

## CHOICE LITERATURE.

## A DAY OF FATE.

BY REV. E. F. KOB.

## BOOK FIRST—CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

The old gentleman laughed heartily as he answered, "I have had my say about editors in general. Mother and—I may add—something in thy own manner, has inclined me to except present company. But I'll read thy paper since Emily Warren takes it, so thee'd better beware."

I saw that Adah was regarding me with complacency, and seemed meditating many other questions. I had fully decided, however, that while I should aim to keep her good-will I would not permit her to make life a burden by her inane chatter, or by any sense of proprietorship in me. She must learn, as speedily as possible, that I was not one of her "half-dozen young men."

"Richard Morton, thee can keep thy room, and I hope thee will not find our quiet, homely ways irksome, since we cannot greatly change them," said my hostess.

"I have a request to make, Mrs. Yocomb," I replied earnestly; "and I shall derive no pleasure or benefit from my sojourn with you unless you grant it. It is, that your family life may go on just the same as if I were not here. As surely as I see that I am a source of restraint or extra care and trouble, you will drive me out into the wilderness again. You know why I wish to stay with you," I added meaningly.

"We shall take thee at thy word," said Mrs. Yocomb, with a smile on her lips, but a very wistful, kindly light in her eyes.

"Reuben, tell Richard Morton the truth," said his father. "Would it give thee a great deal of trouble or much pleasure to take Dapple and drive to the village for friend Morton's valise?"

The youth, who was a good natured and manly boy, to whom Sundays passed a trifle slowly, sprang up with such alacrity that I laughed as I said, "No need of words, Reuben, but I owe you a good turn all the same." Then turning to Miss Warren I continued,

"You have been here a week. Will your conscience permit you to teach me a little topography? It will be no worse than reading that newspaper."

"Indeed, I think it might be better. It will be a useful task at least; for, left to yourself, you might get lost, and make Mr Yocomb no end of trouble. Did you not tell me, sir (to our host), that on one occasion you had to hunt some one up with fish-horns, lanterns, etc.?"

"Yes, and he was from New York, too," said Mr Yocomb.

"If I get lost, leave me to my fate. There will be one editor less."

"Very true; but I'd rather have thee on thy paper than on my conscience. So Emily Warren, thee look after him, and shew him the right and proper ways, for I am now too old to enjoy a night hunt, even with the music of fish-horns to cheer us on. I ask thee, Emily, for some of thine instead when thee comes back."

## CHAPTER VIII.—THE MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES.

"Is it a task, then, to shew me the right paths and proper ways?" I asked, as we strolled away, leaving Adah looking as if—in her curiosity to know more of the new species, a night editor—she wished Silas Jones in the depths of the Dead Sea.

"That may depend on how apt and interesting a scholar you prove. I'm a teacher, you know, and teaching some of my scholars is drudgery, and others a pleasure."

"So I'm put on my good behaviour at once."

"You ought to be on your good behaviour anyway—this is Sunday."

"Yes, and June. If a man is not good now he'll never be. And yet such people as Mrs. Yocomb—nor will I except present company—make me aware that I am not good—far from it."

"I am glad Mrs. Yocomb made just that impression on you."

"Why?"

"Because it proves you a better man than your words suggest, and, what is of more consequence, a receptive man. I should have little hope for any one who came from a quiet talk with Mrs. Yocomb in a complacent mood or merely disposed to indulge in a few platitudes on the sweetness and quaintness of her character, and some sentimentalities in regard to friends. If the depths of one's nature were not stirred, then I would believe that there were no depths. She is doing me much good, and giving me just the help I needed."

"I can honestly say that she uttered one sentence that did find soundings in such shallow depths as exist in my nature, and I ought to be a better man for it hereafter."

"She may have found you dreadfully bad, Mr. Morton; but I saw from her face that she did not find you shallow. If she had, you would not have touched her so deeply."

"I touched her?"

"Yes. Women understand each other. Something you said—but do you not think I'm seeking to learn what it was that moved her sympathies?"

"Oh, she's kind and sympathetic toward every poor mortal."

"Very true; but she's intensely womanly; and a woman is incapable of a benevolence and sympathy that are measured out by the yard—much to each one, according to the dictates of judgment. You were so fortunate as to move Mrs. Yocomb somewhat, as she touched your feelings; and you have cause to be glad, for she can be a friend that will make life richer."

"I think I can now recall what excited her sympathies, and may tell you some time, that is, if you do not send me away."

"I send you away?"

"Yes, I told you that you were the one obstacle to my remaining."

She looked at me as if perplexed and a little hurt. I did not reply at once, for her countenance was so mobile, so obedient to her thought and feeling, that I watched its varied expressions with an interest that constantly deepened. In contrast to Adah Yocomb's her face was usually pale; and yet it had not the sickly pallor of ill-health, but the clear, transparent complexion that is between the brunette and the blonde. Her eyes were full, and the impress of largeness, when she looked directly at you, was increased by a peculiar outward curve of their long lashes. Whether her eyes could be called blue I could not yet decide, and they seemed to darken and grow a little cold as she now looked at me; but she merely said, quietly,

"I do not understand you."

"This was your chosen resting place for the summer, was it not, Miss Warren?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, what right have I, an entire stranger, to come blundering along like a June beetle and disturb your rest? You did not look forward to associations with night editors and like disreputable people when you chose this sheltered nook of the world, and nestled under Mrs. Yocomb's wing. You have the prior right here."

As I spoke, her face so changed that it reminded me of the morning of this eventful day when I first looked out upon its brightness, and as I ceased her laugh rang out heartily.

"So, after all, your fate is in my hands."

"It is. You have pre-empted this claim."

"Suppose I am a little non-committal, and should say, You may spend the evening, you may stay till to-morrow; would you be content?"

"No, indeed, but I would have to submit."

"Well, this is rich. Who ever heard of an editor—and the shrewd, alert, night editor at that—in such a dilemma! Do you realize what an unwise step you have taken? Mr. Yocomb justly complimented your shrewdness in getting Mrs. Yocomb on your side, and having won her over, you were safe, and might have remained in this Eden as long as you chose. Now you place it within the power—the caprice even—of an utter stranger to send you out into the wilderness again."

I said, with a smile, "I am satisfied that you differ from your mother Eve in one respect."

"Ah! in what respect?"

"You are not the kind of woman that causes banishment from Eden."

"You know very little about me, Mr. Morton."

"I know that."

She smiled and looked pleased in spite of herself.

"I think I'll let you stay till—to-morrow," she said, with an arch side glance; then added, with a laugh, "What nonsense we are talking! As if you had not as good a right to be here as I have."

"I beg your pardon. I spoke in downright sincerity. You found this quiet place first. In a large hotel, all kinds of people can meet almost as they do on Broadway; but here we must dwell together as one family, and I feel that I have no right to force on you any association without your leave, especially as you are here alone. In a certain sense I introduce myself, and compel you to meet me socially without your permission. You may have formed a very different plan for your summer's rest."

"It is rather rare for a music-teacher to receive so much consideration. It bewilders me a little."

"Pardon me. I soon discovered that you possessed woman's highest rank."

"Indeed! Am I a princess in disguise?"

"You are more than many princesses have been—a lady. And, as I said before, you are here alone."

She turned and looked at me intently, and I felt that if I had not been sincere she would have known it. It was a peculiar and, I eventually learned, a characteristic act. I am now inclined to think that she saw the precise attitude of my mind and feeling toward her; but my awakening interest was as far removed from curiosity as our natural desire to have a melody completed, the opening strains of which are captivating.

Her face quickly lost its aspect of grave scrutiny, and she looked away, with a slight accession of colour.

"Do you want to stay very much?" she asked.

"Miss Warren," I exclaimed, and my expression must have been eager and glad, "you looked at me then as you would at a doubtful stranger, and your glance was searching. You looked as only a woman can—as one who would see her way rather than reason it out. Now tell me in sincerity what you saw."

"You know from my manner what I saw," she said, smiling and blushing slightly.

"No, I only hoped; I have not a woman's eyesight."

She bit her lip, contracted her wide, low brow for a moment, then turned and said frankly,

"I did not mean to be rude in my rather direct glance. Even though a music-teacher, I have had compliments before, and I have usually found them as empty and insincere as the people who employed them. I am somewhat alone in the world, Mr. Morton, and I belong to that class of timid and rather helpless creatures whose safety lies in their readiness to run to cover. I have found truth the best cover for me, situated as I am. I aim to be just what I seem—neither more nor less; and I am very much afraid of people who do not speak the truth, especially when they are disposed to say nice things."

"And you saw?"

"I saw that had as you are, I could trust you," she said, laughing; "a fact that I was glad to learn since you are so bent on forcing your society on us all for a time."

"Thank Heaven!" I exclaimed, "I thought yesterday that I was a bankrupt, but I must have a little of the man left in me to have passed this ordeal. Had I seen distrust in your eyes and consequent reserve in your manner, I should have been sorely wounded."

"No," she replied, shaking her head, "when a man's

character is such as to excite distrust, he could not be so sorely wounded as you suggest."

"I am not sure of that," I said. "I think a man may know himself to be weak and wretched, and yet suffer greatly from such consciousness."

"Why should he weakly suffer? Why not simply do right? I can endure a certain amount of honest wickedness, but there is a phase of moral weakness that I detest," and for a moment her face wore an aspect that would have made any one wronging her tremble, for it was pure, strong, and almost severe.

"I do believe," I said, "that men are more merciful to the foibles of humanity than women."

"You are more tolerant, perhaps. Ah! there's Dapple," and she ran to meet the spirited horse that was coming from the farmyard. Reuben, driving, sat confidently in his light open wagon, and his face indicated that he and the beautiful animal he could scarcely restrain shared equality in their enjoyment of young, healthful life. I was alarmed to see Miss Warren run forward, since at the moment Dapple was pawing the air. A second later she was patting his arched neck and rubbing her cheek against his nose. He looked as if he liked it. Well he might.

"Oh, Reuben," she cried, "I envy you. I haven't seen a horse in town that could compare with Dapple."

The young fellow was fairly radiant as he drove away.

She looked after him wistfully, and drew a long sigh.

"Ah!" she said, "they do me good after my city life. There's life for you, Mr. Morton—full, overflowing, innocent life—in the boy and in the horse. Existence, motion, is to them happiness. It seems a pity that both must grow old and weary! My hand fairly tingles yet from my touch of Dapple's neck, he was so alive with spirit. What is it that animated that great mass of flesh and blood, bone and sinew, making him so strong, yet so gentle? At a blow he would have dashed everything to pieces, but he is as sensitive to kindness as I am. I sometimes half think that Dapple has as good a right to a soul as I have. Perhaps you are inclined toward Turkish philosophy, and think so too."

"I should be well content to go to the same heaven that receives you and Dapple. You are very fearless, Miss Warren, thus to approach a rearing horse."

Her answer was a slight scream, and she caught my arm as for protection. At the moment I spoke a sudden turning in the lane brought us face to face with a large matronly cow that was quietly ruminating, and switching away the flies. She turned upon us her large, mild, "Junco-like eyes, in which one might imagine a faint expression of surprise, but nothing more."

My companion was trembling, and she said hurriedly,

"Please let us turn back, or go some other way."

"Why, Miss Warren," I exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"That dreadful cow! Cows are my terror."

I laughed outright as I said, "Now is the time for me to display courage, and prove that an editor can be the knight-errant of the age. Upon my soul, Miss Warren, I shall protect you whatever horn of this dilemma I may be impaled upon. Madam, by your leave, we must pass this way."

At my approach the "dreadful cow" turned and ran down the lane to the pasture field, at a gait peculiarly feminine.

"Now you know what it is to have a protector," I said, returning.

"I'm glad you're not afraid of cows," she replied complacently. "I shall never get over it. They are my terror."

"There is one other beast," I said, "that I am sure would inspire you with equal dread."

"I know you are going to say a mouse. Well, it may seem very silly to you, but I can't help it. I'm glad I wasn't afraid of Dapple, for you now can think me a coward only in streaks."

"It does appear to me irresistibly funny that you, who, alone and single-handed, have mastered this great world so that it is under your foot, should have quailed before that inoffensive cow, which is as harmless as the milk she gives."

"A woman, Mr. Morton, is the mystery of mysteries—the one problem of the world that will never be solved. We even do not understand ourselves."

"For which truth I am devoutly thankful. I imagine that instead of a week, as Mr. Yocomb said, it would require a lifetime to get acquainted with some women. I wish that my mother had lived. I'm sure that she would have been a continuous revelation to me. I know that she had a great deal of sorrow, and yet my most distinct recollection of her is her laugh. No earthly sound ever had for me so much meaning as her laugh. I think she laughed when other people would have cried. There's a tone in your laugh that has recalled to me my mother again and again this afternoon."

"I hope it is not a source of pain," she said gently.

"Far from it," I replied. "Memories of my mother give me pleasure, but I rarely meet with one to whom I would even think of mentioning her name."

"I do not remember my mother," she said sadly.

"Come," I resumed hastily, "you admit that you have been dull and lonely to-day. Look at the magnificent glow in the west. So assuredly ended in brightness the lives of those we loved, however clouded their day may have been at times. This June evening, so full of glad sounds, is not the time for sad thoughts. Listen to the robins, to that saucy oriole yonder on the swaying elm-branch. Beyond all, hear that thrush. Can you imagine a more delicious refinement of sound? Let us give way to sadness when we must, and escape from it when we can. I would prefer to continue up this shady lane, but it may prove too shadowy, and so colour our thoughts. Suppose we return to the farmyard, where Mr. Yocomb is feeding the chickens, and then look through the old garden together. You are a country woman, for you have been here a week; and so I shall expect you to name and explain everything. At any rate you shall not be blue any more to-day if I can prevent it. You