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The Planters' Advocate.

By THOMAS J. TURNER. "TRUTH ALONE IS KNOWLEDGE—KNOWLEDGE IS POWER." TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM.

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A Beautiful Story.

From the Lady's Book for May.

THE BETROTHALS; OR, LOVE'S MASQUERADE.

A TALE OF THE "OLD DOMINION."

BY J. W. BRYCE.

There was not, in the palmy days of Old Virginia, a finer estate than Belle-Air. Its noble mansion crowned a hill of gentle slope, along the foot of which rippled the waters of the James River, the intermediate space consisting of a broad and ample lawn shaded with magnificent forest-trees. For miles back extended the plantations, which, with their rows of neat cabins, spacious barns, and well-ordered fences, afforded an appearance of wealth and prosperity not so familiar in these latter days. From the portico, which fronted on the river, the eye wandered over a landscape of surpassing beauty, through which might be traced, for many a mile, the meanderings of the stream; while, in the distant back-ground, the soft line of the Blue Ridge Mountains blended with the sky.

It was early in the summer, when flowers are fresh, and trees wear their greenest foliage, when the birds sing their sweetest lays, and the country offers its brightest charms to lure the denizens of the heated city from care and toil to its sweet repose. Seated on the portico at Belle-Air was a party who seemed fully to appreciate the privileges they enjoyed. First there was Col. Leigh, a true specimen of the old-time gentleman of the Southern school; proud, yet affable; stern, and often dogmatical, yet kind and courteous; prompt to anger, yet quick to forgive; with all the sentiments of generosity and hospitality which so proverbially belonged to his class. On the Colonel's right, in an attitude of gentle entreaty, half playful, half wilful, was a girl of nineteen. To say she was beautiful would feebly express the graceful majesty of her bearing, or the loveliness of her person. In form and mind, Laura Beverly was worthy of her lineage, a pure type of that high beauty for which the "Old Dominion" has been so celebrated. She was a very woman, too, in all her glory and some of her weaknesses. Laura was an orphan, and heiress of the broad estates of Belle-Air; yet, orphan only in name, she had experienced none of the trials or misfortunes of that state. Her parents had died while she was an infant; and in the family of her uncle, Col. Leigh, she had enjoyed the tenderest care and affection, sharing equally with an only daughter the love and attention of her kind relatives. Lettie Leigh, who nestled close to her father on the other side, smiling artlessly at her cousin's earnestness, offered a striking contrast in appearance to Laura. She too was lovely; but her soft blue eyes, her auburn ringlets, and her fairy form, however charming, gave not the regal air to her beauty which shone in every movement of her companion. The fourth and last member of the little party was Mrs. Leigh, a gentle and beloved matron, who had been, in her younger days, the counterpart of Lettie; nay, she was still fair, for her life had been one of harmony, and time had dealt gently with her. At the moment I have intruded upon the party, a discussion was going on between the uncle and niece, to which the others were animated listeners.

"Nay, dear uncle, you must let me have my way in this; there can be no harm; and it will be such fun," urged Laura.

"I tell you frankly, my dear, that I disapprove your idea. Even a frolic, which imparts deception, is wrong; and then it is undignified," said Col. Leigh.

"Ay! there's the rub, uncle. Now, for goodness' sake, don't harness me with dignity yet awhile. Let me have my girl's freedom for a space. I shall be shackled with forms and dignity soon enough."

"But you know, Laura, I have expressed certain views in connection with yourself and Mr. Wortham, which would render such a proceeding not only unseemly, but it might prove highly embarrassing."

"That is just the secret of my plan, uncle.—You wish me to marry Mr. Wortham; and I have vowed, if I ever do marry, that I must be loved for myself, and not my estate."

"Laura," said Col. Leigh, "you are forgetful. Why should you think that your uncle would sacrifice your happiness, or that a Virginia gentleman, your equal in wealth and birth, was a mere mercenary fortune hunter?"

"Pardon me, dear uncle; I had no unkind thoughts of you; but I confess the eagerness with which Mr. Wortham appears to embrace an almost forgotten, and never a binding proposition, and his apparent readiness to take a bride he has never seen, strikes me unfavorably; besides, I hear from Richmond that he was already been congratulated on winning the heiress."

"Some idle gossip. You wrong Mr. Wortham, and scarcely do justice to your uncle, in your version. In making very natural inquiry after the family, Mr. Wortham mentioned, what he was aware was well known to me, that, between your father and his, there had been some hope expressed, rather an agreement made, that a union might be effected at the proper time between their children. It seems his father, with whom you were, when a child, a great favorite, laid considerable stress on this point in his last letters to Charles; but I assure you there was nothing exceptionable in the modest and unpresuming manner in which it was referred to by him. The excellent character which Charles Wortham bears, and his gentlemanly deportment, did incline me to hope, I confess it, that Providence would conform events to the views of your parents."

"Uncle," said Laura, in a low, earnest tone, "I don't like these infantile betrothals; they seem a sacrilege on the holiest feelings of our nature."

"Laura, you misunderstand altogether the subject. There could never have been a thought on the part of your father, or Gen. Wortham, to force the inclination of their children, any more than I would force from my side this dear girl, should the heir of Redwood return worthy of her hand. Do you not know that a similar understanding existed between his father and myself? Such things have been customary among our gentry from the earliest time; and many a happy union has been the result; princely estates have been preserved, and our class strengthened."

"The heir of Redwood! Why, Lettie, are you to be the mistress of yon stately old castle, which has been so long shut up that it is inhabited, they say, by ghosts and ghouls?" And, as Laura spoke, she pointed to where, some miles distant, there rose, amid a park of ancient oaks, a mansion of baronial proportions and appearance.

"How do I know, Lolah?" said Lettie, while a faint blush suffused her cheek.

"Uncle," said Laura, "I am going to talk both seriously and sensibly. I wish you to permit me to carry out my plan. If I have to receive Mr. Wartham in my own proper character, knowing what I do, and under the constraint I cannot resist, I shall never like him, if he were a Chevalier Crighton. Let this little fairy here be, for the time, the heiress of Belle-Air; and a charming one she will make. I will be your dutiful daughter. If Charles Wortham falls in love with her, you will have a son to your mind; and I will wait for the wandering heir of Redwood. On the contrary, if the fates have decreed our union, an *eclaircissement* will be quite romantic. But, if nothing comes of all this, we shall have some fun; and Mr. Wortham, as a true chavelier, will forgive and laugh at a girl's frolic."

There was something in Laura's reasoning which shook the Colonel's resolution; and, when his wife, who knew the somewhat wilful disposition of her niece, and judged, with woman's tact, that the only chance of controlling her inclination was to indulge her fancy, added *her* persuasion, he was ready to yield.

"And suppose I consent to this masquerade, how are you to keep it up, foolish child, without detection through your servants?"

"Trust me for that, uncle. Cato is a miracle of discretion, and rules his subordinates most absolutely. I will go now and give him his lesson. In the mean time, Lettie dear, just con over your own part." And, so saying, Laura danced off in high glee.

Col. Leigh gave a sign, Lettie uttered a low laugh, and the kind-hearted Mrs. Leigh applied herself to soothe her husband's somewhat ruffled humor.

Scarce half an hour had passed ere Laura returned, and, throwing a bunch of keys in her cousin's lap, she said: "There, my dear, you are now mistress of Belle-Air, and we your guests. Here comes Cato for his orders; so let us have the most princely entertainment your establishment will afford."

Lettie, who was quite a little actress, assumed her charge with an air of mock gravity; and when Cato, the fine old negro steward, whose dignity and manners might have put many a modern gentleman to the blush, approached with a smile to receive instructions about the dinner, they were given without embarrassment, and with all the address which would be required to carry out the farce.

As the weather was quite pleasant, Col. Leigh ordered his horse to ride to one of the neighboring plantations; and the ladies returned to their morning avocations.

It was considerably past noon, and near the dinner hour, when the ladies, having made some slight change in their dress, again entered the portico to watch the return of the Colonel. It was not many minutes before he was seen riding up the avenue, accompanied by two cavaliers, whose appearance at once betokened not only strangers, but travelers.

"Our guest!" exclaimed Laura. "Now, Lettie—*Laura, I mean*—your part commences in earnest; play it well. But who can the other be?" she exclaimed. "And which is Wortham, think you?"

"The slightest one on the right," said Lettie. "How graceful he rides!"

"No, by my faith! he is the tall and stately one on the left. See! he sits firm as *Cœur de Lion* on his war-horse! But ring for Cato, dear."

The prompting was unnecessary, for the old servitor at that moment made his appearance with his aids, in the shape of two likely young negroes, to take the gentlemen's horses. With a hearty politeness and urbanity, due to receive the cavalcade, took their horses, which he consigned to his assistantants, and ushered in the guests with every demonstration of welcome.

Col. Leigh presented his companions first to his wife as Mr. Charles Wortham, and his friend, Mr. Leftwell, and then said: "My niece and daughter, gentlemen."

It was only from the keys which Lettie still carried, and the movement of old Cato, not unintentional, it might be, in asking some instruction, that they were led to distinguish *her* as the mistress of the mansion.

The surmise of Lettie was correct; the slightest figure was Charlie Wortham; he was handsome, nay almost too handsome, with bright black eyes, regular features, a graceful form, and a profusion of glossy curls. Yet there was a manly air which forbid the idea of effeminacy, and a sincere expression which at once enlisted sympathy.

There was a little triumph in Lettie's smile, and a shade of disappointment on Laura's brow, when his name was announced. As the eyes of the heiress rested, however, on his companion, a quick flush passed over her face, leaving it unusually pale; and a strange light gleamed from her eyes as they fell beneath his gaze. His was indeed a form of stately beauty, with youthful grace and manly dignity combined: his hair was light, and curled closely around his well-shaped head; his brow was smooth and ample; his eyes, fringed with dark, heavy lashes, were blue, large, and thoughtful, save that, when he spoke or moved, they fairly flashed with light; his nose was straight, with delicate nostrils; his mouth firm and well-formed, and on his short upper lip was a full brown mustache; his complexion was fair, except where browned by exposure; and, though his form was one of great power and strength, his movements were elastic, and his step graceful. In fact, a more proper cavalier, in field or hall, it would have been difficult to find.

After the usual salutations, and inquiries as to the journey, Col. Leigh, addressing his daughter for the first time, in her assumed character, said:

"My dear, it is near your dinner hour, I suspect; and you had better make Cato show these gentlemen to their apartments."

When the party reassembled at the dinner-table, Laura and Lettie seemed in some respects to have exchanged characters as well as names. The former was quiet and reserved, though a shade more thoughtful and sedate, as her cousin had ever been; while Lettie, entering into the true spirit of the farce, played her part with inimitable tact and grace. Charles Wortham alluded to his friend, Mr. Leftwell, as a young English gentleman with whom he had formed an acquaintance in Europe, which mutual tastes and sympathies had ripened into friendship; and the subject of travel having been broached, the latter gentleman displayed a store of rich and varied information with which his hearers were greatly entertained. Indeed, the marked interest which Laura evinced in the discourse of Mr. Leftwell was apparent; and Col. Leigh certainly experienced some qualms of dissatisfaction at the entanglement which the masquerade seemed likely to produce. The bright and spirited Charles Wortham appeared, however, to be perfectly satisfied with his place beside the *soi-disant* heiress, whose frankness and gayety were congenial to his own disposition; and, so far from envying his frend's qualities, he did all he could to bring him out, and set off his brilliant discourse. The Englishman naturally addressed his attentions more particularly to Laura; and, without ostentation, lent himself easily to the entertainment of the party. And even the Colonel was entertained, despite his inward vexation over the anticipated *contretemps*.

Conversation, music, and a moonlight stroll occupied the afternoon and evening; and the party separated for the night with a general sense of enjoyment, but with various and somewhat confused emotions.

Col. Leigh was serious, very serious. "I do not like this masquerade at all; it must end," said he. "I knew something would come of it."

"What is there wrong, my dear; and how will you end it?" asked his wife, quietly.

"What is there wrong, madam? Why, the threatened disappointment of my hopes; and I shall end it simply by making the girls resume their proper places in the morning, and asking the young gentlemen to excuse this wild freak."

"My dear," said his wife, gently, but firmly, "if you have any very serious wishes in regard to Laura, believe me, you will only thwart them the more surely by constraint. It would be an awkward thing to break rudely in upon her little plot now, and cause her embarrassment, and perhaps mortification, which go far to defeat your views."

"But you do not see, madam, that the whole thing has commenced at cross purposes? Here is Charles Wortham devoting himself as assiduously to Lettie, and seeming as contented as if she were really the heiress of Belle-Air, and the whole matter arranged; while Laura shows an interest in this Englishman I never before knew her to exhibit for any one else. I tell you it is all wrong, madam."

"But, my husband, will you right it by the course you propose? Believe me, no. Laura has dreaded, or rather felt a repugnance to this meeting ever since it was spoken of; and only by consenting to her innocent scheme did I believe Charles Wortham would have any chance to win her regards. As for the rest, I think you attribute too much importance to trifles. Charles and Lettie were naturally the most embarrassed of the party—he from ignorance of the plot, she from having no interest in it. As for Mr. Leftwell, he is certainly a highly accomplished and remarkably fascinating young man; yet Charles does not appear to disadvantage beside him."

"Well, my dear, I only wish the farce were well over," said Col. Leigh, yielding, with a sigh, to his wife's persuasion, and preparing to retire.

Laura and Lettie occupied the same apartment, and had no sooner dismissed the attendant than the latter exclaimed:

"Well, dear Laura, how did I play my part?"

"Admirably, my dear; so well that you bid fair to carry off the prize."

"Now, Laura, that wasn't kind," said Lettie, the tears springing to her eyes.

"Why, sweet child," exclaimed the other, folding her in a warm embrace, "you could not think I meant to be otherwise. No, indeed, Lettie, I shall never fancy Mr. Wortham as a husband, though I might like him well enough as a kinsman."

"Now, don't," said Lettie, blushing, "or I shall come right out, and spoil all your plot."

"There, then," said Laura, kissing her, "I won't, for that would be too awkward; and I half suspect my uncle had a mind to do it any how."

"So did I," said Lettie, slyly. "He thought *Richard Cœur de Lion* was about to make a conquest."

"How can you, Lettie?" exclaimed Laura, reddening in her turn—"a gentleman I never saw or heard of before."

"And yet a very proper man. But there! there! sweet coz, let us sign a truce." And the laughing girl entwined her arms about her cousin's neck, and gave her the kiss of peace.

"Well, Wortham, my boy, you are not disappointed in your *fiancee?*" asked Leftwell.

"Why, yes! but that kind of disappointment to which one becomes easily reconciled. She is certainly an angel of grace and loveliness; though, perhaps, I should have expected a little more embarrassment in receiving me under our peculiar relation."

"You are certainly hard to please," said the other, "if you object to too kind a reception from such a source."

"No! no!" exclaimed Charles Wortham. "I am perfectly satisfied; and I should think you might find equal contentment if you could only make yourself out to be the wandering heir of Redwood."

A singular expression, half smile, half frown, passed quickly over Leftwell's features. He merely asked:

"How so?"

"Why, his father and Col. Leigh entered into the same sort of arragement, I believe, as did Maj. Beverly and my own."

"Ah!" said the Englishman quietly. "Well, he will be a happy fellow if he can win that proud, high beauty—as surely, as I trust, dear Wortham, you will secure your own lovely bride."

A fortnight had passed very pleasantly indeed, but not without its anxieties to Mrs. Leigh, its annoyances to the Colonel, and a few *contretemps* among the young folks. The plot had been kept, however, perfectly secret from the visitors. Since the truce, signed and sealed on the first evening, Laura and Lettie had been as affectionate and cordial as ever, but perhaps less confidential. There was a preoccupied air in each, undiscovered by the other, because the change was mutual, but apparent to Colonel and Mrs. Leigh.

As for Charles Wortham, he appeared the very personification of happiness and contentment; while his friend Leftwell, around whose lips there was wreathed an occasional smile of mysterious meaning, seemed just as happy, though more sedate.

Col. Leigh, however, was restless; and even kind Mrs. Leigh did not always exhibit her wonted equanimity.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed the Colonel, as he sat smoking on the piazza, one afternoon, while the younger part of the company were strolling on the lawn, "the farce will end to-morrow. I shall accompany these gentlemen a short distance on their way, and explain as I best can, this foolish masquerade."

"They leave, then, to-morrow?" asked his wife.

"Yes, for a tour over the mountains, and will rejoin us at the Springs."

Mrs. Leigh mused awhile then said: "My dear, have you ascertained fully from Charles who this Mr. Leftwell is?"

Colonel Leigh started somewhat as he replied: "Yes, a gentleman of wealth and excellent family. At least, thus much Charles learned of the English ambassador at Paris, at whose house he met him. But why?"

"Because I think it imports the happiness of our dear Lara to know."

"You don't think so?"

"I do."

"And Charles Wortham?"

"If I mistake not, has found all the consolation he desires."

"But Lettie—she has been betrothed, you know, madam, to the heir of Redwood."

"My dear husband, if Lettie has made her choice, and one so worthy as this, I know you will never permit that affair to mar her happiness. And, if Paul Lacy chooses to loiter in foreign lands, supposing he knows or remembers or cares anything about it, he must not be surprised if another wooer takes his place."

"Well, well! it's ill meddling with woman's gear!" said the Colonel, leaning back, and giving up his faculties to meditation and tobacco.

The young people who had gone forth to enjoy their accustomed walk on the lawn, had paired off, as usual, also. While Leftwell escorted Laura to a rustic seat from whence was had a charming view of the river, and a portion of the surrounding scenery, Wortham had strolled further on with Lettie; and now they both stood gazing at the effect of the moonbeams on the rippling wave. Neither had spoken for some minutes—At last, Charles said: "Miss Beverly"—he called Lettie by her supposed name—"you know I leave to-morrow."

Lettie did not speak.

"And" continued he, "though it may seem premature, I cannot separate, even for a short time, without giving some expression to those deep feelings, and, may I say, those fond hopes—not presumptuously predicated, oh, believe me! upon any imaginary claims—which have so filled me with joy and doubt."

"Oh, stop! stop!" exclaimed Lettie, impetuously; "you are mistaken; I am not—oh, Heaven! why did I ever consent to this?" And the poor girl bowed her head in a paroxysu of grief.

Charles Wortham was astonished. Certainly Lettie had given him no reason to think himself beloved; but, mistaking, of course, her identity, and believing that she must know the proposed relations between them, he had deemed, it may be a little confidently, that her frankness and the evident satisfaction with which his attentions were received, at least excused this early declaration on his part. His own affections were deeply pledged, and, misinterpreting Lettie's exclamation, he could but shrink grieved from what seemed repugnance on her part to his suit; but, ever generous, he sought to bear all the blame.

"Pardon me, lady, if I have presumed too far upon hereditary friendship, the mutual hopes of our parents and your own kindness, in ever asking a hearing for my unworthy suit."

The proud, sad tone in which this was said gave Lettie exquisite pain.

"Oh, no! no! there is no presumption, so far as I am concerned. But you mistake—*I am not Laura Beverly!*"

"Not Miss Beverly!" demanded Wortham, in bewilderment.

"A freak, a foolish girl's freak," sobbed Lettie, for her emotions were fast getting the upper hand. "I only changed names to humor cousin Laura—and—and—oh, I am so unhappy!"

A soft and beautiful, but still triumphant smile stole over Charles Wortham's handsome face as he passed his arm gently around the trembling girl—merely to support her, good reader, and asked, playfully:

"And who are you, then?"

"Only Lettie Leigh."

"And still *Laura Beverly* for me," said Charles, drawing her to his bosom in one fond embrace, and gazing into her beautiful eyes, until the love-light of his own found itself reflected there.

"But my cousin Laura?" asked Lettie, resuming some of her playfulness.

"Oh, she may take the wandering heir of Redwood, if she chooses! She will be easily consoled."

A serious shade came over Lettie's face at the mention of the heir of Redwood.

"But my father—do you know?"

"All about it; and I know he has too true a heart himself to sacrifice his daughter's happiness. But come, dear—shall it be Laura or Lettie? I will compromise, and say love—we will look up our friends. If I mistake not, Dan Cupid has been abroad this evening; and Master Paul Lacy will find he has been 'a laggard in love.'"

"Who can say that the fates are perverse?" said Leftwell to his companion, as they seated themselves on the rustic bench. "Here is our friend Wortham, betrothed in his childhood to an heiress, and wearing the honorable obligation, as he was pleased to call it, like a collar about his neck; yet no sooner does he come on this pilgrimage of duty than he finds destiny has played her kindest part, and given him all heart could ask."

"Do you think he really loves her?" asked Laura, in a low voice.

"Truly and honestly; and, if I am skilled in woman's eyes, she has no very bitter complaints to make against her own lot. Yes," continued, "it is easy to predict they will be happy."

"I hope they may," said Laura, in a low voice.

There was something in Laura's tone that made Leftwell ask: "Do you doubt it?"

"No; but it is a little strange."

Leftwell thought he had the key to Laura's thoughts, and smiled as he said: "And you, Miss Leigh, suppose fate had kindly arranged your destiny, would you accept the boon without rebellion?"

Laura darted a quick and troubled glance at her companion, but was unable to reply. She surely thought her whole plot discoved.

"Nay, pardon me, dear lady," said the gentleman, in a deep, thrilling voice "Want of frankness is not one of my faults; and therefore I will say at once that I am aware your parents did not fail to provide for you as well as those of your cousin did for her; that there is a certain Mr. Paul Lacy, known from his unaccountable absence as the wandering heir of Redwood, who, if he knew how bright a prize he lost, and how fair claiming, would speed over land and sea to be sitting where I am. Charles told me once all about these betrothals."

A sigh of relief escaped Laura's breast, her eye sparkled, and a playful smile was on her lip.

"Oh, miracles are not so common! Mr. Paul Lacy is welcome to his holiday; and, when he returns, I shall not break my heart if he brings a foreign bride."

"And if, in the mean time, another suitor should dare—oh, Miss Leigh, you start! Pardon the words which I must utter, and forgive them if you can. *I love you* in the few short days I have known you; the memory of unsatisfied longings has passed away; and, though my judgment forbade hope, my heart refuses the counsel, and claims to plead for its own cause."

"But, sir, Mr. Leftwell, there is—"

"I know—an engagement, or something of that kind, on your parents' part, with the heir of Redwood."

"Oh, no!" said Laura, blushing, and dropping her eyes beneath his ardent gaze; "I was not thinking of that."

"Then, if that be not the obstacle, you *must* hear me," said Leftwell, taking her hand.

"First hear me," said Laura, with desperate energy, "there has been a foolish freak, a sad mistake, *I am not Lettie Leigh!*"

"Not Miss Leigh!" demanded Leftwell, in astonishment.

"No! no! we changed names. I did it just for—"

"Not another word!" exclaimed he. "I see it all!" And there was pride and joy in his low musical laugh. "I see it all. That fiery spirit of yours was not thus to be tamed. You have been masquerading, a dangerous game sometimes. For instance," added he, looking curiously into her eyes, "you have lost your lover."

"Did I not say, when playing Lettie's part, that I should not break my heart for the heir of Redwood?" asked Laura, archly.

"Ah!" said Leftwell; and a strange, a very strange smile was on his lips; "but my friend Charley?"

"Do you think he will be inconsolable?"

"By my faith, I do not! *Laura,*" said he, slowly—"it is a beautiful name."

There was either something in thus hearing herself addressed by her own name for the first time in days, or else in the magical tones of the stranger's voice, which caused the young girl to look up. She caught his eye, which glowed with a magnetism that fixed her own gaze beyond the power of will. She grew pale, and trembled, but still those deep, mysterious, beautiful eyes looked down into her own, and seemed to drink her very being up. She felt an arm steal softly round her; she heard a low, fond voice say, "*My* Laura," and sank her head upon his shoulder.

When Mr. Leftwell and Miss Beverly returned from their promenade, the group which presented itself in the parlor was certainly picturesque. Col. Leigh and Charles Wortham were engaged in animated conversation; Mrs. Leigh was seated, but looking up with an anxious smile into her husband's face; while Lettie was on her knees at her mother's side, with her face buried her bosom. No one had noticed their approach; and the voice of Charles Wortham was the first they heard.

"I am satisfied, sir," said Charles, in answer to some objection Col. Leigh had been urging, "that Miss Beverly will find consolation for a greater loss."

"But Charles, Mr. Wortham," said the Colonel, apparently much perplexed, "remember my promise—the heir of Redwood—"

"*Is here to speak for himself*, Col. Leigh!" said Leftwell, stepping forward.

Surprise, almost consternation, was on every countenance, even that of Charles Wortham.

"I must beg you to pardon this disguise, sir," continued Leftwell, or rather Paul Lacy, as we must now call him. "I believe you have received a letter explaining my continued absence?"

"I have, this very morning and most satisfactorily," said Col. Leigh.

"Then it only remains to sue for pardon to the ladies," said Paul Lacy, turning to Lettie, who had half risen in her astonishment at the unexpected *denouement*; "and, if this fair lady will grant me her hand in token of reconciliation, I am sure all will be well; nay, I shall not keep it," added he, as the color rushed to Lettie's face, "though, how precious it might have been had I not believed it another's, *or*," continued he, "how hard it might have been to relinquish it had I not some faint hope of pity from another quarter!"—turning a fond, proud look on Laura, which filled her with joy—"I will not say."

"And so," said Col. Leigh, drawing a sigh that seemed to relieve him of a whole load of troubles, "this is the end of LOVE'S MASQUERADE."

"And let me hope," added Paul Lacy, "a renewal of THE BETROTHALS."

Happily flew the summer months away; and, in early winter, gay and joyous was the bridal party that gathered in the old mansion of Belle-Air. Nor did either of our friends have cause to regret that she had changed her partner in Love's Masquerade.

Selected Poetry.

THE RICHEST PRINCE.

FROM THE GERMAN OF JUSTINUS KERNER.

Praising each his own dominions,
As the fairest of them all,
Sat at Worms four German princes,
Once within the Emperor's hall.

"Glorious," spoke the Saxon Monarch—
"Glorious is that land of mine,
Where the mountains hold the silver
Deep in many a gorgeous mine."

"See my land with plenty teeming,"
Spoke the elector of the Rhine,
"Golden seeds in all the valleys,
On the hills the glorious vine!"

"Mighty cities, wealthy cloisters,"
Thus outspoke Bavaria's king,
"Make my land the richest kingdom,
By the treasures that they bring!"

Then spoke Everard, the Bearded,
Wurtemburg's beloved lord,
"Small the cities of my kingdom,
None my mountains silver-stored.

"Yet it holds a treasure hidden,
Brightest, purest, greatest, best,
I my head can safely pillow
On my poorest subject's breast!"

And the Saxon monarch answered,
And his royal brothers there:
"Everard, thy land is richest—
Thou the noblest crown doth wear."

Selected Miscellany.

The Best "Mulroney" Yet.

How Andy Donovan "Practysed the Science of Abstrackshin."

Did ye niver hear tell of one Andy Donovan? Och, now, only think o' that! An' he sich a genius! Well, Andy war a raal gintleman, anyhow, for he war born an' brid to do nothin' at all at all, and folyed the thraade of a feelosopher by way of makin' a decent livin'. Divil a better feelosopher nor Andy all the wureld over, for he hate the Dutchman, Kaiser he great gift of abstrackshin he had. But the magistthers, an' squireens, an' the proothors, an' middle men, war jealous of his reputashin, and sint him over the salt say in a thriflin' offishal capacity, the name of which I disremember; but twar a "convart" they called him, or some narrle that war feather brother to it.

But about his wondherful powers of abstrackshin. Oh ye, thin! sure I come to it prisintly. What 'ud a poor do widout atin' and dhrinkin', I'd like to know? An' doesn't everybody foily the science of abstrackshin for the sake o' the good breakwasts, an' the illegant dinners, an' fine likes o' them? Musha, thin! why would 'nt Andy do that same, an' wid a impty bag over his shoulders, be wandherin' over the counthry, meditatin', and practisin' his own grand flahool science of abstrackshin?

Well, wan day, betimes, i' the mornin', out goes Andy wid his bag over his shoulther, an' his fishin'-rod under his arum, an he thravels on outill he sees forenent him a great flock o' geese.

"Thim's beautiful birds," sez Andy, stoppin' short, an' espishally the gandher. Tiroth, now, there's no harum, sure, in cultivatin' his acquaintance! Arrah, now, Misther Gandher," sez he, pokin' at him with his rod, "is it well an hearty ye are, the day?"

"Iss! iss!" sez the gandher.

"Faix, now, but I'll be pleased to hear it!" sez Andy. "An', savin' manners, may I ax ye if 'tis fond of good company ye are?"

"Iss! iss!" sez the gandher.

"Arrah, thin," sez Andy, "don't be bashful, but spake out. May be 'tis my good looks that 'ud be takin' yer eye?"

"Iss!—s—s!" sez the gandher.

"Many thanks for the compliment," sez Andy, makin' a gintee bow. "There's a bit of a cabin undher the hill yondher as belongs to my own self, wid ent'ertainmint for man an' baste' to the fore, an' if ye'll come wid me, sure but I'll make yez wilcome as the flowers in May."

"Iss! iss!—s—s—s!" sez the gandher, crainin' out his neck, an' runnin' afther the great desaiver.

"Well, it isn't the like o' me to rason out why any respectable gandher shouldn't choose his own masther," sez Andy; "an', if ye'll only say that agin, by jabers but I'll not be the boy to lave yees disconsolate! Are yees minded to go wid me?"

"Iss! iss!—s—s!" sez the gandher.

"Sure I ought to take the effeckshinate craythur at his word," sez Andy; "but it 'ud be right to let him considher over the matter a little the while longer. If a war was a' thim faymaies yondher, I'd be puzzled to know what to do at all, by razin' o' their changin' their mind so often, as becoorse is nathural enough to them spacies. But a gintleman, an' a gintleman gandher—an' sure there's no great differ at times betuxt 'em—I say a gintleman, and a gintleman gandher, 'ud never go back o' their word; for, by rason o' their superior dignity, 'tis the likes of thim as 'ud be ashamed to say no whin they means iss. "So now," sez he, tetchin' the gandher with the end of the rod, "I'll be afther askin' yees, my friend, for the third an' last time, if it 'ud be plazin' to ye to come along wid me?"

"Iss! iss! iss!—s—s!" sez the gandher in the most preimptory manner possible.

"Oh, begorra?" sez Andy, "if yees so fond o' me as all that, I don't see why I shouldn't make yeer bettther acquaintance."

An' thin Andy, the shly rogue, he fasthens a bullet on the ind o' his fishin'-line, an' whirlin' the rod in the air, brought the line suddenly round an' round the neck o' the gandher, an' fished him up with a great lift, an' put him in his bag. Arrah, now! but warn't that a beautiful spiciment of Andy Donovan's science of abstrackshin?

"Och!" sez he, laughin' to his own self, "twar a great piece of friendship in the fat gandher, anyhow, to take a likin' to me. But shure it only shows the discriminashin o' the baste; for I tuk that same likin' to hisself; an' that's no lie. Troth an' I'll be good to the crathur as long as he lives, an' cocker him up wid pataties an' buttermilk. 'Tis afeard I am that he won't live long; but I'll be thankful for his affickshin, an' show it, too, by atin' him tindherly."

Well, by an' by, he comes to a pond where there were lashing o' ducks, an' prisintly up waddles a grand gintleman of a muskovee, an', wagglin' his curly tail, looks him in the face as bould as ye plase.

"What is it?" sez Andy.

"Quack! quack! quack!" sez the duck.

"Be off wid ye," sez Andy, "an' behave yeerself like a dacent furrener. Yees wilcome to the atin' an' the flahool feathers as come wid it; but sure I think it betther manners in yees not to be afther intherferin' wid the purshutes of a country born."

"Quack! quack! quack!" sez the muskovee.

"Oh, murther!" sez Andy. "Did I iver hear tell the likes o' that? An' I standin' here widout saying nothin' at all at all! Hould yer tongue, ye unnathralized baste, an' don't slander an honest boy that way."

"Quack! quack! quack!" sez the imperdint duck.

"Tare an' ounties!" sez Andy in a passhin.—"Lave off, I tell yees. Is it I as looks like a quack, wid niver a rap in my pocket, an' wid a batthered ould casthor on my head wantin' a crown?"

"Quack! quack! quack!" sez the duck; an' thin, by this an' by that, all the other ducks tuk up the cry, and sung out: "Quack! quack! quack!"

"Augh!" sez Andy, feelosophysin', "'tis the way o' the wureld over and over! Niver the bad war put on a man but sure a dozen repeated it. Upon my conscience," sez he, "'tis a hard matter to bear; but thim ducks is poor unforthenate ignoramuses, an' may be they don't know no bettther; so I'll rason wid 'em."

Oh but Andy war the perlite man! an' bad thraveled across the salt say to discoorse wid the Englishmen all about haymakin', and rapin' an' wather-drains, wid practickle explanashins. By throtting about, he seen the wureld, and larned the way they make politicianer spachas in thim furrin parts. So, at this prisint time, he got upon an ould stump by the pond side, an', afther makin' a scrape wid his fut, he lifted his little finger, wid the hand to it, to make believe he war takin' a sup o' could wather—though, betuxt you an' I, sorra cup o' wather niver wet Andy's lips whin he could get anything betther—but he knowed that war the way to commince a spache; an' so, whin he'd been taken wid the little cough which the raal politicianers have on sech occasions, an' wiped his mouth across wid the handkerchief he left at home, he interjuiced his own self as Andy Donovan by name, for want of another gintleman at his elbow, an' thin, wid a grand flourish o' his arum, sez he to the ducks, sez he: "Gintlemen—no, that's not what I mane. Friends and fellow-citizens. Oh, murther, but 'tisn't citizens ye are! Friends an' fellow-countrymen—faix but 'tis right I am at last! Fellow-countrymen—"

"Quack! quack!" sez the big duck.

"Augh, militia murther, ye slandhairons ould ryptyle!" sez Andy. "Why will ye be afther interceptin' me, an' I standin here in defiance o' my characther? Put yer fus in yer mouth, ye baste, and lave me be. 'Tis ashamed I am o' yees for callin' a dacint man, wid a cabin full o' children, a quack! All the wureld knows—yes, thin, an' Kilkenny too, for that matther—that it 'ud break my heart to be a quack. 'Tis the blissed thruth I am spakin' the day; an', if ye'll take yer bills out o' the mud, an' stop gabblin' I'd like to ax yees a handful o' questions.

"War iver the name of Andy Donovan in the newspapers? tell me that, ye Omadhauns, barrin wanst when I bruk Terrence Mahool's hed wid a pewther noggin? Did I iver demane my own self to pay a thirmen to a newspaper man to print letthers in Dublin, an' Kilkenny, an' Connaught, an' Wicklow, to say that sarsyperilla war bether nor brimsthone to a Scotchman, an' more profitable nor beer to Johnny Bull? Is it the likes o' me that ud' break my bones wid Father O'Dougherty's walkin'-stick by takin' my oath that Andy Donovan's spittaty pills, buthered all over wid sugar, war the best purgathory iver invented by mortial man? Ayeh! Is it I that 'ud be dhrawn an' quarthered, like a chicken in a cook shop, for sellin' magnified powthers, to be taken through the little ind of a tellyskope? Is it I as 'ud be here the day, wid a hole in my hat big enough for a bull to run through, and wan tail to my coat, whin 'tis lashins of goold that I be scoopin' up if I war a quack?"

"Quack! quack! quack! quack!" sez the muskovee.

"Oh bad loock to yees!" sez Andy, jumpin' down from his rosthre: "but 'tis myself that'll tache yees what it is to bespattheer a gintleman."

An' shure he did, right aff; for he put a bit o' red rag on his fishen'-hook, and dhraggled it along afther him; an', by this an' by that, the foolish muskovee seized it; an' prisintly who but he war floppin' about in the bag?

"This the way wid all them born natherals o' furreners," sez Andy. "Troth, but I thought ye had bettther sinse. An' now I'll be goin' home," sez he.

An' that's the sthory all about Andy Donovan becomin' a "convart."

MACREADY'S DYING SPOT.—Mr. Macready was never popular with stock actors. He annoyed them exceedingly at rehearsals, by giving every man his particular place on the stage so that in the picture presented he should be the centre.—This actor must stand here; that actor there—it was his will.

On one of the nights of his last engagement in New Orleans, when he was to play Hamlet, he was very particular, at rhearsal, in the disposition of characters at the fall of the curtain. He had selected the most commanding place on the stage, well down to the lights, and declared that there he intended to die. It so happened that as the fatal moment was approaching, just after Hamlet had stabbed the king, his majesty took it into his head to die on the spot selected by the philosophic Dane. The poison was burning in Hamlet's veins; he was in the agonies of death; but still he found time to say, *sotto voce*, to his step father—

"Back—back—I'm going to die there."

The blood of outraged royalty was up, and the stabbed monarch replied—

"I'm King, and I'll die where I please—pick out a place for yourself."

And hamlet was compelled to let his soul out further up the stage.

LOVE'S LAST REQUEST.—"Farewell, farewell," I cried. "When I return thou'lt be my bride—till then be faithful, sweet, adieu—in silence oft I'll think of you." The glistening tears strained her bright eyes—her thickening breath is choked with sighs—her tounge denies her bosom's sway—"Farewell!"—I tore myself away. "One moment stay," she stammered out, as quick as thought I wheeled about. "My angel, speak! can aught be done to comfort thee when I am gone? I'll send the specimens of art from every European mart—I'll sketch for thee each Alpine scene, to let thee see where I have been. A stope from Simplon's dreadful height shall gratify thy curious sight. I'll climb the fery Etna's side to bring home treasures for my bride; and oh, my life, each ship shall bear a double letter to my fair."

"Ah George," the weeping angel said and on my shoulder fell her head—"For constancy, my tears are hostage—but when you write, please pay the postage."

A LADY DIPLOMATIST.—A London correspondent intimates that the diplomatic laurels won by Lord Palmerston are really won by his charming Viscountess. It would seem that no British Ulysses is able to resist the captivating smile of this diplomatic Calypso, except only the incorruptible Roebuck. He has never yet been known to yield to the fascinations of woman. The writer closes by telling how a stern editor of a radical paper, who daily devoted the premier to the infernal deities, was recently done over.

To his amazement, the British Gracchus was invited to an "intimate" party at Cambridge House. He was seated at the side of the engaging Viscountess at table