Kent News

SATURDAY, - - - JAN. 11, 1896.

Written for the KENT NEWS.

A Titleless Tale!

BY W. MACK REICHE.

"You're awfully nice looking! When did you return, Jack?"

"And its mighty kind of you to say that, I ——

"Oh," interrupted Christine, "I mean since you've shaved your second-story lip, the resemblance seemed so striking to that of —

"Never mind, you need not mention that fact, you might spare me that much. I believe if I stayed away ten years instead of eighteen months you'd welcome me, on my return, with the same disdainful indifference you now exhibit. I thought probably distance might produce a little desire."

"And so it did, Jack, if you were not so given to misconstruction, my delight in seeing you is really intrinsic, and to prove it I ask you to favor us with your company whenever it is convenient. You know if dear little mama had lived, she would have said "ditto," underscoring the word come. Poor papa is always asking for you, ending his interrogatory remarks with a fervent benediction, and your humble servant, to win your approbation, will try to make the caramels just as tempting as possible. Now, won't that be sweets to the sweet? But, honestly, Jack," continued Christine, coloring up profusely, "when I thought of the resemblance, it was as unthoughtful, as wicked of me to make such a sad allusion, and I know you'll kindly forgive me when I tell you my heart felt the stinging irritation as keenly as your own."

Is it nobleness that prompts one's silence?

This keen world reflects back to us through the mirror of daring opposition, and in life-size and irresistable force, the very things we want unsaid, while from the mind-reading world like the spiritualist, the many good things for which we solicit a sitting, we never hear. No indeed, you will never hear from the spiritual that for which you listen with breathless anxiety. Nor from the world neither—no, not until your swan-song has been sung and the coals of good and evil deeds are burned out, the locomotive of life has completed its journey, and you are under the control of a Higher Power, will you hear the good as well as the evil.

And thus it was with poor Jack. Christine had flung allusion at random, and it wounded Jack's already rent heart. But like the dear, good fellow he was, and knowing the face of gentleness, he was as ready to forgive as accuse. And thus the above conversation closed between two dear (though Jack would wish a stronger term) friends, of whose lives and characters we think it now time to take an epitome.

Jack Eccleston was the oldest of two sons of a dear, good Southern woman, who was made a widow by the resulfs of war. He was brave, honest, true, and as near a Christian as a young, aspiring lawyer of twenty-five could be. But with all his good qualities we are bound to raise the veil and reveal his rash disposition. With all goodness and free will of heart he might give you his purse and the next moment imagine (if he did not know you) he saw you enter a saloon to empty it and then regret his act. Then again he might let his tongue go at a two forty gate, prancing, dashing and flying itself against the fortress of another's feelings, and though the fortress still stands, the scar remains, causing Mr. Wildfire the deepest remorse.

Christine Crawford, the daughter of an elderly Episcopal minister, was a girl of medium height, a slender form just swaying enough to suggest one-third of the picture of the "Three Graces." She could boast the wealth of a mass of wavy golden thread and eyes expressing humble submission and a willingness of self-sacrifice for other's pleasure.

When we look at the silver lining of the clouds on either side of a glorious and radiant rainbow, we know earth is to be illuminated by the brilliancy of an azure sky; so when we notice those small white teeth between the cherry lips of a young girl we expect to hear nothing but silver-tongue notes issue from her mouth, and such only do we hear when we stand beneath the window of a certain little sacred edifice, in a certain little village somewhere below the Mason and Dixon line; listening to Christine practicing, as is her wont, the chants and Te Deums for Sunday. There you'll find her, always donned in simple black, like a statue that ought to be unveiled; and to use one of Victor Hugo's expression's: "Kneeling upon the height of virtue, nearer the angels than men."

For such a girl we might be sure Jack availed himself of many excuses to see "the only girl he could love." Christine always received him graciously and drawing the line at friendship's limit, gave him no other hopes or encouragement.

"Jack," she answered to his vehement entreaties and in quite a dramatic air, "the millions of little stars which you see studding the sky and to which, it is said, God is millionaire, are not more brilliant than the inscriptions of your generosity and inestimable goodness on my heart. You honor me, you offer me what any pure and good woman ought to be proud to obtain, aud I sincerely and humbly offer you my boundless gratitude, but that sun which will show us both in a different light tomorrow, and which is millions of miles away, is not more distant than my intentions of marriage."

Jack listened to this open confession with down-cast eyes and a sad heart.

"I would make any sacrifice for you Christine. I have, and this is all the thanks I get for saving your father's property, when I thought it might show you my heart's desire for you, and induce—

The die was cast! He saw with awe how tight he had drawn the bow and with what lightning speed the arrow had been thrown.

"Well, Mr. Eccleston," said Christine, whose paleness increased with her words, "that is one off your outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace! I'm much oblige to you for your generosity in reminding me of our obligations to you—'Losing its privacy, benevolence loses its charm.' I bid you good night."

"Be gracious enough to let me explain Christine," said Jack while Christine was still advancing towards the door. "May I not hope to see you again tomorrow?"

"If I ever want you I'll send for you, until then—good-bye."

The truth is, Christine could and would forgive any insult meant for herself, but a reflection upon her dear old father is something that could not be easily retracted.

Time went slowly, days seemed weeks, and weeks months.

"Oh, why ambitious, why seek glory when all that is to make life happy can not be obtained? Can I not rough and tough it? Hasn't Captain Curshaw offered me a "third-mate" position which will bring me income enough to prolong poor mother's stay in Florida?"

Meditating thus, Jack resolved to leave Wednesday with the crew. And on that day he carried his designs into execution.

* * * * *

Three years had passed and nothing was heard from Jack in his foreign ports.

Who can tell but those who have loved, what Christine's young stricken heart endured? Patiently waiting, patiently watching, but daring to hope.

Oh, love:—What is love? Its blind, its deaf, its insipid. Can it feel? Oh, that fifth portion of the whole five senses can alone define that little word which is a world of joy or pain within itself. But as no two of us are moulded in the same cast let each one define the word or describe the feeling from the complexion of one's own heart.

"Perhaps that ragged chap sitting in one of the few of those tri-rectangular-triangular corners of the ship, could enlighten us on the love question," thought Captain Eccleston as he went up to him, slapping him on the shoulder in a jocular way, said: "Well, lad, what are you up to, now, reading German, eh?" as he caught at a glimpse—"Suss Liebchen, Komm und pluck sie—"

"Darned fine looking chap, I'll swear," said Captain E. inwardly, and acknowled to himself that he had never noticed "Books" before particularly.

And to do "Books" justice he did hold his own fairly well with all the rough treatment he had received and was (when clean, which was very seldom) quite a handsome fellow, with his cold black wavy hair and brows, and moustache of the same hue, which blended exquisitely with the deep, rich crimson cheeks. But nature's gifts don't count for much when one's motto has to be, "Six days shalt thou labor, Sundays holy—stone the deck and scrape the cable."

"Beg your pardon, Captain (whose last name "Books" never heard) said "Books" rising politely and removing his cap, knowing if it had been the overbearing and repulsive Captain Curshaw, it would have been a kick with a prom- of thrashing instead of kindness.

"Granted, and no harm "Books," resume your love story," he said, laughingly.

With the exception of the first few days "Books" (by which name the Captain sarcastically addressed him from his close application to reading) had been lampooned and treated violently by the whole crew, excepting Captain Eccleston, ever since he boarded the ship as ward-room boy.

Captain Curshaw entertained an utter repugnance for the boy (if twenty-two is considered boyhood) whose greatest and only fault, to any fair-minded person, was his good looks.

One day, on the return trip to one of the Southern ports, within about one hundred and twenty miles of destination, the Captain became angry. We'll not tell his character. It will tell itself. A hungry lion, or coals of fire from the eternal regions are fools to the heat of his passion. He eyed "Books" sitting beside a coil of chain reading. Watching him for a moment in his usual iconoclastic manner, he crept up to him and gave him a brutal kick on the hand, sending the book over the side of the ship.

"You d— lazy scoundrel! I'll teach you to be stealing my time with your infernal books, said the man whose looks would confirm any one's belief in the Darwin theory, "Get up from there you —! hold your fists in your ribs like you'd been eating green apples," he said, continuing to kick him violently and using language too violent to be smeared on paper.

"Yes, mate, strip this — dog. I guess little of that air will bring him round."

"Mercy, Captain, for God sake! The boy will freeze."

"Who's runnin' this raft, you or me? I'll teach you to obey orders, you — rebel'" and he raised a pistol horizontally to emphasize his command.

He had often noticed the mate's attachment for "Books" and, accordingly, his own wrath grew to an inextinguishing flame, and thought he'd make this opportunity his vengeance. So at the point of the pistol the mate disrobed the boy. And who would not swallow some personal feeling and obey orders when one is obliged to get the focus on the commander through the muzzle of a pistol? Captain Curshaw advanced towards "Books" with a heavy cord in his hand.

"Hold out your thumbs, you Irish snip."

Poor "Books" could endure no longer, and regardless of all consequences, concentrating all his manly force into right arm, he struck the Captain a wretchedly bloody blow in the face, capsizing him, sending the revolver tumbling out of one of the little holes into the flood.

And who can tell but "Books" would have killed him had not the second mate interferred, which gentleman helping the Captain up also assisted in resuming authority and had poor "Books" tied by the thumbs and hoisted so only his toes could reach the deck; in this state, on that bitter cold November morning, that atrocious Captain and that heinous second mate stood threatening the life of Captain Eccleston if he did not administer lash after lash upon the shivering, naked body.

Just as he was about to administer the third blow he noticed two scars, which formed an almost perfect cross, on the left side of the body.

"Merciful God!"—and Captain Eccleston fell fainting, prostrate on the deck. Could it be possible that in this time of piercing anguish the sight of that scarred cross portrayed to him Golgotha's cross of anguish, of which his dear mother had so often told him? or had he been overcome by such incompatable deeds of horror?

Neither. The boy he had flogged was his long lost brother! The scar he saw he had seen to his sorrow in boyhood days. And Captain Eccleston knew no more until he awoke to consciousness and found himself in the middle of the stream, in the boat into which Captain Curshaw had ordered him to be "chucked and thrown on shore."

Jack (since he is no longer "Captain") considered his discharge a blessing, but with all the manly oourage he could muster up, he could not restrain the tears, to which he gave full vent, over the deplorable condition of his poor brother, whose trying condition he was totally unable to alter.

Since no one had known why he had left or where he had gone he returned to his home and resumed his practice with little zeal. Christine (in whose regard he had been reinstated with bountiful forgiveness) thought to herself, from his ceaseless stream of tears, he was Aeneas' ghost and tried to wring from him the confession of his seemingly contrite heart.

"Jack," she said, "do try to be a little more cheerful this evening. For the past month you've been a perfect flood of tears. While the cause may be a just one, how can you expect my continual sympathy if you will not admit me your confidante? It is a reflection on your manhood to make your dear Mama spend tomorrow as a sad gloomy Christmas Eve. Do open your heart to me for once, I pray you, and if there is anything I can conscientiously do to alleviate your distress make it known and your wishes shall be fulfilled."

Then in that silent room, before that open fire-place, Jack, as well as he could, related his history from the time he had left her. Encouraged to continue by Christine's moist and sympathetic eyes, he told her of poor "Books" and ended: "The brave truest fellow, such tender but noble-hearted manliness, the personification of virtue and goodness! Oh Christine I ought not to tell you, but I must! The boy that I thrashed was our precious boy—our Huston! He told her how useless any attempt to release him would be as the Capt. would conceal or kill him at the slightest suspicion.

"Oh my darling boy, my darling boy," she wailed, "I must see him Jack, I'll die if I don't. Kind heaven direct my steps to his aid!" And she sank to the floor with her wild sobbing head on Jack's knee.

"Just think Christine," said Jack after a long and bitter pause, "the ship with her cargo and our dear boy just made the remainder of the trip yesterday and is now only about a mile out in stream."

"Jack I've prayed so often for him I believe he is to be returned to us. I have just been thinking of a scheme which I mean to execute tomorrow and

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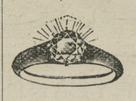

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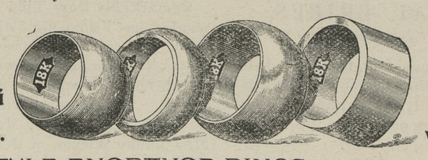

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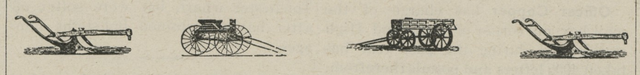

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