

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

AMBITIO NASCE.

—Claudian.

Jove's head ached; (so the poets tell):
He summoned Vulcan, who obeyed
And brought his axe: it glittered fell—
Forth stepped Minerva, sapient maid.

O gentle Vulcan, hither bring
Thy axe, and free me from my pain;
I, too, have some unwieldy thing
Struggling for birth within my brain.

Ah! fruitless summons! vain desire!
Lives wisdom in this throbbing head?
No axe, though forged in Aetna's fire,
Can bring the living from the dead.

Then let me bear my weight of thought
From night till morn, from morn till night,
Till, if it's wisdom, it has taught
My head to feel the burden light.

JOHN READE.

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THE GOLDEN LION OF GRANPERE.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER XI.

"PROBABLY one night only, but I won't make any promise," George had said to Madame Faragon when she asked him how long he intended to stay at Granpere. As he took one of the horses belonging to the inn and drove himself, it seemed to be certain that he would not stay long. He started all alone, early in the morning, and reached Granpere about twelve o'clock. His mind was full of painful thoughts as he went, and as the little animal ran quickly down the mountain road into the valley in which Granpere lies, he almost wished that his feet were not so fleet. What was he to say when he got to Granpere, and to whom was he to say it?

When he reached the angular court along two sides of which the house was built, he did not at once enter the front door. None of the family were then about the place, and he could, therefore, go into the stable and ask a question or two of the man who came to meet him. His father, the man told him, had gone up early to the wood-cutting and would not probably return till the afternoon. Madame Voss was no doubt inside, as was also Marie Bromar. Then the man commenced an elaborate account of the betrothals. There never had been at Granpere any marriage that had been half so important as would be this marriage; no lover coming thither had ever been blessed with so beautiful and discreet a maiden, and no maiden of Granpere had ever before had at her feet a lover at the same time so good-looking, so wealthy, so sagacious, and so good-tempered. The man declared that Adrian was the luckiest fellow in the world in finding such a wife, but his enthusiasm rose to the highest pitch when he spoke of Marie's luck in finding such a husband. There was no end to the good with which she would be endowed;—"linen," said the man, holding up his hands in admiration, "that will last out all her grandchildren at least!" George listened to it all, and smiled, and said a word or two—was it worth his while to come all the way to Granpere to throw his thunderbolt at a girl who had been captivated by promises of a chest full of house linen!

George told the man that he would go up to the wood-cutting after his father; but before he was out of the court he changed his mind and slowly entered the house. Why should he go to his father? What had he to say to his father about the marriage that could not be better said down at the house? After all he had but little ground of complaint against his father. It was Marie who had been untrue to him, and it was on Marie's head that his wrath must fall. No doubt his father would be angry with him when he should have thrown his thunderbolt. It could not, as he thought, be hurled effectually without his father's knowledge; but he need not tell his father the errand on which he had come. So he changed his mind, and went into the inn.

He entered the house almost dreading to see her whom he was seeking. In what way should he first express his wrath? How should he show her the wreck which by her inconstancy she had made of his happiness? His first words must, if possible, be spoken to her alone; and yet alone he would hardly hope to find her. And he feared her. Though he was so resolved to speak his mind, yet he feared her. Though he intended to fill her with remorse, yet he dreaded the effect of her words upon himself. He knew how strong she could be, and how steadfast. Though his passion told him every hour, was telling him all day long, that she was as false as hell, yet there was something in him of judgment, something rather of instinct, which told him also that she was not bad, that she was a firm-hearted, high-spirited, great-minded girl, who would have reasons to give for the thing that she was doing.

He went through into the kitchen before he met any one, and there he found Madame Voss with the cook and Peter. Immediate explanations had, of course, to be made as to his unexpected arrival;—questions asked, and suggestions offered—"Come he in peace, or came he in war?" Had he come because he had heard of the betrothals? He admitted that it was so.

"And you are glad of it?" asked Madame Voss. "You will congratulate her with all your heart?"

"I will congratulate her certainly," said George.

Then the cook and Peter began with a copious flow of domestic eloquence to declare how great a marriage this was for the Lion d'Or;—how pleasing to the master, how creditable to the village, how satisfactory to the friends, how joyous to the bridegroom, how triumphant to the bride!

"No doubt she will have plenty to eat and drink, and fine clothes to wear, and an excellent house over her head," said George in his bitterness.

"And she will be married to one of the most respectable young men in all Switzerland," said Madame Voss in a tone of much anger. It was already quite clear to Madame Voss, to the cook, and to Peter, that George had not come over from Colmar simply to express his joyous satisfaction at his cousin's good fortune.

He soon walked through into the little sitting-room, and his step-mother followed him.

"George," she said, "you will displease your father very much if you say anything unkind about Marie."

"I know very well," said he, "that my father cares more for Marie than he does for me."

"That is not so, George."

"I do not blame him for it. She lives in the house with him, while I live elsewhere. It was natural that she should be more to him than I am, after he had sent me away. But he has no right to suppose that I can have the same feeling that he has about this marriage. I cannot think it the finest thing in the world for all of us that Marie Bromar should succeed in getting a rich young man for her husband, who, as far as I can see, never had two ideas in his head."

"He is a most industrious young man, who thoroughly understands his business. I have heard people say that there is no one comes to Granpere who can buy better than he can."

"Very likely not."

"And at any rate, it is no disgrace to be well off."

"It is a disgrace to think more about that than anything else. But never mind. It is no use talking about it, words won't mend it."

"Why then have you come here now?"

"Because I want to see my father." Then he remembered how false was this excuse; and remembered also how soon its falseness would appear. "Besides, though I do not like this match, I wish to see Marie once again before her marriage. I shall never see her after it. That is the reason why I have come. I suppose you can give me a bed."

"Oh, yes, there are beds enough." After that there was some pause, and Madame Voss hardly knew how to treat her step-son. At last she asked him whether he would have dinner, and an order was given to Peter to prepare something for the young master in the small room. And George asked after the children, and in this way the dreaded subject was for some minutes laid on one side.

In the meantime, information of George's arrival had been taken up-stairs to Marie. She had often wondered what sign he would make when he should hear of her engagement. Would he send her a word of affection, or such customary present as would be usual between two persons so nearly connected? Would he come to her marriage? And what would be his own feelings? She too remembered well, with absolute accuracy, those warm, delicious, heavenly words of love which had passed between them. She could feel now the pressure of his hand and the warmth of his kiss, when she swore to him that she would be his for ever and ever. After that he had left her, and for a year had sent no token. Then he had come again, and had simply asked her whether she were engaged to another man; had asked with a cruel indication that he at least intended that the old childish words should be forgotten. Now he was in the house again, and she would have to hear his congratulations!

She thought for some quarter-of-an-hour what she had better do, and then she determined to go down to him at once. The sooner the first meeting was over the better. Were she to remain away from him till they should be brought together at the supper-table, there would almost be a necessity for her to explain her conduct. She would go down to him and treat him exactly as she might have done, had there never been any special love between them. She would do so as perfectly as her strength might enable her; and if she failed in aught, it would be better to fail before her aunt, than in the presence of her uncle. When she had resolved, she waited yet another minute or two, and then she went down-stairs.

As she entered her aunt's room George Voss was sitting before the stove, while Madame Voss was in her accustomed chair, and Peter was preparing the table for his young master's dinner. George arose from his seat at once, and then came a look of pain across his face. Marie saw it at once, and almost loved him the more because he suffered. "I am so glad to see you, George," she said. "I am so glad that you have come."

She had offered him her hand, and of course, he had taken it. "Yes," he said, "I thought it best just to run over. We shall be very busy at the hotel before long."

"Does that mean to say that you are not to be here for my marriage?" This she said with her sweetest smile, making all the effort in her power to give a gracious tone to her voice. It was better, she knew, to plunge at the subject at once.

"No," said he. "I shall not be here then."

"Ah,—your father will miss you so much! But if it cannot be, it is very good of you to come now. There would have been something sad in going away from the old house without seeing you once more. And though Colmar and Basle are very near, it will not be the same as in the dear old home;—will it, George?" There was a touch about her voice as she called him by his name, that nearly killed him. At that moment his hatred was strongest against Adrian. Why had such an upstart as that, a puny, miserable creature, come between him and the only thing he had ever seen in the guise of a woman that could touch his heart? He turned round with his back to the table and his face to the stove, and said nothing. But he was able, when he no longer saw her, when her voice was not sounding in his ear, to swear that the thunderbolt should be hurled all the same. His journey to Granpere should not be made for nothing. "I must go now," she said presently. "I shall see you at supper, shall I not, George, when uncle will be with us? Uncle Michel will be so delighted to find you. And you will tell us of the new doings at the hotel. Good-bye for the present, George." Then she was gone before he had spoken another word.

He eat his dinner, and smoked a cigar about the yard, and then said that he would go out and meet his father. He did go out, but did not take the road by which he knew that his father was to be found. He strolled off to the ravine, and came back only when it was dark. The meeting between him and his father was kindly; but there was no special word spoken, and thus they all sat down to supper.

(To be continued.)

A curious law case has been tried in France, to discover who was the rightful owner of a well. Swearing and complication were going on about the matter to a lengthy extent, when the judge, astonished, exclaimed: "But this is all about a little water. What can it matter so very much, that you should both put yourselves to so much trouble and expense about it?" "Monsieur," replied one of the advocates, dryly, "the pleadings are, both of them, wine-merchants." The value and significance were seen at once, and created a roar of laughter.

THE WOMAN TO WHOM WE KNEEL.

We had been talking that evening about money and the want of it—a very extensive subject, that led us to discuss all the bearings of impecuniosity on vice. I cited an instance within my own knowledge of a man who had been saved from Heaven knows what—the hulks, perhaps—by a timely five-pound note. "And I," said he, "I know a woman"—but here he stopped, seeming to regret having said so much. I pressed him to continue, however, and as perhaps the secret he had kept for many years was welling up rather powerfully within him at that moment, he agreed at length to tell me the story, suppressing all names. "Though for that matter," added he, "you have met the persons I shall allude to and will meet them again." This said, he spoke to this effect:—The first time I set eyes on her—I will call her Rose for convenience sake—it struck me that she was the sweetest girl I had ever seen. She was very pretty, spoke with a winning and demure grace, and was true as gold. The second time I liked her still better, for I discovered that she knew everything that I didn't, could play and sing, knit and embroider to any extent, draw likenesses in her album, and talk French without boasting about it. The third time, I had to reason seriously with myself, and say that in the interest of my own peace of mind I had better not see her again. The fact is, I am not a marrying man, and if I had ever cherished any dispositions towards matrimony, the sight of Miss Rose's own home might have cured me of the taste. Her father was one of those well-to-do paupers whom I pity much more than the frequenters, casual or otherwise, of the work-house. He had £1,500 a year or thereabouts, and on that was expected to keep up the same state as a man with £5,000. A house in a good quarter, a carriage and pair, an occasional box at the opera—these were necessities of his position; and in the way of mouths to fill there were two boys at a public school, one at Oxford, who, of course, had debts, and three or four daughters, of whom Rose was the eldest. Now, if you divide £1,500 among all these items, and leave a margin for repairs to the roof of the house, expenditure for the accidental polling of the carriage, disbursements on account of new furniture, new horse, or pressing bills from the son at Oxford, you arrive at the conclusion that life under these circumstances is a perpetual note of interrogation; and you cease to wonder at the downright tone in which Rose's mother told her as soon as she had left school that it was her duty to get married, and that speedily. I have heard some youngsters of my acquaintance be very witty at the expense of matchmaking mothers, and think it capital sport when a detrimental of their set cuts out a few substantial suitors and succeeds, by hook or crook, in marrying a girl like Miss Rose. I wish they would look a little beyond the wedding-day, some of these young fellows, and reflect what a pleasant business it is when the detrimental's father-in-law has to pay for the lodgings where the young couple have gone, the bills at Christmas, the expenses of the first confinement; and, to do all this, has to pinch himself, starve his household, cut down the pocket-money of his sons, and leave his younger daughters without those new bonnets and dresses which they have been counting on. This, I know, is not the poetical way of looking at the question; but then life is not a poem, and we only fall into very rhymeless scrapes when we try to make it one. Rose's mother was a match-maker. She had the shrewdest eye for men of parts, that is, men with cheque-books, and she began taking her daughter the round of all the balls, routs, and garden parties where such might be found. Only, as it would have been quite impossible to deck Miss Rose out so as to rival some of her wealthier competitors in the marriage handicap, the expedient was adopted of giving her a fixed allowance and letting her shift for herself, which is a popular and by no means unclever way of imbuing a girl with the cheque-book view of marriage, for if she exceeds her allowance and gets into debt with her milliner she knows that a wealthy marriage is the only possible mode of pulling her out of her dilemma. So Miss Rose's allowance was settled at £60 a year, paid quarterly. The Oxford son, who was consulted, and who had never been able to live within his own three hundred pounds, added to three other hundred pounds annual debt, opined that it was quite enough; so did the eldest of the public school sons, who was probably sincere, and so for that matter did Miss Rose herself, for, though she was the best taught little thing in the world, practical arithmetic was her feeble point; when she added up two and two she always counted that it made six, and when she took two from two nothing would persuade her that two did not remain. On finding herself at the head of her first quarter's fifteen pounds, it seemed like Golconda to her. She instantly bought one of those little velvet and gilt clasp-books that are half the length of your finger, and only cost half a guinea, to keep her accounts in, and made out pretty lists of things she didn't want, but of course purchased soon after, so as not to leave the account book empty—gloves with six buttons, perfumery, fans, birthday presents for this and that dear school friend, and so on. Then I suppose the usual thing occurred—exuberance so long as the pounds lasted, astonishment and dismay when the last of them vanished over a Bond Street counter in exchange for a bottle of scent. One day Miss Rose came in tears to my sister, who was her most intimate school friend, and confessed that she had not a farthing in the world and owed ever so much for two dresses, a pink and a blue one. It was evident that there was a vague fear of something horrible underlying her mind, and that she apprehended being sentenced by a judge to immediate detention in Whitecross Street. My sister, who meant well, but who, being the only girl in her family, ran up bills without scruple, knowing that I was always there to pay them—my sister told Rose not to be downhearted about such a trifle as an unpaid invoice, and the two at once set off together for the modiste's, a French old woman, who had quite sense enough to guess that with a face like Miss Rose's a rich husband was sure, and so protested forthwith that she had no thought of asking for payment—indeed, would much rather not be paid than otherwise. "You shall settle with me, miss, in three or four years' time," she said, with the sweetest of smiles, "when you are married, or—when you like."

Pay when you like! I remember one morning when I was at Christ Church, returning to my rooms in Peckwater after chapel, and finding a smug-faced fellow on the landing with a carpet-bag. He followed me in without asking leave, and told me he was the traveller of a great London jewellery firm. His bag was full of watches, rings, and pins; and I might have as many as I chose without paying. "The settling-day," he added, "would come by-and-by; when I took my