

blunt and precipitate, because he must bear a poisoned arrow and a great, big horror in his sacque coat's inside pocket.

"True," thought Egbert, "I had no one to break the force of my fall. True, I would have been a happier man had this Lansing Daere never been born. But one drop out of every two, in the rich wine of his life, is her blood. Let that consecrate the whole. Her race shall not suffer if Egbert Mentor can prevent one pang."

Heroes are common enough in the gaslight of our nineteenth century democracy. Do you know I honestly believe nine hundred and ninety-nine Ned Everetts would not make one such man as this Louisianaized Englishman? Any fool can make a woman feel vengeance. Only a born knight—a man of gentle blood—can pardon the wound his heart receives from the lady of his choice. "But, do you, an American, a citizen of the great United States, believe in aristocracy?" says a Canadian at my elbow. "Sir, I believe in the aristocracy of Almighty God. I consider the doctrine that all men are born equal a self-evident lie, which every meadow and forest proclaims to be false. I had far sooner swear allegiance to Victoria than be taken into 'Abraham's' despotic bosom. Victoria does not open her subjects' private letters. She does not hang every dissenter at the nearest lamp-post. She does not invade private houses and make 'black-lists' of those literary men who make, through the public press, expositions of their conscientious convictions.

After supper, the old gentleman invited his young companion to take a walk. They passed through the town out into the cemetery. Every tomb bore quaint devices, and the city in the sunset shone with a glorious lustre. Lansing looked really beautiful. His violet-grey eyes glittered with a myriad mingled emotions, and his golden hair, as he removed his *sombrero* to enjoy the delicious evening breeze, hung about his high and narrow brow in a wealth of luxuriant profusion.

Pausing by a tomb that was covered by a flat gray stone, upon which was carved the simple words: "*Dolores, etat 16, Resurgam.*" Egbert seated himself, and lighting a fresh cheroot and handing another to Lansing, Mentor said:

"You showed to-day a curiosity to know something of my past."

"Say, rather, a nobler feeling than curiosity. Your voice told me, dear sir, that you had known a grief. Tell me all about it. Who should better sympathise with the memories of the old, than those young like me?"

"Lansing, in a few words, I will sketch the past. I came to Maryland young in life and when but twenty-two met one I worshipped. Shall I tell you what a sweet, sad face, what a wealth of soft brown hair, what delicately-pencilled eyebrows, and what a pouting mouth my angel wore? I loved her, Lansing, even as you worship Emily. Do not quarrel with me if I tell you she was even a nobler, holier, better woman than Miss Hazleton. Do not say 'impossible!' At any rate, I thought so then, and think so still. I was a tutor in her father's house, and she was the eldest of my pupils, at this time 'sweet sixteen.' Of good family, and possessed of a competence, she was not rich, and when she confessed her love, and I won her parents' consent to our union, I confess my own good fortune begilded life until I thought this earth a heaven. In two years we were to be married, and I went away to New York, having obtained a lucrative professorship in a college in that metropolis. Every vacation I visited her, and thrice each week she used to write me letters that trembled with a girlish heart's sweet tenderness.

"When within three months of the time appointed for her marriage her letters ceased, and one dull November day, going to the post, I received a letter announcing she was married to another. She asked forgiveness. Her father was embarrassed; she had wedded rich; she had not known her own heart; she did not love me—would I forgive her all the seeming inconstancy?"

"Lansing, do you believe I suffered? Do you marvel, if I drank deep, and lost my

place, and became for years a broken-down, prematurely-old young man?"

"It would have killed me," gasped the boyish lover.

"No; men never die of such wounds. Time is very kind, young man. I raised the Circean goblet of pleasure to my lips and blunted sense.

"One day I got a letter from my father's solicitor. He was dead, and I was rich. Richer by far than the one love of my life. Richer than her husband.

"Suddenly I dismissed my last female companion. I removed to New Orleans and was a Monk of the order of Desolation; for no social pleasure, no gay company, no wine nor wassail knew my presence more.

"The crash of 1837 came. I was engrossed in business, when one day accident put me in possession of the fact that my old rival was on the brink of ruin. He had assets enough, but could not realize, and a large sum of ready money only could save him from destruction. 'A lawyer,' I wrote him, a client of mine had a large sum he would invest, if he would give a mortgage, and never till the money was paid, did he know it was I who saved him. Subsequently we met, and became firm friends."

"Who was this man?—I have a suspicion. My father has often said, you saved him from ruin years ago."

"Lansing! Lansing! you are her son. Have you confidence in me; are you calm?"

"My dear, dear friend!" And the boy-lover put his arms about his neck and wept.

Then gradually, Mentor broke the sad news to him, and placing the letters in his hands, turned down another avenue of the cemetery, and left the young man alone with his big grief.

Minutes lengthened into hours; hours rolled on, and the midnight moon arose, when suddenly Mentor felt the delicate hand upon his shoulder, and Lansing said:

"We will go now to the Fandango."

Egbert looked a second at the young man. The lips quivered and the eyes were red with traces of scalding tears. "Let us go to the inn first; I—I—I want to change my coat."

Mentor smoked in silence, and the boy went to his room, boy no longer! Carking care, and distrust, and the bitterness that never dies, had made a man of him. Those letters were silently placed in his trunk, beside the Bible his dead mother gave him years ago. He could not take them to a place of revelry. His eyes were washed, and he had, calmly, changed his coat, and Mentor marvelled at the years his friend had lived in a few brief hours. Not a word was said as they went to the Fandango.

... Who forgets the wild days of his passionate youth? Who that has known the grief that woman bringeth, forgets the surcease of the cup?—the mad forgetfulness the music lendeth?—the blunting of the senses in the maddening dance?

The room was large. The violins were sending forth wild, joyous strains, and the light of the candles in their bronze and silver sconces, cast weird shadows on the groups. At a side-room, were two monte tables, piled up with gold and silver coin, surrounded by a throng of both sexes, who smoked and staked their money with the terrible excitement of an assumed stoicism.

The young man watched the scene, and dreamily marked the panoramic expression of the players. At length, a young girl tapped him with her fan, exclaiming, "*¿Senor, tiene Vmd, la bondad a dar-me dos reales?*" He gave her the coins, and she lost them.

"I am out of luck," said she. "Why do you not play?" This she remarked in English.

"Certainly! if you wish it."

Meanwhile, Mentor watched the youth in sadness.

He staked, quite recklessly, an eagle. And the eagle won, and won, and won, until a pile of golden coin idly rested at his left hand. The superstitious players bet upon his cards, and there seemed a magical breath of fortune in the ace he bet upon. At last the dealer threw the cards to his *vis-a-vis* and a new deal was made, when the girl

whispered, "Cease now! they will cheat you with those packed cards."

He obeyed her, and listening to the prayers of veteran gamblers against whose efforts Fortune frowned, gave them a handful of small silver, and followed Martina into the main hall, where the dance was at its height.

Like all Spanish women, the new acquaintance of Lansing Daere was born to waltz. You ask these Mexican ladies who taught them, and the everlasting "*¿quien sabe?*" is your reply. Graceful as swans, and light as fairies, they will waltz hours and know no fatigue. They do not hop like German *fraus*, nor drag like the mournful English dames. They waltz for the love of waltzing, not to display their charms. You might preach a twelvemonth and fail to convince them it was an "impropriety" to waltze, save with a husband, brother, or accepted suitor. They laughingly take your proffered arm, and if you dance well, will never tire in your arms; but if you have no ear for music, or affront their taste, they become "so tired," and begging a hundred pardons, soon remember they have another engagement. The music was faultless for the purpose. Did those Spanish composers catch inspiration from some wicked fairies? Else how did they learn those seductive strains? What business have such soft, sweet notes in this work-a-day world of ours? The naughty fairies!—how they make those violins give the "good bye" to Duty, Sobriety and staid Decorum.

Do you wonder, with the wound fresh in his memory, and the point of the poisoned dagger of Despair in his bleeding heart, that Lansing Daere did not repulse the exquisite tapering fingers laid upon his shoulders, but encircling her waist joined in the dance? For a marvel, the American waltzed well. No one can learn to dance—save as a monkey or a dog. And if this fact were realized a great many *parvenues* would save time, money and ridicule.

I wonder what thoughts passed through the brain of that young man, as he whirled around in the delirium of that night! Did he know where he was, and realize the horrid mockery of the scene to him? Was he not unconscious of his partner, and was this why his fingers scarcely touched her waist? Was it the motion that lent him surcease of sorrow, by drowning reflection and making him dream he had once lived, but now was dead and flitting through the clouds, as a lost spirit seeking home, and rest, and holy peace?

Egbert watched him mournfully. He could understand him. It would not do to balk his wayward humor now. The violence of the tempest must subside. It was better so: better than lonely brooding and paralysis of the soul. He would watch over him; but not dare to interfere with these manifestations of his agony. Martina might teach him oblivion for a few days: the cup might give him stupor—the gaming-table could never lead the poet far astray.

The night was far spent when they gained the inn. Lansing was silent, and forgot to even bid his friend good night. Of course he did not sleep. Grinning fiends peopled his chamber. Emily took more shapes than Proteus to his delirious brain. Now she was a star, lost in the immensity of space. Anon, she was a spring of water, bitter to the taste. Again, she changed into a violet, and he was keeping herds from browsing by his flower.

.....Why try to make you feel the wild fancies that surrounded him? He was mad, for the time; and Egbert was rejoiced, as he went into his room after breakfast to see he had at last fallen asleep. How lovingly the old man fanned the youth and prayed for his future life!

VIII.

MAUD LA GRANGE.

The plantation of Terreverde, in La Grange Parish, Louisiana, glittered in the sunshine of the early day.

Standing nearly a half mile from the high road, the Manor House was in the centre of a spacious court-yard redolent with beauty. Stately magnolia trees gave cooling shades, and gorgeous flowers filled the air with perfume. The grass was soft as velvet, and a

little stream which flowed lazily and dreamily along, in the rear of the mansion, had been made by human labor to irrigate every portion of the miniature park, while gravelled paths, hedged with evergreens, led hither and thither, so that pursuing their winding course, you could explore and enjoy the delightful scene in detail, which was equally exquisite in the effect produced by its *tout en semble*, viewed from the brow of a hillock, to your right, as you approached Terreverde.

For miles and miles of level, or gently undulating ground this vast estate extended. There was scarce a man, in lower Louisiana, who had not heard of its rare fertility and marvellous loveliness; and a servant belonging to this plantation held his head high above neighboring negroes.

The wealth of brilliant colors in each *parterre* of the court-yard, was like the descriptions of the enchanted gardens that you find in Persian story; and had not these gay hues been relieved by the soft vernal tint of the grass and hedges, and the gray of the gravel, and dark shadows of the grandly gloomy old Manor House, the eye would have wearied of the gorgeous brightness. In the stately branches of the magnolia trees, laden with their white, sweet blooms, birds were singing gaily, and your first impression on beholding all this glory, was to kneel and thank the good God who had made, here and there, little spots of earth so very like to heaven.

The mansion itself, though screened by shady elms, and grand old live-oaks was very old, and in some places seemed to need repair; but the neglect seemed to arise rather from veneration for its time-worn glories, than from indifference or economical considerations. A very high and broad stone stoop led to a wide and quaintly carved gallery, which ran around all sides of the main building, both on the first and second stories; and the architecture seemed a strange commingling of Ionic and Corinthian, with a dash of the Arabesque. In the material, a brownish stone had been used chiefly, but the pillars that supported the gallery were of a whitish, coarse-grained marble, that presented a singular effect, the first time you saw them, as if reminding you of people you had met in a world anterior to earth.

Green trailing vines ran over the mansion in a semi-barbarous freedom. Sometimes, by moonlight, you could fancy they were serpents that had broken from their secret lurking-places, and thronged for a midnight revel about the gray walls of Terreverde; but, when you viewed the place in the morning and clear sunlight, you saw they were kindly, harmless "wood-bine" and "everlasting" that caressed the Manor House now, even as they had done for fifty years and more, in the happy, happy past.

Far away, in the distance, when the day was very clear, and the water high, you could catch a faint glimpse of the Mississippi, and young eyes, that see so much more than older worldlings do, have even discerned the smoke from the steamers bearing the wealth of the western world on the bosom of that marvellous river; while looking westward, through the court-yard, you might mark the white, clean cabins of the plantation village.

The early September morning air, carried the song of the negroes to your ear, as *returning* from the field-labor, they were marching to the copse where their breakfast was awaiting them, and if you cared to listen, you would mark a plaintive sweetness in their merry voices. The nearest approximation Roman letters could give to the words and measure would be:

"Pick de cotton, hoe de co' n;
Ho! de Kigi, kogi kum—
Niggers all to work 'um bo' n;
See de Kigi, see dey cum—
Spec ow' Missey, she' do say;
Ho! de Kigi, kogi kum—
Dat de darkies rubber play;
See de Kigi, see dey cum—
Den, vivy 'erry-verdy!

The day is very newly born, yet from one wing of the mansion comes two figures presenting the law of contrast in the most striking aspect, for approaching the main avenue of the court-yard, they pace to and fro, up and down the winding walks, enjoying the delicious morning breeze.

The first of the twain is very petite, and although in her imagination her sixteenth