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Choice Literature.

THE DEATH BED BETROTHAL.

[CONTINUED FROM OUR LAST.]

On New Year's Day Ellen completed her nineteenth year. The night before her husband brought home a valuable suite of pearls; we were invited to a large party on the second of the month, and he desired her to wear them then. This cold kindness completely overcame her, and she left the room in tears. For a few minutes he walked moodily up and down the floor, then came and stood before me.

"Can you explain Mrs. Livingstone's strange conduct, cousin? I have done everything for her that money can do, and now she is not happy. Do you suppose she wanted some other article of jewelry? If she did, she shall have them. Anything at all that she will ask for, she shall have; and all I ask in return is that she will be happy. Of all things in the world, I hate to see a woman in tears. I promised my mother to make her happy, and I will do so if I can.

"Then you need give her no more jewels, Edward, for they are only valuable in her sight as your gifts. Bestow a few more smiles upon her, stay at home, and read or talk to her, instead of going so much to your club; give her more of the love for which she is pining, and less of the splendor which sickens her; and believe me, you will soon see her look happy."

Edward heard me through, then said, in an impatient tone, "Pshaw, cousin, that has always been your mistake! You judge Ellen's disposition by your own—It is probably something she wants, and is too proud to ask for, that makes her fret. But I don't wish to be annoyed so any more."

Mrs. Trevor's "at home" was a magnificent affair. The ladies were rivalled in taste and splendor, and her parties had always been the admiration of the circle she called her own.

I thought Edward introduced his wife with more than usual satisfaction, and that the lady appeared rather surprised at the beauty and grace of the fair Mrs. Livingstone. Certainly no woman in the room could compare with her, the dress of pale blue satin suiting admirably her delicate complexion and light brown hair, while pearls were the only ornaments which ever became her. I wore dark lavender and black lace, the gayest dress I had put on for five and twenty years; but it was Edward's wish, and I loved to gratify him.

After promenade for a short time, Edward left us together in one of the deep, heavily curtained windows, and as the rooms filled, the scene became very interesting. Here, undisturbed and unseen we could watch the rest, and enjoyed it until a party came and seated themselves directly before us, and where we could not avoid hearing all they said. They had scarcely got themselves seated, when a buzz at the other end of the room announced a new arrival, and escorted by several gentlemen, and followed by a large party of ladies, we saw a beautiful girl advancing towards us. From the heavy braids of her dark hair to the belt which clasped her slender waist, she was glittering with jewels; they sparkled from her neck, and circled her head in a glittering diadem. She wore a rich purple satin and with the heavy folds sweeping the ground might well have been mistaken for some royal queen.

"Who is it?" one of the ladies before us asked her neighbor.

"Why, don't you see? It is Miss Sophia Vane."

I started involuntarily, and Ellen looked at me, but I could not remove my eyes from the proud beauty on whom all eyes were now turned.

"I hear she is going to be married," said the first speaker.

"Yes, to old Mr. Lincoln, very much to his nephew's annoyance; for he would certainly have been his heir. It is also quite a surprise to Miss Vane's friends, for you know since that affair of Edward Livingstone's, she has flirted dreadfully, and they really thought she would never marry."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I never did understand rightly about that affair."

"You didn't? Well, you see they came home from Calcutta together, and of course Sophia would not lose such an opportunity; so at last Mr. Livingstone was over head and ears in love; and as soon as he landed, went off to get her consent, it appears. He only got there the day she died, and she made him promise to marry a girl she had picked up somewhere, a doctor's daughter, or something like that, I believe. A homely little rustic, I have heard them say she was, and that's the reason she does not go out more. I have

never met her yet. It is too bad for Mr. Livingstone, such a splendid fellow as he is to be tied to such a wife; not but what I think he had a lucky escape from Sophia, for she is a dreadful flirt; but then he liked her, and you know love is blind."

Our gossiping neighbors went away, and I hardly dared to look at Ellen. She was very pale, and apparently lost in thought; but at last she said quickly, "Let us go and walk with the rest; I am tired of sitting here."

As we passed out we met Mrs. Trevor, leaning on the arm of a most distinguished looking man. She introduced him as her brother, Mr. Norton. He bowed low to Ellen, and after conversing for a few minutes, asked her to dance. To my surprise she instantly consented, and they went away. I soon after followed, and by a strange coincidence saw that they were standing opposite to Edward, and his partner was Miss Vane. Ellen danced gracefully and never more so than on this occasion, while I could see that she was holding an animated conversation with her partner.

Miss Vane glanced critically at the stranger, and Edward looked restless and unhappy. When the dance was finished, Mr. Norton and his partner were joined by Mr. Trevor and a few other of the elder gentlemen all distinguished, educated, and well known men. The peculiar education Ellen received from her father, and the solid studies she had all her life pursued, enabled her now to join in the conversation of her new companions with far more spirit than she had just before mingled in the dance. They were charmed. Here was a well-read lady, without the least tinge of blarney, with new and brilliant ideas on most subjects, and an intimate acquaintance with authors the very names of which are unknown to most fashionable ladies. Perhaps not the least of Ellen's charms was her simplicity; she did not like the society of young men—they were all dull in comparison to Edward; but old

men, and with them she was always a favorite. When Edward came to lead his wife away the oldest man of the group came forward, and shaking him heartily by the hand, congratulated him on the matrimonial prize he had drawn, adding, "I shall take the privilege of an old friend, and come frequently to see you, if only for the selfish gratification of a conversation with your wife."

Such words from such a man were no mere praise, for his indifference to the ladies was as well known as his fame was wide spread. Ellen and I spoke of the conversation we had overheard but once, when she asked me if I had known of Edward's love for Miss Vane before. She sighed heavily when answered in the affirmative, and the subject was dropped.

The winter passed quickly, for we lived much in society, and as Ellen now made a point of always accepting invitations, her husband could no longer excuse her of staying at home to annoy him. She felt that Miss Vane was artfully weaving spells around Edward, even now while he vainly struggled to free himself from the fascinating influence, and it was her place to be at his side. The season was over at last, but our return to the country was delayed by Edward being taken suddenly ill. Ellen nursed him through his short but painful sickness, and when he recovered, Miss Vane was married, and had gone on her wedding tour.

We went back to the Hall, Ellen rejoicing to be once more among the birds and flowers, Edward more gloomy and reserved than ever. Poor Edward, I pitied him now; he had scorned Ellen's love in the day when it might have been his, and now when he had learned her worth, learned how high others esteemed her, he also discovered that his love was not necessary to her happiness. Believing that it was too late now to repair his error, and too proud to make any change in his behavior or let her know his feelings, he suffered in silence torments of remorse.

It was a sad misunderstanding, for had she dreamed of the change in his feelings all would have been well; but believing that he loved Miss Vane, and that his own fate was inevitable, she strove still to do her duty, or cheerfully accept the bounteous gifts Heaven had lavished on her, to render her husband's home as pleasant to him as possible, and patiently submit to what she could not avert.

Early in the summer business called Edward away from home, and he proposed taking a voyage to India ere he had returned, to settle the affairs of a deceased friend. I had hoped that this separation might break down the barrier to happiness these two proud young people had raised for themselves, but again I was mistaken. They parted as usual, with a simple hand clasp, and when I asked Ellen, as she sobbed and wept on her couch, why

she had so dissembled her grief before her husband, she said she had done so dreading his cold reproval, wishing at least to part in peace. All things had been done to ensure our comfort during his absence. Ellen's own apartments beautifully furnished, the gardens improved by slopes and Italian terraces, and the green-house well stocked with choice exotics.

The Summer was very warm, and I saw that Ellen suffered from the excessive heat; having no longer a motive for appearing cheerful she sunk into a dangerous state of sadness, and all my efforts to rouse her were vain. Our daily walks were gradually shortened into a stroll in the gardens, then to a visit to the greenhouse, and at last she could go no further than to the open window of her boudoir. Here under the shadow of the curtains, reclining on her favorite couch, she spent her days, hourly growing more feeble, and as I feared rapidly falling into a decline. In his three months absence, Edward had sent us but three letters, one only of the number being to Ellen. It was in the usual reserved style in which he always addressed her, commencing simply "Mrs. Livingstone," but she shed many tears over those lines, and I noticed failed more rapidly afterwards.

We received a letter from town one day, one of those gossiping, scandal-bearing epistles which some women love so well to indite. It contained the intelligence that Mrs. Lincoln had eloped with a dashing foreigner, having also carried off with her an immense sum of money. The poor old man, her husband, through grief and vexation, had died next day. I must confess to feeling some anxiety to know what Edward would think of his paragon now. Ellen said little, but she truly pitied the guilty woman.

As the autumn approached, I began to grow seriously alarmed at the state of Ellen's health; her appetite was gone, her face and hands, always fair, became transparent, and she could no longer move without assistance, and, as I daily placed her on her sofa, I prayed that Edward might return ere it was too late.

(CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.)

THE SOLDIER'S DEATH.

During the first of the war we were called up at midnight to visit a dying soldier. He was at the Columbian Hotel, in Richmond. As we entered the room, we saw the sufferer, lying upon his bed, pale and emaciated: the signs of death in his face. At the foot of his bed stood the Adjutant of his regiment; on one side sat a kind old lady, a nurse from one of the hospitals, and who, from the familiar and tender way in which she spoke to him, had evidently known the young soldier well at his own home in Savannah, Georgia. We sat down on the edge of the bed and began a conversation with the three.

Whitfield Stevens belonged to Bartow's regiment; had fought through several battles, and was now dying from fever occasioned by exposure and hardships incident to the soldier's life. He was the son of Methodist parents, but was not himself a member of the Church. He had, however, spoken in a way that greatly encouraged the attendants around his bed to cherish the hope that he was truly concerned about his spiritual condition, and had asked that a minister of the Gospel might be sent for to converse and pray with him. Such was the information we obtained in the course of the conversation. He was a tall, manly fellow, and in spite of the ravages of disease, his fine face, clear, bright eye, and expressive mouth, revealed at a glance that he was a young man of decided character.

"I sent for you, sir, to talk with and pray for me," said he, with a calmness and directness that interested, and at the same time made us feel that we could approach him freely on the subject of religion.

"Whitfield, are you a member of the Church, or a professor of religion?"—"No," he replied, "but I tell you how far I have committed myself to religion. After the battle of Manassas—and you know that Bartow's regiment suffered a great deal—I felt that the Almighty had been very merciful to protect my unworthy life; and late in the evening, just a little after sunset, I went off by myself and out of sight, beyond some pines; I knelt down upon the green grass, and thanked God for sparing me to my mother, and I gave him my word I would try to serve him as long as I lived." Pausing a moment to gather strength, he continued slowly, distinctly, with an emphasis that we rarely if ever hear, except from the lips of the dying, "Father came on soon after the battle to see me. When he was about to return, and had said good bye, I noticed that he still lingered and looked anxious;

he came back, and seemed loathe to leave. I said to him: "Father, I know what is the matter with you; you think I am not a Christian, and you don't like to leave me in my present perilous position without being able to think of me as ready to die." He said that was what made him hesitate and linger. I told him then about my praying on the evening of the Manassas fight. He seemed greatly comforted by it, and said he could return home with a cheerful heart."

We said: "Then, Whitfield, you are not afraid to die?" "No, sir," he answered, "I shall go up and make my report to the Almighty, as the Commander in Chief of all things. I'll tell him I have been a faithful soldier, and a dutiful son." Here the nurse interrupted him, and seeming to think he was trusting in his own goodness, said: "Whitfield, my son you know all that that won't save you." "Stop! stop! wait till I get through," said he, "I'll tell him I have been a faithful soldier and a dutiful son, but an unfaithful servant of God; nevertheless, my trust is in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men."—As he finished the sentence, he turned and looked upon the kind nurse, as though to ask, "Is my faith right?" The good old lady burst into tears. We all knelt down in prayer around his bed; fervently we thanked God for his grace, earnestly we commended the dying soldier to his Saviour, and arose feeling that truly God was in that place.

"Sing to me," said he, "some of those good old hymns I used to hear at home." We sang—

"Father, I stretch my hands to Thee," &c.
"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound," &c.

He seemed to appreciate the sentiments of the hymns, and tried now and then to join in singing. Finding that he enjoyed those hymns so much, we commenced and sang the beautiful words—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
Where'er Thou dost provide,
Let me hide my head from shame."

Every sound hushed on the street—silence reigned in all that crowded hotel—the light in the room threw its fitful flashes upon the quiet pale face of the young hero—the Adjutant leaned upon the foot of the bed, weeping—the generous Christian nurse, amid her tears, joined in the hymn—we felt,

"Angels now are hovering around us."

As we sang the lines—

"Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

Whitfield exclaimed, "Adjutant! Adjutant! is not that grand? Ah! you don't know what that means! I'll tell you what it means. At Manassas, when the bullets were whistling around us like hail and our boys were dropping in the ranks, and poor Bartow fell, then the Almighty covered my defenceless head with the shadow of His wing!" With deeper emphasis than we had employed, he repeated—

"Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

It was the crowning triumph. The noble boy, weaker sank back on his pillow. We said, "You had better now rest."—"No," said he, "let me talk. I have but a little while to live; let me talk. I wish one thing could be." "What," asked we, "do you wish?" "I would like," he replied, "that my dear mother could come and sit down right here on the bed by me, and I could kiss her once; then I would lie down and die, and they would carry me away to Georgia, and bury me by the side of my sweet little sister—nurse, you know my sister; she was a good child—and then. Ah! and then I would go up to Heaven, and wait till the rest all came. O! would not that be grand! I hoped to live long enough to see Father. He will be here to-morrow morning. But never mind, God knows best—it is all right. Adjutant, you know—of my company? Well, give my love to him. In the battle, as he was marching by my side, "Whitfield," said he, "I'll stand by you to the death." Noble fellow! Tell him I'll think of him in eternity."

The dying soldier grew weaker, his bright eyes closed, and the morning sun threw his golden splendors upon the brow of the sleeping hero. His father arrived by the early train, but too late to see his son alive. We told him the story of his son's death, and recounted more fully than in these pages the touching scenes of that memorable night. The old man smiled through his tears, and grew happy with hope in the midst of his grief. "I am satisfied," said he, "Whitfield died as I would have him die—died for his country; died honorable; and, above all, died in the faith of the Gospel. It will comfort his mother. I shall return to my home and praise God for his goodness in the midst of our sorrows."

Ed. R. C. Advocate.

FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE. A WORD TO THE LADIES.

DEAR LADIES:—Allow me to remind you of the power of female influence. My lips are not speaking flattery, for I will credit you for nothing more than what God your maker allows you to claim, without subjecting yourselves to the power of imputation or vanity. It is not yours to mingle in the rough and thorny scenes of life, and by masculine authority control the destinies of the world; but in the nursery, at the domestic fireside, in the social circle and other retired and consecrated scenes, it is yours to give the first impulse to thought; to the heart its abiding impress, and to character its hue and texture. You are imparting a lasting flavor of those mountain springs, that are destined to send forth the pure or polluted waters into various and extended regions.

You have the moulding of the feelings, and the habits of communities. Your instrumentality, under God, materially affects the destinies of empires. Princes and Kings are sitting upon your knees and receiving laws from your lips, while universal consent has invested you with peculiar advantages; for you can speak and act, when others cannot; you can reprove where others dare not. The combined influence of your loveliness, beauty and affection gives terror to your frowns, and restless power to your smiles. They impart force to your argument and pungency to your rebukes. Your influence, though soft and gentle as the Zephyr which impresses its kisses on the flowery landscape, is still as powerful as the rushing winds, which raise into mountain waves the surface of the great deep.

How, then, shall your influence be exerted in the defence of man's best interest, or all that's dear and dear to him? Shall you come down upon our society, to shun the social mercy, to shun the danger; or shall you wither and destroy? No, no, no, no, ready to reply: We wish to exert strength in a proper way." Lend it not, then, to the cause of Alcohol. Snatch your children from its ranks, and in the exercise of that authority which is peculiarly your own, command the world to forsake it. Look at the army of drunkards! You have aided in filling its ranks; and many of your own sex are there; and in there anything more hateful and disgusting than a female intoxicated! If you are shocked at the idea, should you not abhor and shun the first step that conduces to such an end? Alas! many of your sons are there, who have filled your cup with wormwood and gall. Ten thousand husbands are there; and O! how many hearts have they broken! They have caused many amiable wives to shed tears of blood, and spend year after year in unavailing anguish; and having wrapped themselves in rags, and laying down on their beds of straw, in the bitterness of their souls to curse the day they were born; while poverty, neglect, strife, scorn, bruises, are but a part of their sad inheritance. The wretches who once swore to love, cherish and defend you, have become your tormenting foes; and alcohol has made them so. Soon many of these wives will put on the robes of widowhood, and then, with their little ones, they must beg a crust of bread at the door of charity, or die.

Such are the consequences of having such husbands, and these husbands once had mothers, and perhaps the first step the maternal guidance enabled them to take in tottering infancy, was moderate drinking. Perhaps their mothers dedicated them to it, and said, alcohol is good, drink gently on, dear little ones. Cruel Mothers! to sacrifice your own child on an altar which is worse than Moloch's.

Now let me solemnly enquire—how can you, how dare you countenance an enemy, who causes you thus to abuse your own sex, and compels you thus to abuse your little ones? for on your own heads falls the tremendous curse! You are the deepest sufferers. Methinks I see your bosoms swelling with just indignation. Let it have full vent; let it fall on the monster's pate. You have it in your power to prevent it, you can influence your children, your neighbors and your friends; and you can reprove the drunkard with that severity which he must feel, and as man cannot.—And I can tell you what else you can do, you can declare to all your admiring lovers, if they wish to secure your heart and hand, they must be divorced from Alcohol!—Ah! this will be taking the right stand; and if adhered to, it will touch them; for ADAM'S BOYS must have wives any how; and rather than not get them, they will gladly forsake the banners of the prince, and fly for refuge to the banner of

TOTAL ABSTINENCE.