

[REGISTERED in accordance with the Copyright Act of 1868.]

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

LILLYMERE.

CHAPTER XVII.

LADY MARY MORTIMER AMAZED AT GREYNA GREEN.

By London & North-Western Railway two lady passengers arrived at the city of Carlisle, county of Cumberland, England; then took a private carriage to Gretna Green, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, distant from Carlisle about twelve miles.

The elder of the two called the younger Agnes; and she, possibly by gracious request,—for they were of unequal social rank,—addressed the other as Mary.

At Saark Toll Bar, a turnpike gate on the Scotch brink of the small river Saark—a tributary of Solway and there the dividing line between England and Scotland, the carriage stopped while Mrs. Burly collected toll, and replied to certain inquiries. Bella Burly, the daughter, observing her mother's delay, came also to the carriage. With an air of expectancy and a curtsy she approached, but on seeing two ladies, and no gentleman, retired abruptly as if disappointed.

The elder of the two noticing this motion made a pleasant remark, to the effect that the young woman had expected a friend and was disappointed.

"Not a friend of ours, my lady; but rather, if at all, one of your ladyship's."

"What friend of mine could she have expected?"

"My daughter not knowing your ladyship by sight, as I have the pleasure and honour, may have thought the carriage contained a loving pair desiring to be wedded."

"You are Mrs. Burly, I presume by the name on the office? Pray, why address me as ladyship? Have you seen me at any time previous to now?"

"In London many a time; at Lillymere Hall, once or twice; also at Eecley Manor. Oh, dear yes! To have seen Lady Mary Mortimer once was sufficient to know the distinguished loveliness ever after."

"Mrs. Burly, is it usual on the Scottish Border to flatter English ladies?"

"Nobody on Scottish or English Border can flatter Lady Mary. Language is too poor and rude at Solway Moss for that. The beautiful Mortimer of high fashion, and angel of a thousand blessed charities, shines at a height far beyond the approach of flattery."

"Really, Mrs. Burly, you are accomplished in the art. Pray, what may have suggested to your daughter that this carriage contained people to be married? To be married, where?"

"Here, your ladyship, in this house. We have married many hundred couples a year. But that evil revolution now going on throughout this once prosperous country, laying railways alongside turnpike roads, and ruining toll bars; undoing the landed interest, abolishing protection, bringing in free trade, is now making an end of Gretna Green marriages. Soon a new law, they say, is to extinguish their validity, fine and imprison us, if continuing to marry any couple of true lovers, who may come fleeing from detested suitors and appealing for protection to Gretna. Bella Burly, my daughter, likely enough assumed the unusual arrival of a carriage with postilion from Carlisle, now the rail has ruined the road, to indicate a pair of lovers flying to blessed matrimony before the law for protection of women is finally abolished, and the accursed revolution completed."

"Are Gretna Green marriages made in this toll bar office?"

"Here, in this house, or office, as your ladyship pleases to term my residence."

"Who performs the ceremony?"

"When Uncle Hurly is not within call I, or Bella, or both officiate. The marriage mainly consists of filling up blanks in printed forms. I put questions to the parties, Bella writing the names and dates. The papers signed a marriage is completed, so far as law directs the procedure. If Uncle Hurly should be at the Farm and within call, he may come, put on gown and bands, and add an admonition, or blessing."

"What are the fees?"

"The fees? Half a crown to a hundred guineas. The fortune, generosity, or love of the parties determine the fees. As I was saying, Hurly may assume the black robe and add a blessing, or prayer if the bride seems desirous of some form of sanctity, and there be no urgency. But if in a hurry, any angry guardian or disappointed lover pursuing, we cry—'Join hands! You two are one! Now, henceforth, evermore, Amen!' And push the happy couple into that closet, bolting its door, removing the key, loosing the house

dog, Solway. Well does Solway know his duty, distinguishing between the married lovers and enemies of their happiness. They may stay there or go out at the back window—made low of purpose, and flee. They may flee, they may be pursued, they may be overtaken; it matters not, they are married. Just as well joined in eye of the law as if the Bishop of London had made the twain one, at St. George's, Hanover Square. And, in addition to its being a legal marriage, a high moral principle is vindicated—marital protection of woman."

"Don't name me, please, as Lady Mary, or ladyship. Our visit here is quite private. Oblige in this, good Mrs. Burly; and enjoin your daughter to the same reserve and kindness. I remain in the North, one, two, or three days going between Gretna and Carlisle as business may demand; and may require your assistance in efforts to obtain documentary proof of a certain marriage. You named Hurly, who is Uncle Hurly?"

"My deceased husband's brother, who succeeded his father in Millington. All England once knew his father, Hurly Burly of Millington, farmer, cattle dealer, flockmaster, fox-hunter, none to beat him riding to hounds, and champion Cumberland wrestler. Lately Hurly, our uncle, has been much at London, engaged in the movement to save Gretna, but failing in that talks of emigrating to America. And we may follow, now the ruin of turnpike roads is complete; railroads, radicals, revolution rampant. If Uncle Hurly should come along I see caution him; and he will be as discreetly silent about you, Mary, as Bella or I."

"That is well, call me Mary. This young lady is Agnes; my kind companion in present affairs of business. To you I'm to be plain Mary, an old friend, or acquaintance. You understand?"

"Perfectly. I had expected to see you more changed, Mary. But you carry youth, and the beauty of youth, almost as freshly and gaily as ever."

"About marriages, Mrs. Burly, when females only officiate; are the contracts good in law?"

"Quite as binding, Mary, with only Bella and I officiating as if Uncle Hurly were here. They have never been questioned, and we two women have done hundreds for Netley's tens."

"Who is Netley?"

"Netley of the Hill. He pretends to be High Priest of Gretna. For a time he did get the greater share of the high-flying, coach-and-four matches. We more people coming on foot. The Toll Bar being on the brink of Saark, but a footstep in Scotland as you may say, was rather too near the Borders. Too near for coach-and-fours with postillions spurring, whipping from Carlisle, as from all the stages beyond. Pursued by other coach-and-fours with their postillions whipping and spurring; the last bribed by jilted lovers, riding with angry fathers, to overtake the fleeing, loving—the true, the trusting loving pair; but paid tenfold more in money by Carlisle confederacies of Gretna and of the lovers, not to overtake them. In such fleeing, whipping, spurring, galloping, this toll-house was too near the boundary for the marriage ceremony. But it suited well for another incident in the public service."

"What public service, Mrs. Burly?"

"This, Mary: We seeing the first coach-and-four, or pair—but pairs of horses were accounted in those days poor concerns; with real heiresses, real love, real beauty, and disappointed suitors in pursuit, coach-and-fours, or coach-and-sixes came rattling out of, as they had come rattling into Carlisle. We, at Saark Toll Bar, perceiving the coach-and-four, or coach-and-six, coming, whirling in a cloud of dust, or spattering in mud, postillions brandishing whips and spurring; hearing them halloo and hallooing, shouting in their galloping to open, open, open the gate, gate, gate, gate! Hearing the cries in the fast and faster beautiful races of love, they eager to land the lovers at Gretna in time to have the officiator cry: 'You two are one!' We, hearing, seeing, knowing the urgency threw open the gate, letting postillions gallop through; trusting the toll would be paid in some way. Do you take me, Mary?"

"Quite understand; proceed, please."

"Then perceiving, not many hundred paces behind as sometimes happened, another chaise-and-four in pursuit—eager heads out of side windows, hats blowing away in the wind; pistols out of the windows, and voices in wild passion threatening to shoot the postillions if they did not spur, and whip and gallop quicker, quicker, and overtake the flying foremost coach,—we closed the gate to take toll. And protect young innocence, fleeing from a hateful alliance; from some odious, loathed suitor, accepted by avaricious, or blinded parents, blinded guardians; matches made for policy of some sort alien to happiness of a loving pair. To protect young heiresses, innocence and beauty, is the distinctive moral principle of Gretna marriages. By existence of which tens of thousands of true lovers who never were here have had their affections consulted, and were married happily at home in the churches to avoid the runaway alternative, the flight to Gretna! To protect heiresses in their true loves, and

female innocence in general under marital rights, we closed the gate on pursuers and demanded toll."

"This is a new moral philosophy, Mrs. Burly; proceed."

"You smile, Mary? But the young lady—Agnes is the name I think—looks sad. Shouldn't be surprised now, to learn that some old dotard, or odious, avaricious, unhealthful, foul-breathing wooer pretended to her hand, and has got consent of guardian or parents; while the younger, handsomer gentleman, the loved and accepted of her heart, dares not be seen in her sweet company? Shouldn't wonder! dear young lady—you are ill! Agnes quivers and faints. Will you alight? Perhaps I touch too truly a suffering heart?"

"Revert to your descriptive story, Mrs. Burly. Leave Agnes to me. You closed the gate against pursuers, what then?"

"We closed the gate, collecting toll. And while I or Bella, or both, bothered about change, Hurly Burly, or some other of our people, quietly removed a lynch pin, or undid, or partly cut the traces. The gate re-opened, pursuit was resumed. Soon a wheel came off; or the traces gave way, and the post-boys stopped. The pursuers then rushed to Gretna on foot. But the loving two were one before anger, avarice, or envy arrived. Now all this is changed, and woman, less protected since that public ruin of a railway came along robbing turnpikes of traffic, is to be deprived of all protection. Next year Gretna marriages are to cease. Love will then have no appeal. Dotage, selfishness, ugliness, unhealthfulness, foul breath itself—laugh! are to make free trade havoc of the heiresses of England."

"Where is Springfield, Mrs. Burly? Were not marriages performed there?"

"Sure. Springfield, parish of Gretna, county of Dumfriesshire; that was the first form of certificate, and long continued the only Gretna certificate. When Miss Pelham, sister of the two Pelhams, the Secretary of State, and the Premier, 1750, was stopped going into the Fleet—a place of private marriages in London—to be wedded to a dashing highwayman whom she had danced with the night previously at Ranelagh Gardens, supposing him to be a gentleman of condition—a bad misadventure, no doubt; all London society was shocked. Consequent on that affair the stringent marriage Act of 1750 passed both Houses in a panic, in dread of ladies of rank and fortune eloping with highwaymen! Most of the greatest, gravest legislation in this dear old England of ours was, and is, done in a panic. I say England of ours for we are Cumberland Burlys, though living with one foot in Scotland. That Act rendered the union of loves obstructed impossible, except as runaways to the Scotch border, where the law looks to, and long it should have continued to operate for, the protection of women. Joseph Paisley, the weaver at Springfield, parish of Gretna, officiated first on this, the Carlisle road; others on the north roads at Berwick and at Coldstream. After Paisley, the weaver, there was Elliot, the post-boy, and various others officiating at Springfield. And with these the Burlys, of Millington, at Saark toll-bar. Lastly, Netley came to the Hill, a kind of hotel and farm-house."

"We have heard much in the south about a blacksmith. Where did he operate? I've come purposely to see his place, and procure a certain document, or copy, if such exist."

"There has been no blacksmith in the business of marrying. He was a mythical person. 'Forging the links of Hymen' was a term of fancy for marriage; and so Paisley, the weaver, was called 'blacksmith.' They might more appropriately have said, 'weaving the threads of destiny.' If you confide to me, Mary, the name of the parties whom the document concerns, I may suggest where to look for it."

"You have been at Lillymere Hall, you said? I now remember you, Mrs. Burly. You were Bella Ellaby, own maid to the dashing Countess of Enderwick, when I was a child; that is when I was younger than now. You have been at Lillymere?"

"Yes, Mary; there and at Eecley Manor also."

"You remember when Sir De Lacy Lillymere was Member for Eecley?"

"Certainly, and I, as many more, expected a certain friend of mine honouring me to-day with a call to become his bride."

"Stop, stop, Mrs. Burly, please. That is the point of deep trouble and perplexity this moment. You knew not, none knew, not even he, not even I, what fictions were woven around us. The plotters themselves were not each aware of all that others of the number did. Lillymere loved and worthily won the love of Edith Ogleburn. I had not, in absence of his regard for me, any partiality for Colonel Lillymere. In society friends disagreeably pressed me into his path, which I resented. Then society pronounced me haughty. Proud Lady Mary was the term used. The proud Lady Mary Mortimer, even newspapers called me. I knew he loved Edith, and could not regard me. Wasn't that sufficient?"

"Quite sufficient, Mary."

"But certain of his family and of mine, moved by the old feud of Eecleys and Ogleburns, that feud additionally embittered by

Colonel Lillymere taking a Parliamentary seat under Eecley Manor patronage, then voting for disfranchisement of the borough he sat for; those family connections united to prevent his union with Edith Ogleburn. They were enemies to me by fleetingly representing to Earl Royalfort that I was engaged to the heir of the Earldom. They were defiant criminals in eye of the Holy One, whom I humbly—humbly serve, not as proud Lady Mary Mortimer, but the poor sinner, Mary Mortimer, a fly on the bloom of fashion, a poor fly, poor fly!"

"You are excited, dear Mary; pray alight and take refreshment."

"Not yet, thank you. Colonel Lillymere having finally and utterly broken with the Eecleys by voting for disfranchisement of the borough he sat Member for, was also at that juncture expecting to be ordered abroad on active service, and indeed did go abroad on service soon after, and fell in battle. In expectancy of early separation, embarrassed by his family opposition, and that partly founded on the wicked falsehoods of prior engagement to me, he carried his bride, Edith Ogleburn, here, and made a private marriage at Gretna Green. So I have but lately ascertained for a certainty. I now want legal proof of the marriage; but am surrounded by such difficulties as to induce great caution, almost secrecy."

"About Edith, what do you know of her, Mary?"

"Edith died broken hearted; poor dear, dear, lovely, loving saint! Broken hearted in frenzy of despair at loss of husband and loss of infant boy. Husband slain on field of battle; infant boy killed by wild eagles, as was supposed. And, most deplorable of calamities! She driven forth as an imposter and strumpet, in Lord Royalfort's absence, by order of—I shrink from naming whom. Driven out by young Adam Scholar in person, the law agent, who, in somebody's interest concocted the lying letters of pretended correspondence from the deceased Colonel Lillymere, showing Edith—pretending to show Edith to have been only a depraved woman and mistress! And her dresses, all but what she stood in, tossed into the hogs-pens to be torn and trampled by the foul beasts. Among them a blue satin corset now said to have contained a certificate of her marriage. I learnt so quite lately, and a large sum of money in bank notes, inserted there when she went abroad following the husband she adored, following him to battle, where she found him on the dreary dark night amid terrific carnage, dying, and where she tore off her clothes to staunch his blood. Oh God! the wrong done that true woman, compared with whom I'm so unworthy."

"But you also are worthy, Mary. Don't weep, Mary, dear lady."

"Let me continue. In rage of Eecley antipathy to the Ogleburns and to him, the Dame, or sister, or both, thrust a dagger through Edith's satin corset when carrying it to be thrown among hogs, exclaiming: 'Would to the Demon the dagger were in Edith's heart, and in the heart of every Ogleburn living or dead!' For many good reasons I am now constrained to confide those matters to you, Mrs. Burly."

"The Ogleburns, Mary, had politically betrayed the Eecleys after two of them sitting as Members for the borough, and that was bad. Also, when one, said to have been a gipsy, named Eecley, was on trial at Berwick-on-Tweed, Admiral Ogleburn, who had been Member for Eecley, called out in the jury room, half asleep, 'Hang them all! Hang the whole tribe of the Eecleys!' Now the Eecleys were Tories, like me and like all the Burlys, and those things were offensive, and came with bad grace from recreant Ogleburns. This much, begging pardon, I must say for the provocation given the Eecleys. But, on the other hand, none of those things could excuse the persecution of poor, innocent Edith. Beg pardon, Mary, for the interruption."

"You do right, Mrs. Burly, to express sentiments and feelings. What you have said is all too well known to me. But—well, I need go no farther in explanation. The sad, sad story ends. Edith in frenzy of despair—her husband lost, babe lost, certificate of marriage lost, the marriage itself denied, and she thrust out as a depraved imposter—by hands of Adam Scholar the legal agent, acting for Scholar & Scholar of London, Edith wandered away in delirium. Wandered to Wales, and near Bangor, leapt over a precipice into the Merri Strait. But the babe—Mrs. Burly, permit me to alight, please."

"Do, Mary; alight and come in the house. It is humble, but tidy as the Queen's palace. Enter it, please, and refresh. I have good wine."

To be continued.

The Princess Clotilde, eldest daughter of Victor Emmanuel and wife of Prince Napoleon, is said to be an exceedingly kind-hearted and winning woman, and seems to be esteemed and liked by everybody, but her husband. A Geneva correspondent ascribes their disharmonies to the difference in their tastes and ages. He is in his 49th year, while she is only 28.