

besides the old man had been ailing lately, and she feared to agitate him. She resolved to wait until Morris came in person to tell his own story and plead for them both.

A few days afterwards a party of young friends called, on their way to the Bay, to take her to skate. Glad of any occupation to pass the weary waiting she joined them, and soon became exhilarated and joyous with the merry exercise. The road passed near the shore, and as the driver's horn announced the arrival of the daily stage, more than one skater balanced themselves for a moment to watch the cumbersome vehicle make the turn that led to the village. A keen pair of eyes within saw the party on the ice, and detected Evelyn's tall, lythe figure among them. There was a momentary stoppage, a few words exchanged with the driver, and Willie Morris, cramped and cold with long confinement in one posture, but radiant in countenance, came trembling down the rugged pathway to the lake.

Beautiful as a fairy dream, Evelyn glided towards him. In his excited state of mind, she resembled some spirit of the waters or genii of the lake. Many eyes were on them, but they were not ashamed to clasp each other's hands in cordial greeting, and then the company gathered round, and hearty were the words of welcome uttered. Willie was pressed to join in the amusement, and with boyish vanity, not unwilling, perhaps, to show off his accomplishments before Evelyn, for he was a bold and graceful skater, he accepted the invitation, and was quickly performing the most perplexing and daring curves and figures beside his fair companion. For a time she kept up with him, but presently, carried away by the inspiring exercise, the peculiar circumstances that threw a veil of enchantment over the whole scene, Willie was led into more venturesome feats, and many of those present paused to watch and admire his beautiful evolutions.

Unobserved by any one, Sylvester had joined the party. He quickly made his way up to Evelyn, and expressed a wish that she should return home with him. The ice, he said, could not be considered safe after the violent storm that had lately visited them and the change in the weather. Not safe! Every vestige of colour fled from Evelyn's cheeks, but before words could utter her fears there was a cry from the spectators that the daring skater was in danger. He had distanced all the rest, and so thoughtless were they that the idea of the lad going beyond a prudent line never occurred to any one, till they saw by his movements that pleasure and pride had given place to a dreadful anticipation of evil. Even as Evelyn looked the ice cracked under him; he cleared one fissure in safety. Self-preservation arms a man with supernatural power. "Nothing can save him," muttered Sylvester.

"Oh! Willie!" shrieked the frantic girl, "can nothing be done?" She grasped Sylvester by the arm. He was ghastly pale. "Willie, Willie Morris, do you mean?" "Yes, yes, he arrived just now." "You love him, Evelyn?" "Dearer than life."

Sylvester was divesting himself of superfluous garments. "Evelyn, I may perish in trying to rescue him; if so, remember my small black desk in my sitting-room is yours; here is the key. Let no one read the papers contained in it until you have done so."

"He is lost!" shrieked the bystanders, for at that moment the treacherous ice succumbed to the power of the swelling water, and literally crumbled beneath the poor fellow's feet. He was quite near them. They saw his arms extended, as if for help. They heard his frantic prayer, "God have mercy on me!" Personal fears soon scattered the party, a few moments before so gay and volatile, in all directions.

"Kiss me, Evelyn." The girl's trembling lips were pressed on Paul Sylvester's, the first kiss, since an unconscious child, he had received from one for whom he was willing to sacrifice life itself. A few bold strokes and he reached the gaping aperture. Evelyn pressed her hands over her eyes while

he disencumbered himself of his skates and plunged into the frozen angry depths.

"First one brave, good man, and then another, recovered his courage, and returned to the vicinity of the spot where two human beings were struggling for that dearest of treasures, life. A kind neighbour tried to draw Evelyn away, but she refused to leave the place where those so dear to her were in such horrible danger. Ropes had been collected, a few planks brought, any expedient that occurred in the emergency that could possibly be made useful. Several moments of fearful suspense ensued. Everybody knew Sylvester to be an expert swimmer and diver, and to be gifted with almost gigantic strength and endurance. Presently the forms of the unhappy men were seen quivering on the surface, then disappeared almost before hope had birth in the breasts of the spectators. Anon, and young Morris, stiff and blue with cold, and insensible from his long immersion, was half thrown upon the solid border of ice that surrounded the fatal chasm. Friendly, brave arms received him, carried him beyond danger, and then returned to aid in Sylvester's rescue. But alas! the almost miraculous effort that had saved Willie from his watery grave had been the stupendous exertion of a dying Titan, and while anxious eyes were straining between fear and hope, Paul Sylvester, a livid corpse, was sinking into those unknown depths where science only vaguely penetrates and mortal ken can never pierce.

With difficulty Evelyn was taken from the scene of disaster. Willie had already been borne ashore, and was receiving all the care his situation demanded. A few hours sufficed to restore him to his ordinary vigor, and much shocked was he to learn of the tragic end of the lion-hearted man who had saved his life.

The news had to be broken very carefully to old Elwood. He was deeply attached to Sylvester, and the loss at his age was irremediable. He was requested to take charge of Sylvester's effects until it could be ascertained if he had any relatives, and some of the smaller articles of his property, liable to be lost, were removed to Elwood's cottage for greater safety—among them the black desk. Its arrival recalled the dead man's last words, and, producing the key, Evelyn tremblingly repeated his wishes. It was given over to her keeping, and with a feeling of reverence the girl proceeded, in the privacy of her chamber, to open the repository of Sylvester's secrets.

The first document that met her eye was "Paul Sylvester's Last Will and Testament." Laying it aside for more interesting matter, she was startled to see a folded paper addressed "Evelyn Elwood." It was dated June 1st of the preceding year, the day Willie left Cedar Creek after his pleasant visit of a week. It ran thus:—"Retributive justice follows man through all his misdeeds! For years I had hoped to blot out my crime, by devotion to my child, by giving up every worldly prospect, by quenching lust of wealth and power, that I might not forsake my one absorbing duty; but now the most fatal accident that could have occurred is brought to pass. Willie Morris' son, the accursed, the calumniated, has been led here to bring punishment on my most guilty head. As circumstances stand now, this wretched alternative is left me: I must see Evelyn pine and die, for Richard Elwood could never be induced to tolerate the son of her mother's murderer, as he considers Willie Morris, Senior, or I must confess myself as black a villain as ever walked God's earth, forfeit a lifetime of respect, and receive a hoary father's malediction, and see aversion and scorn, maybe, shine in the soft eyes of my child, that now reveal kindness and esteem, if nothing dearer. How sweet, how inexpressibly beautiful she looked to-day when confessing her love for Willie! Oh! what treasure would I not have sacrificed for the privilege of pressing her to my heart and calling her daughter! Such bliss is not for me. I have forfeited it, and must submit. I am resolved on my course of action. Evelyn must be made happy at all hazards. If Willie prove faithful, my confession shall

be made; though how, or when, or where, I am yet undecided. I can go away like Cain with the mark seared into my heart instead of my brow. Tempter of innocence; the viper that stung the bosom that cherished it! How could I address Richard Elwood? 'I murdered your daughter! through my stronger mind. My passionate will triumphed over her gentle confidence. I had taught her obedience only to ensure my success. I permitted an innocent man for years to be under the imputation of a crime committed by myself.' I hear the old man's curses. I see Evelyn's pale face of horror. The suffering is greater than I can bear. Oh! Evelyn! my child! my child! When time shall have softened the heinousness of your father's guilt; when every day you prove the value and utility of the lessons learned from him as a master; when every treasure of your brain, every impulse of your heart recalls the memory of one absent and erring—and it must be so—for have I not molded you to my model since infancy?—then let his devotion, his duty to you, earn for him your forgiveness; let his name be breathed in your prayers! Teach Richard Elwood to forgive him also for your sake. Not in calm malice, not with intent, was your mother left to die and suffer, unsupported and alone. Had she trusted in me, confided to me her fatal secret! But, alas! child as she was, she feared me more than she loved, and shrunk from me more than from the world."

It would be difficult to portray the emotions of Evelyn as she read the confessions of her father's erring, passionate life. Exquisite grief for her girl-mother, of whose fate she previously had a dim idea, sympathy she could not deny to the father, whose daily existence had been a daily offering to her childish needs. As he truly said, she was too entirely moulded by him to turn from him, guilty as he was, and his last act seemed to her almost expiatory. Hours passed in thought, in tears, and prayers, ere the girl could join her grandfather, and then the task was no easy one to make him acquainted with the facts so strangely made known to her.

It was a great shock to Richard Elwood—a far greater one than his death; but anger and severity were chastened by the knowledge that the offender had gone to a tribunal where justice would be administered by Omniscience, and he bowed his head, and murmured, "God have mercy on his soul. It was a brave death. I forgive him, as I hope to be forgiven."

Willie Morris saw Mr. Elwood before he left Cedar Creek, and his application for Evelyn's hand was listened to approvingly; but none of them could think of joy with the memory still fresh of the cold corpse yet tempest-tossed in the cold bosom of the lake.

Evelyn said she should devote a year to mourning, and Willie's tears mingled with hers when they spoke of the dead.

Sylvester's will made Evelyn his heir of whatever he might die possessed of. His savings had not been so very inconsiderable, being a man of rigidly frugal and sparing habits. So, when the time of probation ended, Evelyn did not go a portionless bride into the wealthy family of the Morris.

Old Elwood's last days were peaceful. In the domestic happiness of his beloved Evelyn, he realized the anticipations he had formed years before for another of her name

[From Chambers's Journal.]

### THE ANTE-NUPTIAL LIE. IN TWO PARTS—PART II.

Then began as hard a struggle as any woman could have been called upon to endure. My husband went up to town that same day, and Parliament sat late that year. During all that time he never wrote to me, nor, save from a casual notice of him in the papers, did I know anything of his movements. The intolerable suspense and misery of such a separation may be conceived. My love for him, indeed, was no mere dutiful regard, but of that profound yet passionate nature which men of his stern and reticent character seem calculated, by a strange contrariety, to excite. Add to this, that I knew

myself to be exposed to the pitying wonder and suspicion of the world at large.

Mr. Anstruther's character stood above imputation, but I at the best was but a successful *parvenue*, and had at length no doubt stumbled into some atrocious fault beyond even his infatuation to overlook. The very servants of the household whispered and marveled about me; it was inevitable that they should do so, but all this added bitterness to anguish.

Worst of all there was a wistful look in Florry's childish eyes, and a pathos in her voice as she pressed against my side, to stroke my cheek, and say, "Poor mamma!" which almost broke my heart with mingled grief and shame. She, too, had learned in her nursery that her mother had become an object of compassion.

It was the deep sense of pain and humiliation which my child's pity excited, which aroused me to make some attempt to relieve my position. I sat down, and wrote to my husband. I wrote quietly and temperately, though there was almost the delirium of despair in my heart. I had proved that an appeal to his feelings would be in vain, and I therefore directed my arguments to his justice.

I represented to him briefly that his prolonged neglect and desertion would soon irretrievably place me in the eyes of the world in the position of a guilty wife, and that for my own sake, but still more for the sake of our daughter, I protested against such injustice. I told him he was blighting two wives, and entreated him, if forgiveness was still impossible, at least to keep up the semblance of respect. I proposed to join him in London immediately, or to remain where I was, on condition of his returning home as soon as Parliament was prorogued.

I waited with unspeakable patience for a reply to his letter, and the next post brought it. How I blessed my husband's clemency for this relief! My trembling hands could scarcely break the seal; the consideration of the sad difference between the past and present, seemed to overwhelm me—it was not thus I had been accustomed to open my husband's letters, feeling like a criminal condemned to read his own warrant of condemnation.

The letter was brief, and ran thus:

"As the late events between us have been the subject of my intense and incessant deliberation since we parted, I am able, Ellinor, to reply to your letter at once. I consent to return and attempt the life of hollow deception you demand, under the expectation that you will soon become convinced of its impracticability, and will then, I conclude, be willing to consent to the formal separation which it is still my wish and purpose to effect."

"Never!" I said, crushing the hard letter between my hands, and then my passion, long suppressed, burst forth, and throwing myself on my knees by my bedside, I wept and groaned in agony of soul. Oh! I had hoped till then—hoped that time might have softened him, that the past might have softened him, that the past might have pleaded with him for the absolution of that one transgression. Had my sin been indeed so great that the punishment was so intolerable? And then I thought it all over again, as I had done a thousand times before in that dreary interval, weighing my temptations against my offense, and trying to place myself in my husband's position. I did not wish to justify it: it was a gross deception, a deliberate falseness; but then I was willing to prostrate myself in the dust, both before God and my husband, and to beg forgiveness in the lowest terms of humiliation and penitence. But the pardon granted me by the Divine, was steadily refused by the human judge—against his hard impenetrability I might dash my bleeding heart in vain. What should I do? What should I do? Which was the path of duty? And frail and passionate as I was, how could I hold on in such a rugged way? Had I not better succumb?—suffer myself to be put away, as he desired, and close the door of hope on what was left of life? My child—he said he would give me up my child. Then resolution arose renewed. For that