



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVIII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1867.

No. 5.

LOVE AND MONEY.

A TALE.

Henry Morton had foreseen the famine. He had laid in a stock of provisions for the hard time, and now good and charitable citizens called upon him to sell it them for the poor.

We can say there was a bright reverse to this picture, and it is with delight we pen it. Men came forth and gave abundantly; ay, and what was so good, helped in its distribution; went into lanes and alleys where disease and death kept an unceasing reign, penetrated into spots unknown by them before, brought bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked, coffined the dead with their own hands—did all that Christian charity could prompt, not for the sake of laudation, but to carry out the sublime principle enunciated by their Maker, to love their neighbor as themselves.

Henry Morton would not sell the corn in his stores, and he chuckled with delight at the proof he had given of his firmness. He would not sell his corn, and he laughed outright at his inclemency, and declared with great emphasis that such was the way in which the great name of Morton should be ever kept up.

'She hates me, hates me, as does all the world. But who cares? She can't disrespect me—no one can. I'm too rich for that, much too rich. She has no love for me, but I don't want it from her. I'm too rich for it; yes, I am; but respect I must have—great respect—from her, from every one. They can't refuse it me, it is my due.' Thus he beguiled himself into the belief that he was the most strong-minded, sensible man, to be found within the three kingdoms.

But let us have some change of scene now.—Come up to the cottage, at Sunday's-Well.—There is a desolate look about it, and a notice is upon the gateway for all whom it may concern, containing the information that it is to be let.—Mary Power does not live there now, nor her brother. They are gone, and the place looks lonely without them, so we do not want to enter. Let us turn back. Two months had elapsed after Alice's coming from school, when Robert showed signs of discontent with his lot, and often expressed his regret at not being in a better position.

It was a difficult task to upset his equilibrium, but upset it was now. 'Going away! Leaving my office; is that what you say?' 'Yes, sir, I can't remain here any longer.' 'Not going to die like old Monckton, eh?—Are you quite sensible of what you're doing at the present time?' 'Quite sensible, Mr. Morton; I'm doing it to better my condition.'

waving sea of men and women surging and beating, in which so many are engulfed. Timid girl, with the spirit of a Columbus, but without the necessary knowledge to carry out her plans. She never told Robert that she had any schemes which she wished to put in execution; she did not tell him what made her spend sleepless nights. Oh, no, she was sure that he would laugh at the notion of her working in any way; but she was determined to do so.

One day, after four or five months of cogitation, she wrote a letter to Susan Borem, telling her that if a situation of anything in the way of taking care of children was vacant about that place she would feel very thankful if informed of it. A reply came from the elder sister containing the intelligence that Susan had departed this life, in consequence of which an assistant was required by her, and that if that post would suit her it was open to her. Mary was at first daunted; Miss Borem's curls, lengthened in her imagination, became terrible screws, to which she feared another introduction; the scholastic lady's nose grew more igneous than nature and a little stimulant could make it, and the proposition was almost abandoned when her fortitude assumed the mastery, and in a half-hour of self-denial she wrote her willing acceptance of the situation.

'What could possibly have caused you to do such a thing?' asked her brother. 'Was I not every way anxious to please you? Had you but told me in what I erred I would have instantly rectified my conduct. What could I have been guilty of?' 'Too much kindness to me, Robert; no more. I could not see you toiling for me in that dark office of Mr. Morton's from morning to night without feeling deeply grieved. I was fully certain that were I in a position to earn my bread respectably you would not remain there, but go off to America.'

'That was it; all because I spoke latterly of the money made there. Oh! it was cruel of me; very cruel; very selfish, very mean. Yes, Mary, I see it all now, perfectly. You couldn't but have noticed me; but I never thought of you as a burthen; never, I assure you.'

'My dear brother, you did not look upon me in that light; but I did myself. Your happiness is my happiness; your joy mine also; and very likely some day or other you will come home very rich, and take me away from Elm Park.'

Robert could not prevail upon her to stay, and soon he was left alone in the cottage; and, as he felt, very nearly alone in the world. However, he was not one to look melancholy matters long in the face, as he had quite given up the tenebrous since he had left Mr. Tweezer's; and forthwith he began to make arrangements for a journey to the New World. He sold the furniture, gave up the house, retired to lodgings, and gave Mr. Morton notice of his intention to leave; at which notice the entire Morton office-hold received a shock.

'Leaving!' said the three clerks; 'leaving, Mr. Power! What on earth has befallen you, sir? Are you really in earnest? It is no matter of joke, I can tell you. This is a place, sir, in which any young man may feel proud of being employed. The name, sir, the name is everything.'

But Mr. Morton was petrified when Robert went inside and said, 'I intend to go away next week, sir.'

It was a difficult task to upset his equilibrium, but upset it was now. 'Going away! Leaving my office; is that what you say?' 'Yes, sir, I can't remain here any longer.'

'Not going to die like old Monckton, eh?—Are you quite sensible of what you're doing at the present time?' 'Quite sensible, Mr. Morton; I'm doing it to better my condition.'

'Better your condition? Outside my office doors? What a chimera! Has any one been tampering with you? Making you promises of greater emoluments, and the like?' 'No, sir; but I have been thinking this some time of going to America to make a fortune for myself.'

'Indeed! Well, there is something remarkable in that. I may as well tell you that the opinion I hold of your abilities is rather high.—You're a good, steady, intelligent young man, and I have a moral certainty that you'll succeed. Have you any—' 'Well, never mind.'

'Perhaps it would be as well if you did.—You're not married?' 'No.' 'You're young?' 'Will be twenty-one in a couple of months.'

'Just the time to make a bold start. You have vigour, will, and energy to overleap all obstacles.'

'Well, I'll try to do, and if I fail—' 'Never think of failing in anything. I say I will, and I must.'

'I never wish to be too confident, sir, in myself; and then I can never forget that there is an all-ruling and arranting Providence.'

'I tell you you will get on, and I'm no mean judge of people; I'm remarkable for my foresight. You're truly honest; I don't mean that honesty the want of which the law would punish. There is in you that which some of our great men, as they are called, would want. You're a pauper now, Robert,—nothing more; but there is metal within you that you can coin into gold pieces, thereby placing yourself in a bold position amongst men.'

'Any amount of money would never make me proud, sir; I am as proud now as ever I shall be.'

'Ah, you think so. You are grievously mistaken, though. But listen to the advice that I now give you. Strain every nerve; work yourself into an oil, if needs be, to make money: for it is the great god of this world's adoration.—You are acquainted with my daughter?'

'Yes, sir.' 'She knows that you're about leaving Cork?' 'No, I haven't told her as yet.'

'You will go up to see her to-day?' 'Not to-day. Before I go I will.'

'Do. You know her well at that school?' 'Oh, very well. My sister was her constant companion, and I often went over to see them both.'

'Did you like her then?' 'Indeed I was very fond of her; she was such a winning child.'

'Did you think so?' 'I did.'

'What is your opinion of her now?' 'My feeling towards her has not altered in the least.'

'I am glad you are so friendly towards her. But you haven't seen her often since she has come to live here?'

'No.' 'Do you think she'd make a good wife?'

'Indeed I do.' And Robert laughed heartily at the question.

'You think she'd be an excellent wife for any one?'

'I do.' 'He that asks for her hand must be rich.'

'There was a pause.

'If you were rich, very rich, would you consider her a good speculation for yourself?'

'Well, if I had means sufficient to marry, and Alice Morton were disengaged, I should offer myself to her.'

'You would?'

'Yes, without any doubt.'

'Why would she be the girl of your choice?'

'A question that I could hardly answer satisfactorily, seeing that you may not understand me.'

'Tis likely I would not; but, at all events, whoever gets her as a wife will receive something worth while.'

'As to that, Mr. Morton, I don't care. It is not for her money that I would marry Alice, neither would I think of such a union unless I were far beyond a pauper, as you have termed me, and, I must admit, justly too.'

and altogether in threatening attitude, he said— 'You can't have sufficient money for your journey; so you must take one hundred pounds from me as a loan, which you can pay when you come back.'

'Thank you, Mr. Morton; thank you very much; but I won't do anything of the kind.—My passage-money is paid. I have something left after it, and I need no more.'

'But a little sum to begin with, wouldn't you take it?'

'No, sir.'

'I can't help it. It is no compliment, Robert, you have earned it from me since you came here.'

'I won't have it, sir. I will depend upon God and myself.'

Mr. Morton went to his seat, quite overcome by the exertion made by him to get himself into a state of generosity.

'When will you leave the office?'

'My time won't be up—'

'Oh! don't mind that. You can finish up to-day. Good bye. Get yourself in readiness. I suppose I'll see you again before starting, when you come to bid Alice adieu. Good bye. You're an honest fellow, and sure to come to luck.'

Robert went out to bid his fellow clerks farewell; but again they remonstrated with them.

'Sure of what you're about, Mr. Power, leaving a good place—an excellent place—for the sake of going to a country of which you know absolutely nothing. Always considered you a young man of sense, wisdom, and the like. Never anticipated this, never. The name that Mr. Morton has, sir, of money, extended itself to his offices, and those within them. Monstrously foolish, echoed the three. 'Monstrously foolish to leave such a place.'

'Well, I have decided.'

'So much the worse. Impossible to put an old head on young shoulders. Young men will have their own way. Will do what they think right. Won't consult their elders. Self-sufficient. However, we're sorry for you. Mr. Power; very sorry. You're were always hard-working, kind, obliging. Good bye, sir, and we wish you luck; a good deal of it, but we have our own views. Good bye.'

The stool vacated by Robert was soon filled by a man of steady appearance, suited to the place, and everything went on as usual, only that Mr. Morton felt a strange sensation for two or three days. He was not exactly lonely, but fidgety, and it was only an unusual press of business that brought him to himself. The evening preceding the day upon which the vessel Robert was to go in sailed, he went to see Alice. Fortunately, she was not at Mrs. Aylmer's, but at home, sitting in the drawing-room, dreamily turning over the leaves of a music-book.—Aroused by his tap on the door, she looked up, and in came Robert, greatly to her surprise.—Seating himself opposite her, he said,—

'I'm to leave to-morrow, Alice.'

'What can you mean?'

'Has not Mary ever told you of my intent on?'

'Upon her going to Miss Borems, she did say something about your going to America; but you can't mean that.'

'I said so to-morrow.'

'To-morrow, Robert? You're joking.'

'Nothing of the sort.'

'Speak seriously; don't alarm me needlessly.'

'Would that alarm you?'

'Certainly it would.'

'Well, I am going, nevertheless.'

'Oh! Robert, what shall I do without you? But yet I don't think you are serious.'

'I am, indeed, Alice; this is one of the most thoughtful moments of my life.'

'Leaving Cork, leaving me, I may say, almost alone; isn't it cruel?'

'I first met you with my sister when you were very young, and instinctively I knew you were everything that could be admired; I made a friend of you. We parted, and I still cherished your memory. I saw you again, a blooming girl, and my affection for you intensified, strengthened, grew every day, until I was forced to acknowledge to myself that I loved you. Now, Alice, I could love you with all my heart, as I have already said I do; but if you did not reciprocate that feeling, if your heart was in another's keeping, I would be perfectly satisfied to sink to the level of your friend. I would not die of grief; I could live very well without marrying; I'd content myself with the belief that you had made yourself happy, and other cares would fill up my life, and I'd forget the day under the elm. But, if you can without any doubt say that—'

'Ah! Robert,' said Alice, 'is not this strange language?'

'I don't see that it is. It's very probable that you'll marry. You can't be a nun, because we have no convents amongst us. And wouldn't it be as well that you should marry me as another? You may say I'm not handsome, but I don't think that ought to be a great obstacle.'

'I have never thought of marriage.' She blushed, being by nature truth-telling, at this derivation. 'And this comes upon me so suddenly, that I don't know what to do. It's a matter requiring grave consideration.'

'True, it is; but you have known me a long time; and I would not ask an answer but that I am to go on the ocean to-morrow, and I cannot forget it is a treacherous element, which may wash me away, with all my hopes and projects, or it may not; and if so, I enter a land in which there is a mighty scramble, a great rush of men towards one object, a struggle in which I intend to throw myself, in which I will work night and day to gain money, and in which I would wish to have some binding and sustaining thought.'

'Why to gain money?'

'To marry you.'

'Robert, I would marry you if you were not the possessor of a shilling.'

'Thanks, Alice; that gives me new vigor, but I would not come empty-handed to ask your father for his daughter.'

'You cannot mean that he has an absolute control upon my wishes.'

'I mean that I am too proud to take you and make you the wife of a beggar, even if he were to give his consent.'

'Love tramples upon all pride,' objected Alice, and she looked furtively at Robert.

'Not in my instance.'

'Then you do not love—you deceive yourself.'

'I do not deceive myself, Alice; I have got into the habit of looking before I leap, and I am conscious that unequal marriages generally turn out badly. Say you love me, let me have that as a stimulus to my labors, and I will come back in a few years to honorably demand you as my wife.'

'In a few years! oh, how wearily they will pass without you, dear Robert.'

'Then I may count upon you, Alice. You will be mine, won't you?'

'Why press me to a promise?'

'Because there are subjects that imperatively ask for the seal of one's words.'

'You love me, and when I come back, enabled to keep a respectable home, you will marry me?'

'Yes. Be content now.'

'But bear in mind that if I do not succeed, I release you from your promise.'

'It is not in your power to absolve for a sin against plighted faith.'

'I have the power, for it was at my bidding you bound yourself.'

'Have you such a low opinion of me as to imagine that I look upon gold as the great standard by which men and women are to be judged?'

'No, Alice, I have studied you well.' Like many another he believed himself perfectly conversant with their mind-working machinery.—

'And I know you are not like the generality of persons. Yet I cannot hide from myself this fact, that every one respects the rich. I can see a certain amount of usefulness in such a state of things. It prevents the indolent from remaining inactive; it gives the spur to mainly exertion; it makes us anxious to gain that which has proved a most serviceable agent in the world, and which can be made the cause of so many good works.'

'Robert, would you not remain at home?'

'No, Alice, I am determined upon going, and nothing human can stop me.'