

Literature, &c.

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"ROSALINE."

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

By Ellen Louise Chandler.

Two years from the May morning of our last meeting, Rosaline became my wife. I do not need to describe the wedding; indeed, I remember nothing concerning it, save the face that was uplifted to my own, the hand that trembled in my clasp, and the white robe that floated round one graceful figure. These, and the low sound of the church anthem, swelling and dying away like the ebb and flow of waves upon the beach at midnight. As we left the church, the impulse to claim her was strong within my soul, and wondering what manner of reply I should receive, I passed my arm about her waist, and whispered, "my wife." The blue eyes were uplifted to my face, the red lips approached a little nearer, and clear and soft as the voice of an angel, I heard the response—"My beloved, my husband!"

I wished not to carry my Rose to pine in the sunshine of a stately castle, and my father, ever indulgent, fitted up for us a retreat as beautiful as the bowers in the Paradise of Mahomet, where dwell the Houris in their eternal beauty. A marble hall, sunny and radiant, rose up in the midst of surrounding trees. Fountains tinkled a lulling music in the porch; rare birds flitted to and fro among the branches, and the walls were hung with the masterpieces of ancient painters; gems that you might have covered inch-deep with gold, and yet not have told their value. In the pleasure grounds, under the branching trees, stood graceful statues, that you might have taken for the guardian spirits of the scene, shrinking timidly beneath the leaves.

It would be but an imperfect expression to say that I was happy here, and even happiness, in its weakest sense of freedom from pain, visits mortal hearts but seldom. I was lapped in an elysium of bliss. Every day I thought Rosaline could grow no dearer, and every night I acknowledged that I loved her better than ever before. I never tired of watching her. Every expression of her face had some new charm.—I trembled lest I should lose a single one.—That sense of satiety which some writers say falls even to the lot of the most loving, never came to me. Every kiss I pressed upon her lips seemed to bring with it a higher sense of ineffable sweetness, than I had ever experienced before. She was my world. Apart from her, I had no hope, no ambition. There was no thing as silence between us; again and again we recalled the brief history of our past acquaintance, and each time we lifted our hearts to God with a prayer of thanksgiving. It was the Eden of my life.

Six months had passed in this blissful dream, before I bethought myself of a promise I had made to my friend Wilhelm Heine, that I would invite him for to visit my new home. I mentioned it to my little wife. She said, laughingly, "We don't need any third person do we darling? nevertheless, I suppose he must come."

The next day, I saw a shadow on her brow. "What is it, Rose?" I asked, laughingly, "has your pet magpie stopped chattering, or the white gazelle strayed into the forest?" There was a smile around my little Rosa's lips, but her eyes did not smile, and when she attempted to answer my question in the same playful humour in which it was spoken, they grew filled with tears.

"No such grave misfortune," she said, "but, Rudolph, I do not like that Mr. Heine, and I wish he were not coming."

"Why didn't you tell me so yesterday, my darling? But, even now, I will write and retract the invitation."

"No, indeed, my husband. Such a course would make me seriously unhappy. It was only selfishness in me, not to wish our present felicity interrupted. You know I have not seen much of Mr Heine yet, and I am sure I shall learn to like him because he is your friend."

"Yes dear, and for his own sake, too. Wilhelm Heine is at once the most gifted and the most fascinating man I ever met."

Ten days after that, our guest arrived. I was hardly glad to meet once more the only man for whom I ever conceived a friendship. He became one of our family at once. He shared our common sitting room, and had every opportunity to watch my sweet wife's graces, and learn to love her. I was rejoiced to see that she commenced to take an interest in my friend and I encouraged their intimacy by every means in my power. He would sit by her side for hours, and read old ballads of hopeless love, and I, with my head lying in her lap, never thought of wandering at the choice of his subjects. I left them a good deal alone together, as the management of my estate, which I had for some time neglected, required my attention, and I gladly availed myself of an opportunity when I could leave Rose a companion, to beguile the tedium of the long hours.

One morning I left home for a ride of some twenty miles, to transact some business at a neighboring town. As I was kissing Rosaline

good-bye, Wilhelm Heine remarked carelessly: "You had better return as early as you can. I shall find it necessary to leave this afternoon, to begone three or four days, and Rosaline will be lonesome until you come back."

"Well," I replied, giving his hand an earnest grasp, "you will stay as long as you can, and I'll try to reach home by nightfall."

All that day my path seemed flooded with sun-light. I was half wild with joy. Well as I loved Wilhelm Heine, two or three days alone with my beautiful wife seemed like an eternity of happiness. I hurried through my business, and then, stepping into a jeweler's, bought a whole set of delicate pink corals; I thought they would befit so charmingly the blonde style of her beauty. As I turned up the bridle path, leading to my fair home, I half wondered that no little, light figure sprang forward to meet me. But my second thought was of her delicate health, and I said, the evening air is chill I am glad she did not come. I reached the door, but she was not there, and an indefinable sense of fear and pain stole over my heart. I entered the house. "Where is your mistress?" I asked the first servant I met, my faithful butler.

"Alas, sir, I do not know," was his reply.

"Good heavens! butler, if you know anything speak quickly. My wife is not dead is she?"

My manner must have terrified him, for he turned fearfully pale, as he answered. "Mr Heine left about an hour before noon, sir.—Some two hours after, my lady went out, with her favorite maid, for a walk. I went to the village, about that business you wished me to arrange, and on my return I met a close carriage. It whirled rapidly by me, and through the windows I recognized in the inside, my lady and her maid, and Mr Heine. That is all I know, sir?"

I made him no reply, but entered my own room, and locked the door. For twenty-four hours I neither spoke nor moved, except to shout a denial to the servant, who several times besought admittance. I was utterly stupefied with my grief. I never thought of pursuing the fugitives, or avenging myself on the wretch who had so basely betrayed my honor. In my whole soul there was room but for one idea—Rose was false! Rose, Rose, Rose! Rose for whom I would have given my own life—Rose, whom I had so loved and cherished; Rose, my wife. I had looked upon her as an angel; as the embodiment of all goodness, and truth and purity, and she was false! Hours swept over me like moments; moments were big with the torture of ages, and still I sat there alone, with the one hideous thought.

The sun had risen and set. It was again evening. Twenty-four hours since I had known myself a dishonored husband. I heard a key turn in the lock of my door. It aroused me.—No one possessed a key which fitted it but my wife. The door opened; a light foot-fall stole across the room—a head was bowed upon my bosom, and there, kneeling before me was Rosaline. For a moment I did not cast her off; I could not, while she sobbed so wildly; but I made no movement to encircle her trembling form with my arm.

"Oh, my husband," she said, "my dear, good husband, it breaks my heart to think how anxious you have been, but I'm here safely now. I have walked thirty miles this day, to get back to you. I am, oh, so tired. Hold me on your true heart, my husband and let me rest; and then I will tell you all."

I was fully roused from my apathy now. I put her from me, and answered sternly, "hold you, Rose! A false wife has no right to rest upon her husband's heart. I have loved you so fondly, that I will not tell you how much I must henceforth despise you. I will leave you our home and all its luxuries, but we two shall never meet again. You have—" but I paused, for she fell down apparently lifeless, at my feet, I lifted her upon a couch, and summoning the servants, told them I was about to leave home, and enjoined upon them the strictest and kindest attention to their mistress, under penalty of a discharge from my service. I lingered beside her couch, till I saw the red faintly creeping back into her cheek, and then I put spurs to my horse, and dashed away in pursuit of Wilhelm Heine. I had ridden three days, and the greater part of three nights, upon his track, before I encountered him. I challenged him to mortal combat, and the weapons he chose was pistols. I had had very little practice, while my antagonist was an excellent marksman; and I fancied that if I should succeed in avenging my wrongs, it would be by a special interposition of Providence. We fired at the same moment. I saw his hand tremble as he took aim; and his shot passed harmlessly through the crown of my hat. At the same instant, he fell, mortally wounded, the blood gushing in a stream from his heart.

Bitterly as I hated him, pity for my old friend was uppermost, as I knelt beside him then, and attempted to staunch his wound. "Save yourself, Rudolph," he said, speaking with difficulty, "but listen to the truth, before I die. Your wife is innocent as the purest angel in heaven. How could I be thrown so constantly in her presence and not worship her? But I never dared to breath one word of love in her pure ears. I resolved to take advantage of your absence to spirit her away, and I trusted to

the vain hope that when she found her reputation compromised by her flight with me, she would not venture to go back, and that in time I could convince her of the extent of my devotion, and win a return. Her maid was in my confidence, and adroitly persuaded her to walk in the direction of a certain spot, where I had agreed to be in waiting with my carriage. By force I carried her away. I took her thirty miles that day, and committed her for the night to the custody of the girl. I supposed the woman slept, for during the night Rosaline escaped, and my most persevering efforts to trace her course have been unsuccessful. Thank God my breath has lasted long enough to do her justice."

My heart was with the wife I had left, suffering and desolate; and abandoning my victim to the care of the seconds, I dashed homeward.—Once more it was sunset, when I reached my dwelling, and once more there was no gently voice to bid me welcome. I hurried to my wife's apartment. The last rays of the setting sun flooded her fair face with their glory. She looked supernaturally beautiful, but I saw on the radiant brow, the very shadow of death. She had been exhausted by the weary, toilsome march she had taken to reach my side, and my undesired reproaches had stricken her down, as a woodland flower falls before the fierce blast of the hurricane.

I threw myself on my knees beside her couch, groaning in agony. "Oh, Rose, Rose!" I cried wildly, "forgive me, only forgive me. I know your innocence now; how could I ever have doubted you! My wife, my wife!"

She raised herself by a strong effort, and throwing her arms around my neck, she laid her head upon my bosom.

"I can die happy now, my beloved," she murmured, "Now that I know you will think of poor Rose tenderly when she is gone. You have made my life very bright my husband. I am willing to go home while it is yet noon-day, before the shadows come. God bless my darling!"

Oh, how she had loved me even in her death, loved me and I had killed her. Alas, Rosaline! She died with her lips pressed to mine, her arms twined round my neck, her head upon my bosom. Her last words were a blessing. They bore her to her dreamless slumbers, underneath our favorite tree. White-robed German maidens scattered flowers upon her grave, and over her is a sculptured seraph, with folded wings. I go there at nightfall, and lay my head upon the mound, and I know she stands beside me. I know the kiss of a spirit is upon my brow; spirit fingers part my tresses, and an angel-voice whispers, "Forgive him, oh, Father in Heaven, for he knew not what he did!"

Wilhelm Heine sleeps also in the vault of his fathers, and what wonder if, with those two murdered ones standing between me and heaven, I feel my heart darken with the curse of my race, and shriek out sometimes in my dreams at midnight for freedom from the madman's fetters. I am a young man still. Not a thread of silver blanches the dark richness of my tresses, but for me earth has held but one light, but one joy, and that—is mixed with the grave-mold.

From an Article in the London Quarterly for July.

QUEEN ELIZABETH.

ALTHOUGH the sincerity of her personal religion was doubtful, she enforced a conformity with her external standard by a rigorous persecution in all directions. While the fires of Smithfield still received an occasional Protestant, the lay votary of Rome had to struggle through life with confiscation or imprisonment and his spiritual adviser lived in a perpetual apprehension that the last sight afforded him in this world would be that of his own bowels committed to the flames before his eyes. Vacillation and obstinacy contended for the mastery in her councils; the sovereign's will was indeed law, but that will seldom remained the same for two consecutive days. In great and small matters alike the 'varium et mutabile' betokened the true womanhood of one who had yet cast off the gentle feelings of her sex. No man could calculate on the ultimate punishment or ultimate pardon of a convicted offender. A marriage treaty was entered upon, broken off recommenced, and finally repudiated; a death-warrant was alternately despatched and recalled, and the responsibility thrown at last upon her confused or deluded agents. Without lineal heirs, with a heritage ready to be claimed by a contending hereditary and parliamentary right an absurd personal caprice led her to expose her kingdom to a disputed succession rather than give any one a direct and undoubted interest in her death. In a word, if she had attained to some of the virtues of the other sex, she had acquired with them some of its less amiable characteristics, while of her own she retained nothing but, to say the least, some of its most degrading weaknesses.

We are conscious of a certain amount of exaggeration in both those sketches, in which we have by turns spoken the language of her ardent admirers and of her bitter opponents.—There are lineaments in both portraits which rest more on popular conceptions than on historical evidence, but both are true in the main, and each expresses one side of a strangely mingled and contradictory character, which cannot

be better summed up than in the words of one of the most eminent of her councillors, that "one day she was greater than man, and the next less than woman."

During the latter part of her reign the queen confined herself to favourites chosen from among her own subjects. They were, to the very last, required to assume the demeanour and language of lovers; but we hear no more of any serious or definite proposals of marriage. Raleigh shone for a while as the rival of Hatton, but the place of Leicester passed on his death, to his his young step-son, Robert Earl of Essex. As the son of Lettice Knollys he was of course a distant cousin of Elizabeth's; and some surprise has been expressed that he never found the disgrace of his mother act as a bar to his advancement. The life and character of this celebrated man have been well traced out by his kinsman and biographer. He is one of those persons who just miss of being truly great. With an assemblage of individual qualities of the noblest kind, there was yet wanting some ruling principle to mould them into a character of harmonious excellence. He is nevertheless by far the most attractive hero of Elizabeth's reign. The wise men of her council, her Burghleys and Walsinghams, may be honoured as they deserve in their own department Leicester is more likely, on the whole, to excite censure than to win esteem; but for Essex we feel something like a personal affection. His frank and impetuous disposition, his personal accomplishment, his chivalrous daring in war, his more honourable mercy in the hour of victory, create an interest in him which mere statesmen and mere courtiers alike fail. He obtained the rare distinction of being at once the favourite of the sovereign and the idol of the people; his personal qualities were those just suited to win the heart of the Queen, while his whole demeanour was no less adapted to conciliate popular affection. Even his foibles and vices were of a nature which the public at large is always willing to extenuate. He might be occasionally insolent and imperious alike to sovereign or subject; his gallantry in war might be but little tempered by the calm fore-thought of the true general; his gallantry in peace might often degenerate into licentiousness; but all these things might be readily forgiven in the young high-spirited, and generous Earl. Like his step-father he united a profession of religion with a neglect of its duties; but what in the one probably but pharisaical hypocrisy, was in the other the common alternation of sinning and repenting. No man ever accused him of treachery, or duplicity, or secret poisoning; even in ordinary court intrigues he was liable to be distanced by every competitor. He probably never affected a sentiment which he did not feel, except—we cannot forbear the exception—when he employed the language of amorous devotion to his aged mistress. He died on the scaffold with more of legal guilt than most political victims of his age, but we may be sure with no treason or conspiracy in his heart of hearts. Elizabeth loved him as she had loved no man before; his death embittered many succeeding moments of her life; and in the opinion of some about her, contributed to bring down her grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. More than a year after his execution she told the French ambassador that nothing now contented her spirit, or gave her any enjoyment: she spoke of Essex with sighs, and almost with tears, and was so much moved that De Beaumont found it necessary to give the conversation another turn. Yet so inveterate was the passion of Elizabeth for the game of courtship that six months later the same ambassador announced that she had been seized with a new inclination for a handsome Irishman the Earl of Clanrickarde, who was said to resemble the ill-fated Essex. But he made no response to the advances of the Queen, who then declared that she could not love him because he recalled her sorrow for the man who had perished on the scaffold.

The main facts of the life of Essex are among the most familiar portions of English history, and for the details we cannot do better than refer our readers to the volumes of Captain Devereux. He has carefully investigated the well-known story of the ring, which Lady Nottingham is said to have kept back from the Queen, and thereby to have procured the Earl's death; but though nothing can be fairer than this statement of the evidence, we dissent from his conclusion that the tradition is true. But, instead of discussing these tempting questions, we must pass on to a more general estimate of the relations in which both Essex and his predecessors in the affections of Elizabeth actually stood to the sovereign, at whose court they were certainly something more than councillors or administrators of the royal will.

We have only to conclude with the remarks already made, that her very failing form, in truth, the clearest testimony to her general greatness. The more we condemn the woman, the more we admire the Queen. Vain, irresolute, capricious, mean, cruel, jealous, jeoparding, if not surrendering, the choicest jewel of the female character, she never lost the love and veneration of her people; she has never failed to shine among the most glorious lights in the page of history.—How great, then, must have been the intellectual grandeur, the capacity for government, the discernment of merit, which have in the eyes alike of her contemporaries and her successors