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THE BROKEN MINIATURE.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

From the Metropolitan Magazine.

Two young officers belonging to the same regiment aspired to the hand of the same young lady.

We will conceal their real names under the names of Albert and Horace. Two youths of noble never saw the untarnished colors of their country wave over their heads, or took the undaunted hearts into the field, or purer as or more polished address, into a drawing

room. There was a marked difference in their character and each wore his virtues so becomingly, and one of them at least concealed his as so becomingly also, that the maiden who loved them both, was puzzled where to give preference; and stood, as it were, between the flowers of very opposite colors and perfumes, and yet each of equal beauty. Horace was the superior officer, was more commanding in his figure but not so beautiful in his features as Albert. Horace was more vivacious, but Albert spoke with more fluency upon all subjects. If Horace made more agreeable companion, Albert made a better friend. Horace did not claim the name of being sentimental, nor Albert the name of being jovial. Horace laughed the most heartily, and Albert was the most witty and the least wittier. Horace was the more noble-born, yet Albert had the better fortune, and the more that could acquire, and the circumstances of the two did Matilda prefer? Yes had a secret, an undefined preference, yet her inclination walk so sisterly hand in hand with her duties, that her spotless mind did not divide them from each other. She loved the more of Horace, yet thought the more of Albert. As yet, neither of the aspirants had declared themselves. Sir Oliver, Matilda's father, soon put the matter to rest. He had his private and family reasons for wishing Horace to be the favored lover; but he by no means wished to lose to himself his daughter the valued friendship of a young man of probity and honor, he took a delicate method of letting Albert understand that every thing that he possessed, his grounds, his house, all that belonged to them, were at his service. He excepted only his daughter.

When the two soldiers called, as they were the habit of doing, together, Sir Oliver had some improvement to show Albert,—the dog for him to admire, or some horse for him to try; and even in wet weather, there never wanting a manuscript for him to peruse, so that he was sure to take him out the room, or out of the house, and leave alone with his daughter, uttering some sarcastic remark in a jocular tone, to the effect that Horace was fit only to dance attendance upon the ladies. Albert understood too well, and submitted. He did not strive to violate the rites of hospitality, to seduce the affections of the daughter, and outrage the feelings of the father. He was not one of those who would enter the temple of beauty, and deride the pretence of worshipping at the shrine, to destroy it.

A common-place lover might have done so, but Albert had no common-place mind. But he did not suffer? O! that he suffered, and suffered acutely, his beloved girl's, his heroic niece, and at times his forced gaiety, too fully testified. He kept his flame in the instant recesses of his heart, like a lamp in a scabbard, and which lighted up the ruin of his happiness alone.

To his daughter Sir Oliver spoke more excitedly. Her affections had not been engaged, and the slight preference that she began to feel stealing into her heart for Albert had its due change at once. When she found that she could not approach her as a lover, she found springing up for him in her bosom a regard as tender, and as ardent, as if the same cradle had rocked them both. She felt, and her father knew, that Albert was a character that must be loved, if not as a husband, as a brother.

The only point on which Matilda differed with her father, was, as to the degree of encouragement that ought to be given to Horace. "Let us my dear father," she would intreatingly say "be free, at least for one year."—"Let us for that period, stand committed by no engagement: we are both young, myself extremely so. A peasant maiden would lay a longer probation upon her swain. Do but ask Albert if I am not in the right?"

The appeal that she made to Albert which ought to have assured her father of the purity of her sentiments, frightened him into a suspicion of a lurking affection having crept into her bosom.

Affairs were at this crisis when Napoleon returned from Elba, and burst like the demon of war, from a thunder cloud, upon the plains of France; and all the warlike and the valorous arose and walked her in with their veteran breasts. The returned hero lifted up his right hand, and the united force of France rushed with him to battle.

The regiment of our rivals was ordered to Belgium. After many entreaties from her father, Matilda at length consented to sit for her miniature to an eminent artist; but upon the express stipulation, when it should be given to Horace, that they were still to hold themselves free. The miniature was finished, the resemblance excellent, and the exultation and rapture of Horace complete. He looked upon the possession of it, notwithstanding Matilda's stipulation, as an earnest of his happiness.—He had the picture set most ostentatiously, in the finest jewels, and constantly wore it on his person, and his enemies say, that he showed it with more freedom than the delicacy of his situation, with respect to Matilda, should have warranted.

Albert made no complaint. He acknowledged the merit of his rival eagerly, the more eagerly, as the rivalry was suspected. The scene must now change. The action at Quatre Bras has taken place. The principal body of the British troops are at Brussels, and the news of the rapid advance of the French is brought to Wellington; and the forces are, before break of day moving forward. But where is Horace? The column of troops to which he belongs is on the line of march, but Albert, and not he, is at its head. The enemy are in sight. Glory's sunbright face gleams in the front, whilst dishonor and infamy glow in the rear. The orders to charge are given, and at the very moment that the battle is about to join, the foaming, jaded, breathless courier of Horace, strains forward as if with a last effort, and seems to have but enough strength to wheel with his rider into his station. A faint huzza from the troop welcomed their leader. On, ye brave, on!

The edges of the battle join. The scream—the shout—the groan, and the volleying thunder of artillery, mingle in one deafening roar. The smoke clears away—the charge is over—the whirlwind has passed. Horace and Albert are both down, and the blood wells away from their wounds, and is drunk up by the thirsty soil.

But a few days after the eventful battle of Waterloo, Matilda and Sir Oliver were alone in the drawing room. Sir Oliver had read to his daughter, who was sitting in breathless agitation, the details of the battle, and was now reading down slowly and silently the list of the dead and maimed.

"Can you, my dear girl," he said tremulously "bear to hear very bad news?"

She could reply in no other way than by laying her head upon her father's shoulder, sobbing out the almost inaudible word "read."

"Horace is mentioned as having been seen early in the action badly wounded, and is returned missing." "Horrible!" exclaimed the shuddering girl, and embraced her father more closely.

"And our poor friend, Albert, is dangerously wounded too," said the father.

Matilda made no reply, but as a mass of snow slips down from its supporting bank—as silently, as pure, and almost as cold, Matilda fell from her father's arms insensible upon the floor. Sir Oliver was not surprised, but much

puzzled. He thought that she felt quite enough for her lover, but too much for her friend.

A few days after a Belgian officer was asked to dine by Sir Oliver. As he had been present at the battle, Matilda would not permit her grief to prevent her meeting him at her father's table.

Immediately she entered the room the officer started, and took every opportunity of gazing upon her intently, when he thought himself unobserved. At last he did so, so incautiously, and in manner so particular, that when the servants had withdrawn, Sir Oliver asked him if he had ever seen his daughter before.

"Assuredly not, but most assuredly her resemblance," said he, and he immediately procured the miniature that Horace had obtained from his mistress.

The first impression of both father and daughter was, that Horace was no more, and that the token had been intrusted to the hands of the officer, by the dying lover; but he quickly undeceived them, by informing that he was lying desperately but not dangerously wounded at a farm house on the continent, and that in fact he had suffered severe amputation.

"Then in the name of all that is honorable how came you by the miniature?" exclaimed Sir Oliver. "O, he had lost it to a notorious sharper, at a gaming house at Brussels on the eve of the battle, which sharper offered it to me, as," said he supposed, "an enticement from whom; upon it would never come; to repay the large sum of money for which it was left in pledge. Though I had no personal knowledge of Colonel Horace, yet, as I admired the painting, and saw that the jewels were worth more than the rascal asked for them, I purchased it, really with the hope of returning it to its first proprietor, if he should feel any value for it, either as a family picture, or as some pledge of affection; but have not yet had an opportunity of meeting with him."

"What an insult!" thought Sir Oliver.—"What an escape!" exclaimed Matilda when the officer had finished his relation. I need not say that Sir Oliver immediately reprehended the picture, and that he had no further thoughts of marrying his daughter to a gamester.

"Talking of miniatures," resumed the officer "a very extraordinary occurrence has just taken place. A miniature has actually saved the life of a gallant young officer of the same regiment as Horace's, as fine a fellow as ever bestowed a charger." "His name?" exclaimed Matilda and Sir Oliver together. "Is Albert, and he is the second in command; a fine fellow that same Albert." "Pray Sir, do me the favor to relate the particulars," said Sir Oliver; and Matilda looked gratefully at her father for the request.

"O, I do not know them minutely," said he, "but I believe it was simply that the picture served his bosom as a sort of breast-plate, and broke the force of a musket ball, but did not, however, prevent him from receiving a very smart wound. The thing was much talked of for a day or two, and some joking took place on the subject; but when it was seen that those ballistics gave him more pain than the wound, the subject was soon dropped, and soon seemed to have been forgotten." Shortly after the officer took his leave. The reflections of Matilda were bitter. Her miniature had been infamously lost, whilst the mistress of Albert, of that Albert whom she felt might, but for family pride, have been her lover, was even in effigy, the guardian angel of a life she loved too well.

Months elapsed, and Horace did not appear. Sir Oliver wrote to him an indignant letter, and bade him consider all intercourse broken off for the future. He returned a melancholy answer, in which he pleaded guilty to the charge—spoke of the madness of intoxication, confessed that he was hopeless, and that he deserved to be so; in a word, his letter was so humble, so desponding, and so dispirited, that even the insolent Matilda was softened, and shed tears over his blighted hopes. And here we leave to Horace the justice to say, that the miniature was merely left in the hand of the winner, he being a stranger, as a deposit until the next morning, but which the next morning did not

allow him to redeem, though it rent from him a limb, and left him as one dead upon the battle-field. Had he not gamed, his miniature would not have been lost to a sharper, the summons to march would have found him at his quarters, his harrassed steed would not have failed him in the charge, and in all probability, his limb would have been saved, and his love have been preserved. A year had now elapsed, and at length Albert was announced. He had heard that all intimacies had been broken off between Horace and Matilda but nothing more. The story of the lost miniature was confined to the few whom it concerned, and those few wished all memory of it to be buried in oblivion. Something like a hope had returned to Albert's bosom. He was graciously received by the father and diffidently by Matilda.

She remembered "the broken miniature" and supposed him to have been long and ardently attached to another. It was on a summer's evening, there was no other company, the sun was setting in glorious splendor. After dinner, Matilda had retired only to the window to enjoy, she said, that prospect that the drawing-room could not afford. She spoke truly for Albert was not there. Her eyes were upon the declining sun, but her soul was in the dining room.

At length Sir Oliver and Albert, arose from the table, and came and seated themselves near Matilda. "Come, Albert, the story of the miniature," said Sir Oliver.

"What? fully, truly and unreservedly," said Albert looking anxiously at Matilda.

"Of course." "Offence, or no offence," said Albert with a look of arch meaning.

"Whom could the tale possibly offend?" said Sir Oliver. "That I am yet to learn—Listen." As far as regarded Matilda, the last word was wholly superfluous. She seemed to have lost every faculty but hearing. Albert in a low, yet hurried tone, commenced thus.

"I loved, but was not loved. I had a rival that was seductive. I saw that he was preferred by the father, and not indifferent to the daughter. My love I could not—I would not attempt to conquer; but my actions, honor had me control; and I obeyed. The friend was admitted where the lover would have been banished. My successful rival obtained the miniature of his mistress. O, then, then I envied, and, impelled by unconquerable passion, I obtained clandestinely from the artist a facsimile of that which I so much envied him. It was my heart's silent companion, and when at last, duty called me away from the original, not often did I venture to gaze upon the resemblance. To prevent the secret being discovered by accident, I had the precious token inclosed in a double locket of gold, which opened by a secret spring, known only to myself and the maker. I gazed on the lovely features on the dawn of the battle day. I returned it to its resting place, and my heart throbbed proudly under its pressure. I was conscious that there I had a talisman, and if ever I felt such as heroes felt, it was then—it was there. On, on I dashed through the roaring stream of slaughter. Sabres flashed over and around me—what cared I? I had this on my heart, and a brave man's sword in my hand—and come to the worst better could not have died than at that noble field. The showers of fatal hail hissed around me. What cared I? I looked round—to my fellow soldiers I trusted for victory, and my soul I entrusted to God, and shall I own it? for a few tears to my memory to the original of this my bosom companion." "She must have had a heart of ice, had she refused them," said Matilda, in a voice almost inaudible from emotion.

Albert bowed low and gratefully, and then continued—"While I was thus borne forward into the very centre of the struggle, a ball struck at my heart—but the guardian angel was there, and it was protected; the miniature, the double case, even my flesh were penetrated, and my blood soiled the image of that beauty for whose protection it would have joyed to flow. The shattered case, the broken, the blood-stained miniature, are now dearer to me than ever, and so will remain until life itself shall desert me." "May I look upon those happy features that have inspired and

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