

MY NATIVE LAND.

BY THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.

What though my feet have wandered far
Through groves and lawns of antique shores,
Where ever to the morning star
The enamored lark her love-song pours,
And through enchanted woods and vales
Romance still walks, a spirit free,
Thrilled by the poet-nightingales
I turn, dear native land, to thee.

It is not that thy giant floods
Sweep seaward with univalued flow
It is not that thy pathless woods
Have majesty no others show;
Nor for thy matchless inland seas,
Wider than eagle's eyes discern,
Nor mountains vast;—'tis not for these
My heart, dear land, to thee returns.

Not for thy seasons, though they sweep
From unknown continents of ice,
Or wake in tropic forests deep,
Bring summer from the land of spice,
Not that thy fiery forest-trees,
At harvest close, with splendours burn
In hues triumphant,—not for these
To thee, dear land, my steps return.

Not only that my native hearth
Is shrouded among thy greenest hills,
Or that my earliest infant mirth
Was learned among thy flowers and rills,
But, childly, that before thee open
A glorious future, grand and free,
And thou hast all my brightest hopes,—
For this, dear land, I turn to thee.

For the Favorite.

THE MASKED BRIDAL.

BY ANTOINETTE.

OF HALIFAX, N. S.

CHAPTER XIII.

RAFTY'S REVENGE.

Meanwhile, time had been busy working changes at Helshourne Hall. On the eventful day that was to have been the wedding day of Stanley Riverdale, the whole household was thrown into confusion by the sudden disappearance of the intended bride, Lady Alice Paget.

Sir Claude became nearly frantic with grief as time passed on, and no clue could be found to the mystery.

What had been the fate of the tenderly nurtured girl, dear to him as his own child; none could tell. Perhaps she had been brutally murdered, and all this seemed probable, could such a crime be committed without some trace being left? Surely not.

She had disappeared as completely, however, as if she was no longer living, and all search for traces of her had proved unavailing.

Rumors had been offered, and advertisements inserted in the London papers, but they had produced no results.

A month passed and all the strangers having taken their departures from a house, so still and gloomy as Helshourne had now become, Sir Claude and his son were left in solitude. Stanley had affected great grief at the loss of his promised wife, but many felt strong doubts as to his sincerity.

Lady Eva for one, had openly declared her belief that his was no disconsolate heart. She had treated him with insulting coldness ever since Lady Alice's disappearance; and one day just before her departure from London, Stanley met her on the terrace in front of the Hall.

It was a very hot day, and the little beauty was flushed and angry, and she was tired of the place and annoyed with herself for remaining there so long. She had just received a letter from her friend Clara Hope, and an account of a party to Greenwich, given by her admirer the Marquis of Menck's Ferry, and Lady Clara wrote off it as follows:

"He" (meaning the Marquis) "has consoled himself; he is deeply in love, but not with any of our set. She is some beautiful Italian actress, and he is perfectly devoted to her, follows her about like a shadow. His love they say is returned and there are whispers that they will marry, but this, of course, is uncertain. He goes abroad with her next week, and once on the continent no one knows where they will bring up. I think you were very silly to refuse him, when he did offer; of course you wanted him to do it again, but you see your chance is gone now. The party he gave us the other day was, he said, his farewell to polite society, so I can't help thinking there is some truth in the rumors about his marriage."

This was, of course, as no doubt it was meant to be, gall and wormwood to the reader.

The proud, willful girl had intended to marry the Marquis, and only meant to add to the glory

of the conquest by forcing him to offer himself twice. Alas! What was to be done?

She thought it all over in one moment; could she get up to London in time to stop this tour to the continent? No, it was impossible. This letter was nearly a week old, having been written five days ago, and Lady Clara neglecting to post it.

Now, at that very moment he might be on his way to Paris, with the new enchantress.

This thought so maddened her that she stamped her foot in impatient rage, and crushed the friendly letter up in her hand. She ground her pretty little teeth, and if she had not been a lady, no thinks she would have sworn.

At this unpropitious moment who should appear on the scene, but Stanley. Stanley, the cause of all this misfortune, for as Lady Eva bitterly thought, "If it was not for coming down here to break this fellow's heart, I would not have lost the best match in England. I'll make him pay up for it."

Little did he know what thoughts were running through the fair one's head, as he came towards her. He, poor fool, was thinking how lovely she looked, standing in the bright sunshine, in her long white robe, trimmed here and there with knots of rose color. Fair, young and innocent, as she looked she was a serpent, and she could sting.

"Lady Eva, I have tried so often to see you alone, and it seems to me that you have avoided me. Is this so?" He was very near her now, so near that she could see the purple velvet doublet rise and fall, with the beating of his heart.

Her face was cold and cruel, and her voice, on a clear and bell-like in its tones as she said coolly,

"Why should I avoid you, Master Riverdale?" "I know not, you must know I love you, you do know it, Eva; oh! tell me is that love returned?" He took her hand, the hand that held the letter, and it seemed to her as if he was taunting her with her loss.

"You love me? Faith, that is a pretty confession for a man that lost his bride a short month ago!"

"Oh! Eva; you know I loved you long ago,—oved you the first time I ever saw you!"

"Indeed I did not; I know nothing about you; you were engaged to your cousin and that was enough for me."

"But I am free now," he cried eagerly. She raised her eyebrows with just the lowest and most musical laugh in the world.

"You are free now! Yes, and I know how you are free. Do you think I will marry a murderer?"

He grew ghastly white and trembled from head to foot.

"What do you mean?" he gasped, with white lips.

"What I say. Did not my maid Celeste, see you with her own eyes, come into the house through a dungeon window, the first night we spent beneath your roof? Stand back, Stanley Riverdale I don't attempt to touch me, or I will scream for help!"

"Eva, you cannot, you do not believe this? For the love of Heaven cease to torture me; you know I never harmed one hair of Alice's head. She is alive and well at this moment."

"It is false, every word of it. You have killed her. How did you know I meant Alice, I never mentioned her name?"

"Eva, how can you be so mad as to persist in this absurd story?"

He was calmer now and spoke quietly. She looked him in the face, and she was cowed by his fierce black eyes.

"I won't tell anyone. I am going away."

"And you do not love me? Never have loved me?"

"No."

"Why did you make me love you, you fair-faced devil?" he cried passionately.

"I did not, I never sought your love."

"You did. Do you think I did not see your eyes because I am the victim of them? I tell you I did. You sought my love and you have it, and now you shall return it."

"Shall," she repeated scornfully.

"Yes, shall! You have ruined me, and I am desperate, unless I have you I have nothing. Why will you not love me, Eva? I love you with my whole heart and soul."

The girl hesitated a moment, and thought that perhaps she might do worse than accept his offer. Sir Charles Seymour had no fortune to bestow on his daughters, and his estate was entailed, so on his death it would pass to his nephew. She had married the Marquis, and perhaps Stanley was as rich as anyone she would be likely to meet with. She thought a moment and like a good general weighed the chances.

She was young, and Stanley was bad tempered, he would master her, and she could not bear that. No, she would go back to London. After all the Marquis might not go away; at any rate there was a chance, and it would do her heart good to win him yet, for had not Clara Hope triumphed over her.

Her mind was made up. She would not argue with Stanley any longer, she would go and leave him without further ceremony.

"I am going into the house; I am fairly burnt up, standing so long in this intolerable sun."

"But, Eva, darling, you have not given me your answer. What is it?"

"Yes, I have. I don't love you, and nothing will make me marry you."

"Then, Eva Seymour, may my curse rest upon you forever. You have destroyed my life!"

He seized her arm in his strong grasp and

held her as he blazed these words into her ear, then flung her from him with such violence that she staggered and would have fallen, but she caught the stone railing near her, and he strode off down the avenue.

Lady Eva was frightened. She trembled for fear he would return, and hurried into the house and up to her own chamber without delay.

"I will not stay another night in Helshourne, for I do believe he would murder me," she said to herself, for the wise little lady could keep her own counsels.

Her sister and Sir Charles were always ready to do the petted beauty's bidding, so, ere night-fall, the coach was packed, and after bidding Sir Claude farewell, they started for London.

Stanley had not returned when they left the house, and Eva was not sorry to be spared a final interview with him.

Where was he all that day?

After leaving Eva, he walked on in mad despair, with the evil passions of a demon raging in his heart.

She had called him a murderer, and indeed he almost deserved the hideous name.

On he went, on and on. Leaving the road, he struck into the forest. At one time he would have gone to the gipsy encampment, and passed the day with Myra and his child; but that time was past. He had not been there for nearly two months, and even when Rafty had come to the hall, and besought him to come and see his sister, who was very ill, he had neglected to do so.

He walked on. The woods were fair to see in this the leafy month of July, but he saw them not. The birds sang sweetly, but he looked up and cursed their joyous notes in the bitterness of his soul.

What made the grass so green and fresh, and all the earth seem glad and happy when he was so wretched, so desolate?

On and on he walked, trampling the daisies under foot, and breaking through the leafy branches in his mad haste.

He walked till the grand old sun began to sink to rest in a bed of soft fleecy clouds; then Stanley paused, and looked wildly about him.

He was far from home, but how far he knew not. The spot was unfamiliar.

It was a wide clear space, covered with boulders of granite, and stout fir-trees, ferns and mosses sprang up between the huge stones, while a deep black pool gave a sombre look to the landscape.

Stanley sank down beside an old tree, and gazed about him in bewilderment. What dreary spot was this, and what fate had brought him here?

The sun went down, the stars came out and peeped down sorrowfully at the fallen mortal who lay on the damp earth, regardless of the falling dew, the gathering darkness.

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"Rafty, I am dying. Can you not bring Stanley to me?"

The voice was low and faint, and betrayed the fast-fading strength of the speaker.

The young gipsy answered with a groan.

"Oh! Rafty, find him; let me see him only once more. I know it is hard for you to go again after they drove you away; but, Rafty, it is the last thing I will ever ask of you. Go, my brother, or you will be sorry when I am no more."

Loud sobs from the brother rendered the low tones un audible. Myra endeavored to raise herself to wipe away the fast-flowing tears from her brother's brown cheeks as he bent over her, but she was too weak, she sank back with a sigh.

"Myra, drink this wine; it will do you good."

"Where did you get it, Rafty?"

"Lord Northcourt sent it to you."

"God bless him."

She swallowed a mouthful, but her fast-growing weakness made the effort seem painful.

"Rafty, will you not go, my brother?"

"I cannot leave you alone; besides, they would not let me go. Myra, the last time I was there they set dogs on me and said I came to steal."

So as the voice was, the gipsy's eyes flashed at the thought of the insult.

"I know it is hard, but, Rafty, I cannot die till I have seen him."

"Well, Myra, I will go. Who will I get to stay with you till I return?"

"Myra."

The gipsy left the tent, and the dying girl seemed quieted by the thought that her brother would bring Stanley. She folded her hands on her breast, and sank into a troubled doze.

The tent door was lifted softly, and Mona entered. She glanced at the dying girl, and then sat down noiselessly to watch her.

Myra's face was well-nigh red; the girl was passing softly away. She had taken no illness, but her heart was broken—Stanley's neglect had killed her.

Her babe had sickened and died about a month before, and Myra had nothing to live for now. She felt no anger against the cruel heart that had destroyed her, only she did not wish to live any more. All the brightness was gone out of her life. She was tired. She wanted to rest—to lie down under the green trees and waving grass—to go to sleep with the merry birds to sing their happy songs over her head the live-long day, and the kind pitying stars to watch over her at night.

Poor Myra! her life had been innocent and harmless. Surely she would be gently judged!

An hour passed. She slumbered on. Then she woke suddenly and started up, a bright smile on her face.

"Hark!" she cried.

Mona rose and stood beside her, but Myra never noticed her. Her eyes were fixed and glassy, and a smile of unearthly brightness was on her face.

"Hush! Stanley is calling me! I must go!" She raised her head, still looking far away, still smiling with strange angelic beauty, and then fell back on her pillow—lifeless.

In another hour Rafty returned—alone. He came in noiselessly for fear of disturbing the still form on the lowly bed. But never again could Myra's rest be broken; she slept the sleep that knows no waking.

Mona was still in the tent. She held up her hand to Rafty, as, he thought, for a sign that the girl was sleeping; so he beckoned her to come out of the tent. She obeyed in silence.

They stood in the pure holy star-light, and Mona knew not how to tell Rafty that the sister he loved so well had gone from him forever.

"Where is Riverdale? Is he with you?"

"No, I knew it was useless to go there. They drove me away with curses and blows. I would not have borne it but for her."

Rafty broke down as he uttered the last words.

Mona sighed deeply. She watched the sobbing boy, for he was but a boy, and wondered how she would find words to tell him the sad news.

"They told me that he told them to drive me away," said poor Rafty bitterly; "and what shall I say to her when she begs to see him?"

"Rafty, she will never ask to see him again," said the old woman solemnly.

"What?" cried Rafty, "what do you mean?"

"Myra will never fret again. All her sorrow is over. She died while you were away."

"Oh, my sister! Oh, my little sister!"

He wrung his hands, and threw himself on the earth in an agony of grief. He writhed in paroxysms of anguish.

Mona was alarmed. She knew not what to do. Never had she witnessed sorrow like this.

Suddenly Rafty started up. He passed into the tent, and bending over the body of his sister, kissed her cold face with passionate earnestness.

"Oh, my sister! my little sister!" he cried in heart-rending tones, "I will be revenged on the scoundrel who has murdered you. The sun is rising, Myra, and before it sets he will be cold and still as you are."

With these fearful words he passed out of the tent and away, he knew not where.

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Stanley lay all night long beside the old tree in the dreary spot where he had sunk down, overpowered by fatigue, and the first rays of dawn fell on his haggard upturned face.

Why did not the whispering breeze warn him to flee the spot? Why did not the ominous bush over the face of nature startle him to a sense of his danger? What nameless horror chilled the life-blood in his veins as he lay?

Rafty stood over him.

When the gipsy left the tent with the murderous words on his lips, the murderous thoughts in his heart, what demon had guided him here? To the very spot where Stanley lay unconscious in deep dreamless slumber.

Rafty drew the knife from his belt and felt its keen edge with his finger, then crept softly to Riverdale's side. One quick plunge into that heaving breast and all would be over, but the gipsy paused. Something in his heart whispered,—

"Is it fair to take away the life of a sleeping man?" and this silent voice staid his hand.

He paused, and even while he combatted the feeling and fought fiercely against it Stanley woke.

Woke to see the dark wild face, fearfully near his own, to see the wild murderous glare of those eyes, to feel that hot breath and realize that his last hour had come.

"Rafty?" he said calmly. Somehow he knew why the gipsy was there.

"Yes, Rafty," replied the other. "Riverdale do you know what I am about to do?"

"Yes, you are going to murder me."

This was said in an indifferent tone, as if the speaker took but little interest in the subject.

"Yes, you are right. You have killed my sister. I will kill you."

"Is Myra dead?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry."

"Sorry!—Ruffian that you are, get up and fight for your life before I am tempted to kill you where you lie."

Stanley rose.

"You have a knife, I am defenceless," he said carelessly. Rafty looked about him, and a smile crossed his face when he saw the pool, black and cold it looked in the chill morning air.

"Do you see that pool?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is deep as Hell, come to its brink and see if you can force me over into it, no one ever comes out of it once in, there will be an end to one of us."

The two men walked to the edge of the pool. Rafty threw away his knife and took his stand on a broad flat stone beside the dark yawning gulf.

Stanley gave one long look round, and then took his place beside the avenger, as he felt the gipsy to be.

He laid his white well formed hand, with its glistening diamonds, on the coarse covering of Rafty's shoulder, and the gipsy placed his dark