

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

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Choice Literature.

ALICE, OR THE CURSE.

THE LEGEND OF ELLABY GRANGE.

"It is more than a hundred and fifty years ago for it was in the reign of James the Second," commenced Hester Deane, "when Colonel Wainflete lived here with his son and two daughters. His eldest son was like himself, in the army, and seldom at home; and his youngest was a great sorrow to him, because he was bookish and gentle-tempered—feeble minded, too, his father said, and he must have had some failing of that sort to act as he afterwards did; and the Colonel himself was a proud man, fond of roistering company and fox-hunting after he retired to this place; and he had the bad taste to make a butt of his youngest son before those that couldn't at all understand him—there would have been no peace for Edwin Wainflete (that was the youngest son's name it hadn't been for his sister Edith, who was gentle, like himself, and who loved him so much that she could see no fault him. Helen, the eldest daughter, was bold and domineering, like her father; and Edwin dreaded her most, perhaps, because the stinging reproaches for his weakness were harder to bear from a woman than a man, and more of a letting down. With all that, he hadn't the energy to help himself to anything. He might have entered the Church—and his father profanely said he wasn't fit for anything better—but he didn't take to it. He seemed unable to do more than dream on in his own quiet way, and the Grange was almost too hot to hold him.

Things went on in this way for a great many years; the sons and daughters were all unmarried, and the two eldest, Richard and Helen, were getting of a good age, when the colonel suddenly considered that Edwin might be married; if nothing else could be done to him; and he entered into a treaty with Sir John Morton, who lived in the High Peak, for one of his daughters. Edwin had never been rebellious—he had only kept on his own way because he couldn't help it—but he set his face against this match in a way that almost drove the old colonel mad. It was all very well to command him, but it was impossible to drag him to the altar with a rope round his neck, and it was clear he wouldn't go without. The colonel threatened to disinherite and turn him out of doors, when a circumstance occurred in a neighboring village that drew off his attention.—An old woman had occupied a cottage there for many years and lived no one knew how. When she first came she brought an infant with her, a little girl about two years old, that she brought up, and who always called her grandmother. This child grew to be a beautiful young woman, and she was intelligent and lady like too, and well able to read and write, though she'd had no instructor but her grandmother. For these reasons, and because neither mixed commonly with the villagers, though they were always friendly, the simple people took it into their heads that the old woman must be a witch. It unfortunately happened that many cattle died suddenly, and the small-pox took off many children, at the same time; and first the rumor and then another got afloat, till the whole village rose up in a frenzy. They tore the old woman out of her bed, ducked her in a pond on their own account, and then took her, more dead than alive, before a magistrate.

The magistrate was Colonel Wainflete. Some of the gentry in those days were quite as superstitious as the common people, and the colonel, thinking the charge against her clearly made out, committed her to Upton jail to take her trial. The granddaughter was with her through it all; but they would not allow them to be in jail together, and the poor girl wandered about like one distracted, praying for mercy, but finding no one to hear her.

Just at that time Captain Richard came home on a visit. The Duke of Monmouth had just been beheaded; and he had been out in the war against him, and had a deal to talk about. Mr. Edwin sat listening amongst others, and the colonel took occasion of his brother's example to try to shame him into being more manly; but Captain Richard, who was generous with all his pride, to excuse his brother, and said laughingly that two heroes, meaning his father and himself, were enough for one family.

Well, on that same night, when Edith Wainflete went up to her bedroom (she slept in the room that is Mr. Henry's study now,) she heard a rustling at the window that induced her to draw the curtain aside; and there, with her whole weight on one of the branches outside, her small hands grasping the stone cornice, and her pale face pressed against the latticed panes, stood Alice Leigh, the grand-daughter of the reputed witch.—Edith, gentle as she was, had the courage of her race. She flew to her door, bolted it, and then opened the window and let the girl

in, for she guessed that she was come to ask her to plead for her grandmother; and her heart had been wrung by what her father had done, for she disbelieved the tale.

"Alice Leigh fell on her knees; but Edith quickly raised her, and then the girl told a story she little expected to hear. She said, she had been the wife of Edwin Wainflete four months; that her grandfather, Captain Leigh, was a soldier and a gentleman, who had died in the civil wars fighting for his king. Her father had lingered after the restoration without notice, or reward for the losses his family had sustained, and on the death of both her parents her grandmother had retired, with herself and what small property she had left, to the village where they had lived so many years. All this she said, was known to her husband, who had promised through his brother to make interest for her grandmother with the king. But he procrastinated; he failed her altogether, in this greater need. 'I have seen him twice,' she said, since that dreadful night (meaning when her grandmother was taken,) and I know I can place no faith in him—not in him whom I have loved so much; he is fearful, vacillating—oh! he is selfish—he will make no effort—he will leave her to die!

"The girl seemed distracted, and Edith Wainflete was scarcely less so; but she saw at once what ought to be done, and she tried to soothe her, and promised to do her best for her. She herself took her down stairs, and saw her out of the house when she imagined every one was asleep; but her sister Helen heard the noise, and watched her, and followed her to her chamber to demand an explanation to what she had seen. Edith had nothing to hide, and told her sister everything. Helen listened in silence, and seemed so unmoved that Edith was surprised and delighted, expecting to see her fall into a mighty rage, whatever view she took of the subject. Helen said she could best manage the matter her own way, and she doubted not would do so satisfactorily, and she made Edith promise not to breathe a word on the subject, even to Edwin himself. Knowing that Helen's influence over both him and her father was greater than her own, she readily consented.

But calm as she seemed, Helen's feelings were raised to quite a storm of passion. She believed that the story should go no further if she could help it; she had silenced Edith for the present, and she doubted not to manage her weak minded brother.

She sought him that night, and he cowered under her fierce reproaches. He was himself horrified at having become relative to a woman convicted of so heinous a crime; for all his book learning had not taught him stater than to believe in witchcraft. Helen by her advantage, and half-persuaded him that he had been drawn into the match by the old woman's art, though he well knew that the courtship and marriage were alike secrets to her. On questioning him, Helen learned that the ceremony had been performed by an old school-fellow of his, just entered into holy orders, who had been at the Grange on a visit some months previous.—There was no written document to prove the marriage, and the young clergyman who promised to keep their secret, had gone abroad. It seemed easy to deny the marriage altogether, and this Edwin consented to do.

One week after, when the trial came on, old Mrs. Leigh was found guilty and condemned to die. People's hearts were so hardened by prejudice that there were few to feel pity for the beautiful young creature who stood by her grandmother's side, looking eagerly and wildly round to see if any were there to come forward and speak for her as she had hoped. When the sentence was spoken she fell on the floor of the court like one dead.

It was in the month of July, and on that very afternoon a young woman made her appearance at Ellaby Grange, and asked to see the colonel. Her dress was disordered, her feet dusty, as well as they might be for she had almost flown from Upton, a distance of eight miles; and a thick veil was drawn over her face, so that at first the servant didn't know her. The colonel consented to see her and when they were alone she lifted her veil and fell on her knees. But seeing who it was he stopped her. 'Pooh!—pooh!' he said, 'it's no use you coming here, I can do nothing for you. But Alice would be heard, and she told him of her marriage with his son, and his promise that he would interfere to save her grandmother.

Without answering her, the colonel rang the bell violently and summoned his family into the room. Edith was then ill in bed, but the others came; and before them all the colonel asked his son, in a voice of thunder, if what the girl said was true. The proud threatened eye of Helen was upon him, and the fierce looks of his father, and his brother Richard glared as if he could have struck them both down where they stood, and hadn't the courage or the generosity of a man to brave it out for her he had vowed to love and protect; he turned away and said he knew nothing about her.

Captain Richard had been saying that it

was shame to take the old woman's life for she had no belief in witchcraft; but when he heard what the girl had asserted, as it seemed, for the purpose of gaining her end, he thought that she must belong to a bad set, for he could not imagine that a Wainflete could so be to his own soul as his brother had done that day.

She was driven forth harshly; but when she got into the court-yard she fell on her knees and invoked a malediction on the house in which she had been treated so cruelly, and as both brother and sister had broken faith with her, she prayed that the future sons and daughters of the Wainfletes might so act as to prove a bitterness and a curse to one another for generations to come, until their pride was humbled and their hardness of heart melted away.

"I had been feverish, and she became worse. To their restless inquiries Helen had always answered that everything was going on right. She took care to keep her in ignorance until two days after the execution of Dame Leigh, and then she informed her that her brother having denied the girl's statement, the matter had been thoroughly sifted and her falsehood proved. 'And Dame Leigh has been executed?' said Edith, her puffed lips quivering. Helen acknowledged. 'Then may Heaven forgive all those that we had a hand in this black work!' exclaimed Edith solemnly. 'Disgrace before the world you all feared; but you had not the fear of Him before your eyes when you sinned this iniquity to be! I thank God that my time amongst you will not be long. I am proud as you are; but my pride will allow me to live scornful my own flesh.'

At same night Edith Wainflete died, raving. They all stood round her bed in her chamber, and Richard marked well what words she said. He looked at his brother and envied him where he stood, shivering like a cat in a fire, but he said not a word to him.

On the day of the funeral there was a large assemblage of friends and relations in the great hall of the north front. There was a delay of a quarter an hour, because Captain Richard was missing. At length he strode in, with his heavy sword girt to his waist, in dress and accompanied by the same young clergyman who had married Edwin to Alice Leigh. He had not gone abroad as he had intended, and on that day he had arrived to visit his friend. Alice had mentioned his name to Edith, and Edith in her ravings had repeated it; Richard himself scarcely needed his testimony to convince him of the truth.

'I take you all to witness, said Captain Richard, striding into the middle of the room and pointing to his brother, who turned pale and tried to shrink away, 'that neither I, nor, so far as I know, any of mine have had a hand in the wickedness of this man, whom I proclaim to be a disgrace to all of his blood, and an alien to me henceforth a day for ever, and also a shame to the name of manhood; in token of all which I here brand him as a dastardly poltroon and a liar. If any wish to take his part I am ready to make good what I have said.'

As Richard spoke he struck his brother a heavy blow with the flat of his sword, laid it on the table, and strode out leaving the mourners to follow him.

'You may imagine what consternation there was. Most of those present did not understand what was meant, but they all rose and followed Richard. The colonel himself, if he was not conscience-stricken, was too great an admirer of his eldest son to withstand him in favor of one whose baseness he now understood, knowing it could not be hid long.

The mourners observed that Edwin Wainflete was not amongst them, and they returned to the Grange to learn that he had committed suicide.

Captain Richard had lost his favorite sister; and when Helen came to understand how he had exposed his brother before all their kindred and friends, she was exasperated against him and refused to be reconciled; so that when the colonel died, and he came to live there, she left the place, and they were altogether estranged. The curse pronounced by Alice seemed to be at work already, and it has worked ever since.'

CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE AND HEAVY LOSS.—The evacuation of Jackson, Mississippi, left in the hands of the enemy, as we learn from the *Memphis Appeal*, the rolling stock of the "New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern," the "Mississippi Central" and the "Mississippi and Tennessee" Railroads. The motive power, alone, consisted of over forty engines. To have saved this invaluable property, required only the construction of a temporary bridge across Pearl River. Six weeks of time were allowed for this work, which might have been done in six days. What were the railroad and military authorities thinking about? The loss is of incalculable importance, and, in the present condition of things, wholly irreparable.

An Incident of the War.

"There is a soldier's wife," I heard some one remark as I was standing at the bed-side of one of the patients in the Hospital at Cumberland Gap. I looked and saw a lady with a babe folded to her bosom enter the door. Immediately I advanced to meet her, and inquired if I could be of any assistance. She asked me if her husband, William Morris, was in the hospital. I answered that he was, and led her to his bed-side. As soon as she saw the sunken cheek and parched lips of her husband, and his wild, frenzied gaze, she uttered a moan of anguish, and stooping over him she kissed his brow and called his name tenderly, trying by every fond endearment to recall him to consciousness. But the sufferer, though he fixed his eyes upon her face and seemed to be trying to recall those features to his memory, yet no word escaped his lips to tell of recognition. Then the pent-up grief of the wife broke forth: "Oh, William, William, my poor dear husband, have I come only to see you die. Oh, God, in mercy spare my husband!" I lifted her little fretting babe from her arms and wrapping it in my blanket, walked out from this scene of sorrow into the open air, where I could force back my sympathetic tears. When I returned with my sleeping charge, I found the wife more composed, bathing the fevered brow, and in his fixed gaze I fancied I could detect a faint gleam of recognition. I spoke cheerfully of her husband's situation, told her of similar cases that had recovered; and ere I left the hospital I saw her quietly seated, partaking of some refreshments I had ordered for her.

Weeks afterwards, as she was about to return with her husband to her mountain home, she came to thank me for some little attentions bestowed upon her, and then I learned of woman's devotion that I may not soon forget. She told me of her home on the slope of the Uneca Mountain; of the happy hours spent there till her husband was called to join his countrymen in defence of his country. Then she told of long weary days, weeks and months she had spent in his absence, thinking on the past and dreading of the future. How, as she sat one night rocking her infant to sleep, a returning soldier had brought her news of her husband's illness. At first she was overcome, checking her grief she ministered to the want of her guest, after which she spent the night in preparing for her journey, as she determined to start at early dawn for her husband's bed-side. Morning came. After closing the windows and door of her cabin, she, with her baby clasped to her bosom, starts on foot to the nearest depot of the East Tennessee & Virginia Railroad, which was thirty miles distant. Night found her at the door of a house where kind hearts and loving friends received her, for they were not unmindful of strangers, and the morning found her refreshed and again on her journey. The third day she reached the depot. After resting some hours here, she found herself on the train, where she was soon carried to Morristown. There she left the cars, and unaided and alone she starts on her way, having yet a journey of fifty miles to accomplish on foot. Onwards she plods her weary way unmindful of swollen streams and miry roads, for in imagination she hears the voice of affliction calling her name. A thousand fears gather around her; what! should she be too late—the thought gives her unnatural energy, and the fourth day we find her wending her way through the swarming soldiery, guided by the yellow flag that waves in the distance, till at last she stands, with aching, anxious heart, at the entrance of the Hospital where first I met her. "And sir," said she "when I return to my mountain home, I carry with me the remembrance of your kindness, and in the silence of the Uneca, I will talk to our Father in Heaven of you, and ask him to reward you as I never can."

Oh what unutterable horrors crowd round the fearful thought. A drunkard's death! Dying drunk—parting with earth, drunk—closing the eyes on time, drunk—entering eternity drunk—facing holy men and angels, drunk—meeting the Holy Spirit that was slighted for the rum bottle, drunk—encountering the blessed child Jesus, whose sacred and precious blood was forsaken for the adulterated blood of the grape, drunk—and staggering up to the judgment seat, to meet the 'Judge of all the earth,' the Eternal God, DRUNK! Horror of horrors!

Yet, gentle reader, whose young fancy has faintered over this idea, this is no fancy sketch! Horrible thought—it is a true picture of many. Read the accounts of the few months that have just past. The dreadful accidents to intemperate people—the sudden death of rum-bloated victims of a brutalizing Licence Law. Think over it—weep over it—howl over it; and pray God not to visit a silent Church and a temporizing state with a just and scorching retributive vengeance.

ADVERSITY THE TEST OF FORTITUDE.—The reverses brought upon us should be accepted as the test of our fortitude and our strength. Heretofore our greatest achievements have followed close upon our most embarrassing situation. Difficulties and perils have never yet failed to bring out the true spirit and energy of the Southern people. Nor will they fail us now. Before the summer's campaign is concluded we shall have encouraging news to elate the confident and cheer the desponding.—*Richmond Dispatch*.

A LESSON FROM HISTORY.—The British ran over every high road of this country; penetrated every neighborhood, plundered every city and town clean to the Gulf—but lost the game. Their successors in tyranny will lose like them, unless the descendants of those who lived "in times that tried men's souls" have infamously degenerated.—*Richmond*.