

THE SATURDAY REVIEW

A Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, and News.

"This is true Liberty, when Freeborn Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free."—Euripides.

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LITERATURE.

TIME AND LOVE.

AN ALLEGORY.

Old Time and young Love, on a morning in May,
Chanced to meet by a river in halcyon weather,
And greeting for once, (this a fable you'll say)
In the same little boat made a voyage together.

Strong, steady and patient, Time pulled at his oar,
And swift o'er the water the voyagers go;
But Love, who was thinking of Pleasure on shore,
Complained that his boatman was wretchedly slow.

But Time, the old sailor, expert at his trade,
And knowing the leagues that remained to be done,
Content with the regular speed that he made,
Tugged away at his oar and kept steadily on.

Love, always impatient of doubt or delay,
Now signalled for aid of the favouring gales,
And scolded at Time, in the sanest way,
For not having furnished the shallop with sails.

But Time, as serene as a calendar saint,
Whatever the greybeard was thinking upon,
All deaf to the voice of the Yonker's complaint,
Tugged away at his oar and kept steadily on.

Love, vexed at the heart, only charmed the more,
And cried, "By the gods, in what country or clime
Was ever a lubber who handled an oar
In so lazy a fashion as old Father Time!"

But Time only smiled in a cynical way,
(This often the smile with your elderly Dou),
As one who knows more than he cares to display,
And still at his oar pulled steadily on.

Grown calmer, at last, the exuberant boy
Envoys the minutes with snatches of rhyme;
The voyage, at length, he begins to enjoy,
And soon has forgotten the presence of Time!

But Time, the severe, egotistical elf,
Since the day that his travels he entered upon,
Has never for a moment forgotten himself,
But tugs at his oar and keeps steadily on.

Awaking, once more, Love sees with a sigh
That the River of Time he is presently passed,
And now he breaks forth with a piteous cry,
"O Time, gentle Time! you are rowing too fast!"

But Time, well knowing that Love will be dead,
Dead—dead—in the boat ere the voyage is done,
Only gives him an ominous shake of the head,
While he tugs at his oar and keeps steadily on.

THE STATION MASTER AT LONGLEY.

"I am an old man you say? Well you are right there; but one is not really considered old at the age of forty-five. Why am I bald, then? Ah, friend, you may well ask! Men do not usually lose their hair so early in life, and my scalp was polished in this shining fashion some fifteen years ago. It took only one grim night's work to do all."

"A story?"

"Yes, comrade, there is a story about this poor bald pate of mine; if you wish to hear it, I will tell you. It is an old story here, and for familiar to our friends about now, but I fear I have gabbled it somewhat too often when the bottle has been going round, but as you have never heard it before you will find it as good as new. The up train is not due for a full hour yet, and perhaps my story will help as well as anything else to kill time. Fill your glasses, then, and draw nearer to the fire, for that drifting snow outside does not make this winter night too warm."

"You say you knew at once, when first you saw me, that I had served. Well, no doubt the soldier who has been in active service always bears the stamp upon him. I smelt powder on me like no one else. I was nine years in the Fusiliers, I served in Canada; and, after reaching the grade of Sergeant, I was dangerously wounded in a rencontre with the Kildars at the Cayo, and was sent home with a pension. The restoration of health brought back my constitutional antipathy to idleness, and, after knocking about in some discontent for some time, I at last succeeded in procuring occupation as ticket clerk at the Longley Station on this line."

"Among the few acquaintances I made during the year I spent there was a young fellow named Carston, the son of a wealthy sheep farmer, who lived some six miles from the station. A clever fellow he was—the real manager of the farm—and on market days and such like, he was a frequent traveller on our line. Young Carston and I had come to be great friends, and more than one pleasant holiday had I spent with him (for even our railway officials have holidays now and again) up among the hills, black and barren as they were. I dwell upon this (rather tediously perhaps) because it is to Frank Carston I owe this bald crown."

"It was a cold, cheerless, winter evening, as I stood upon the platform waiting for the mail train from the north, which was a little behind its time. There was no passenger for Longley; the train would not wait two minutes, and my work would be over when it had passed on. I was pleasantly anticipating a quiet night by my own fireside, with a hot cup of tea and the London morning paper, when the train came dashing in and pulled up with a shriek, and a head was thrust out from one of the carriages, while the familiar voice of my friend Carston bellowed:

"Ned, old fellow," he said, as I hurried up to him, "I want you to do me a great favor. You see this bag; it contains two hundred sovereigns. To-morrow is rent day, and I got this cash for the old man this morning. You know the crazy he is for paying in gold. I am going through to London on urgent business, and I want you to take charge of the money and this letter, and carry them out to our place. Get your sort of conveyance and drive out; don't mind expense—I'll settle all that. I know that as a friend, you'll do this business carefully for me. Tell father I'll be home to-morrow night if possible."

"Oh wait the train, and before I could utter a word, I was left alone on the platform with the heavy bag of gold in my hand. The commission with which I had been so unexpectedly entrusted was a very disagreeable one that bleak winter night, but it

would be childish to disappoint a friend. I went home to my lodgings, got some tea, loaded a small double-barrelled pistol (an unusual precaution suggested by the thought of the gold), put it in my pocket, and wrapped my great coat around me. It was no easy thing to get a carriage, fly, or gig, in a little place like Longley, at that hour; and what was a walk of four miles to me, when sure of a stiff glass of something warm and a good bed that night, and a pleasant canter on a sure-footed nag back to the railway station in the morning?

"The night, though cold, was dry, and the moon was up. To be sure some ominous clouds were gathering round her, and she was rising, but steadily sinking, and would soon be hidden behind the hills. No matter; I should be far on my way before her light was gone, and those clouds, I thought, were not likely to change into what they promised—a snow shower—till I was safely unscathed by old Carston's fireside. All went well enough for the first half-hour, and as the brick walk made the blood course warmly through my veins, I thought how much pleasanter this was than to be jolted and bruised in some crazy, lumbering old vehicle as the Longley Inn was capable of supplying, over that rough, wild mountain road. But my snipecock of the weather proved sorely deceptive. Before the half-hour had well gone by, the snow-storm came down fierce and fast, and the moon was no longer visible. There was no help now, however, but all the more need to get to my journey's end as soon as possible; so I clutched my stick with a firmer grasp, and quickened my pace. But the thick, steady fall of snow darkened the air that I could not see twice my arm's length before me; and I had not been walking many minutes when the apprehension stole upon me that I was fast losing my way. It was a dangerous locality I was in just then, in the midst of that snow-storm, for the road would cover hill and moor, without wall or fence; and, where the snow was rapidly covering heath and path alike, to trace my route with accuracy became impossible.

"Human life had been sacrificed more than once, amid snow-drifts, on that wild moorland, and sheep innumerable had been lost. To make my danger greater, the place was full of pits and hollows, where mining speculators had tried to sink shafts in former years. Should I wander off the beaten track, the chances were that I might meet a broken neck in one of those confounded holes.

"I stumbled on at random. I had lost my bearings, utterly; and in a few minutes I knew as little where I was as if I had been suddenly set down, bound and blindfolded, in the middle of the moor. I was making way, sure, as best I could, through the snow drift; but, for all I knew, I might be going in any direction but the right one. Was I on the beaten road, or was I on the heath?"

"Another moment cruelly settled my doubts. One step more—my foot found a rest; and I fell headlong into a broad, deep pit. Stunned by the fall, I lay there I know not how long. Bruised and giddy, I tried at last to regain my feet, when a pang of exquisite pain shot through my left arm; and the bag was broken.

"As with my right hand I now tried to steady myself and grope my way out of the hole, the agony I suffered was indescribable; yet my first thought was to feel for the bag of gold which was still safely suspended from my neck. I crawled out of the pit, and pushed forward on chance, more slowly this time, though, and cautiously, for the terror of those evil holes was strong upon me now. But I grew weaker every moment, and a vague and sickly alarm seized me. Suppose I should swoon upon that moor—my head was giddy and my limbs utterly aching; and what a dreadful death under the fast-falling snow awaited me!

"At this horrible thought a cold sweat suffused my whole body, and my parched tongue clove to my palate; to my last hour I shall not forget the horror of that picture of death which rose before my mind's eye that night. The pain of my arm grew more excessive every moment; it lanced my side like a leaden weight. But, strangely to say, even with the grim terror of death before me, a wild desire began to creep over me to lie down upon the snow and rest. Had I done so, no doubt, the last sleep would have followed. But luckily just then a faint glimmer of light caught my eye, and with the eagerness of awakened hope, I hurried towards it. In a few minutes I found myself at the open door of a wretched cabin, on the hearth of which a wood fire was burning.

"Hallo!—I was the greeting I received from a rough voice; 'who the— are you, and what do you want here such a night as this?'

"The wood which burned on the hearth was fresh and damp, and filled the cabin with smoke as well as with a pungent odor. It took a little time to discover, in the far corner from which the voice proceeded, the figure of a man, large, stout, and broad shouldered, raggedly clad, with dark scowling face and bullet head, covered with coarse, black, matted hair.

"I hurriedly explained to this person my misadventure. He rose and pushed towards me the stool on which he had been seated. 'Sit you down, man,' he said somewhat roughly; 'you look weak, and a broken arm is no trifle. Though what we can do for you, hang me if I know. But what errand took you out upon the moor such a night as this?'

"From Longley to old Carston's," he exclaimed. "Whew! Why, man, you chose a very roundabout way to get to your journey's end."

"Roundabout? What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean that Carston's is nearly in the opposite direction," was his answer. "And you have been steadily walking away from it for the last half-hour at least."

"And how far am I from it now?"

"Some four good miles at least."

"Here was a discovery; but what was to be done? I asked the strange goodman to Carston's, and offered to pay him well. 'Not for all the money they say old Carston has in the bank,' he answered, 'would I attempt to go over the moor to-night. Why, man, the snow is falling so thick you couldn't see a yard before you. It would be as much as your lives are worth. Men have not their doom upon that moor outside before now, on such a night as this.'

"I was in the danger of discovery I'm afraid to see a yard before you. It would be as much as your lives are worth. Men have not their doom upon that moor outside before now, on such a night as this."

bring chance of aid? There was no alternative.

"All you can do," said the man, 'is to keep where you are to night; and be thankful that you have the shelter of even these miserable walls on such a night as this. It will be well even if this infernal snow storm does not bury the cabin itself before morning. If you want anything to eat, you can have a crust of bread—that's all we have—and in that room inside you may lie down on the straw till morning comes. As you do look horribly beaten up—here, Sally, up with you, lass, and get to the other corner, beside the fire, to which these words were addressed, and now behold, for the first time, a young woman sitting beside a child that lay asleep upon the ground. I turned, and found her eyes fixed upon me with a strange, eager gaze. She was miserably clad, and looked much and thin, yet her face showed the traces of such personal beauty. She was delicately fair, every feature was beautifully moulded; and her long, dark, wavy hair, of a golden tinge, actually glistened in the blaze of fire. But what struck me most about her was the hungry, wolfish glare of her eyes so unnaturally large—fastened as it was upon me; that wild, eager look made my heart sick with a vague feeling of dread and dislike, and I could not help but mutter to myself: 'but she went to a large chest at the other end of the room (almost the only article of furniture in the place), and took from it a large black bottle and a broken cup.

"Come," said the man, taking the cup and the bottle, and pouring some of the contents of one into the other, 'you did not expect, perhaps, to see anything like this in the shop; but I had it on the moor. No matter; it came to us some way. Try it—the brandy is good, and you could not take better physick to-night.'

"Most gratefully did I seize the cup and drink off its contents; and never was cordial more welcome. The blood came coursing warmly through my veins, and I forgot the apprehension stole upon me that I was fast losing my way. It was a dangerous locality I was in just then, in the midst of that snow-storm, for the road would cover hill and moor, without wall or fence; and, where the snow was rapidly covering heath and path alike, to trace my route with accuracy became impossible.

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save them from the death of dogs. I will do it myself!"

"Easy, lass," he said, catching her by the wrist and drawing her back to her seat again. "You're a plucky gal, lass; but I'd be well waddled if a woman like you had not the courage to do me myself? I told you I did not like the job; I had rather get at money any other way; but I didn't tell you that I wouldn't do it. Sit you down, and let's talk it over. The chap is fast asleep now—the fatigue and the brandy have done for him, and you can hear him moaning as he sleeps. Look at the black eyes he has under his ears. A cloth upon his mouth and my hand upon his windpipe may be enough. There will be no signs of blood, and, when they do find him after the snow melts, they will say he perished in the storm."

"Now, Bill," said the woman with a horrid show of admiration, 'you talk like a man and a wise one. I begin to know you better. Well, lass, he said, 'consider the thing as done. Just give me the bottle.'

"He took it, raised it to his lips, and drank a deep draught. With trembling hand I felt up the door for bolt or lock. There was a wooden bolt only. Gently and silently I pushed it home, then crept back to my bed and searched for my pistol, resolved to sell my life dearly.

"I got the pistol, drew back the hammer, and felt the trigger; the caps were gone! I tried the barrels; they were drenched with water! I saw it all; the pistol had been dealt with while I slept at the fire; and I was now utterly at the mercy of those fiends. But I had little time to waste in thought, for the next moment the door was shaken by a heavy hand. I lay back, and moaned and snored like one in a troubled sleep."

"The door is bolted on the inside," I heard the man whispering; 'the fellow fastened it before he went to sleep.'

"Then burst it open," said the woman.

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