

LITERATURE.

SONG.

All around and all above thee,
In the hushed and charmed air,
All things woo thee, all things love thee,
Maiden fair!

Gentlest zephyrs perfume breathing,
Waft to thee thier tribute sweet,
And for thee the spring is wreathing
Garlands meet.

In their caverned, cool recesses
Songs for thee the fountains frame;
Whatso'er the wave caresses
Lisps thy name.

Greener verdure, brighter blossom,
Wheresoever footsteps stray,
O'er the earth's enamoured bosom,
Live away.

Whereso'er thy presence lingers,
Whereso'er thy brightness beams,
Fancy weaves with cunning fingers
Sweetest dreams.

And the heart forgets thee, never,
Thy young beauty's one delight,
There it dwells, and dwells for ever,
Ever bright.

THE FATAL BRIDE.

BEING A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE REMINISCENCES
OF A BACHELOR.

(Founded on an event which actually occurred.)

(Continued.)

What I had just heard, satisfied me that the catastrophe, whatever it might be, was certainly not far distant; and with a degree of anxiety proportioned to the imminence of the event, in which I could not help feeling the profoundest interest, I knocked at the hall-door, and was promptly shown up stairs, and found myself *vis-a-vis* with Captain Jennings.

I found him in his dressing-gown and slippers. He looked pale and anxious, but had quite recovered his coolness and self-possession by this time.

'I feel that I have taken a great liberty, in giving you so much trouble,' he continued, after the usual salutations had been interchanged, and I had taken a chair; 'but, with the exception of Doctor Robertson, with whom my acquaintance is just as slight as with you, I have no other gentleman to apply to in this most unhappy affair'—(here he slightly shrugged his shoulders, with an air of chagrin and discontent, which somehow impressed me more than all that had yet passed, with a conviction of that callous selfishness which I believed to be the basis of his character.) 'You and Doctor Robertson are alone acquainted with the particulars of this business, and you will, I trust, forgive the preference which makes me, not perhaps unnaturally, select you, rather than him, as the depository of the only confidence I have to make.'

He said this in his most engaging and conciliatory manner; but, as I bowed in acknowledgment of the preference, I felt my original dislike of him rather increased than abated.

'I offer no defence whatever for my conduct; God knows I blame myself as severely as anybody else can possibly do,' he continued, with a contrite shake of the head; 'I ran blindly into extreme temptation, and have compromised, not only myself, but a young lady, whom I would gladly die to extricate from the unfortunate position into which I have unguardedly led her.'

Equivocal as had been his agitation that morning, it was at all events, genuine; but now he had recalled all the artificial graces of his manner. I saw in the polished ease of his remorse, and in the studied melancholy of his compassion, something indescribably repulsive and abominable.

'Without further tasking your patience,' he resumed, at the same time taking a paper from his desk, 'I have to entreat your consent to become the depository of this paper. It is a piece of evidence which may throw an important light upon this affair; the copy of a document which I keep in my possession, and which you will, perhaps, oblige me by retaining in yours; the nature of it you will see at a glance, and I have endorsed upon it the name and address of the party whose testimony it is, so that if need be, there can be no difficulty in applying it properly. All I ask of you is, to guard it equally from destruction, and from the eyes of all others but yourself; and that whenever I write to you to that effect, you will kindly hand it to my law agent in town, whom I will name to you, whenever it becomes necessary to employ one. Will you kindly undertake this commission?'

I could hardly decline an office, as it seemed so easily performed. I so little liked the applicant himself, however, that a slight and not very gracious hesitation, preceded my acceptance of its duties. He thanked me, however, profusely; and I had risen for the purpose of taking my departure, when a vehicle of some kind stopped at the hall door, and a thundering double-knock announced the arrival of a visitor.

'Tell them I'm dressing,' said Jennings to the servant

who appeared at the room-door; and in the next moment the summons at the hall-door was answered.

'Captain Jennings is dressing for the evening,' I heard the servant say, in reply to the inquiry of the footman who had knocked.

This intimation, however, had not the desired effect, for the steps of the carriage were let down with a sharp clang, and almost at the same moment, I heard a different voice, that I presumed, of the visitor in person demand—

'Is your master at home?'

The same answer was repeated, and the applicant for admission replied in a sharp decisive tone—

'Ha! dressing for the evening, very good; then he is at home?'

'But, sir, I beg pardon; he positively cannot see anybody at present,' urged the man.

'He shall certainly see me,' retorted the visitor, in the same tone. 'I know the way—don't mind.'

From the moment the clatter of the carriage-steps smote my ear, my mind unaccountably misgave me, and a foreboding of impending collision and mischief, filled me with almost painful suspense. My instinctive apprehensions did not deceive me. The drawing-room door was pushed abruptly open, and young Chadleigh entered the room.

The moment I saw him, I perceived that in his face which warned me of the truth of my vague anticipations. Pale, stern and collected, he walked slowly a few steps into the room, bowed with an ominous and icy formality to Captain Jennings, and in a tone so cold and deadly, as I think I never heard before or since, said—

'Captain Jennings, I presume you apprehend the subject of my visit?'

It was scarcely necessary to put the question. He had advanced to receive Chadleigh with his usual air of frank and easy gaiety; their eyes met, and in that encounter he read the truth—the smile passed away in an instant from his countenance, and was succeeded by a look, to the full as stern and ominous as that which confronted him. The young men felt that a deadly quarrel lay between them, and I think I never saw a more portentous greeting.

'You have not announced it, sir,' said Jennings, with a cold and measured politeness; 'but I have no hesitation in saying, that I do suspect the cause of your visit.'

'Good, sir!' replied Chadleigh, in the same constrained voice; 'I came on behalf of Miss Mary Chadleigh's father, and in my own right as her brother, to demand of you, in the first place, where that young lady at present is?'

'Without meaning to dispute your right to put that question,' replied Jennings, 'I mean to stand upon mine, to decline answering it.'

'You refuse to answer?' said his visitor, while his countenance darkened.

'I do—most distinctly refuse,' repeated he.

'Pray, think better of it, sir,' replied Chadleigh, with a gastly mimicry of courtesy.

'Mr. Chadleigh,' replied Jennings haughtily, 'I recommend you strongly to act as a man of the world in this business. The mischief, whatever it be, is now past cure. If you will only allow events to take their course, scandal may be avoided, and a great deal of unnecessary trouble, exposure, and violence spared. If you persist in pushing this matter to extremity, do so; upon your head be the consequences.'

'Sir,' said Chadleigh, 'you greatly mistake me, if you fancy that your mean and perfidious conduct, in spiriting away the daughter of a gentleman, who frankly told you that he peremptorily declined the connexion which your conduct seemed to offer—if you fancy that your base and mercenary conduct in inveighing her, a young lady entitled to a fortune, and with most suitable prospects before her, into a marriage with you, a mere adventurer—'

'Mr. Chadleigh, before you proceed further, let me ask you, have you actually made up your mind to push this affair to a public quarrel?' insisted Jennings.

'Yes, sir,' retorted Chadleigh, proudly and bitterly.

'Mary Chadleigh has selected for herself—embraced her own degradation—married a man whom her father expressly forbid his house, because he suspected him of entertaining schemes he has but too securely realized. She is now, and henceforth to Sir Arthur and me, a stranger; we renounce and disown her; and by —, she shall not stand between you and the punishment you deserve.' He paused; and added emphatically—

'I presume you will be at home by eleven o'clock to-night?'

'Certainly, sir,' answered Jennings calmly.

His visitor bowed sternly, and began to withdraw.

'I wish, if you please, to add one word,' said Jennings.

'Certainly,' said Chadleigh, returning.

Jennings looked down for a moment, in agitated and guilty abstraction—bit his lips, and grew deadly pale as though inwardly agonized with a mortal struggle.

'I have to request your attention, too, Mr. —,' he said, addressing me, and arresting my departure 'It is, unfortunately, due to myself that you should hear what I am about to say.'

'Be so good as to say, without further delay, what you desire me to hear,' said Chadleigh.

'Yes, yes; you have forced me to it,' said Jennings, drawing himself up, and looking with a steady, and singularly evil scowl, full in his visitor's face. 'You talked of marriage?'

'Yes, sir,' replied Chadleigh.

'Well, sir, as you will have it a quarrel between us, it is unfortunately due to myself to say, that there is no such thing as marriage in the case.'

Jennings spoke these words with a resolute and measured distinctness, which left no room for misapprehension.

'No!—no marriage!' said Chadleigh after a hideous pause of some seconds, and speaking almost in a whisper, like one half-stunned, while he returned the guilty gaze of his transformed friend with a stare of actual horror.

For my own part, I confess I was scarcely one degree less astonished than Chadleigh, at this utterly unlooked for declaration.

'Not married—not married! Why, great God, can it—is it credible! You monstrous, measureless villain—'

The flimsy varnish of affected courtesy was gone, and the hell-born passions it had masked broke forth in an instant, in undisguised and titanic revelation. With one hoarse execration, shrieked rather than spoken, Chadleigh advanced towards Jennings.

'Take care, Chadleigh—take care; I would not harm you,' said Jennings sternly.

'Hold, for God's sake,' I cried, interposing between the two young men. 'Mr. Chadleigh, I implore of you—remember, consider; what can come of this?'

'Let me go, sir,' cried Chadleigh, hoarsely.

'Mr. Jennings,' I cried, still clinging to Chadleigh, for in his furious proxysm of excitement, I could not tell what dreadful results might possibly attend a physical encounter, 'for God's sake, avoid this; you'll have bloodshed else. Mr. Chadleigh, reflect; stay for one moment.'

'Let me go, sir; let me go, or by —, I'll strike you down,' cried Chadleigh, straining and struggling to reach the object of his fury.

'Get into your room, Mr. Jennings, unless you wish for murder. Go, for heaven's sake,' I repeated. 'I can't prevent it longer. I tell you go—go, in God's name. Will you go nor not?'

Jennings' momentary agitation had entirely disappeared with the immediate menace of such an encounter as that which threatened him. His physical courage no one had ever doubted; and the moment it was tasked, his intrepid calmness instantly returned. He hesitated for a second; then, with one glance of mingled remorse and disdain at Chadleigh, he turned, and strode sullenly into his chamber, flinging the door close after him. The key was, fortunately, in the outside; and without giving Chadleigh time to get before me, I sprang to the door and locked it, and placing the key in my pocket, stood facing the baffled assailant.

'Sir,' he said bitterly, 'by —, you shall answer for this.'

'When and how you please, Mr. Chadleigh,' I replied, sadly. 'I have done my duty and no more, in preventing a murderous fray; and I thank God I have succeeded.' He stood undecided for a few seconds. At last he said—

'Perhaps you were right, sir; and I ought to ask your pardon. You were right, sir, and I was wrong. Pardon me.'

I gave him the assurance he required, and he added abruptly—

'This is no place for me. Good night, sir.'

So saying, he left the room; and I, from the window, saw him re-enter the carriage and drive away, ere I returned to turn the key in Jennings' room. I did so, and called him; there was no answer. I pushed the door open a little, and looked in. He had thrown himself into a chair, and was sitting close by a table, his forehead laid upon his arm, and his face concealed—he was sobbing. He started up abruptly, on becoming aware of my presence, and with a violent effort commanded himself.

'Mr. —,' said he, 'pray don't leave me for a few minutes, Mr. —, you don't know what I am suffering, and what I have suffered. I am about the most miserable and unfortunate mortal you ever saw or heard of—indeed I am. Sir, you can't understand—I can't explain to you the horrors of my position.'

'The poor young lady,' I said, coldly, 'is certainly impressed with the belief that she is legally married. Dr. Robertson distinctly told me so—nay, he himself believed it.'

'Yes, yes, yes,' he interrupted, vehemently; 'but I can prove it is not so. The paper I have placed in your hand will show you that there has been no such thing. She thinks it—she believes, no doubt, poor creature; but she's wrong—quite wrong.'

I was greatly shocked at the sinister eagerness with which Jennings laboured to impress this fact, which, of all others, I thought he ought naturally to be most anxious to conceal for the present, upon my conviction; and I could not forbear saying—

'At all events, you will not fail to make all the reparation now in your power, and—'

'What reparation?' he asked vehemently.

'There is but one,' I answered, 'which you can now offer; and that is, marriage.'

'You are right, indeed,' he answered, sullenly, after a long pause: 'it is the only—the only reparation for such a wrong.'

He sank into a moody and compunctious silence. At last he said, abruptly—

'They talk of generosity, and impulse, and all that, but take my word for it, prudence is worth them all. My own utter want of reflection has done it. I have been