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TERMS.

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From the Magnolia for 1836.

THE FATE OF POMPEY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE BROTHERS."

The desolator desolate,
The victor overthrown,
The arbiter of others' fate,
A suppliant for his own.
Byron.

For the first time had the plains of Thessaly rung to the war-cries of two Roman armies, mingling in civil strife; for the first time had they reeked to heaven with the unnatural evidence of kindred slaughter; destined as they were again to minister unto the fall of liberty. Carnage, unexampled since the days of the one-eyed Carthagenian, since the ambuscades of Thrasymene, or the pitched battle of Cannæ, had fallen on the masters of the world. From this day forth, the annals of the eagle-queen were to be stamped with different records; from this day forth, were the nations to be let loose against her; and deadlier yet, the hands, which had subdued this universe, were to be turned against her vitals; from this day forth, was the thirsty earth, at short and oft-repeated intervals, to drink the blood of Rome in fearful retribution.

The bodies of fifteen thousand citizens—the veterans of twenty battles, the sons of war, nursed in the very lap of victory, cumbered the marshes of Pharsalia; while twice the number bowed in desperate submission before the footstool of the native conqueror. Nor was it on mercenaries alone, or Gaulish horsemen, or the infantry of Spain, or even on the private legionaries, that the havoc had fallen with the most unsparing hand. Two hundred senators lay there, prætorians, consulars, stiff in their curdled blood—men who had braved the chilling cold of the transalpine winter, unsubdued and fearless, who had marched undaunted through the scorching deserts of Numidia; who had breathed unenervated the luxurious atmosphere of Syria—men who had rendered the name of Rome supreme to the farthest limits of the habitable world—unnaturally stricken down and in a private quarrel. And he, the conqueror of Mithridates, the spoiler of the east, the destroyer of the pirates, the desolator of Jerusalem. He who, while yet a boy, had been surnamed the GREAT, by one yet loftier than himself in that vain eminence which men call greatness—He, who, for thirty years, had striven, now in the field, now in the forum, at one time with his country, at another with his country's foes, but still in one unvarying career of victory, in one eternal tide of fortune—Pompey, had fallen.

While there was yet a hope, he had battled like a soldier—like a man. Till he heard the fatal mandate, "*Faciem feri miles!*" thundered from the lips of the great captain, and saw it fearfully backed by the headlong valor of his legionaries—till he saw his chosen cavalry, the pride of the equestrian order, the flower of Rome's young chivalry, swept away like chaff before the onset of the Gallic veterans—till then, he had striven—he had hoped.

Night fell, and he was hopeless. Alone he had mounted his horse, and galloped from the theatre of his disgrace, he scarce knew whither. The moon rose brightly as he quitted the postern gate of his encampment, the deep shout of the legions, and the din of arms, as they scaled the feebly guarded rampart, ringing in his ears, and goading his soul to madness. A score of horsemen joined him in his route, weary like himself, and many wounded; ere midnight, he had reached Larissa, but he knew too well the course of Roman clemency to loiter, even without the gates. The moon set as he entered the wildest defiles of the range of Ossa, yet he tarried not; the morning found him painfully journeying down the windings of the river Peneus, through the laurel thickets, and beneath the limestone crags of Tempe: night, the second since he was a leader, already in his confidence victorious, saw him outstretched upon the wretched pallet of a fisher's hut, tossing in his fevered slumbers, while his few attendants fitted with hasty zeal the fragile shallop that was to bear him on the morrow beyond the mercies of the conqueror.

The sun went up from the waters, but no human eye beheld him, for the northwest had driven the vapors far to seaward, and the heavens were shrouded to the zenith with dark and threatening clouds; the waves of the Thermaic gulf were already capped with white, and the distant sails, that might be seen on the horizon, were skimming their broken ridges with unusual velocity; the very sea fowl, conscious of the coming storm, were beating up against the wind, with hoarse and plaintive clamors, as they sought the security of the shore. But to Pompey and his fugitive companions, the wildest tempest that was ever brewed in the stormy west, would have been preferred to the wonted calms, the glassy surface, and slight breezes of the Mediterranean. The wind, though boisterous, was fair—the sea, though to landsmen it might have seemed perilous, had no terrors for the exile who "blest its roughness for the speed it gave." The boat was hauled down to the beach, a moment saw it launched into the boiling surf, the mast was shipped; the long yard hoisted; and, ere the canvass was fairly spread to the influence of the gale, she was already dancing over the billows at a rate that barely seemed sufficient to the fears or wishes of her crew.

A week had not elapsed from his departure, ere he had collected a few scattered galleys of his yet powerful fleet, had armed a petty force of scarce two thousand men,—all that now adhered to the fortunes of him who had lately boasted, that, by the mere stamping of his foot upon the earth, he could create an army,—above all, he had taken on board, at Mitylene, his heroic wife Cornelia, with Sextus, the youngest of those brave boys who were, in after days, destined to perish, like their sire, in the vain hope of victory and vengeance.

The mind of the bold Roman had been shaken, it is true, by his late disasters, but it was unsubdued. No thought of base submission, no thought of withdrawal from the contest, or relinquishment of his ambitious views, had crossed his daring spirit. His army was, indeed, broken—his party scattered to the four winds of heaven, while the power of his rival was not only increased by victory, and by the confidence arising thence, but was actually reinforced by the desertion of his own dispirited and faithless legions. Still there was hope for Pompey. While Rome should stand, and Cato breathe—while twenty patriots, who preferred a patriotic death for liberty to the base droppings of a delegated sway, should tread the earth, he knew that Cæsar could not be firmly seated on the throne, which was evidently the ulterior object of his undoubted though covert policy. For a few days, for a few bitter days, he had been plunged in deep abstraction; the abstraction not of doubt nor of despondency, but of anxious debate, and high consideration. But that debate was ended—consideration had yielded to resolve and the warrior's front was calm, and his eye brilliant, as though he had never known defeat or sorrow.

On the tenth morning after his disastrous conflict, while the stars were yet winking in the gentle sky, the galley of the fated chieftain dropped its anchor in the deep bight formed by the Pelusiac, or eastern estuary of the Nile. The low and swampy shores were veiled from sight by a thick bank of fog, above which a few solitary palm trees reared their lofty stems and feathery foliage against the transparent atmosphere of the upper regions. Three other triremes, the whole of Pompey's armament, might be seen to windward, looming up one by one from the horizon, till they stood into the little bay, and came to their moorings a little way to seaward of the leader's vessel. On the deck of that low vessel—a war galley of the commonest construction, bearing no marks of its commander's dignity, save in the gilded coronals encircling its elevated prow, and the *vexillum*, or square banner that fluttered from the turret on the stern—on the deck of that low vessel was assembled a small group, anxiously gazing forth upon the shores, eager to pierce the misty wreaths that obscured their view of those shores, whereon they hoped to reinstate themselves in all their former glory.

The principal personage of that group was a figure that well might realize the noblest conception that can be formed of, perhaps, the noblest specimen of the human race—an ancient Roman. Tall and superbly formed, with a natural dignity of motion and of manner that would have seemed the result of study, had it not been that study must have failed in the production of any thing so perfect—firm, yet courteous, graceful, unbending—possessing all the grandeur of the stoic, with all the gentleness of the epicurean. Pompey the great, in action or repose, was still the "man perfect, and chaste, and grave," of his renowned admirer, the immortal Cicero. Splendidly clad in the rich armour of a Roman officer—the brilliant corslet glancing from beneath the fringed and studded cassoc, which he bore above it, and the triple-crested casque of polished brass, rich with the sculptures of the Grecian chisel, setting off his intellectual head, and features stern almost to severity—the conqueror of Mithridates stood on the prow—now his sole space of empire—pointing with one extended arm to the camp and royal ensign, that were by degrees becoming visible on the Egyptian beach; while with the other he encircled the waist of her who clung not to him in the frail dependency of modern females, but bore herself erect, though pale and tearful, as became a Roman matron, a daughter of the proudest race in that proud clime: the hundred heroed clan of the Cornelii.

"Cneius," she said, in tones that faltered not, though they were low and mournful in their sweetness, "yours is it to command, mine to obey—and to complain or murmur becomes not the daughter of Scipio. Yet hear me ere you go—hear me my Cneius; you go—never—I know it—never to return."

"Now, may the gods avert it!" cried the youthful Sextus, who listened to their words at a respectful distance—"avert it, and grant better things!"

"Away"—she burst forth into high and spirited eloquence—"away with the deprecation and with omens, and with all the senseless mummery of augurs, 'whom the Gods purpose to destroy, they first deprive of reason!' Pyrrhus believed in augury, and fell—Philip made use of it and conquered! Away with augury and omens—they are the terror and the ruin of the fool—the mockery and the weapons of the wise!

"But I—I read no omen, save of the human heart—I use no prophecy save that of human foresight—and I say to thee, trust not the Egyptian—trust not—or thou shalt perish! The noble Cato, and my own brave boy, Afranius Labienus, are in arms—in arms for Rome and Pompey! Cicero, too, is with them—Cicero, who has smiled serenely upon the storms of the republic, to which this slight reverse is but a passing breeze—Cicero—himself a host. And will you leave all these,—the brave, the eloquent, the true—will you desert your friends, your followers, your own *blood*, Cneius—will you desert the arms of Rome, to herd among barbarians?"

"Not so, Cornelia," he replied, with a calm and chastened smile—"not so! thy fears deceive thee, and thou knowest not what thou sayest. I leave not any—least of all the dear and gallant one of whom thou speakest—I desert not any; nor herd I with barbarians. The sun which set last night amid the blackness of the storm cloud, is rising now in glory. Virtue—Roman virtue—may be hidden for a while by calumny, or spite of fortune, but it must rise the brighter from its brief concealment. I go not, noble woman, I go not to lie in coward indolence, but to strive in noble action. With an Egyptian army will I reinforce the patriot bands of Cato, with an Egyptian army will I see Rome in liberty and glory!"

"Be it so!" was the melancholy answer of the wife and mother, silenced, but not convinced—"be it so! and Jove, the greatest and the best, preserve thee!"

As she spoke, a clang of martial music was wafted to them on the light land wind which was rising with the sun: the barbarous horn, the clashing cymbal, the deep roll of the beaten tympanum, and the jingle of the wild Egyptian systrum. The morning mists rolled peacefully away before the enlivening influence of the breeze, and scattering as they rose, flocked the blue canopy with a thousand fleecy islets of snow white vapor. The bosom of the levantine sea was scarcely ruffled by the balmy wind, not breaking, but sparkling with its cones of diamond spray. The sea-gulls were abroad in hundreds, now fanning their broad wings aloft as they poised themselves for their meditated swoop, now darting from their height with a rapidity that mocked the eye, plunging with a lead-like dash into the tiny waves, and bearing their finny prey far, far aloof, into the blue distance, ere the circling ripples on the surface, disturbed by their invasion, had vanished from the waters.

On the silver sands—at scarcely a mile's distance from the galley, the host of Ptolemy was seen moving downward to the verge in a huge semi-circle, flashing with gilded arms, and scarlet turbans, embroidered garments, and all the blazoned gorgeousness of oriental warfare. Banners, in multitudes that almost equalled the number of the glittering spear points marshalled beneath them, waved in the wind, surmounted by the uncouth gods of that benighted people—serpents of gold and azure; the ibis, and the loathsome crocodile, the ape, the scarab and the mute and senseless fish, all their jewelled images, all their devoted worships. A cloud of Numidian cavalry thronged the spacious plains around the marshalled host; now on the flank, now on the rear, and now in front, wheeling their literally unbridled horses, in mad evolutions, by voice and gesture only, tossing their spears aloft, or shooting their arrows, and gathering them again from the earth in full career.

The eye of the warrior flashed with an expression it had not worn since the flower of Rome fled before the veterans of Cæsar.

"It is a host," he shouted, "a host with which a Roman might subdue an universe!"

"Aye," murmured Cornelia, at his elbow, "aye, were it but a host of Romans!"

"Thus," he replied, smiling again more joyously than before, "thou silly trembler! To that barbarous body will we affix a Latin head: with Cato's good ten thousand, and these dark-visaged myriads of the Ptolemies, we will right speedily efface the black spot of Pharsalia." But, as he spoke, the memory of that dark day, and of the brave there festering in their blood, overcame him; he broke off abruptly, and was silent.

"See!" cried the boy Sextus, springing forward in youthful vivacity, "see, they send forth a skiff!"

And in good truth a barge was seen skimming the water, under the united exertions of six brawny rowers, but it was scarcely such an one, or manned by such a crew, as one high potentate would send to bear his greetings to an equal. A long low skiff, of rough, unpolished planks, well-modeled enough, and built for speed, but neither carved nor painted, much less adorned with the rich mouldings of gold and ivory, which, in those sumptuous days, were deemed appropriate, and almost indispensable appendages of the pleasure-boats of even private citizens.

"A common fisher's skiff!" Cornelia returned, with a deep expression of scorn, but without farther comment.

"And there," cried Sextus, perceiving that it was an intentional indignity, "and there upon the beach stand the royal yachts, with their gay tackle, motionless! Receive them not, my father—let them call Fabius and Marullus hither, with their pikes, to drive down the barbarians from the channels.—Would that I had my Parthian quiver here, and that good bow, the gift of Crassus! By Hercules! yon swart-faced ape, that sits in the stern, should rue his insolence!"

"Peace, Sextus! 'tis the brave Achillas, the leader of the army; and there beside him, with the emerald tiara, sits Photinus, the *curator* of the royal treasury; and there, Theodotus, of Samos, the youthful king's preceptor—but in strange trim they come, by Hercules!"

"All hail! Pompeius," cried the dark Copt, who had been called Achillas: "All hail! The Great!"

"Health to Achillas!" was the dignified reply; "and to thee too, Photinus; welcome Theodotus!"

"Thy slaves, Great Pompey, bear the greetings of their king; Ptolemy is most eager to behold his friend and benefactor! If it seem good to Pompey, we will conduct him to the king's encampment!"

"Go not, my noble husband! Go not, oh, go not if thou hast any love for thy Cornelia! If thou wouldst live, go not! If thou wouldst see the capital again, and enter it in glory, go not with these men, Cneius Pompey!"

For a moment the philosopher was moved, the hero bent. He turned his eyes admiringly, with a tender and somewhat melancholy gaze, upon the noble features of the Roman matron; caressingly he laid his hands upon her jetty locks, braided in simple plaits around the magnificent contour of her brow, then drawing her close to his bosom, he printed a calm and passionless kiss upon her forehead.

"Thou wert ever a sweet suppliant, my own Cornelia," he said; "and it much irketh Pompey in aught to say thee nay! But before love, stands glory, and before glory, Rome. Rome calls me, and shall I, for thirty years her soldier; for thirty years her minister of greatness, shall I neglect her summons!"

"Oh say not so!" she again pleaded, and a tear-drop, worth the richest empire of the east, stood in her dark Italian eye; "oh say not so, my husband, my lord, my life! All tells of treachery around us, all here can see, can hear, can feel it in their very souls; Marullus, Fabius, speak, say out the thoughts which, ye may not deny it, lurk in your secret bosoms. Had Pompey in his glory sent an embassy to Ptolemy, would it have been an eunuch, a mercenary, and wily Greek, and in a squalid cock-boat?" She raised her voice as she spoke, and the notes, high and clear as the wailing of a distant bugle, shot with an ominous chill, that for many a year was unforgotten by its hearers, into every breast around her.

"Cornelia," replied Achillas, who had heard her last words, "Cornelia doubts the faith of Ptolemy! Be it so! we can return to him who sent us; yet by the triple-formed Osiris, had he meant ill to Pompey, force had been more easy of accomplishment than fraud. Nor could three Roman galleys, though manned by Romans, and led on by the glorious Pompey, have beat off five hundred of our Egyptian brigantines!"

"Boastful and insolent!" cried the excited wife, losing all command of her feelings, all thoughts of even common prudence, in her unselfish fears:—"Boastful and insolent! Darest thou, a swart barbarian, defy the might and majesty of Rome?"

"Peace, and farewell, Cornelia;" interrupted Pompey, breaking away from her embrace; "thy terrors have impaired thy reason, else wouldst thou better know to welcome our friends. Farewell, beloved one, ere sunset I return."

"In glory," continued the dark Achillas, a smile gleaming unnaturally over his Ethiopian features; "in glory shalt thou return, and in pomp far better suited to thy greatness. Not thus had we come even now, but that the waters are full shallow, and the channels intricate for larger vessels; and speed, so thought our king, would savor more of friendship, than cold pomp or heartless ceremony."

Again he embraced his noble wife, kissed the large tears from her full black eyes;—"Farewell, my heart; the Gods watch over thee. Sextus, remember, in evil fortune or good; remember thou art the son of Pompey, whom Sylla styled The Great! Increase in virtue and in fortune, love and support thy mother, honor and imitate the noble Cato, hate Cæsar, and above all things, be a Roman!"

He stepped from the channels of the galley into the boat, and with a countenance as serene as though he were departing on a pleasure voyage, seated himself amidships, between the rowers and the group of guards who filled the stern of the long narrow skiff. The man in the bow, a jet black Mauritanian, with a white turban and close vest of linen, pushed off the boat with a vigorous thrust of his pole, and sinking into his seat, plied his oar with a vigor in which he was seconded by all his comrades; a dozen strokes sufficed to wheel the skiff round, and a dozen more, had given her an impetus which whirled her away from the galley like a swallow skimming the surf.

While the side of the boat was turned towards his vessel, the ill fated warrior gazed steadily upon the features of his wife, and of the few so nobly faithful; as she fell off, he waved one mute farewell, then folding his arms calmly over his bosom, he collected all his energies, prepared for either fortune.

Not a word was spoken; for the breast of the fugitive was full; full of high sorrows and high purposes; while the hearts of those about him beat anxiously and fearfully, with the wild fear of meditated guilt.—Suddenly, in obedience to a gesture of Achillas, the foremost rower, as it were, accidently deranged the motion of the boat by an awkward use of his oar, and she rocked violently; but contrary to the wishes of the traitor, the proud Roman sat unmoved, and apparently unconscious; the villain bit his lip with all the bitterness of disappointed malice, and uttered a subdued imprecation. The sound fell upon Pompey's ear, though not its purport, and, raising his eyes, he gazed eagerly around him. An eye caught his, a well known face; Pompey possessed that rarest faculty of memory, by which the great alone are oft distinguished. He turned half round; "Ha! comrade;" he said smilingly, and rejoicing at the sight; "Ha! fellow soldier, we have met before; thou didst serve with me in Pontus; thy hand, veteran!" and he stooped forward with extended arm to greet him. At this instant Photinus waved his arm aloft, and the oarsman, who sat immediately behind the hero, unsheathed his long two-edged acinaces.

"Strike, in the name of Isis," shouted Achillas; and the blow flashed in the sunlight.

At the word, the noble Roman had sprung to his feet, and grasped the handle of his Spanish blade; but it was too late, the home-driven thrust found the joint between the corslet and his studded belt, and entered deep into his unguarded side. He felt that he was slain, and, withdrawing his hand from the hilt of his useless weapon, folded his arms across his heart; glared from face to face, in stern and fearless indignation, while those before him shrank from the terrible expression of his bright eye, as though it were fraught with blighting fire. Again and again the murderers struck, but still their blows were from behind. Slowly he was falling forward, when, with a desperate and dying effort, he drew himself up, and hurled himself backward; the assassins leaped aside, and the tall body fell heavily on its back, across the benches, slippery with his life-blood; the last glance of the glazing eyes was upward to the free heavens; the last thought of the parting spirit was one of self-restraining dignity.

For a moment's space there was a pause, and then a cry went up, a fearful cry of mingled agony and indignation! In it were blended the vengeful shouts of the fierce legionaries, the boyish notes of Sextus, and wilder, shriller, and more terrible than all, the ravings of the desperate Cornelia. It ceased; and silence fell as with a palpable and heavy weight, over the brilliant scene, for hope was at an end; rescue too late; vengeance impossible. The fatal skiff shot onward, and now she reached the strand; the murderers leaped forth; and lo! a pike was reared in the glad sunshine, fearfully burthened with a human hand; another with a gory head! A naked mutilated corpse upon the glittering sands, and with a shout of barbarous applause, and yet a wilder burst of music, the hosts of Egypt celebrated their accursed triumph.

In terror and despair, the Roman galleys slipped their cables; with every sail set, every sheet strained to the utmost, they rushed before the gale, from that inhospitable coast, bearing away, she knew not and she cared not whither, her to whom the universe had now become one cheerless sepulchre.

Noon glowed upon the level beach and breezeless waters, and not a vessel was to be seen on the deep, not a human being on the shores. The Roman fleet had long since sunk into the blue haze of distance, and the hosts of Ptolemy, their aim accomplished, had marched in lavish exultation to the walls of Alexandria. For miles along the margin of the surf, not an object was to be seen, save one of horror! The senseless mangled clay, that but a few brief hours since had been a hero! the form which men deemed it an honor to obey, and women to adore! A headless, soulless, nameless mass; a thing viler than the foul vultures, that flapped their wings above it!

The sun sank slowly; one half of his great disc was buried, as it seemed, in the sands of the far desert; the other peered, an arc of living flame, above the desolate horizon. In the remotest distance of the three great pyramids, might be seen faintly, their blunt cones, scarcely distinguished by a deeper shade from the blue sky, and their western faces glimmering with the last beams of the departing day-god.

In the foreground of the picture was a figure—worn, emaciated, and half naked figure—bending in speechless veneration over an humble pyre of sea weeds, and sun dried rushes, with a few planks and spars; the wreck, perchance, of some war galley that once rode the waves in fearless glory; scantily furnished forth a funeral pile for the world's conqueror; and he who heaped the fuel, and composed the miserable limbs; he who alone did homage to the ashes of the Great; was one o'er whom the eye of Pompey, while yet it saw, would have glanced heedlessly, if not in scorn.

Hear it, O Earth! the demi-god, beneath whose feet thy thousand nations trembled, perished in exile, at the bidding of an eunuch, and found a tomb—happy to find one thus—at the precarious mercy of a slave!

TO PARENTS AND MASTERS.

KEEP YOUR BOYS IN THE HOUSE ON EVENINGS.—This is a duty which many parents seem almost entirely to overlook. If they can get rid of the noise of their boys, and be left to pursue their avocations in peace, they do not stop to inquire where their children are; or are easy, as they are only in the next street, playing with other boys. But O! how often is it, that, in this way, is laid the foundation of vices that mar the future character, which in their progress destroy both the body and soul. Here, away from parental restraint, often commences the first oath. I once asked a boy who was conversant with these scenes, but who had not got so far in evil as some of his companions, whether there was much swearing among the boys in the streets? He replied, 'Some.' I asked further, Is there more swearing in the day time than in the evening? Without hesitation, he answered, "In the evening." This was just as I expected. I asked him why it was so? He replied he did not know. I presume it was a subject on which he had not reflected, and only spoke the fact as it was recalled to his mind by my question. But I could not help thinking that the darkness of the evening, the greater number which collected together, and the feeling that they were then more secure from the observation of others, is the cause, and that the evening gatherings are particularly unfavorable to the morals of our youth. How can parents who have the least regard to the morals of their children, suffer them to be exposed to such baneful influence? Better would it be for their own families, and for the community at large, if they would devote their evenings to their children, though other things should be neglected.

We have spoken of the vice of swearing only, but this stands not alone. The evil practice of smoking tobacco, is another thing extensively learned by boys thus congregated together in the street on evenings. This is a practice, which, in time, usually leads to intemperance. Cold water has a vapid and disagreeable taste to those who become established in cigar smoking, and something stronger is sought after, to satisfy this corrupt taste. The man that would spare himself the pain of beholding his son, when full grown, the victim of intemperance and profaneness, would do well to place an early restraint on his acquiring a love of tobacco, and a frequent mingling with sinful companions in the street on evenings. O that parental obligation may be more deeply felt, and that one parent may help and not hinder another in the great work.—*Essex Reg.*

A RHAPSODY.

As I walked by myself, I said to myself,
And myself said again to me,
Look to thyself, take care of thyself,
For nobody cares for thee.
Then I said to myself, and thus answered myself,
With the same reparter,
Look to thyself, or look not to thyself,
'Tis the self same thing to me.