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## ORIGINAL.

For the Pearl.

ALICE WARE.\*

"After the first wild tumults of unlicensed love were over, a letter was written to my parents, stating that we were married—that we had taken this step in order to overcome my father's aversion to the match—praying forgiveness, and requesting that as little as possible might be said about the affair, as we were anxious, until after L. had obtained his promotion, that the report of his marriage should not reach the ears of his friends. This tale readily deceived my poor mother, who quite approved of the step, and being told to all her acquaintance with great glee, passed current; and, as we never returned to Halifax again, I presume from what you tell me, was generally adopted as the true version of the affair, until other topics excited deeper interest, and Alice Ware and her conquest were forgotten. But my poor father, I have reason to believe, was not so easily deceived—or, at least, was always haunted by doubts and suspicions. This I gathered from the last letter I ever received from him; and although he was too proud and too tender of my reputation to break his fears even to my mother, I have read that letter over a thousand times, to try in vain if its language would not bear some other construction, and have invariably found the conviction burnt still deeper into my heart and brain, that his daughter's folly had prematurely bowed that old man's head in sorrow to the grave."

Here her feelings again overpowered her—she fainted, and would have fallen off the seat; but I caught her in my arm, supported her against a tree, and stooping down, washed one end of my handkerchief in the salt water, and passing it over her face revived her: after a pause she resumed her story.

On quitting St. Andrews they passed some time in the United States, but before L.'s leave of absence expired, the Regiment was ordered to Jamaica, and he joined it there, taking with him his fair, confiding, but guilty companion. Hitherto, wherever they had travelled, she had passed for his wife, and the absence of the rite had been less missed, because, among strangers, all the courtesies due to her supposed rank and station had been freely accorded. The moment she joined the Regiment, however, mortifications of every kind were in store for her—not only did L. not present her to his brother officers as his wife, but she plainly perceived, by the unreserved familiarity and coarseness of their behaviour, that he was not at all anxious to have her so considered. The ladies of the Regiment of course would not associate with her, and consequently she was shut out of the society of Kingston; and while every body else was enjoying the voluptuous dissipation and revelry of that gay station, she was compelled to live the life of a recluse. An incident occurred here, which I must give in her own words.

"We had not been very long in Jamaica," said she, "when I began to perceive that L. had no intention of marrying me. On the contrary, whether it was, as I now believe, that he never really loved me—or, as I used sometimes then to suspect, that the continued contemplation of the ruin he had made, or the jeers of his gay companions, drove him more into company, often when off duty he spent many hours, and at last long wearisome days, and even nights, from my side. What avails it to tell of the gradual decay of affection, or the progress of indifference, where affection did not exist, and passion and vanity were gratified to satiety—the unavailing remonstrances—tears—reproaches, answered by mean excuses, recrimination, insult, scorn, defiance. Had my seducer ever really filled my entire heart, it would have broken at his coldness—but the pride and vanity which his first attentions had gratified, were morbidly wounded at his subsequent treatment, and gave me strength for the time to bear what was still in store for me. I soon discovered that I had a rival, and although at first I hated her with all a woman's hate, I afterwards almost loved her for the entire retribution which she brought upon my seducer.

"You are perhaps aware that many of the young Creole girls, the offspring of wealthy merchants or planters by their slaves, are sent home at considerable expense to be educated in Europe. In this country, where a slight difference of complexion makes no difference in the free intercourse of society, many of these young ladies acquire all the modern accomplishments, and embellish their own graceful persons, and cultivate their vivacious and fertile in-

tellects with all the advantages to be derived from thorough training and close observation, in the improving circles of European society. When these girls return, the truth for the first time, perhaps, flashes upon them, that the tinge upon their skin, which, in the old world where slavery does not exist, was no bar to their progress, in the feverishly sensitive society of the West Indies is recognised as a stain that all the waters of the Gulf Stream cannot wipe away; and which shuts them out more rigidly than could the highest moral offence from all the society which they feel they are best calculated to mix with and to adorn. But two courses are open to them—to marry into a class beneath them in every quality of mind, and that promises but a life of loathsome degradation which it is painful to contemplate; or to become the mistresses—often more loved and better obeyed than wives would be—of merchants, public officers, and military men, whose sojourn in the island is not intended to be for life—or who, if they contemplate permanent residence, are afraid to assume the cares and responsibilities of marriage. L.'s estrangement from me was completed by his falling in love with one of these Syrens. Yes, the experienced deceiver—for I was not his only victim—he who could counterfeit, but vainly flattered himself that he could not feel, a real passion—who had fluttered around the gay circles of Europe and America, and resisted the fascinations of the most lovely by which they were adorned, until he had learned to scoff at love as a creation of the poets and novelists, and mocked me for believing in a false doctrine, and bowing at the altar of a false god—yes, even he, in one short hour, felt all his fine theories and affected coldness melt beneath the liquid lustre of that young Creole's dark and restless eye, whose every glance seemed to search into his very soul, and laugh to scorn the flimsy defences by which that weak man—for all cold bad men are weak—fancied he had guarded his heart. Her figure was remarkably fine—her complexion, though sufficiently indicative of her origin, was of that transparent kind, that, like a calm lake, reflects the lightest cloud that passes over, and gives back every ray of sunshine that rests upon it. Her talents were of a high order—her passions mercurial and fierce as the storms that sweep through the tropical latitudes in which she was born. The bird does not more surely yield to the fascination of the serpent, than was L. snared, bowed down in spirit, and led whithersoever she pleased, by that remarkable woman. Whether it was that anything that he had done or said tempted her to triumph over and despise even while she used him for other objects—whether it was that she had heard my story, and felt a pride in making my seducer feel much that he had made me suffer—or, as was the general belief, that she took this mode of resenting upon the white men the injustice, the disappointment and the social degradation which their arbitrary and capricious laws had inflicted upon her, it is certain that no slave in all that region ever trembled more obsequiously beneath the lash, than did that villain before the eye of his enchantress. Her influence over him became a bye word in Kingston, until I—aye, even I—had learned to laugh at and despise him who had taught my steps to err, and my lips to become familiar with falsehood."

At this point a hysteric laugh, in which a spirit of very natural vindictiveness seemed to mingle with a sense of the ludicrous, excited by the strength of these recollections, at times interrupted her narrative, which, as it has already swelled under the pen far beyond the limits that I at first intended, I must greatly abridge, and draw if possible to a close. L. crouching to the slightest caprice of the young Creole, who whistled him off and on as the fowler shakes a falcon into the air, and fires him down from his proudest flight, became a bankrupt in fortune, character, and rank—caught the fever and died. Alice Ware—without friends or resources—accepted the proffered protection of the bachelor Colonel, and soon after left with the Regiment for Europe, many parts of which she had seen and scanned, in a spirit that proved her mind would have been a fine one if properly trained, and that an appreciation of the charms of the good and the beautiful was often present with her even in the darkest scenes of moral degradation. Her adventures, though varied, and often exciting, need not be recounted here,—my object has been to record only so much of her story as will convey instruction. Her trials—perils—and unreal pleasures, were those common to her unfortunate class—the outward show of unreflecting enjoyment, with the restless and undying worm within, were hers—to act the daily lie of feigning what she did not feel—to pay back the unreasoning scorn with which the virtuous of her own sex looked upon her, with suspicious hate and brazen defiance—and to regard the other sex as her prey—all this had become the business of her life; her descent in the scale of affluence and comfort and influence being measured by the decay of her charms, and

every step of her downward progress being marked by a corresponding paralysis of the moral principle—until, as the poor girl confessed to me, in the lucid intervals of virtue, such as I had enabled her that evening to enjoy, she shuddered at the acts that but an hour before she had committed without a thought.

"Thank Heaven," said she, with a sigh, as she concluded her narrative, "my course is nearly run—and a broken spirit will soon be released from a world of which it has long been weary."

"Keep up your heart," said I, "you are still young—I will not lose sight of you until I see you on board a vessel bound for Halifax—with me your secret will be safe—you will pass for a widow, and being removed from the pressure of necessity, and the contagion of evil example, and among kind friends, you will soon learn to forget the past, and atone for youthful follies by a life of usefulness and peace."

"You are very kind—but it is too late, even if it were possible that I could consent to pollute the soil of my happy country with the touch of a thing so vile. How could I tread the paths with which, artless and spotless, my childish feet were so familiar—look hopefully into the faces of old friends, who would shun me as a pestilence if they knew my story—and stand a living lie above my father's grave? No—no—that would be impossible, even if we had met earlier, but now my days are numbered. Consumption is doing its work surely and not slow—if it runs its course, my head will probably be cold before you reach your home, but something tells me, now that the only object of life has been accomplished by this interview, I shall not live so long."

"You do not look unhealthy," said I.

She said nothing—but took the wet handkerchief and wiped the rouge from her cheeks, and throwing the scarf from her shoulders, exhibited her bones nearly working through the wasted flesh that hung upon but hardly could be said to cover them.

I shuddered, and was confounded at the extent of the deception, and drawing out my purse placed it in her hand. "If you will not return," said I, "at least take this, it will perhaps be of service—and I will leave my London address at the hotel; and should your fears as to the state of your health be realized, I will have great pleasure in smoothing your passage to the grave."

She rose from her seat, and while the moonlight, (for it was near ten o'clock,) streamed over her features and wasted limbs, returned the purse with a solemnity of gesture which I could not resist—and then kneeling down, took my hand, kissing it passionately and bathing it in a flood of tears. "God bless you—God bless you, Mr. B. The last prayer of the poor wretch with whom you have sympathized as if you were her own brother, shall be breathed for the happiness of you and yours. Think not I refuse your bounty from any waywardness, or distrust of your generosity—to partake of it would be to waste it, I have enough to bear me to the grave. And, on the contrary, I wish you to take something from me."

Seeing me start, she added, "It is no gift of which you need be ashamed—it was not, like every other rag about my person, purchased by the sacrifice of health and the peril of my own soul;—and taking a ring from her finger, she kissed it and placed it upon one of mine. "It was my father's gift," said she, "and I have never felt it on my hand, or looked upon it, but I have thought of the smile that played upon his features when he called it mine—and, like an amulet, it has charmed me back to comparative rectitude of thought and action a thousand times. It must not, when I die, fall again into evil hands,—with you it will once more revisit scenes that—wretched as I am, are still dear to me—and find a home among the virtuous and the good, whose society, if the past could be forever blotted out, even now I feel that I could enjoy."

As soon as this last burst of feeling had subsided, she reminded me of the lateness of the hour, and walked with me across the promenade ground which was now quite deserted—thanking me again and again for the interest I had manifested, and respectfully but firmly declining all offers of assistance, she pointed up the street I was to follow; and then, with one long steady glance of gratitude strongly blent with mental agony, as the moonlight fell upon our faces, she squeezed my hand and suddenly glided away among the trees.

I sauntered up the main street to my hotel, musing upon the strange adventure which had befallen me, and my mind filled with speculations as to the probable fate of the gifted but unfortunate being who had so much interested me. I went directly to bed, but was for many hours restless and thoughtful—at last I fell asleep, and did not awake until about an hour before the last coach was to leave for London. I breakfasted—paid my bill, and was sitting by myself on the back seat of the coach, waiting until some

\* Concluded from p. 249.