

CASS COUNTY TIMES.

DEVOTED TO NEWS, POLITICS, INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS, LITERATURE, MORALITY & AMUSEMENT.

JUSTICE AND TRUTH OUR GUIDE—THE PUBLIC GOOD OUR AIM—WILLING TO PRAISE, WHEN PRAISE IS DUE, BUT NOT AFRAID TO REPRIME.

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Miscellaneous.

From the New York Mirror.

THE STRANGER.

A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY HENRY G. BELL.

HODNET is a village in Shropshire. Like all other villages in Shropshire, or any where else, it consists principally of one long Street, with a good number of detached houses scattered here and there in its vicinity, on the sunny side of what in England they call a hill. It contains the shops of three butchers, five grocers, two bakers, and one apothecary. On the right hand as you go south, is that very excellent inn, the Blue Boar; and on the left, nearly opposite, is the public hall, in which all sorts of meetings are held, and which is alternately converted into a dancing-school, a theatre, a chapel, a ball-room, an exhibition-room, or any other kind of room that may be wanted. The church is a little further off, and the parsonage is, as usual a white house, surrounded with trees at one end of the village. Hodnet, is, moreover, the market-town of the shire, and stands in rather a populous district; so that, though of small dimensions itself, it is the rallying-place, on any extraordinary occasion, of a pretty numerous population.

One evening in February, the mail from London stopped at the Blue Boar, and a gentleman wrapped in a travelling cloak came out. The guard handed him a small portmanteau, and the mail drove on. The stranger entered the inn, was shown into a parlor, and desired that the landlord and a bottle of wine should be sent to him. The order was speedily obeyed, the wine was set upon the table, and Gilbert Cherryripe himself was the person who set it there. Gilbert next proceeded to rouse the slumbering fire, remarking, with sort of comfortable look and tone, that it was a cold, raw night. His guest assented with a nod.

"You call this village Hodnet, do you not?" said he, inquiringly.

"Yes, sir, this is the town of Hodnet," (Mr. Cherryripe did not like the term "village.") "And a prettier little place is not to be found in England."

"So I have heard; and as you are not upon any of the great roads, I believe you have the reputation of being a primitive and unsophisticated race."

"Primitive and sophisticated, did you say sir? Why, as to that, I cannot exactly speak; but if there is no harm in it I dare say we are. But you see, sir, I am a vintner, and don't trouble my head about these matters."

"So much the better," said the stranger, smiling. "You and I shall become better friends. I may stay with you for some weeks, perhaps months. In the meantime get me something comfortable for supper, and desire your wife to look after my bedroom."

Mr. Cherryripe made one of his profoundest bows, and descended to the kitchen, inspired with the deepest respect for his unexpected guest.

Next day was Sunday. The bells of the village church had just finished ringing, when the stranger walked up the aisle, and entered as if at random, a pew which happened to be vacant. Instantly every eye was turned towards him, for a new face was to important an object in Hodnet to be left unnoticed.

"Who is he?"

"When did he come?"

"With whom does he stay?"

"How long will he be here?"

"How old may he be?"

"Do you think he is handsome?"

These and a thousand other questions flew about in whispers from tongue to tongue, whilst the unconscious object of all this interest cast his eyes calmly, and yet penetratingly over the congregation. Nor was it altogether to be wondered that his appearance had caused a sensation among the good people of Hodnet, for he was not the kind of person whom one meets with every day.

There was something both in his face and figure that distinguished him from the crowd. You could not look upon him once and then turn away with indifference. His high Roman nose, his noble brow, his almost feminine lips, and beautifully regular teeth—his pale but not delicate cheek, his profusion of dark and curling hair, his black bright eyes, whose glance, without being keen, was intense—all, taken together, produced an effect which might have excited attention on a wider stage than that of Hodnet. In stature he was considerably above the middle light; and there was something in his air which they who were not accustomed to it did not understand, and which some called grace, others dignity and others shadow.

When the service was over, our hero walked out alone, and shut himself up for the rest of the day in his parlor at the Blue Boar. But speculation was busily at work, and at more than one tea-table that evening in Hodnet, conjectures were poured out with the tea, and swallowed with the toast. A few days elapsed, and the stranger was almost forgotten; for there was to be a subscription assembly in Hodnet, which engrossed entirely the minds of men. It was one of the most important events that had happened for at least a century. Such doings had never been known before. There was never such a demand for milliners since the days of Ariadne, the first milliner of whom history speaks. Needles worked unremittingly from morning to night, and from night to morning. Fiddles were scraped on in private, and steps danced before looking glasses. All the preparations which Captain Parry made for going to the North pole were a mere joke to the preparations made by those who intended to go to the Hodnet assembly. At length the great, the important night arrived, "big with the fate" of many a rustic belle. The three professional fiddlers of the village were elevated on a table at one end of the hall, and every body pronounced it the very model of an orchestra. The candles (neither the oil nor the coal gas company had as yet penetrated so far as Hodnet) were tastefully arranged, and regularly snuffed. The floor was admirably chalked by a travelling sign-painter, engaged for the purpose; and the refreshments in an adjoining room, consisting of negus, apples, oranges, cold roast-beef, porter, and biscuits, were under the immediate superintendence of our very excellent friend, Mr. Gilbert Cherryripe. At nine o'clock, which was considered a fashionable hour, the hall was nearly full, and the first country dance (quadrilles had not poisoned the peace, and stirred up all the bad passions, of Hodnet) was commenced by the eldest son and presumptive heir of old Squire Thoroughbred, who conducted gracefully through his mazes the chosen divinity of his heart, Miss Wilhelmina Bouncer, only daughter of Tobias, Esq. justice of peace in the county of Shropshire.

Enjoyment was at this height, and the three professional fiddlers had put a spirit of life into all things, when suddenly one might perceive that the merriment was for a moment checked, whilst a more than usual bustle pervaded the room. The stranger had entered it; and there was something so different in his looks and manner from those of any of the other male creatures, that every body surveyed him with renewed curiosity, which was at first slightly tinged with awe. "Who can he be?" was the question that instantaneously started up like a crocus in many a throbbing bosom. "He knows nobody, and nobody knows him; surely he will never think of asking any body to dance." "Dance!" said Miss Coffin, the apothecary's daughter, I wonder who would dance with him! a being whom we know no more about than we do of the man in the moon. Papa says he looks for all the world like a quack doctor." "I rather suspect," said Miss Bluebottle, a starch spinster of fifty, who was considered the Madame de Staël of the village—"I rather suspect that he is an Irish fortune-hunter, come for the express purpose of running away with some of us. We ought to be upon our guard, I assure you."

Miss Bluebottle was said to have property to the amount of seventy pounds per annum, and, no doubt, concluded

that she was herself the leading object of the adventurer's machinations. Had it been so, he must have been a bold adventurer indeed.

For a long time the stranger stood aloof from the dancers in a corner by himself, and people were almost beginning to forget his presence. But he was not idle, he was observing attentively every group, and every individual, that passed before him. Judging by the various expressions that came over his countenance, one would have thought that he could read a character at a single glance—that his perceptions were similar to institutions. Truth obliges me to confess that it was not with a very favorable eye that he regarded the greater majority of the inhabitants of Hodnet and its neighborhood. Probably they did not exactly come up to his expectations; but what these expectations were, it is difficult to conceive.

At length, however, something like a change seemed to come over the spirit of his dreams. He told on Emily Sommers, and appeared to rest where it fell with no small amount of pleasure. No wonder; Emily was a generally styled beauty, and there was a sweetness, a modesty, a gentleness about her, that charmed the more the longer it was observed. She was the only child of a widowed mother. Her father had died many a year ago in battle, and the pension of an officer's widow was all the fortune he had left them. But nature had bestowed riches of a more valuable kind than those which fortune had denied. I wish I could describe Emily Sommers; but I shall not attempt it. She was one of those whose virtues are hid from the blaze of the world, only to be the more appreciated by those who can understand them. She was one of those who are seldom missed in the hour of festive gaiety, who pass unobserved in the midst of glare and bustle, and whose names are but already heard beyond the limits of their own immediate circle. Epimetheus with that circle; leave the busy world behind you, and enter within its circumscribed and domestic sphere, and then you will discover the value of a being like to her of whom I speak. Without her, the winter fireside, or the summer evening walk, is destitute of pleasure. Her winning smiles, her unclouded temper, her affectionate gentleness, must throw their hallowed influence over the scenes where her spirit presides, unconscious of its power, else they become uninteresting and desolate. I have said that she is not missed in the hour of festive gaiety; but when she is at length removed from among us, when the place that knew her knows her no more, she leaves a void and a long remembered grief" throws its shadowy gloom over a few fond hearts.

It was to Emily Sommers that the stranger first spoke. He walked right across the room, and asked her to dance with him. Emily had never seen him before; but concluding that he had come there with some other friends, and little acquainted with the rules of etiquette, she immediately, with a frank artlessness, smiled at acceptance of his request. Just at that moment young Squire Thoroughbred came bustling towards her; but observing her hand already in that of the stranger, he looked somewhat wrathfully at the unknown, and said, with much dignity, "I, sir, intended to have been Miss Sommers' partner." The stranger fixed his dark eye upon the squire, a slight smile curled on his lip, and without answering, he passed on with his partner, and took his place in the dance. The squire stood stock still for a moment, feeling as if he had just experienced a slight shock of electricity. When he recovered, he walked quietly away in search of Wilhelmina Bouncer.

It was the custom in Hodnet for the gentlemen to employ the morning of the succeeding day in paying their respects to the ladies with whom they had danced on the previous evening. At these visits all the remarkable events of the ball were of course talked over. Criticisms were made upon the different dresses; commentaries were offered on the various modes of dancing; doubts were suggested regarding the beauty of Miss A.; suspicions were hinted as to the gentility of Miss B.; Mr. C. was severely blamed for dancing thrice with Miss D.; mutual inquiries were made concerning the old-looking man, who introduced himself so boldly to Mrs. and Miss Sommers, and who was reported even to have seen them home, or at least

to have left the assembly along with them. We make no doubt that all this chit-chat was very interesting to the parties engaged in it; but as we have not talents either of a Richardson or a Boswell, we shall not attempt to enter into its details, especially as our attention is more particularly devoted to the "old-looking man" already spoken of.

It is most true that he did leave the public hall of Hodnet with Mrs. and Miss Sommers, and true that he escorted them home. Nay, it is also true that he won so much upon their favor, that, on his requesting permission to wait on them the next day, it was without much difficulty obtained. This was surely very imprudent in Mrs. Sommers, and every body said it was very imprudent. What! admit as a visitor in her family a person whom she had never seen in her life before, and who, for any thing she knew, might be a swindler or a Jew! There was never any thing so preposterous; a woman, too, of Mrs. Sommers' judgment and propriety! It was very—very strange.

But whether it was very strange or not, the fact is, that the stranger soon spent most of his time at Violet Cottage; and what is, perhaps, no less wonderful, notwithstanding his apparent intimacy, he remained nearly as much a stranger to its inmates as ever. His name they had ascertained was Burleigh—Frederick Burleigh; that he was probably upwards of eight-and-twenty, and that, if he had ever belonged to any profession, it must have been that of arms. But farther they knew not. Mrs. Sommers, however, who, to a well cultivated mind added a considerable experience of the world, did not take long to discover that their new friend was, in every sense of the word, a man whose habits and manners, entitled him to the name and rank of a gentleman; and she thought, too, that she saw in him, after a short intercourse, many of those nobler qualities which raise the individual to a high and well merited rank among his species. As for Emily, she loved his society she scarcely knew why; yet when she endeavored to discover the cause, she found it no difficult matter to convince herself, that there was something about him so infinitely superior to all the men she ever seen, that she was only obeying the dictates of reason in admiring and esteeming him.

Her admiration and esteem continued to increase in proportion as she became better acquainted with him, and the sentiments seemed to be mutual. He now spent his time almost continually in her society, and it never hung heavy on their hands. The stranger was fond of music, and Emily, besides being mistress of her instrument, possessed naturally a fine voice. Neither did she sing and play unrewarded; Burleigh taught her that most enchanting of all modern languages—the language of Petrarch and Tasso; and being well versed in the use of the pencil, showed her how to give to her landscapes a richer finish, and a bolder effect. Then they read together; and as they look with a smile into each other's countenances, the fascinating pages of fiction seemed to acquire a tenfold interest. It was a picture for Rubens to have painted, that little domestic circle beside the parlor fire; Mrs. Sommers, with her work-table beside her, and a benevolent smile and matron grace upon her still pleasing countenance—her guest, with the glow of animation lighting up his noble features, reading aloud the impassioned effusions of genius—and Emily, in all the breathlessness of fixed attention, and weeping by turns, as the powerful master touched the different chords of sensibility. These were evenings of calm, but deep happiness—long, long to be remembered.

Spring flew rapidly on. March, with her winds and her clouds, passed away; April, with her showers, and her sunshine, lingered no longer; and May came smiling over the blue sky, scattering her roses over the green surface of creation. The stranger entered one evening, before sunset, the little garden that surrounded Violet Cottage. Emily saw him from the window, and came out to meet him. She held in her hand an open letter.

"It is from my cousin!" "His regiment has returned from France, and he is to be with us to-morrow or next day. We shall be so glad to see him! You have often heard us talk of Henry?—he and I were playmates when we were children, and though it is a long while since we parted, I am sure I should know him again among a hundred."

"Indeed!" said the stranger almost startlingly: "you must have loved him very much, and very constantly too." "O yes! I loved him as a brother," Burleigh breathed more easily. "I am sure you will love him too," Emily added.

"Every body whom you love, and who loves you, I also must love Miss Sommers. But your cousin I shall not at present see. I must leave Hodnet to-morrow."

"To-morrow! leave Hodnet to-morrow!" Emily grew very pale, and leant for support upon a sun-dial, near which they were standing.

"Good heavens! that emotion—can it be possible!—Miss Sommers—Emily—is it for me you are thus grieved?"

"It is so sudden," said Emily, "so unexpected—were you never to return again—are we never to see you more?"

"Do you wish my return, do you wish to see me again?"

"Oh how can you ask it?"

"Emily, I have been known to you only under a cloud of mystery—a solitary being without a friend or acquaintance in the world—an outcast apparently from society—either sinned against or sinning—without fortune, without pretensions;—and with all these disadvantages to contend with; how can I suppose that I am indebted to any thing but your pity for the kindness which you have shown to me?"

"Pity! pity you! O Frederick! do not wrong yourself thus. Not though you were a thousand times less worthy than I know you are, I should not pity, I should—"

She stooped confused, a deep blush spread over her face, she burst into tears and would have sunk to the ground had not her lover caught her in his arms.

"Think of me thus," he whispered, "till we meet again, and we may both be happy."

"O! I will think of thee thus for ever!" They had reached the door of the cottage.

"God bless you! Emily," said the stranger. "I dare not see Mrs. Sommers; tell her of my departure; but tell her, that ere autumn has faded into winter, I shall again be here. Farewell! farewell! farewell!"

She felt upon her cheek a hot and hurried kiss, and when she ventured to look around, he was gone!

Henry arrived next day, but there was a gloom upon the spirits of both mother & daughter, which it took some time to dispel. Mrs. Sommers felt for Emily more than for herself. She now perceived that her child's future happiness depended more upon the honor of the stranger than she had hitherto been aware, and she trembled to think of the probability that, in the busy world, he might soon forget the very existence of such a place as Hodnet, or any of its inhabitants. Emily entertained better hopes; but they were the result probably of the sanguine and unsuspicious temperament of youth. Her cousin, meanwhile, exerted himself to the utmost to render himself agreeable. He was a young, frank, handsome soldier, who had leapt into the very midst of many a lady's heart—coat, sword, epaulette, belt, cocked-hat, feathers and all. But he was not destined to leap into Emily's. She had enclosed it within too strong a line of circumvallation. After a three month's siege, it was pronounced impracticable. So Henry, who really loved his cousin next to his country, thinking it folly to endanger his peace, and waste his time any longer, called for his horse one morning, shook Emily warmly by the hand, then mounted, "and rode away."

Autumn came; the leaves grew red, brown, yellow, and purple; they dropped from the high branches, and lay rustling in heaps upon the path below. The last roses withered. The last lingering wail conveyed from the fields their golden treasure. The days were bright, clear, calm, and chill, the nights were full of stars and dew, and the dew, ere morning, was changed into silver hoar-frost. The robin leaped across the garden walks; and candles were set upon the table before the tea-urn. But the stranger came not. Darker days, and longer nights succeeded. Winter burst upon the earth. Storms went careering through the firmament; the forests were stripped of their foliage, and the fields had lost their verdure. But still the stranger came not. Then the lustre of Emily's eye grew dim; but yet she smiled, and looked as if she would have made herself believe that there was hope.

And so there was; for the mail once more stopped at the Blue Boar; a gentleman wrapped in a traveling cloak, once more came out of it; and Mr. Gilbert Cherryripe once more poked the fire for him in his best parlor. Burleigh did come back.

I shall not describe their meeting, nor inquire whether Emily's eye was long without its lustre. But there was still another trial to be made. Would she marry him?

"My family," said he, "is respectable, and as it is not wealth we seek, I have an independence, at least equal I should hope to our wishes; but any thing else which you may think mysterious about me, I cannot unravel until you are indissolubly mine."

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"God bless you! Emily," said the stranger. "I dare not see Mrs. Sommers; tell her of my departure; but tell her, that ere autumn has faded into winter, I shall again be here. Farewell! farewell! farewell!"

She felt upon her cheek a hot and hurried kiss, and when she ventured to look around, he was gone!

Henry arrived next day, but there was a gloom upon the spirits of both mother & daughter, which it took some time to dispel. Mrs. Sommers felt for Emily more than for herself. She now perceived that her child's future happiness depended more upon the honor of the stranger than she had hitherto been aware, and she trembled to think of the probability that, in the busy world, he might soon forget the very existence of such a place as Hodnet, or any of its inhabitants. Emily entertained better hopes; but they were the result probably of the sanguine and unsuspicious temperament of youth. Her cousin, meanwhile, exerted himself to the utmost to render himself agreeable. He was a young, frank, handsome soldier, who had leapt into the very midst of many a lady's heart—coat, sword, epaulette, belt, cocked-hat, feathers and all. But he was not destined to leap into Emily's. She had enclosed it within too strong a line of circumvallation. After a three month's siege, it was pronounced impracticable. So Henry, who really loved his cousin next to his country, thinking it folly to endanger his peace, and waste his time any longer, called for his horse one morning, shook Emily warmly by the hand, then mounted, "and rode away."

Autumn came; the leaves grew red, brown, yellow, and purple; they dropped from the high branches, and lay rustling in heaps upon the path below. The last roses withered. The last lingering wail conveyed from the fields their golden treasure. The days were bright, clear, calm, and chill, the nights were full of stars and dew, and the dew, ere morning, was changed into silver hoar-frost. The robin leaped across the garden walks; and candles were set upon the table before the tea-urn. But the stranger came not. Darker days, and longer nights succeeded. Winter burst upon the earth. Storms went careering through the firmament; the forests were stripped of their foliage, and the fields had lost their verdure. But still the stranger came not. Then the lustre of Emily's eye grew dim; but yet she smiled, and looked as if she would have made herself believe that there was hope.

And so there was; for the mail once more stopped at the Blue Boar; a gentleman wrapped in a traveling cloak, once more came out of it; and Mr. Gilbert Cherryripe once more poked the fire for him in his best parlor. Burleigh did come back.

I shall not describe their meeting, nor inquire whether Emily's eye was long without its lustre. But there was still another trial to be made. Would she marry him?

"My family," said he, "is respectable, and as it is not wealth we seek, I have an independence, at least equal I should hope to our wishes; but any thing else which you may think mysterious about me, I cannot unravel until you are indissolubly mine."

"Indeed!" said the stranger almost startlingly: "you must have loved him very much, and very constantly too." "O yes! I loved him as a brother," Burleigh breathed more easily. "I am sure you will love him too," Emily added.

"Every body whom