

MASZARD'S GAZETTE

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Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio.

EDITH'S MARY.
A lover's quarrel! A few, many words, a formal parting between two hearts that neither time nor distance could ever reunite, then a lifetime of misery!
Edith May stood before me in her bridal dress. The world was to be made to believe she was happy and heart-whole. I knew better. I knew that no woman who had once loved Gilbert Almslie could ever forget him—least of all, such a heart as Edith's. She was pale as a snow-creeper, and bent her head gratefully as a water-lily in recognition of her numerous friends and admirers.
"What a sacrifice!" she latter murmured, between their out teeth! "What a sacrifice!" my heart echoed back.
Mr. Jefferson Jones was an ostentatious old bachelor. He had but one idea in his head, and that was to make money. There was only one thing he understood equally well, and that was to keep it. He was angular, prim, cold, and precisious; mean, profligate, contemptible, and cunning.
Edith May, with her passionate heart, her beauty, grace, taste, and refinement—Edith, to row "love and honour" to such a soulless block! It made me shudder to think of it! I felt as though his very gaze was profanation.
Well, the wedding was over; and she was duly installed mistress of Jefferson House. She had fine dresses, fine furniture, a fine carriage, and the sturdiest possible incense-burner in the shape of a husband.
Mr. Jefferson Jones was very proud of his bride; firstly, because she added to his importance; secondly, because he placed himself not a little in bearing of so dainty a prize. It gave him a malicious pleasure to meet her old admirers, with the graceful Edith upon his arm. Of course she preferred him to them all; she why did she marry him?
"It was a brilliant dawn," Mr. Jones concluded to dine at a restaurant instead of returning home. He had just seated himself, and given his orders to the obsequious waiter, when his attention was attracted by the conversation of two gentlemen near him.
"Have you seen the belle Edith since her marriage Harry?"
"No; I feel too much vexed with her. Such a splendid specimen of flesh and blood to marry such an idiot! All for a foolish quarrel with Almslie! You never saw such a wreck as it has made of him. However she is well kept up; for, with all her consummate tact and effort to keep up appearances, it is very plain that she is the most miserable woman in existence; as Mr. Jefferson Jones, whom I have never seen, might perceive, if he wasn't, as all the world says, the very prince of donkeys."
"How very despicable she was in her manner since their marriage! How very polite, and how careful to perform her duty to the letter! Mr. Jones decided, with his usual caution, that there was no room for a doubt on that point; he noticed, indeed, that her girlish gaiety was gone; but that was a decided improvement, according to his view. She was Mrs. Jones now, and meant to keep all whatever popularity she could command."
"And so, through that interminable evening, Edith sat playing long, stupid games of chess with him, or listening to his gains or losses in the way of trade, or reading political articles, of which the words conveyed no ideas to her absent mind."
She walked through the busy streets, leaning on his arm, with an uneasy frown over her side, and a God-forsaken look on her face, when he was near her. But when she was alone, her small hands clasped in prayer, and her fair head bent to the very dust, she was not so wretched.
Jones seized his hat and rushed into the open air, tugging at his neck-tie as if he were choking. "Six times he went, like a comet, round the square; then, setting his boomer down over his head, he went away; he turned his head and looked deliberately toward it. It was but the deceitful maid behind the whirring mill."
"The found Edith, calm, pale, and self-possessed, as usual. He was quite as much so himself—over just so far as to compliment her on a coquetish little jacket that fitted her round figure very charmingly."
"I'm thinking of taking a short journey, Edith," said he, casting himself on a sofa, and playing with the silk cord and tassels about her waist. "As it is wholly a business trip, it would hamper me to take you with me; but you'll hear from me. Meanwhile, you know how to amuse yourself, don't you?"
He looked searching in her face. There was no conscious blush, no change of expression, no tremor of the frame. He might as well have addressed a marble statue.
"Mr. Jefferson Jones was good!" Well, he had his own idea of his characteristic calmness; and when the door closed, Edith felt as if a mountain weight had been lifted off her heart. There was but one course for her to pursue. She knew it—she had already marked it out. She would deny herself to all visitors—she would not go abroad till her husband's return. She was strong in her purpose. There should be no other left open for busy would-be callers. Of Almslie she knew nothing, save that a letter reached her from him after her marriage, which she had returned unopened.
And so she wandered restlessly through those splendid rooms, and tried, by this self-inflicted penance, to atone for the deflection of her heart. Did she take her guitar, old songs, and sing together with her husband, to her lips; that book she had read. Oh, it was all misery, tears, where she would?
"Day after day passed by—no letter from Mr. Jones! The time had already passed that was fixed upon for his return; and Edith, nervous from close confinement and the weary inward struggle, started like a frightened bird at every knock."
"It came at last—the letter, streaked with black! He had been suddenly drowned. His hat was found; all search for the body had been unavailing."
"Edith was not hypocrite. She could not mourn for him, save in the outward garb of woe; but now that he was dead, conscience did its office. She had not, in the eye of the world, been untrue; but there is an eye that searches deeper—that sees thoughts as well as actions."
Almslie was just starting for the continent, by order of a physician, when the news reached him. A brief time he gave to decorum, and then met. It is needless to say what that meeting was. Days and months of wretchedness were forgotten, like some dreadful dream. She was again his own Edith, sorrowing, repentant, and happy.
They were sitting together one evening, Edith's head was upon his shoulder, and her face radiant as a scarlet. They were speaking of their future home.
"Any spot on the wide earth but this, dear Almslie. Take me away from these painful associations."
"Say you so, pretty Edith?" said a well-known voice.
"I but tried that faithful heart of yours, to prove it! Pity to turn such a pretty comedy into a tragedy; but I happen to be a manager here, young man!" said Mr. Jones, turning fiercely toward the horror-struck Almslie.
"The revelation was too dreadful. Edith survived but a week. Almslie became hopelessly insane."

MABEL'S SOLILOQUY.

"This is a heartless life to lead," said Mabel Gray, as she unbound her long hair, and laid aside her rich robe. "It is a life one might lead were there no life beyond. When I left the heated ball-room to-night, the holy stars, keeping their tireless watch, sent a thrill through me; and the little prayer I read to my dead mother's knees came unbidden to my lips. There's a letter, now; she's happier than her mistress. Come here, child; unbind my hair, and sing me that little Methodist hymn of yours, 'Jesus, I my cross have taken.'"
"That will do—thank you, child; now you may go. What a sweet voice she has! Either that or my tears have need my heart. I'm so restless to sleep. How softly the moonlight falls to-night—and years hence, I have said the gold and purple robe of sunset has been woven for me; the blue vault of heaven arched over my head; the ever-changing, fleecy cloud has gone drifting by; the warm sunlight has kissed open the flowers I love; the green moss has spread a carpet for my careless foot; and I have revolved in all this beauty and luxury—God forgive me!—unmindful of the Giver!"
"Dear reader, shall it be only at 'Bethesda's pool' that you seek your Benefactor? While your life cup overflows with blessings, when the warm blood courses swiftly, shall there come no generous response to that still, small voice, 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'"

HOW HUSBANDS MAY RULE.

"Dear Mary," said Harry, "to his little wife, 'I have a favour to ask of you. You have a friend whom I dislike very much, and who, I am quite sure, will make trouble between us. Will you give Mrs. May for my sake, Mary?'"
A slight shade of vexation crossed Mary's pretty face, as she said, "You are unreasonable, Harry. She is ladylike, refined, intellectual, and fascinating; is she not?"
"Yes, all of that and, for that very reason, her influence over one so yielding and impulsive as yourself is more to be dreaded, if unfavourable. I'm quite in earnest, Mary. I could wish never to see you together again."
"Pshaw! dear Harry, that's going too far. Don't be disagreeable; let us talk of something else. As old Uncle Jeff says, 'How's trade?'" and she looked archly in his face.
Harry didn't smile.
"Well," said the little wife, turning away, and patting her foot nervously, "I don't see how I can break with her. Harry, for a while of years; but, as the proverb is, 'to go there this very evening.'"
"Harry made no reply, and in a few moments was on his way to his office.
Harry stood behind the curtain, and looked after him as he went down the street. There was an uncomfortable, stifling sensation in her throat, and something very like a tear glittering in her eye. Harry was vexed—she was sure of that. He had gone off, for the first time since their marriage, without the affectionate good-bye that was usual with him, even when they parted but for an hour or two. And so she wandered, restless and unhappy, into her little sleeping-room!
It was quite a little gem. There were statuesque, and pictures, and vases, all gifts from him either before or since their marriage; each one had a history of its own—some tender association connected with Harry. There was a bouquet, still fresh and fragrant, that he had purchased on his way home the day before, to gratify her passion for flowers. There was a choice edition of poems they were reading together the night before, with Mary's name written on the leaf, in Harry's bold, handsome hand. Turn where she would, some proof of his devotion met her eye. But Mrs. May! She was so smart and astute! She would make so much sport of her, for being "ruled" so by Harry! Hadn't she told him "all the men were tyrants," and this was Harry's first attempt to govern her. No, no, it wouldn't do for her to yield.
"So the pretty evening-dress was taken out, the trimmings re-adjusted, and re-modelled, and all the little eccentricities of her toilette decided. Yes, she would go; she had quite made up her mind to that. Then she opened her jewel-case; a little note fell at her feet. She knew the contents very well. It was from Harry—slipped silently into her hand on her birthday, with that pretty brooch. It couldn't do any harm to read it again. Harry's very lover-like for a year-old husband; but she liked it! Dear Harry! and she folded it up, and sat down, more unhappy than ever, with her hands crossed in her lap, and her mind in a most pitiable state of irresolution.
"Perhaps, after all, Harry was right about Mrs. May; and, if he wasn't, one hair of his head was worth more to her than all the women in the world. He had never done her an unkind word to her—never! He had anticipated every wish. He had been so attentive and solicitous when she was ill. How could she grieve him?
"Love conquered! The pretty robe was folded away, the jewels returned to their case; and, with a light heart, Mary sat down to await her husband's return.
The lamps were not lit in the drawing-room when Harry came up the street. She had gone, there after all he had said! He passed slowly through the hall, entered the dark and deserted room, and threw himself on the sofa with a heavy sigh. He was not angry, but he was grieved and disappointed. The first doubt that creeps over the mind of the affection of one we love is so very painful.
"Dear Harry!" said a welcome voice at his side.
"God bless you, Mary! Did the happy husband say 'you're saved by a keen sorrow?'"
"Dear reader, won't you tell me there are some husbands worth all the sacrifices a loving heart can make!"
"LITTLE CHARLEY."
It is hard to lie upon a bed of sickness, even though that bed be of down. Nauseous, too, is the healing draught, though slipped from a silver-cup, held by a loving hand. We sometimes see the days and nights, even with the speaking eyes of love, and words of cheer and discourse. Ah! who shall measure the sufferings of the sick poor?
"Dear little Charley! you were as much out of place in that low, dark, wretched room, as an angel could well be on earth. Mostly, in the footsteps of him who loveth little children, were those tiny feet treading. Patiently, uncomplainingly, were those racking pains endured. A lean, a contraction of the brow, a slight, involuntary clasp of the attenuated fingers, were the only visible signs of agony. What a joy to sit beside him—to take that little feverish hand in mine—to smooth that ruffled pillow—to part the tangled locks on that transparent forehead—to learn of one of whom the Saviour says, 'Of such is the kingdom of Heaven!'"
But never did I bless God so fully, so gratefully, for the gift of song, as when, in that sensitive heart held close to mine, I made him forget his pain by some simple strain. I had sung for my own amusement; I had sung when dazzling lights, and fairy forms, and festal hours, were inspiration; but never with such a rest, and with such a thrill of happiness, as when, in that wretched room, I soothed the sufferings of "little Charley." The garland-crowned prima donna, with half the world at her feet, might have envied me the tightened clasp of that little hand, the earnest gaze of that speaking eye, and that half-whispered, plaintive, "One more! Charley is so happy now."
Ay! Charley in happy now! Music such as only the blessed hand fills his soul with rapture. Never a discordant note comes from the harp swept by that cherub hand, while for ever that majestic anthem rolls on, in which his infant voice is joining. "Worthy the Lamb!"

THE LOST AND THE LIVING.

But a fleeting twelvemonth had passed since the heart that for years had beat against his own was for ever still, when Walter Lee brought again a fair young creature to share his widowed home. Nor father nor mother, brother nor sister, claimed any part of the orphan heart that he had coveted and won. No expense or pains had he spared to decorate the mansion for her reception. Old familiar objects, fraught with tenderest associations, had been removed to make way for the upholsterer's choicest fancies. There was no picture left upon the wall, with sweet, sad, mournful eyes to follow him with silent reproach. Every thing was fresh and delightful as the new-born joy that filled his heart.
"My dear Edith," said he, fondly pushing back the hair from her forehead, "there should be no shadow in your path, but I have tried in vain to induce Nelly to give you the welcome you deserve; however, she'll not annoy you. I shall compel her to stay in the nursery till she yields to my wishes."
"Oh, no! don't do that," said the young stepmother anxiously. "I think I understand her. Let me go to her, dear Walter," and she tripped lightly out of the room.
Walter Lee looked after her retreating figure with a lover-like fondness. The room seemed to him to grow suddenly brighter and more cheerful. He went to the door, and almost unconsciously took up a book that lay near him. A slip of paper fluttered out from between the leaves, like a white-winged messenger. The joyous expression of the face faded into one of deep sorrow as he read it. The handwriting was his child's mother's. It ran thus:—
"Oh, to die and be forgotten! This warm heart cold—these pale lips still—these lips that smile and set, and then to lie in the moonlight and see around my own dead home—the merry laugh, the pleasant circle, and I not there! The weeds choking the flowers at my headstone; the sacred trees of sunny fair forgotten in its envelope; the sun of happiness so soon absorbing the dewdrop of sorrow! The oppressor changed for the orange-wreath! Oh, no, no; don't quite forget! Close your eyes sometimes, and bring me back the moonlight and the sunbeams in the lips that told you, not in words, how dear you were. Oh, Walter, don't quite forget! From Nelly's clear eyes let her mother's soul still speak to you. MARY LEE."
Warm tears fell upon the paper as Walter Lee folded it back. He gave himself time to rally, and then glided gently up to the nursery door, it was partially open. A little light crept in from the moonlight and the stars of the night. Her face was half hidden in sunny curls. Her little pinure was full of toys, which she grasped tightly in either hand.
"No, you are not my mamma," said the child. "I want my own, dead mamma; and I'm sorry papa brought you here."
"No, you don't say that!" said the young stepmother; "do you call me mamma, if it gives you pain, I am quite willing you should have your own mamma best."
Nelly looked up with a pleased surprise.
"I had a dear mamma and papa once," she continued; "and brothers and sisters so merry and so merry; but they are all dead, and sometimes my heart is very sad. I have no one now to love me, but your papa and you."
"When next Walter Lee met his young bride, it was with a chastened tenderness. Nelly's loving little heart was pressed closely against his own. He was again "her papa!" No, he did not "quite forget!"
"And you will let me climb in my papa's lap as I used; and put my cheek to his, and kiss him! and love him as much as ever I can, won't you?"
"Yes, yes, my darling."
Walter Lee could bear no more—his heart was full.
"What! Mary's child pleading with a stranger for room in a father's heart! In the sudden flush of this new found of tenderness had he forgotten or overlooked the claims of that helpless little one! God forbid! From Nelly's clear eyes let her mother's soul still speak to you. Ay, it did!"
"Nelly's eyes began to moisten; and, taking out one after another of the little coronets and toys from her pinure, she said, "And you won't take away this, and this, and this, that my dear mamma gave me!"
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