaping up her pile of woes high and still higher, and telling her throughout all, 'that she did not love him now.'

After a fearful scene the girl tore herself away; rushing as if for refuge from a tempting angel, and from herself, into her mother's room; busying herself about

that sick bed with even greater care and tenderness than usual.

'You have been a long time away, Isabel,' Mrs Gray said, petulently.

'Yes: I am very sorry, dearest mamma. I have been detained.' Isabel kissed her withered hand.

'Detained—you don't deny it, Isabel.'

'I am very sorry.'

Tears trembled in her mother's eyes as she murmured, 'Sorry! Don't stay with me, child, if you wish to go. I am accustomed to be alone.'

'I entreat you not to think that I wish to leave you for a moment.'

'Oh, yes, you do, Isabel! I daresay Charles is below stairs—he seems to be always here since I have been ill. You have a great deal to say to him, I am sure.'

'I have said all I had to say,' answered Isabel, quietly.

She was sitting in the shadow of the window-curtains; and, as she spoke, she bent her head lower over her work. Her mother did not see the tears which poured down fast from her eyes.

'Oh, then it was Charles who kept you! I can easily understand, my love, the burthen I must be to you. I am sure you are very good not to wish me dead—perhaps you do wish me dead, often—I am in your way, Isabel. If I had died, you would have been happily married by this time; for you would not have worn mourning very long, perhaps. Why have I been left so long to be a burden to my family?'

All this, broken by the terrible cough, and by sobs and tears, Isabel had to bear and to soothe away, when she herself was tortured with real grief.

Charles departed for Jamaica. The thick shadow of absence fell between their two hearts. Henceforth she must live on duty, and forget love; now almost hopeless. A stern decree this for a girl of nineteen.

For the youth himself, the excitement of the voyage, the novelty of his strange mode of life, and the distraction of business, were all so many healing elements which soon restored peace to his wounded heart. Not that he was disloyal, or forgetful of his love, but he was annoyed and angry. He thought that Isabel might have easily left her mother to go with him, and that she was very wrong not to have done so. Between the excitement of new scenes and new amusements, and the excitement of anger and disappointment, Charles Houghton recovered his serenity, and flourished mightily on Jamaica hospitality.

By the end of the year the invalid grew daily weaker and weaker. She could not leave her bed, now; and then she could not sit up even; and soon she lay without motion or color—and then, on the first day of Spring, she died. She died on the very same day that Charles Houghton entered the house of the rich French planter, Girard, and was presented to his heiress Pauline.

Pauline Girard! a small, dark, gleaming gem—a flitting humming-bird—a floating flower—a firefly through the night—a rainbow through the storm—all that exists in nature most aerial bright and beautiful; these Charles compared her to and a great deal more; that is—when they first met. Charles, with his great Saxon heart fell in love with her at first sight. It was not love such as he had felt for Isabel. It struck him like a swift disease. It was not the quiet, settled, brother-like affection which had left him nothing to regret and little to desire; but it was a wild fierce fever that preyed on his heart and consumed his life. He would fly; he would escape; he was engaged to Isabel. It must be that she did not love him, else she never could have suffered him to leave her; yet he was bound to her. Honor was not to be lightly sacrificed.—Would Pauline, with her large passionate eyes, have given up her lover so coldly? Still he was engaged, and it was a sin and a crime to think of another. He would fly from the danger while he could; he would fight the battle while he had strength. He was resolved, adamant.—One more interview with Pauline and—but Pauline presented herself accidentally in the midst of these indomitable projects. One glance from her deep sapphire eyes put all his resolutions to flight—duty like a pale ghost, passing slowly by in the shade.

When fully awake to the truth of his position, Houghton wrote to Isabel. He wrote to her like a madman, imploring her to come out to him immediately; to lay aside all foolish scruples, to think of him only as her husband, to trust to him implicitly, and to save him from destruction. He wrote to her with a fierce emphasis of despair and entreaty that burned like fire in his words.

This letter found Isabel enfeebled by long attendance on her mother; unable to

make much exertion of mind or body, and requiring entire repose. That she should be restored to her lover; that she should be happy as his wife, was, for a moment like a new spring-tide in her life to dream.

Then she remembered her father, her dear, patient, noble, self-denying father, to whom she was now everything in life; and she wrote and told Charles that she could not go out to him; but reminded him that his term of absence had nearly expired; and that, when he returned, they should be married, never to be parted again. Why should they not be married in England rather than in Jamaica?'

'Thank God I am free!' Houghton exclaimed when he had read the letter. It dropped from his nerveless hand. He ordered his horse, and rode through the burning tropical sun to Pauline Girard. Not two hours after the receipt of Isabel's letter he was the accepted lover of the young French heiress.

Poor Isabel! at that moment she was praying for him in her own chamber.

News came to England in due time. Charles himself wrote to Isabel, gently, and kindly enough; but unmistakably. It stood in plain distinct words, 'I am to be married to Pauline Girard; and no sophistry could soften the announcement. He tried to soothe her wounded feelings by dealing delicately with her pride. He had been, he urged, only secondary in her heart. She placed others before him, and would make no sacrifice for him. What had happened was her own doing entirely; she had not cared to retain him, and he had only acted as she would have him act, he was sure of that, in releasing her. And then he was 'hers very affectionately; and 'would be always her friend.'

Isabel did not die. She did not even marry another man out of spite, as many women have done. She looked ill; but was always cheerful when she spoke, and declared that she was quite well. She was more than ever tender and attentive to her father; and she went out much less among even the quiet society of their quiet home; but read a great deal, and without effort or pretension she lived out her sweet poem of patience and duty and womanly love.

From Jonah Barrington's Personal Sketches.

DUEL EXTRAORDINARY.

At an election for Queen's county, between General Walsh and Mr Warburton, of Garryhinch, about the year 1783, took place the most curious duel of any which have occurred within my recollection. A Mr Frank Skelton, one of the half-mountain gentlemen described in the early part of this work—a boisterous, joking, fat young fellow—was prevailed on, much against his grain, to challenge the exciseman of the town for running the butt-end of a horse-whip down his throat the night before, while he lay drunk and sleeping with his mouth open. The exciseman insisted that snoring at a dinner-table was a personal offence to every gentleman in company, and would therefore make an apology. Frank, though he had been nearly choked, was very reluctant to fight; he said 'he was sure to die if he did, as the exciseman could snuff a candle with his pistol-ball; and as he himself was as big as a hundred dozen of candles, what chance could he have?—We told him jocosely to give the exciseman no time to take aim at him, by which means he might, perhaps, hit his adversary, first, and thus survive the contest. He seemed somewhat encouraged and consoled by the hint, and most strictly did he adhere to it. Hundreds of the town's people went to see the fight on the green of Maryborough. The ground was regularly measured; and the friends of each party pitched a ragged tent on the green, where whiskey and salt beef were consumed in abundance. Skelton having taken ground, and at the same time two heavy drams from a bottle his foster-brother had brought appeared quiet stout till he saw the balls entering the mouths of the exciseman's pistols, which shone as bright as silver, and were nearly as long as fusils. This vision made a palpable alteration in Skelton's sentiments; he changed color, and looked about him as if he wanted some assistance. However, their seconds, who were of the same rank and description, handed to each party his case of pistols, and half-bellowed to them—'Blaze away, boys!'

Skelton now recollected his instructions, and lost no time; he cocked both his pistols at once; and as the exciseman was deliberately and most scientifically coming to his 'dead level,' as he called it, Skelton let fly.

'Holloa!' said the exciseman, dropping his level. 'I'm battered, by J—!'

'The devil's cure to you!' said Skelton, instantly firing his second pistol.

One of the exciseman's legs then gave way, and down he came on his knee, ex-

claiming 'Holloa! holloa! you blood-thirsty villain! do you want to take my life?'

'Why, to be sure I do!' said Skelton. 'Ha! ha! have I stiffened you, my lad?'

Wisely judging, however, that if he stayed till the exciseman recovered his legs, he might have a couple of shots to stand, he wheeled about, took to his heels, and got away as fast as possible.—The crowd shouted, but Skelton, like a hare when started, ran the faster for the shouting. Jimmy Moffit, his own second, followed, overtook, tripped up his heels, and cursing him for a disgraceful rascal, asked 'why he ran away from the exciseman?'

'Ough thunder!' said Skelton, with his chesiest brogue, 'how many holes did the villain want to have drilled into his carcass?—Would you have me to stop to make a riddle of him, Jimmy?'

The second insisted that Skelton should return to the field, to be shot at. He resisted, affirming that he had done all that honor required. The second called him a 'coward!'

'By my soul,' returned he 'my dear Jimmy Moffit, may be so! you may call me a coward if you please; but I did it all for the best!'

'The best! you blackguard!'

'Yes, said Frank: 'sure it's better to be a coward than a corpse! and I must have been either one or t'other of them.'

However he was dragged up to the ground by his second, after agreeing to fight again, if he had another pistol given him. But, luckily for Frank, the last bullet had stuck so fast between the bones of the exciseman's leg that he could not stand. The friends of the latter then proposed to strap him to a tree, that he might be able to shoot Skelton; but this being positively objected to by Frank, the exciseman was carried home: his first wound was on the side of his thigh, and the second in his right leg; but neither proved at all dangerous. The exciseman, determined on halting Frank, as he call it, on his recovery challenged Skelton in his return. Skelton accepted the challenge, but said he was told he had a right to choose his own weapons.

The exciseman, knowing that such was the law, and that Skelton was no swordsman, and not anticipating any new invention acquiesced. 'Then,' said Skelton, 'for my weapons, I choose my fists; and by the powers you gauger, I'll give you such a basting that your nearest relations shan't know you.'

Skelton insisted on his right, and the exciseman not approving of this species of combat, got nothing by his challenge; the affair dropped, and Skelton triumphed.

THE THIRST FOR WEALTH.

How wise is the prayer of Agur! And how few there are who imbibe its spirit, and discern the perils of riches! Insensibly the desire of wealth grows upon us, and while our convictions are all the other way, we find our hearts clinging to the world's possessions as to their best good, and our hearts are busily engaged in performing what the heart, wrapped in the love of the world, designs.

The desire for wealth, 'covetousness, which is idolatry,' is one of the most dangerous and deadening influences which can affect our Christian life. It closes our hearts against the appeals which may constantly be made to us, while the world is still unconverted, and there are any spots in foreign lands unvisited by the messengers of the cross, or in our own, unprovided with the stated ministrations of the gospel.

If all that is unworthy hoarded, and all that is worse than foolishly expended could be turned to the great object of evangelizing the world; if men were more intent upon building up the kingdom of Christ, and less devoted to their own selfishness and pleasures, how different would be the report from the ends of the earth—and how would ignorance, vice, and suffering diminish in our world.

One of the most celebrated members of the Paris bar was lately consulted by a younger practitioner upon an obscure point of law. I cannot give you positive answer, young man, replied the advocate: I have pleaded once one way, and once the other, and I gained my suit each time.'

'A doctor and a poet quarreled; an indifferent person was applied to, to settle the dispute, when the latter made the following reply: 'You are faulty, both; do penance for your crimes; bard, take his physic—doctor, read his rhymes.'

'Young man, do you know what relations you sustain in the world?' said a minister of our acquaintance to a young member of the church. 'Yes, sir,' said the hopeful convert, 'two cousins and a grandmother; but I don't intend to sustain them much longer.'