

THE LITERARY TRANSCRIPT, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCER.

VOL. I. No. 14.]

QUEBEC, TUESDAY, 6TH MARCH, 1838.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

ROMANCE OF A NIGHT.

We dearly love that doubtful dreamy hour, when the lamps in Regent street begin to pale before the slowly-spreading dawn, and the lantern in the policeman's belt can no longer be mistaken for an ignis-fatuus by gentlemen whose conviviality has got the better of their eyesight and discretion. It is then that, as we slowly wend our way towards our domicile, with jaded step and drowsy air, our material man, or at least what remains of him after a night's waltzing, wrapped in a cloak which has, "blaved" for a dozen years, "the shower and the breeze," and crowned with a crash-hat of such venerable antiquity that it may be designated as indescribable and *impalpable*—for shape it has none, and its outward surface may be seen, but it certainly is no longer felt; then it is, that "a change comes o'er the spirit of our dream," and under the soothing influence of the hour, with its subdued light, and solemn tranquillity, we subside into a frame of mind more suited to our pretensions as a philosopher, and more propitious of what posterity will expect from us; then it is, that the *prestige* of the brilliant scene which we have just left having passed away, when the intoxicating strains of Weipport no longer ring in our ears, and our vision is no longer dazzled by bright lamps, brighter jewels, and still brighter eyes—our dreams of conquest, and plans of flirtation, give place to purer and nobler thoughts; it is then we put this *dui bono* strongly to our hearts and with self accusing justice interrogate our conscience whether, indeed, we have not gone a little too far with Lady A?—whether our marked attentions have not almost compromised Mrs. B and finally ejaculate a pious aspiration, that poor dear Lady Mary may not have taken all we said during that last gallop, and afterwards in the cloakroom, quite *au petit de lettre*.

It was on one of the loveliest of these metropolitan mornings in the early part of the month of May, that I (for it is time to drop the literary plurality of pronouns, so ill suited to a personal narrative) was returning home to my lodgings, after a ball at Lady A's in Portland Place, where the absence of a fair and favorite proficient in the kindred arts of dancing and flirtation had cast a certain gloom over a scene which was undeniably brilliant, and would have been agreeable, if I had not been *tout soit pep* in love, and unable to put in execution that admirable precept of the French philosopher or moralist:

"Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime,
Il faut aimer ce qu'on a."

In fact although there had been no lack of pretty faces, or, as my vanity whispered, amiable glances and encouraging smiles, the whole artillery of ball-room warfare had been wasted on a heart not fortified by stoicism, but defended by a foreign force that had recently taken possession. To me the *fete* had been, "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." My particular role, with all its accessories and adjuncts, had been completely manque. The waistcoat which she had praised as becoming, had been selected in vain—the back-step in the waltz unprofitably rehearsed in the morning—the bouquet, composed of all that was most rare, to secure which, I had driven before breakfast to Covent-garden, lay unneeded in my coat pocket; and, in short, I felt as sulky and *maussade* as possible.

In this discontented and uninteresting mood I was sauntering down Regent street—now wondering how people could be such fools as to stay out at balls till three o'clock in the morning—now reckoning the hours that must elapse before the next opera-night, when I should have a chance of seeing my lady-love occupying a front seat in the dingy pit-box, in which her too vigilant dragon of a *framma* mounted guard during the alternate weeks—and now, as the carriage of Prince T—, passed my, bearing the veteran diplomatist to Hanover Square, from his nightly rubber at the Traveller's, speculating in the innocence of my heart, on the vast importance of the political matters, which could have detained his excellency to such a late hour, in

conference with his confreres du protocole at the Foreign Office—when my attention was attracted by the sound of a female voice in tones of lamentation, and looking around me to see from whence they proceeded I beheld an "elegantly dressed female," seated on the steps of the Club-house—I know not in what name she rejoices—at the corner of Jeremy street, wringing her hands, and exclaiming—"Ah mon Dieu! Que vais-je devenir! Que vais-je devenir!"

Conceiving at first that she was only a "damsel fair and free," suffering under the depressing influence of the blue demon of Geneva, I was about to pass on, and leave her to the benevolent attentions of some one of those salaried knights errant, the rules of whose order oblige them to "succour all distressed fair ones in such an emergency, and provide them with an asylum for the night in that hospitable retreat, commonly called the station house, when she arrested my progress by a more direct appeal to my sympathies, and "Mon bon Monsieur, pour l'amour de Dieu!" saluted my ears, in accents too distinct and musical to admit of any doubts as to the sobriety of the person who uttered them.

This interpellé, I approached the interesting speaker, and on obtaining a nearer view of her, was gratified by the sight of one of the prettiest little faces that ever peeped from behind the tulle, blonde, or gauze, of a Parisian bonnet. It was one of those April countenances, which appear qualified to laugh and cry almost at the same moment, for as the tears fell from her dark, sparkling, and expressive eyes, a gentle smile played round her rosy lips, and disclosed a set of teeth, whose mother-of-pearl hue might have put to shame the most highly-finished and accurately imitated ratiel that ever issued from the laboratory of Monsieur Mailan. I was interested in spite of myself, and when she clasped a pair of very pretty gloveless hands in an attitude of graceful supplication, I felt the spirit of chivalry strong within me, and determined to assist the disconsolate fair to the best of my ability, en tout bien, et en tout honneur.

"Madam," said I, in French, and with my very best accent, may I request to know in what I may have it in my power to serve you?"

"Alas! sir," she replied, in the true style of ancient romance, you see before you an unfortunate stranger, qui ne sait ou donner de la tete."

"Madam," rejoined I, "you may command me. If you have lost your way, I shall be too happy to give you the benefit of my experience in recovering it."

The fair stranger here gave me a look which seemed to imply some doubt of my qualifications as a guide; and, to say the truth, I believe my aspect, with all the accessories of crushed hat, dishevelled hair, and drooping shirt collar, was not such as to inspire much confidence in my expressed intention of leading her into the right path. She had however, but slight advantage over me in the article of dress. Her own toilette was any thing but soignée, exhibiting in fact, a degree of disorganisation for which I was at a loss to account, without falling back on my original hypothesis respecting her.

"Where do you wish to go, madam?" I continued, in as sober and matter-of-fact a manner as possible.

"Alas! Sir," said she; "that is more than I can tell you."

"With all deference," said I, "I would suggest that that is an important preliminary, which it is highly expedient to arrange before a lady sets out on so early a walk; and if I may take the liberty of advising still further, I should say, the best possible thing you can do is to go home."

"Chez moi?" exclaimed she, "mon Dieu I have no chez moi! and it is for this very reason that I have taken the liberty of troubling monsieur! "I fear madame," said I, that I am not very likely to advance your views of domiciliation; but if you do not know here you are going, perhaps you will be able to inform me from whence you come."

"Direct from Paris, Monsieur," answered she; "I arrived about an hour ago, by the Calais steam-boat."

She then proceeded to inform me that the object of her visit to London was to rejoin her brother, who was an *artiste* of the opera, and that she had landed at some place which, as well as I could make out from her pronunciation, seemed to be the Tower Stairs, and as soon as she had been released from the indeliberate curiosity of the *douaniers* had consigned the custody of herself and portmanteau to a hackney cabman, who had undertaken to deliver her in safety at her brother's residence, the particulars of which were legibly displayed on a piece of paper which she had, with full confidence in the *loyaute* of the English character, entrusted to him for his guidance. But the perfidious chariot, regardless of the duties of hospitality, oblivious of the important distinction between *mum* and *team* and wholly insensible to the disgrace which he was about to entail on his "order," had driven her to the spot where I had found her; and having induced her to alight, in the full belief that she had arrived at her destination, he suddenly snatched from her hand the purse which she had produced for the purpose of paying his fare, and before she could recover from her astonishment at a procede si inouï, drove off at full-road speed, bearing with him the whole of her stock in trade, viz, her portmanteau and the aforesaid purse. And thus she found herself, at three in the morning, on the pave in Regent St. unable to speak three words of English, without a soil in her possession, and reckoning amongst her misfortunes, the loss of her brother's address, which she in vain attempted to recall to her memory, and which at all events, she would have found very difficult to articulate intelligibly. In this forlorn situation she had appealed ineffectually to the benevolence of two or three passers who had vouchsafed to her petition no other notice than the G—d—m with which her experience of the British residents in Paris had rendered her tolerably familiar; and such was her distress, that she was only restrained from going to throw herself into the river by her ignorance of the road which led to the water side, when I appeared in the character of her good genius and at the first glance having discovered by my countenance that I should not be insensible to the claims of a forlorn stranger on my assistance and support, as a *galant homme*, she had ventured to solicit my advice, and throw herself on my generosity, &c.

All this was of course very flattering to my vanity, but, nevertheless, rather embarrassing to my prudence; and however I might covet the reputation of a "Squire of dames," I confess I was disposed to wish that my fair incognita had been less correct in her observations as a physiognomist, or that my features had been cast in a less attractive mould. To leave her to her fate, however was impossible, as her story might be true, and I was bound in common humanity to give her the benefit of the doubt. But how to proceed was the question. The most obvious though perhaps not the most chivalrous *denarcho* would be to look out for a police man, and deliver her into his charge, requesting him to give her the hospitality of the station house, till such time as further measures might be taken for the discovery of her friends. But as good or bad luck decreed, not one of these exemplary functionaries was in sight; and on my delicately hinting to my unfortunate companion the propriety of soliciting the intervention of the municipal authority in her favour, she was evidently much hurt at the idea of being placed in so equivocal a position, which she declared would compromise her in a manner most distressing to her feelings, as well as those of her friends. "Could I but conduct her to her brother's house, that was all she required of me. She could not recollect the street, but it was somewhere dans le quartier de St. Pierre, D'ailleurs, I surely must know him, so distinguished an *artiste*, whose name was almost European, Mons^{rs} Lachapelle Corycque *chanteur et premier* Pontemine de

Theatre de sa Majeste le Roi de la grande Bretagne."

Unfortunately, the knowledge of the name and profession at which this "European" celebrity rejoiced, was of very little assistance to me in the temporary disposal of his sister, who, it seemed was likely to remain on my hands, until the reopening of Seguin's stop, or the box office at the king's theatre, should enable me to direct her proceedings, or at least ascertain the correctness of her story. In the mean-time, what was to be done? I did not see to rouse the people at any of the fashionable Hotels in order to solicit for my fair charge an asylum which they would most probably refuse to an applicant coming "in such a questionable shape." To take her home to my own lodgings would not, I thought be quite correct; and still less did I relish the idea of procuring a bed for her until eight or nine o'clock, which seemed to be the only remaining alternative. In this agreeable state of perplexity, I found myself incessantly continuing my route towards Craven street where I lodged, when the lady, whose misfortunes had certainly not deprived her of the faculty of speech, kept close by my side, and poured into my nostrils every variety of details concerning her birth, parentage, and education—life, character, and behaviour, which had very little interest for one whose chief anxiety it was to get rid of the fair narrator as politely, but as rapidly as possible.

At length we arrived at the corner of Waterloo place, in Pall-Mall, where an itinerant tea maker (so called by courtesy) had established his stall, and was dispensing some villainous decoction of sise-leaves, from a huge kettle or cauldron, to a select party of the most distretable looking characters of both sexes; but no sooner had my fair charge cast eyes on this promontuating sea-equipage—to her a very ass in the desert—than exclaiming, "Ah! c'est charmant!" she requested that I would have the goodness to stop for one moment, while she refreshed herself with a cup of the restorative beverage—declaring that she was ready to drop with thirst and exhaustion.

I was at first very unwilling to accede to her request, and strongly represented the indecorum of the proceeding; but she was unimpressible by argument, and for aught I knew, might really be in want of some refreshment, which I had no other means of procuring for her, at the moment. So in an evil hour I yielded; and she commenced operations in a style which was strongly corroborative of her alleged thirst. Cup after cup of the detestable mixture went down her throat with a rapidity perfectly astonishing, and Samuel Johnson himself might have wished to emulate the energy and perseverance with which she returned to the charge and proved her admiration for his favorite hyson, by her devotion to its very unworthy representative.

At length she condescended to leave off and I was in the act of drawing out my purse to pay for her bibulous indiscretions, when two gentlemen of a certain age made their appearance, issuing from the opera colonnade, and as they approached I was horror-struck on recognizing the features of my respected "governor"—the most moral, correct, and decorous of his species—and his intimate friend, the Right Hon. —, an equally strict disciplinarian in all matters of propriety, and a little of a saint into the bargain. These brother patriots were winding their way slowly towards home, after a protracted debate in the House, and I felt that this exemplary discharge of an important public duty, in submitting to these constantly recurring vigils, contrasted rather unpleasantly for me, with the very equivocal species of recreation in which I appeared to be engaged. But this was no all. Anxious as I was to escape the notice and animadversion of my worthy parent—it was of still greater importance to me that my charitable conduct should not be subject to misrepresentation on the part of Mr. —, who was a leading committee-man in all Bible Society