

BURNED LANDS.

On other fields and other scenes the moral laughs from the blue—but not such fields are these...

The months roll over them, and mark no change. But when spring stirs, or autumn stills, the year, perchance some phantom leafage rustles faint...

HOW HE FORGAVE HER.

Those unfortunate people who have never corrected their first proof-sheet, or cut the leaves of the first copy of their first book...

"Dear sir," the letter ran, "your book Mosses and Midgets (delightful and original title), has been given to me to review for the Blackwood Chronicle, and I find so much in it that is sympathetic and true to the instincts of my own nature...

Earle was really my own name, having been given to me, I always thought, as an attempt to impart a dignified sound to my other two extremely insignificant ones, Amy Smith...

I had never known what it was to have a friend like this, a friend in perfect sympathy with my own aims and objects in life, and yet so far above me in intellect and power...

I knew not what to do, so, like most weak people, did nothing. I did not even acknowledge the copy of "Stray Thoughts" he sent me, with a letter even more affectionate than usual...

"One morning, some days after receiving "Stray Thoughts," while I was still debating how I should make my confession, I got a few lines from his author...

I felt overwhelmed with shame, and yet absurdly happy at the idea of really seeing and talking to him. What would he say? Would he forgive me? I looked anxiously in my glass...

could not guess how or where I should meet him, but the next night, when my cousin and I arrived at a musical party...

"Your friend is here to-night?" "Who is my friend?" I thoughtlessly inquired.

"Cyril Brownrigg," she answered, with a laugh. "How will he greet his brother and friend, I wonder?"

I felt myself growing scarlet with shame and annoyance, for I had, of course, been unmercifully teased about that unfortunate dedication, and had carefully explained to all my friends that the author only knew me from my book...

"Have you seen your 'brother and friend' here yet, Mr. Brownrigg? I know she (with a malicious accent on the she) is here tonight, because I have just spoken to her cousin, Mrs. Wrayburn."

A grave voice answered slowly: "I do not quite understand you, Miss Gould."

"No," she laughed. "No, I dare say not! It was a charming little mystery, no doubt, but really it is losing the charm of novelty now, and of course not many of us believe in these quixotic impersonal feelings...

"I beg your pardon," he said; "but your brother—I conclude he is your brother—is a great and dear friend of mine. Is he here tonight?"

"I have no brother," I murmured, and continued hurriedly: "I am Earle Oakhurst—at least my real name is Amy Earle Smith. I wrote Mosses and Midgets, and I added, desperately, seeing how pale and hard his face was growing as the first look of surprise changed to one of cold displeasure..."

"You feared?" he inquired, quietly, as I paused. "Yes," I said, feeling my cheeks burn and my eyes fill with tears...

"And did you really imagine that to deceive and make me ridiculous, was the best means of keeping my friendship?" "Yes—no—I don't know. I did not think much about it until I saw the dedication, and then I felt too ashamed and unhappy to confess...

"You can do nothing. Will you allow me to take you back to your cousin, who, I believe, has been inquiring for you?" he asked, with a sudden change to icy conventional tones.

I rose without a word, but as we entered the room I whispered: "Can you forgive me?" "No, I cannot," he answered, and with a bow left me...

"After that miserable evening, though I frequently saw Cyril Brownrigg at musical or literary gatherings, he never spoke a word to me beyond what mere politeness rendered necessary; and yet I always felt a strange new joy in his presence...

One night a large party of us were dining together, Miss Gould, Cyril Brownrigg, my cousin and myself being among the number. After dinner we were all going to the theatre to hear a celebrated French actress in one of her most powerful impersonations...

"I suppose I may congratulate you, Mr. Brownrigg, and I do, very heartily. I really think you have been as successful as you could wish, and every one is saying how entirely you deserve your good fortune..."

"Thank you," he answered, quietly, with, I fancied, a half glance at me. "I do consider myself very fortunate and hope to be even more so before long."

"Ah!" she said with a little laugh, "we shall even have to congratulate you on your marriage, I suppose?"

"I could not catch his answer, as just then our hostess rose, and I had to follow; but as we went upstairs a girl I knew said: 'I suppose Miss Gould is to be congratulated. Have you heard of her engagement? A case of love at first sight, I hear. By the by, when will Mr. Brownrigg's new book appear? It is also to be dedicated to his brother and friend?'"

The old joke had not died out even yet, and now came as a keener shame and pain than ever. I made no reply, and though I heard afterward that Mme. Sophie Lenoir surpassed herself, everything that night seemed a blank to me at the theatre. Voices and faces mixed themselves up together in torturing confusion, and the brilliant light seemed only to show me more clearly the utter blackness of my heart and life...

lignant light seemed only to show me more clearly the utter blackness of my heart and life. My cousin, perhaps, guessed something of my misery, for she said: "Don't talk to Amy; let her dream. No doubt she is composing sonnets on the actress or the play!"

So they laughed and left me alone. Suddenly my apathy was broken by a cry of "Fire!" repeated in louder tones and again the people sprang from their seats, as thin streaks of smoke were seen curling round behind the stage...

Under ordinary circumstances it would, of course, have been perfectly easy for us in the stalls to hurry out, but for some reason the lights suddenly went out, and at the same moment a rush was made from behind, the people in the pit becoming frantic in the darkness, and finding their own entrance quickly choked, tried to force their way over the stalls...

The confusion was terrible. Women shrieked and sobbed, men swore, and when every now and again a flickering flame blazed higher than before, it showed a sickening scene of struggle and despair...

I felt so miserable that I never thought of leaving my seat, but sat staring stupidly, as if the frightful scene was no concern of mine, when I was aroused to tingling life again by Cyril's voice close to my ear: "Take my arm," he said in low, hurried tones, "and for Heaven's sake hold fast!"

I clasped it with both my hands, but without a word. He forgave me, then; he cared for me; he wished to save; and the joy of this thought took away all fear. At the same moment the curtains of one of the boxes near blazed up for a few seconds, and by the light I saw my cousin's agonized face, as she struggled to keep on her feet, and was pressed back by the surging, maddened mass from the pit; she saw us, too, and reached her hand out to us...

"Amy! Mr. Brownrigg!" she cried; "help me! do not leave me!" "It is impossible to save you both," he said, hoarsely. "Good God! what can I do?"

I saw what he could do, and said: "Press forward, think only of getting out of this horrible place..."

Then the light died away again, and with a smothered sob of intense thankfulness I slid my hands from his arm, and taking my cousin's, gently slipped them into the same place and pushed her forward, saying: "Keep firm hold. I will follow close behind."

She was half dead with terror, and scarcely understood, but clung blindly, and he, in the struggle and darkness, did not notice the change, and pushed his way forward, shielding my cousin as well as he could...

I kept close to them until we reached the passage leading to the door of exit into the street, but then somebody seized me by the shoulders and dragged me roughly back, slipping into my place. I lost my balance and fell, and for one horrible minute felt a sickening sense of suffocation as the rush passed over me; the next I struggled on my feet again. Fortunately I had fallen close to the wall, so was able to support myself against it, and felt my way by its guidance through the blinding smoke in the direction of the door...

I was nearly crushed to death, and very sore and bruised, but I felt the still glow of that great joy in my heart, and thanked God with all my soul that I had been able to show Cyril I was not entirely frivolous and heartless. Death seemed nothing to me in comparison with the knowledge that he loved me, for I had seen the love I longed for in his agonized eyes, and heard it in his voice, during that momentary flicker...

"Where is she?" I asked, faintly, looking around for my cousin. "She is safe," answered Cyril's voice, "quite safe at home by this time; but you, Amy, are you much hurt? How could I have missed you? I shall never forget my horror and misery when I got outside the theatre and found your cousin clinging to me, and you, I knew not where. I rushed in again, but was helpless in the darkness, until at last I found you, quite close to the door!"

"Have you quite forgiven me?" I asked. "Yes, my dearest, I forgave you long ago, and love you, too; but after that evening, when I was so hard and merciless, I feared to tell you what I felt, and you always seemed to avoid me, and treat me so coldly..."

"Oh," I said, between a laugh and a sob, "I thought you never meant to speak to me again, and I heard a lady congratulating you on your approaching marriage to Miss Gould."

"Miss Gould?" he exclaimed. "Why, she has just become engaged to Thornton, the artist who painted her portrait in the R. A. this year. What can you mean?" "I thought," I stammered—"I heard she was engaged directly after hearing you congratulated, and so I thought—"

"You were entirely mistaken," he said, gravely. "That lady was congratulating me on the announcement of the speedy appearance of my new book, and suggested that probably my marriage would be the next subject for congratulation. But there is only one woman I would marry, Amy, the 'brother and friend' I know so well and love so dearly. It is my turn now to ask for forgiveness. Can you forgive me, Amy, and let my new book be dedicated 'To the God-given wife and friend' I hope to have always beside me henceforth? Can you, Amy?"

"Yes," I answered, and that "yes" has been the key to my earthly paradise, for surely no other woman can ever have been so happy as I am.

There is no doubt one is absurdly joyful over one's first proof-sheet and first review, but Cyril and I always say, after all, the last is better than the first, and we ought to know, for we have just finished correcting what will certainly be our very last proof-sheet. We have grown old together, and since that terrible yet joyful evening, and as we sit hand in hand by the fire, and recall the past, we feel that though the first book was a beautiful preface, yet

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the deepest joy and holiest content came afterward, when the glamor of poetry and passion being past, we still felt the glory of art, and the unselfish beauty of love glow clearer and more divine with every day we passed together, and every line we wrote.—Once a Week.

ENGLISH AS SHE IS SUNG.

A Fashionable Choir's Assaults Upon Scripture and Sense.

Attending service not long ago, in an elegant church where they worshiped God with taste in a highly æsthetic manner, the choir began that scriptural poem that compares Solomon with the lilies of the field, somewhat to the former's disadvantage.

Although never possessing a great admiration for Solomon, nor considering him a suitable person to hold up as a shining example before the Young Men's Christian Association, still a pang of pity for him was felt when the choir, after expressing unbounded admiration for the lilies of the field, which it is doubtful if they ever observed very closely, began to tell the congregation through the mouth of the soprano that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed."

Straightway the soprano was reinforced by the basso, who declared that Solomon was most decidedly and emphatically not arrayed—was not arrayed. Then the alto ventured it as her opinion that Solomon was not arrayed, when the tenor, without a moment's hesitation, sang as if it had been officially announced that "he was not arrayed." Then when the feelings of the congregation had been harrowed up sufficiently, and our sympathies all aroused for poor Solomon, whose numerous wives allowed him to go about in such a fashion, even in that climate, the choir, all together, in a cool and composed manner, informed us that the idea they intended to convey was that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed "like one of these." These what? So long a time had passed since they sang of the lilies that the thread was entirely lost, and by "these" one naturally concluded that the choir was designated. Arranged like one of these? We should think not, indeed. Solomon in a Prince Albert or a cutaway coat? Solomon with an eyeglass and a moustache, his hair cut pompadour? No, most decidedly, Solomon, in the very zenith of his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

Despite the experience of the morning, the hope still remained that in the evening a sacred song might be sung in a manner that would not excite our risibilities, or leave the impression that we had been listening to a case of blackmail. But again off started the nimble soprano with the very laudable though startling announcement, "I will wash." Straightway the alto, not to be outdone, declared she would wash. The tenor, finding it to be the thing, warbled forth he would wash. Then the deep-chested basso, as though calling up all his fortitude for the plunge, bellowed forth the stern resolve that he would wash.

Next a short interlude on the organ, strongly suggestive of the escaping of steam or splash of the waves, after which the choir, individually and collectively, asserted the firm, unshaken resolve that they would wash.

At last they solved the problem, stating that they proposed to "Wash their hands in innocence, so will the altar of the Lord be compassed."—Good Housekeeping.

The Story of Stephen Foster. If Whittington's cat cannot be placed among well-authenticated Felidae, many a man has attained the glory of lord mayoralty in ways fully as romantic as those of Whittington in the nursery tale. Stephen Foster was a debtor confined in the jail of Ludgate, which once stood over the gate on the hill, a very little way west of St. Paul. There was a gate at which every day a prisoner was allowed to sit to collect alms for his fellows, and here one day Foster sat. A wealthy widow passing by gave him some money, inquired into his case and took him into her service. He saved his wages, traded successfully, married the widow, and in due time became Sir Stephen Foster, lord mayor of London. In his prosperity he forgot not his days of adversity, and founded a charity for prisoners which was long kept up in the jail of Ludgate and commemorated in his epitaph.—Century Magazine.

Sagacity of a Horse. A remarkable illustration of the sagacity of the horse, says the Birmingham (England) Mail, reaches us from the Giltot-road, Edgbaston. A man named Nathan Gilbey, a coal dealer and hauler, rents a field there in which a horse and goat have been in the habit of grazing. Recently a port of young roughts from the Inchnield Gang-road amused themselves by throwing stones at the goat, and some of the most cowardly ruffians beat it with a stick. The horse raced to its rescue, and seized one young rascal by the coat-collar, and flung him clear over the hedge into the road.

WINTER EVENING.

Tonight the very hopes springing by Toss gold from whitened nostrils. In a dream the streets that narrow to the westward gleam like rows of golden palaces; and high from all the crowded chimneys tower and die a thousand aureoles. Down in the west the brimming plains beneath the sunset rest. One burning sea of gold. Soon, soon shall fly the glorious vision, and the hour shall feel. A mightier master; soon from height to height, With silence and the sharp, unifying stars, Stern creeping frosts and winds that touch like steel.

Out of the depth beyond the eastern bars, glittering and still, shall come the awful night. —A Lampman, in Scribner's Magazine.

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