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THE SHAKER LOVERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE GREEN MOUNTAIN
BOYS,' 'MAY MARTIN,' &c.

[CONTINUED.]

"Go away! Surely! Hast thee well con
sidered, Seth?"

"Yes, long and deeply. I can no longer
endure the vile misusage I have lately receiv
ed; I can no longer endure to be a slave—a
slave to those who would fetter and degrade
both the body and the mind; and I have de
termined that this night I will leave them."

"But whither would thee go?—into the
wide, wicked world?"

"If I thought, Martha, I should find the
people of the world more wicked than some
of those I shall leave behind, I would remain.
But it is not that which now perplexes and
troubles me."

"If we have been taught aright, Seth, what
should trouble thee more?"

"Ay, if aright; but thee knows my opini
ons of the absurdity of our creed, and the fal
sity of half that is told us. No, it is no scrup
les of that kind, but my doubts and fears
about the reception I may meet with in the
world of whose ways I know so little, and in
which I must appear so foolish and awkward.
I am ignorant Martha, ignorant as a child, of
all that I should know."

"But does not that spring from pride of
heart, Seth, which, under any good creed,
thee should strive to banish? It appears to
me thee should have better reasons."

"Well, I have other reasons, and much
stronger ones, I confess, with me; but I
know not that thee would consider them bet
ter. It is—" and the youth paused and hesi
tated, while the wondering maiden threw an
innocent and inquiring look upon his sorrow
ful and agitated countenance—"it is," he re
sumed, at length mastering his emotions, "it
is the thought of leaving thee, Martha, which
wings my heart—leaving thee among this
people to be subjected to the wiles and persecu
tions of that wicked and designing—"

"Oh! name him not, Seth, name him not!"
quickly interrupted the girl with a shudder,
which but too plainly told both her fears and
abhorrence of the man about to be mention
ed.

"I should not, Martha, but I have noticed
that which has filled me with alarming con
jectures—with fears for thy safety; and I
would that thee tell me what he proposes to
thee."

"I cannot—I cannot; but, oh! if thee
knew my troubles, Seth—" and the poor girl,
at the thought thus called up, dropped her
head upon the other's shoulder, and wept as
if her heart would break.

"The wretch! the accursed wretch!" ex
claimed the young man bitterly.

"Nay, nay, do not curse, Seth," sobbed
the girl, making an effort to check her emo
tion; that is a gift belonging, I think, only to
the Great One above, who meets out justice
to the sinful, not as man meets under the in
fluence of blinding passions, but according to
the proper measure; and He, we must re
member, can protect the innocent as well as
punish the guilty; and, though my trials are
indeed sore, yet I trust that Good Being will
still, as He has done, preserve me guiltless
and unharmed."

Each being absorbed in the thoughts and
feelings which the conversation had excited,
there was here a short pause in the dis
course, during which the maiden gently dis
engaged herself from the partial embrace of
the other, and, wiping her eyes, seemed to
resume her usual tranquillity.

"Martha," at length said the young man,
with an air of embarrassment and a slightly
tremulous accent.

"What would thee say, Seth?" asked the
maiden composedly, perceiving that the other
hesitated to go on.

"Martha, does thee love me?" resumed
the youth with an effort.

"Why—why," replied she, now hesitating
in turn, "why, we are commanded to love one
another, are we not?"

"Ay, Martha; but does thee regard me
with that feeling which the world calls love?"

"I hardly know what to tell thee, Seth. I
have often greatly feared that my heart was
an erring one. I have tried to bestow my
love on all; but I may have sometimes thought
perhaps, that thee was getting more than thy
share."

"Thy words are precious to my heart,
Martha. Let us, then, cherish that feeling
towards each other, and permit it to lead us
to its natural consummation. Thee knows,
Martha, that the love of which I speak, when
crowned by marriage, is allowed and approved
by the good and wise of every sect but our
own. Thee knows, too, that it is sanctioned
and blessed by the good book, which I lent
thee on purpose that thee might read the
whole, instead of only such parts as our eld
ers would have us take for our guide, coun
singly denying us the free use of the book be
cause they fear to have us read and reason up
on the rest—not because, as they pretend, we
should pervert it."

"Thee bewillest me, Seth. I will con
fess that I have at times thought that thee is

reason in what thee now says, but I have as
often feared that it was only the promptings
of vain fancies or sinful inclinations; and it
is so different from what I have always been
taught to believe right, that it sometimes
makes me tremble lest I should at last be left
to harbour a belief which may be wrong in
itself, and prove ruinous to my soul's inter
ests."

"It is not wrong," warmly urged the young
man; "it is not wrong, Martha. It is right;
thy reason tells thee that it is right. All na
ture confirms it. The Bible, when properly
consulted, also answers yea. Come, then,
Martha, come with me. Let us go into the
world, where there will be no mean spies to
dog and torment us—no tyrants to prevent
our innocent actions, and make them an ex
cuse for prosecuting the foulest designs, and
none to molest or make us afraid; where,
united as one never more to part, we will
live, be free to love, and in that love and
freedom find our solace, our comfort, and
our lasting felicity. Come, come; fear not.
With my own hands I will support thee—in
my own heart I will cherish thee."

"Oh! tempt me not—tempt me not, Seth!"

"Call it not temptation, dearest one.—
Sooner would I suffer all that wicked men
could inflict than lead thee astray. I think it
—I mean it for thy good as much as for my
own happiness. It is not temptation; it is
but the pleadings of wisdom and of love. Fly
with me, then, this night and this hour—fly
with me from the dangers and miseries that
here beset thee to safety and happiness."

"Nay, nay, Seth," replied the maiden
calmly and firmly, after appearing to struggle
a moment with her conflicting feelings. "Thy
proposal is a bold and startling one; it is al
so new and unexpected. I have not consid
ered and may not now accept it; and, more
over, I may not longer remain with thee. I
must return to the buildings."

"And am I never to see thee more?" asked
the other sadly.

"Why, if thee will indeed leave us," she
replied, lingering and hesitating, "unless,
perhaps—unless thee could return at some
appointed time and place—"

"Will thee, then," eagerly inquired the
youth, "will thee meet me here four weeks
from this night?"

"If permitted, I will, Seth."

"And be prepared to go with me?"

"Again I may not promise; but I will
weigh thy proposal with kindly intent. Fare
thee well, Seth."

"Fare thee well, beloved Martha—if thee
can stay no longer, fare thee well, with many
blessings; but remember, oh remember!"

"Fondly and anxiously gazed the youth af
ter the maiden, till her retreating form was
lost to his view among the intervening shrub
bery, when he appeared to resign himself from
his tender reverie to the purpose now remain
ing to be accomplished; and, with a firm
step and resolute air, he bent his course to
wards the pond, where he knew a skiff belong
ing to the Shakers was moored."

Although the Shaker leaders mainly de
pend for retaining their subjects upon the im
pression of veneration and hatred of the world
which they so sedulously implant in the so
nances of their youth, aided by the extreme ig
norance in which they are kept for the same
purpose, and by which they are generally ren
dered as helpless and passive as could be
wished, yet force, whatever may be said to
the contrary, is, or at least was formerly, not
unfrequently resorted to for the purpose of
restraining those detected in attempting to
escape. Seth, therefore, with the view of a
voiding collisions growing out of any at
tempt that might be made, in case he had
been suspected and watched, to prevent his
going away, deemed it best to depart in a di
rection and manner which the Shakers would
be the least likely to suspect him of taking.
In pursuance of this plan he had determined
to take the boat and cross over to some point
which was to place him beyond the family
possessions, within the boundaries of which
the pursuit of their fugitives was usually con
fined. Congratulating himself on the result
of his interview with Martha, which, besides
filling his bosom with the blissful conscious
ness that his love was reciprocated, and in
spiring his mind with the joyful hope that
the prize of his affections would soon be his,
and passed over, as he supposed, undetected,
he pursued his way with a light and rapid
step along the path leading to the water. He
had not gone many rods, however, before, to
his utter surprise, his old persecutor, the
sleepless Higgins, stepped out from behind a
covert, and, with a look of malicious igno
ration, confronted him in his path. Deeply
vexed, but neither daunted nor turned from
his purpose, the young man paused & threw
back a look of indignation and scorn at his
detested opponent; for, perceiving the youth
to be alone and conscious of his own bodily
power, he disdained either to cower or flee,
but, with an air of cool defiance, stood wait
ing his movements.

"Ah! thou vile young heretic!" at length
exclaimed the Elder, tauntingly; "I have
caught thee at last, then, in thine own iniqui
ties, eh? What was thee saying to the maid
en?"

"What thee will not be likely to be much
the wiser for," indignantly replied Seth, who
felt confident that, whatever the Elder's luck
had been as a spy, he could not, from the dis
tance of his position, have gained much in the
character of an eaves-dropper.

"Ha! dost thou defy thy appointed rulers,
young man? Confess thy sins unto me, lest I
make an example of both thee and her in pun
ishment for thy heinous offences."

"Hypocrite, I know thee, and for myself
deity thee! But I bid thee beware how thee
shalt further persecute that innocent girl; for
as sure as thee injures a hair of her head, I
will hunt thee while I live, and haunt thee
when I am dead."

Accustomed to witness only tokens of the
most abject submission in the deluded people
over whom he had so long tyrannized, and
totally unprepared for such bold language
from the young man whose spirit he had great
ly underrated, the astonished Elder stood a
moment fairly choking with rage, unable,
from the violence of his passions, to utter a
single word.

"Get—get—get thee back to the buildings!"

at length he sputtered in exploding rage—
"Get thee back, thou audacious—thou—thou
God-forsaken reprobate! Get thee back, I say
instantly!"

"Man I shall not obey thee!" said Seth in
a cool determined tone. "I no longer ac
knowledge thy authority; and, from this hour
I am no longer one of the blinded and delud
ed people. I go hence," he added, turning
out of the path with the view of passing by the
other.

"I will detain thee—I will seize thee—I
will curse thee, and, verily I will smite thee!"
again exclaimed the fuming Elder, spring
ing at the other, and making a desperate
grasp at his collar.

The young man, however, was not taken
unprepared for the onset, and the next instant
the wrathful Quaker was sprawling upon the
earth.

Bounding forward for the pond, with the
object of getting out upon the water before
his discomfited antagonist could recover him
self and reach the shore in pursuit, Seth
quickly gained the landing, hastily unfasted
the skiff and leaped aboard; but before he suc
ceeded in clearing the boat fairly from the
shore, and as he was stepping backwards, with
handled oar, to take his seat in the stern, the
Elder came puffing in hot haste down the
bank and dashed into the water up to his
knees after the receding boat, which even at
that moment had just past out of his reach.

Espying however, the end of the tie-rope,
which, in the hurry of unfastening, had not
been taking up, and was now dragging thro'
the water within reach, he instantly seized it
and gave it a sudden and furious jerk. Un
conscious of the oversight he had committed,
and therefore, wholly unprepared for this
movement, the young man lost his balance in
the violence of the shock, was precipitated over
the end of the skiff into the water, and in
stantly disappeared beneath the surface.

A desperate effort the Elder first drew the
skiff up high and dry on the shore, then hur
riedly catching up an oar, and springing back
to the water's edge, he held the formidable
implement uplifted over his head, as if in
readiness for a fatal blow the instant his vic
tim's head should re-appear on the surface.—
In a few seconds the young man came up just
out of reach of the weapon; when, perceiv
ing the threatening attitude of his antagonist,
apparently determined on his destruction,
he attempted to come ashore, he seemingly
became panic-struck and confused; and
after glancing wildly around him an instant,
sunk again, with a gurgling sound, beneath
the surface to rise no more to the view.

With a look of still unmitigated malice &
ferocity, and with the same menacing attitude
the ruthless Elder stood waiting for a second
appearance of his victim, a full moment, when
he began to exhibit tokens of surprise and
lowered his weapon a little, still keeping his
eye keenly fixed on the spot. After waiting
in vain nearly another moment, for the drown
ing man to rise, the Elder became thorough
ly alarmed, and throwing down his oar, hur
riedly retreated a rod or two on the bank.—
Here he turned and threw another anxious
and troubled look upon and around the fatal
spot. A few faint bubbles rising successively
to the surface, alone answered his inquiring
gaze; and reading in them the conclusive
evidence of the horrid truth, he gave a con
vulsive start, and fled in terror toward the
buildings as fast as his quaking limbs would
carry him, mumbling and chattering to him
self as he went—

Now, who would have thought if the youth
could have swam; and am I to blame for that
he never learned to swim? Of a surety I am
not. And then did he not lift his hand ag
ainst a gifted Elder of God's church? And
moreover, have I not saved the family's boat,
which he was about to purloin? Verily, I
have done a good thing, though I think I lead
not name the matter to the people, lest it lead
the temptation of evil speaking against rulers,
and peradventure, get to the world's magis
trates. And then again, there is the youth's
property, which he was so froward and per
verse about relinquishing to the church. Nay,

I will not let the affair be known, but go to
work right cunningly and secure it all for
God's heritage. Yea, verily, I have done a
good thing.

Thus strangely reasoning, and desperately
grasping at salves for his troubled feelings,
the terror-stricken Elder reached home, and,
without uttering a syllable of what had taken
place to any one, immediately betook him
self to his solitary lodgings, not there to find
peace and repose, but to write an annu turn
under the scorpion stings of conscience—that
unescapable hell of the guilty which retribu
tive Heaven has planted in the bosom of Man
for the certain punishment of his crime.

Meanwhile the lovely and conscientious
Martha, wholly unapprised of what had be
fallen her lover, returned to her peaceful pil
low, and endeavored to reflect calmly on the
new and interesting subject which her recent
interview had opened to her mind; but, find
ing herself unable to do this from the thou
sand crowding thoughts and sensations which
contributed to swell the gentle tumult of her
bosom, she discreetly deferred the task for a
cooler moment, and, having piously commended
herself to the protection of her Maker,
yielded herself to those quiet and peaceful
slumbers that constitute not the least among
the rewards of virtue and innocence. On a
wakeful next morning, her thoughts immedi
ately recurred to the subject that occupied
her last waking moments; and, as she now
figured in her mind her lover far on his way
from the place, rejoicing in his freedom from
the oppression he had at length escaped, she
again and again recalled the tender profes
sions he had made, and ran over the argu
ments he had advanced in urging her to
leave her present situation, and go forth with
him into the world as his companion for weal
or for woe. The more she thought of the pro
posed step, at first so startling, the less fear
ful did it appear. The more she weighed his
reasons with those she found herself able to
bring up in refutation, lighter and lighter grew
the objections which had caused her to hesi
tate even in giving him a definite promise of
acceding to his request when they should
again meet; and as her scruples yielded and
gave away, the unchecked pleadings of her
own heart came in and soon decisively turned
the already inclining balance, leaving her now
free to wander unhesitatingly over the new
and bright field of destiny which had been pre
sented to her view.

After indulging in her pleasing reveries as
long as inclination prompted, the maiden arose
dressed, and was on the point of descending
from her chamber to join and perform the do
mestic duties of the morning, when her at
tention was arrested by an unusual commo
tion among the family below, which she soon
ascertained, from some words that reached
through the partially opened door, to be caus
ed by the discovered absence of Seth, for
whom search had already been made, but in
vain. The consciousness that within her
own bosom she harbored the secret of the
missing one's absence, which she might not
reveal, made her, for the first time in her life,
feel like a guilty one; and, dreading not to go
down lest her appearance should betray the
agitation she felt, she paused at the head
of the stairs, and stood some time endeavor
ing to compose her feelings and gain a command
of her countenance, which should save her
from showing any excitement that might not
be natural to the occasion; but while doing
this, the poor girl was little dreaming of the
thousand times more difficult task in reserve
for her—that of controlling her feeling un
der the heart-crushing blow which she was des
tined the next moment to receive. The ap
palling announcement now passed from mouth
to mouth among the family that Seth was
drowned in the pond, the evidence of which
in addition to his unaccountable absence, was
found in the circumstance that his hat had
been found floating near the shore, while at
a little distance one of his shoes had been es
pied sunk on the bottom, fished up and re
tained.

It can be better imagined than described
what were the feelings of Martha on hearing
these mournful tidings. No word or sound,
however, escaped her lips on the occasion.—
She turned deadly pale, indeed, and for a
moment leaned her head for support against
the door-case; and this was succeeded by a
quick heaving of her bosom, while with
clapped hands and closed eyes her trembling
lips moved rapidly, as if earnestly engaged in
silent devotion. But the next moment, as
she opened her eyes, and with a firm step
descended from her room, a spectator could
have detected nothing more in her placid
though mournful countenance than he might
have seen in the faces of the rest of the sis
terhood; among whom she now immediately
mingled.

Most of that day was spent by the Shaker
men in dragging the pond in search of the
body, from which operation Elder Higgins
kept studiously aloof; though the nervous
restlessness he constantly exhibited through
the day, and the many anxious and inquiring
glances he frequently cast toward those thus
engaged, plainly told that he felt a painful in
terest in what was going on. The search
proved a vain one. This, however, did not

lead any one to doubt that the young man's
fate was any different from the one first sup
posed, as the body, it was conjectured, had
floated off and sunk in some of the deepest
parts of the pond. But, although all were
unanimous in the opinion that Seth had met
his death by drowning, yet, with regard to the
manner in which the casualty could have
happened, there were many and various
minds—some supposing that he must have wa
ded in to secure something which he saw
floating near the shore; others that he had
risen in his sleep and gone in, while others
considered either of these suppositions to be
highly improbable, since some of the young
men now made known the fact that the de
ceased was an expert swimmer. These and
many other conjectures equally erroneous
were formed respecting the mysterious event,
till, wearied with the fruitless discussion, it
was given up as a case entirely hopeless of
any further elucidation, and therefore permit
ted to rest.

Seth had been a peculiar favorite with the
family generally, and his loss for many days
cast a deep gloom over the minds of the little
community who were thus unexpectedly cal
led to mourn his premature decease. The
impression, however, like all others of the
kind, wore gradually away from the minds of
all except the bereaved Martha and the con
science-smitten Elder, from whose bosoms
the memory of the lost one, for reasons pecu
liar to each, was not, as may well be suppos
ed, so easily to be erased.

Although the circumstances in which Mar
tha was placed forbade any manifestation of
her peculiar griefs, and wholly precluded her
from communicating them to others and re
ceiving in return those alleviating sympathies
which it is the privilege of ordinary sorrow
to receive, yet none the less heavy lay that
fell this blow of affliction, and none the less keen
ly was felt the anguish that now in secret
wrung her guiltless and faithful bosom.—
Young Love was beginning to shed his sweet
and happy influence over her pure and
gentle heart, and his twin angel, Hope, had
just showed his snowy pinion for her unaccus
tomed vision, pointing her to a land of earth
ly felicity which never before, even in her
brightest dreams, had been pictured to her
mind; but all these grateful feelings had been
suddenly chilled and frozen in the current
that was so blissfully wafting her away to the
promised heaven of happiness—all these bright
visions had vanished, leaving her future not
only blank and cheerless, but dark with por
tents of persecution and woe, from which there
was no hope of escaping. These circumstan
ces combined to render the poor girl's life a
no ordinary bereavement; and most persons
of her natural sensibilities would probably
have sunk under the weight of the affliction.
But Martha was a Christian; and she meekly
bowed beneath the chastening rod, and
turned for consolation to that life-spring on
high which is never long a sealed fountain to
the meek and devoted followers of Him who
once himself knew earthly sorrows.

But, while Martha was thus comforted and
sustained, no such consolation remained for
the despicable wretch who had been the cause
of her troubles; and the more he tried to still
his startled conscience, the more did its ac
cusing spirit rise up to disquiet him, not only
for the hand he had in the young man's death,
but for the part he had previously acted to
ward him in his general misusage, and more
particularly in an affair to which only a slight
allusion has as yet been made. About a
month previous to the time of which we are
speaking, a stranger from the neighbourhood
of Seth's early residence called at the estab
lishment, bearing for him a letter, which he
expressed a desire to deliver in person; but
the young man being at work in the woods
some distance from home, and the stranger
being anxious to resume his journey, the let
ter was at length entrusted to Higgins, on his
promise of delivering it to Seth as soon as he
returned. Having repeated his injunctions,
the messenger departed, not, however, till the
inquisitive Elder had fished from him, as cau
tiously as he evidently intended to be, some
clue to the contents of the letter. No sooner
was the stranger's back fairly turned than
Higgins retired to a private apartment and
broke open the letter, which proved to be from
a neighbour of Seth's uncle, whom we have
before mentioned, and which announced the
successive deaths, within a few days of each
other, of that uncle and the nephew living with
him, by which event, it was stated, as no will
or wills had been made, Seth had become
the legal heir to all the estate thus left, con
sisting of a good farm and considerable per
sonal property. The writer closed by advis
ing the young man to leave his present situ
ation, come home and take possession of his
property. After reading the letter carefully
over several times, the perfidious Elder com
mitted it to the flames, and spent the remain
der of the day in devising and settling his
plans, and in drawing up for Seth's signature
an acquittance to the family of all the prop
erty he had or of which he might become the
inheritor. And the next day, after having
smoothed the way for the attempt, as he sur
posed, by an unusual display of affability and
parent-like kindness, he cautiously broached