

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

From Friendships Offering for 1839.

THE MERCHANTS DAUGHTER AND THE JUDGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE REFORMER.'

It was the land of poetry and song—the land peopled with the memories of the past the land over which the shadows of a long renown rested more glowingly than a present glory. It was beautiful Italy; the air like a sweet odour, was to the sense as soft thoughts are to the mind, or tender feelings to the heart, breathing serenity and peace. The sweet air swept balmily over the worn brow of an invalid, giving to the palled hue of his countenance the first faint dawning of returning health.

The eye of the invalid was fixed on the dark characters of a book in cumbersome binding and massive clasps, which the Roxburgh Club would now consider an invaluable black-letter; and so absorbed was he in its perusal that he heard not the approaching steps of visitors until the sound of their greetings roused him from his meditations.

'The saints have you in their keeping said his elder visitor, a man whose brow bore traces of age, though time had dealt leniently with him.

'The dear Madonna bless you!' ejaculated his other visitor, a young girl with the large flashing eye, the pure oval face, and the classic contour of Italy.

The invalid bowed his head to each of these salutations.

'And now,' said the merchant, for such was the elder visitor, 'that your wounds are healing and your strength returning, may we not inquire of your kin and country?'

A slight flash passed over the pale face of the sick man; he was silent for a moment as if communing with himself, and then replied, 'I am of England, and a soldier, albeit of the lowest rank.'

'Of England!' hastily responded the merchant, 'of England? of heretic England he crossed himself devoutly, and started back as if afraid of contamination.

'I may not deny home and country,' replied the soldier, mild, but firmly.

'But I shall incur the church's censure for laboring thee!' exclaimed the merchant; 'thou knowest not what pains and penalties may be mine for doing thee this service!'

'Then let me forth,' replied the soldier; 'you have been to me the good Samaritan and I would not requite you with evil: let me go on my way, and may the blessing Heaven be upon you in the hour of your own need!'

'Nay, nay, I say not so. Thou hast not yet strength for the travel, and besides, England was once the brightest jewel in our holy father's crown, and she might reconcile herself again; but I fear she will not, for your master—Henry is a violent, hot blooded, man and hath torn away the kingdom from apostolic care. Know you not that your land is under interdict, and I, as a true son of the holy mother church, ought not now to be changing words with thee!'

'Even so,' replied the soldier, but there

are many that think the King's grace hardly dealt by.

'The sheppard knoweth best how to keep this fold,' replied the merchant, hastily 'but you are that king's soldier, you take his pay, you eat his bread, and doubtless ought to hope the best for him, and even so do I. I would that he might repent and humble himself, and then our holy father would again receive him into the fold: but, now I bethink me, thou wert reading, What were thy studies?'

The brow of the soldier clouded, he hesitated a moment, but then gathering up his resolution replied, in the din of the battle this book was my breast plate, in the hour of sickness my best balm,' he laid the open volume before the merchant.

'Holy saint!' exclaimed the merchant crossing himself, and drawing back as he beheld the volume which his church has closed against the layman. 'Thou then art among the heretics who bring down a curse upon thy land! Nay, thy sojourn here may bring down maledictions upon me and mine, upon my house and home! But thou shalt forth! I will not harbor thee! I will deliver thee over to the church, that she may chasten thee! Away from him, my child! away from him!'

The soldier sat sad and solitary, watching the dying light of the sun, as he had passed majestically on to shine in other lands. One ray rested on the thoughtful brow of the lonely man as he sought bracing up his courage to meet the perilous future. As he thus mused a soft voice broke upon his reverse.

'You are thinking of your far off home,' said the Italian girl, 'how I wish that all I love had but one home—it is a grief to have so many homes!'

'There is such a home,' replied the soldier.

'Ah!' replied Amelia 'but they say that heretics come not there! Promise me that you will not be a heretic any longer.

The soldier smiled and sighed.

'You guess why I am here to night,' resumed the Italian girl. 'I know it by that smile and sigh. You think that I am come to tell you to seek your own land and home and, therefore your smile, and just breathe one little sigh because you leave this bright sun—and me.'

'Am I then to leave you, perhaps to be delivered over to the power of your implacable church?'

Amelia crossed herself. 'No, no, go to your own country and be happy. Here is money my father could not deny me when I begged it of him with kisses and tears. Go and be happy and forget us.

'Never!' exclaimed the soldier, earnestly 'never! and you, my kind and gentle nurse, my good angel—who you have brought hope to my pillow, and beguiled the sad hours of sickness in a foreign land words are but poor things to thank thee with.'

'I shall see you no more!' said the young Italian, 'and what shall make me happy when you are gone? Who will tell me the tale of flood and field? I have been happy while you were here, and yet we met very sadly. My heart stood still when we first found you covered with blood, on our way back to Milan after the battle. You had crept under the hedge, as we thought to dye. But I took courage to lay my hand upon your heart; and never has a morning passed, but I have gathered the sweetest flower to freshen your sick pillow; and while you were insensible in that terrible fever I used to steal into your chamber and kneel at your bed foot, and pray for the Madonna's care. And when you revived you smiled at my flower, and when you had voice to speak you thanked me.'

Amelia's voice was lost in sobs; and what wonder if one from man's sterner nature mingled with them?

The morrow came, The Italian girl gathered a last flower, and gave it in tearful silence to the soldier. He kissed the frag-

rant gift and then, with a momentary boldness, the fair hand that gave it, then departed. The young girl watched his footsteps till they were lost in sound, and then abandoned herself to weeping.

'Thou art sad, dear daughter,' said a venerable father to his child, as they traversed that once countryfied expanse through which we now jostle our way from the City of Westminster, 'Thou art sad dear daughter.

'Nay, my father,' replied the maiden 'I would not be so but it is hard always to wear a cheerful countenance when—'

'The heart is sad, thou wouldst say.'

'Nay I mean it not.'

'I have scarcely seen thee smile since we entered this England—I may not say this heretic England.'

'Hush! dear father hush! the winds may whisper it, see you not that we are surrounded by a multitude?'

'They are running madly to some revelry.'

'Let us leave their path, then,' said the girl it suits not our fallen fortunes, or our disordered faith, to seem to mingle in this stream of folly. Doubtless the king has some new pageantry.'

'Well if it be so,' replied the father, 'happy the gawgaw and the show might bring the truant smile to thy lip, and the lost lustre to thine eye. Thou art too young to be thus moodily sad. See how anxious, how eager, how happy seem this multitude not one care worn brow!—thou mayest catch their cheerfulness. We will go with the stream.

The girl offered no further resistance. They were strangers in the land poor almost penniless. They had come from their own country to reclaim a debt which one of the nobles of the court had incurred in more prosperous days when the merchant was rich in silver and gold and merchandize.

The vast throng poured on swelling until it became a mighty tide the bells pealed out the cannon bellowed, human voices augmented the din. The Thames was lined on either side; every building on its margin crowded, and its surface peopled. Every sort of aquatic vessel covered its bosom so that the flowing river seemed rather some broad road teaming for life. Galley after galley, glittering with the gold and the purple, came on laden with the wealth, and the pride, and the beauty of the land, and presently the acclamation of a thousand voices rent the skies. 'The King! the King! long live the King!' He came—Henry the 8th came, in all that regal dignity; and gorgeous splendor, in which he so much delighted.

And then began the pageant, contrived to throw odium on Rome, and to degrade the pretensions of the Pope. Two galleys, one bearing the arms of England, the other marked by the papal insignia, advanced towards each other and the fictitious contest commenced.

Borne on by the crowd, our merchant and his daughter had been forced into a conspicuous situation. The peculiar dress, the braided hair, the beauty and the foreign aspect of the girl had marked her out to the rude gallantry of the crowd; so that to a limited sphere, the father and daughter were themselves objects interest and curiosity.

The two vessels joined, and the mimic contest was begun. Of course the English colors triumphed over the papal. Upon to this point the merchant bore his pangs in silence; but when the English gallery had assumed the victory, then came the trial of patience. Effigies of the cardinals were hurled into the stream amidst the shouts and derisions of the mob. At each plunge groans issued from his tortured breast. It was in vain that Amelia clung to his arm, and implored him, by every tear to restrain himself. His religious zeal overcame his prudence; and when at last, the figure of the Pope dressed in his pontifical robes, was hurled into the tide, the loud exclamation of agony and horror burst from his lips. 'O monstrous impiety of an accursed and sac-

ilegious king, sounded loudly above the din of the mob.

It was enough; the unhappy merchant was immediately consigned over to the secular.

Oh! sad were those prison hours! the girl told her beads—the father prayed to all the saints—and then came the vain consolation by which each endeavored to enervate the other. They thought of their own sunny land, its balmy air, its living beauty, and that thought was home.

November came with all its bloom—the month that should have been the grave of the year, coming as it does with shroud and cerecloth, foggy, dark and dreary; the father's brow numbered more wrinkles, the once black hair was more nearly bleached, the features more attenuated.

And the daughter—ah! youth is the transient lamp of hope—but in her the light was dim.

In fear and trembling the unhappy foreigners waited the day of doom. The merchant's offence was one little likely to meet with no mercy. Henry was jealous of his title and head of the church. He had drawn up a code of articles of belief, which his subjects were desired to subscribe to, & he had instituted a court of which he had made Lord Cromwell vicar-general, for the express trial of those whose orthodoxy in the king's creed was called into question.

Neither could the unhappy merchant hope to find favor with his judge, for it was known that Cromwell was strongly attached to the growing reformation, and from the acts of severity with which he had lately visited some of the adherents of the Romish creed, in his new character of vicar-general, it was scarcely probable that he would show mercy to one attached, by lineage, and love, to papal Rome. Strangers as they were, unknowing and unknown, what had they not to fear, and what was left to hope?

The morning of trial came. The fogs of that dismal month spread like a veil over earth. There was no beauty in the landscape no light in the heavens, and no hope in the heart.

The judges took their places: a crowd of wretched delinquents came to receive their doom. We suppose it to be a refinement of modern days, that men are not punished for their crimes, but only to deter others from committing them. The court of Henry's seemed to think otherwise, there was all the array of human passions in the judges as well as in the judged. On one hand recreant fear abjured his creed; on another, heroism braved all contingencies courting the pile and stake, with even passionate desire; and the pile and stake were given with stern and unremitted cruelty.

At length there stood at the bar an aged man and a beautiful girl, the long white hair of the one fell loosely over the shoulders, and left unshaded a face wrinkled as much by care as by age; the dark locks of the other were braided over a countenance clouded by sorrow, and wet with tears.

The mockery of trial went on. It was easy to prove what even the criminal did not attempt to gainsay. The aged merchant avowed his fidelity to the Pope as a true son of the church, denied the supremacy of Henry over any part of the fold, and thus sealed his own doom.

There was an awful stillness throughout the court—stillness the precursor of doom—broken only by the sobs of the weeping girl, as she clung to her father's arm. Howbeit the expected sentence was interrupted; there came a sudden rush, fresh attendants thronged the court. 'Room for Lord Cromwell! Room for Lord Cromwell!'

And the vicar-general came in his pomp and his state, with all the insignia of office, to assume his place of preminence at that tribunal. Notes of the proceedings were laid before Lord Cromwell. He was told of the intended sentence and he made a gesture of approbation. A gleam of hope had dawned upon the mind of the Italian girl as Lord Cromwell entered. She watched his countenance as he read; it was stern, indicative of calm determination, but there were lines in it that spoke more of mista-

ken duty than inmate cruelty. Yet, when the vicar-general gave his token of assent, the steel entered Amelia's soul, and a sob, the verient accent of despair, rang through the court, and where it met with a human heart pierced through all the cruelty and oppression which armed it, and struck upon some of the natural feelings that divide men from monsters. That sound struck upon Lord Cromwell's ear, his eye sought the place whence it proceeded; it rested on Amelia and her father. A strange emotion passed over the face of the stern judge—a perfect stillness followed.

Lord Cromwell broke silence. He glanced over the notes that had been handed to him, speaking in a low voice apparently to himself—'from Italy—a merchant—Milan—ruined by the wars—ay, those in Milan were owing to Clement's ambition, and Charles' knavery—the loss of substance to England to reclaim an old indebtedment.'

Lord Cromwell's eye raised once more upon the merchant and his daughter.

'Ye are of Italy—from Milan; is that your birth-place?'

'We are of Tuscany,' replied the merchant, 'of Lucca; and oh! noble Lord, if there is any mercy in this show it now to this unhappy girl.'

'To both, or to neither,' exclaimed the girl; 'we will live—or we will die together.'

The vicar-general made answer to neither. He rose abruptly at a sign from him the proper officer declared the court adjourned—the sufferers were hurried back to their cells—some went whither they would—others, whither they would not; but all dispersed.

A faint and solitary light glanced from a chink of the prison walls—it came from the narrow cell of the Italian merchant and his daughter.

The girl slept—ay slept. Sleep does not always leave the wretched, to light on lids unsullied with a tear. Reader hast thou known intense misery, and canst thou not remember, how thou hast felt and wept, and agonized, until the very excitement of the misery wore out thy bod's power of endurance, and slept like a toper, a lethargy, bound thee in its chains. Into such a sleep had Amelia fallen; she was lying on that prison floor her face pale as if ready for the grave, the large tears yet resting on her cheeks, and over her sat the merchant leaning, asking himself whether, treasure that she was, and had even been to him, he could wish that sleep to be the sleep of death.

The clanking of the key caught the merchant's ear; a gentle step entered the prison. The father's first thought was the child, he made a motion to enjoin silence—it was obeyed—his vister advanced with a silent tread; the merchant looked upon him with wonder. Surely—no—and yet could it be? that his judge—Lord Cromwell, the vicar-general—stood before him, and stood not with threatening in his eye not denunciations on his lip, but took his stand on the other side of Amelia, gazing on her with an eye in which tenderness and compassion were conspicuous.

Amazement bound up the faculties of the merchant. He seemed to himself as one that dreameth.

'Awake gentle girl, Awake, said Lord Cromwell, as he stooped over Amelia. 'Let me hear thy voice once more as it sounded in mine ear in other days.'

The gentle accent fell too lightly to break the spell of heavy slumber, and the merchant, whose fears, feelings, and confusion formed a perfect chaos, stooping over his child suddenly awoke her with the cry of Amelia! Amelia! awake and behold our judge!'

'Nay, nay, not thus roughly,' said Lord Cromwell, but the sound has already recalled Amelia to the sense of wretchedness. She half raised herself from her incumbent posture into a kneeling one, shadowing her dazzled eyes with her hand, her streaming hair falling in wild disorder over her shoulders, and thus resting at the feet of her judge.

'Look on me, Amelia,' said Lord Crom-