

THE MAIL

A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

TERRE HAUTE, - - - JULY 13, 1878

THE ROSE.

"I am weary of the garden," said the rose.

For the winter winds are sighing,
All my playmates round me dying,
And my leaves will soon be lying,
Neath the snow.

"But I hear my mistress coming," said the rose.

She will take me to her chamber,
Where the honeysuckle clamber,
And I'll bloom there all December,
Spite the snow.

"Sweetest tell her lily finger," said the rose.

Ah, how feebly I resisted,
Smoothed my thorns, and e'en assisted,
As all blushing I was twisted,
Off my tree.

"And she fixed me in her bosom," said the rose.

Like a flower,
And I flashed there all the morning,
Jasmine, honeysuckle, morning,
Parasites all in fawning,
That they are.

"And when evening came she set me," said the rose.

In a vase of rare and radiant metal,
All of rare and radiant metal,
And I felt her red lips settle
On my leaves till each proud petal
Fetched the dew.

"And I shone above her slumbers," said the rose.

And I said, instead of weeping,
In the garden vigil keeping,
Here I watch my mistress sleeping
Every night.

"But when morning with its sunbeams," said the rose.

In the mirror where she braided
Her brown hair, I saw how faded,<
Old and colorless and faded,
I had grown.

"Not a drop of dew was on me," said the rose.

From the leaves no odors started,
All my perfume had departed,
I lay pale and broken-hearted.

"Still, I said, her smile is better," said the rose.

Than the dew,
Though my fragrance may forsake me,
To her bosom she will take me,
And with crimson kisses make me
Young again.

"So she took me, gazed a second," said the rose.

Half a sign,
Then, a sigh, "How hearts so harden?"
Without ever asking pardon,
Threw me back into the garden,
There to die.

"How the jealous garden glories," said the rose.

In my fall,
How the honeysuckles chide me,
How the meadow grasses bid me
Lie like a pale,

"There I lay beneath her window," said the rose.

In a swoon,
Till the cold, stormy morn'g came,
Woke me just at twilight falling,
As the whip-poor-will was calling,
To the moon.

"But I hear the stormwinds stirring," said the rose.

In their lair,
And I know the storm will lift me
In their giant arms, and sift me
Into ashes as they drift me
Through the air.

"So I pray them in their mercy," said the rose.

Just to take
From my heart of hearts, or near it,
The living leaf, and bear it
To her feet and bid her wear it
For my sake.

When the Ship Comes Home.

BY WALTER BISSANT AND JAMES RICE.

Authors of "The Golden Butterfly," etc.

CHAPTER IX.

FULL CONFESSION.

Mr. Baldwin's words were conveyed to the outer office, and, being curious and inexplicable words, were repeated among the clerks. To them the story of George Warneford was an old and almost forgotten thing, so that they did not connect it with Mr. Baldwin's expression. One of them, however, when he heard them, trembled and shook. He was so nervous and agitated that he could do no work that morning. His mind would not take in the meaning of the words which he had to read, the figures danced before his eyes, and amidst the buzz of those who came and went he heard nothing but the voice of Mr. Baldwin, which repeated, "Innocent! Then God forgive us all!"

Forgive whom? Samuel Pringle's cheeks were white when Helen asked him for news of his brother; but his very lips were white when he thought of what these words might mean to himself.

Might mean? Did most certainly mean. There was no doubt in his mind at all that the young lady was come to Mr. Baldwin's about that old business of George Warneford's—a business which had ruined his own life and destroyed his peace. If the innocent man had suffered much more had he, the guilty, endured tortures of repentance and helpless remorse. There was no way out of it now, except to confess and take the consequences.

He sat on a dreadful hour, full of unspeakable terror, from ten till one, and then, taking his hat, went out when his turn came to take his dinner.

One thought always comes to the guilty—the thought of flight. As he emerged from the office where he had expected all the morning to feel the hand of arrest, it occurred to him that he might escape. He looked up and down the crowded thoroughfare; no one was watching him, he thought; he would hasten to his lodgings, pack up a few necessary articles, and then be off, somewhere—anywhere—out of danger.

Excellent thought! He was a thrifty young man, who did not spend all of his small salary, and had a little money with which he would pay his fare to America. He would write to the office and say that he was called away on urgent business, but would be back in a week; then he would not be missed. Once in America, and on his way to the West, he would be able to prove whatever they liked about himself and George Warneford.

Excellent thought! He lived at Arlington. He took a cab, and drove to his rooms in hot haste, made to be away from this dreadful fear which stung him like a hornet. And not only to be rid of this fear of detection and arrest, but also of the how devouring fire of remorse, which had never left him for a single moment, since the day when George Warneford had been sentenced for a crime which he had never committed.

So good and wise a plan did it seem to him, so practical and so original a method of shaking off the inconveniences of remorse and anxiety, that when he stepped out of his bedroom, portmanteau in hand, and saw who were waiting there to frustrate his manoeuvre, he fell fainting on the floor.

His visitors were John Wybrow and the young lady he had seen in the of-

fice. For Helen lost no time. She drove forward, Baldwin's straight to John Wybrow's chambers, and in a few words as she could, told him what was necessary for him to know.

Said John Wybrow, promptly, "I know that thing Pringle. He is a cur and a sneak. I always thought he was capable of villainy, and now I know it. He is the man who did it; not his brother at all. Now, Miss Elwood, the first thing he will do is to run away."

"Run away!"

"Just that. They always do it, fellows like Pringle. He hasn't got the pluck to stay and braven it out. The mention of his brother's name will make him suspect that the worthy Tom has let it all out. He will run away and we must stop him."

John wasted no time in going to the office of Hatterick and Baldwin, and drove straight to Pringle's address, rightly judging that, if he was going to escape, he would probably take the very first opportunity of getting away from the city. So it came to pass that when Samuel had finished his packing, and was joyously bringing his portmanteau from his bedroom, he found this pair of conspirators ready to receive him, and the shock was so great, that he fairly swooned away.

When he recovered he found himself lying on the horse hair sofa which decorated his apartment. His head was dizzy and heavy, and it was some minutes before he remembered what had happened and where he was. Then he sat up as he realized the position.

"Innocent? Then God forgive us all!"

The words rang in his brain. Who were those who chiefly needed forgiveness? And by what suffering was that forgiveness to be arrived at? He clutched the head of the sofa, and groaned in his misery.

Before him stood John Wybrow, looking hard, stern and pitiless, and at the table sat the young lady he had seen at Mr. Baldwin's private room, and her eyes too, meant punishment.

"Now, Pringle," said Wybrow, "you have come here with the intention of running away to escape arrest. We have caught you in the act of packing your portmanteau; and we do not intend you to run away. Not yet."

The miserable man's lips were parted, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

"Not yet," repeated John.

"What's what, Mr. John? Why do you stop me? What business is it of yours?" asked Pringle, hardly knowing what he said.

"Surely you know what you have to do," said Helen, in her low, steady voice.

Pringle shook his head.

"Here is a paper," John opened a desk and took out some sheets. "Here is ink. Here is a pen. Will you write a full account of it, now, at once, or shall I send for a policeman?"

"Spare me!" cried the abject criminal.

"Mr. Wybrow, what business is it of yours? Young lady, what have you to do with an old story, eight years old?"

"I am a boy—very little more than a boy. I have never been happy since, not one single day. Is not my misery enough punishment? Other clerks can go about and be cheerful, and enjoy their victuals. But that thing never lets me alone, not once, not one single day. Why should I suffer more?"

It never occurred to his disordered brain that they really had no proofs of his guilt. He assumed at once that all was known, and they had the power of giving him into custody on the charge of forgery, aggravated by the fact that he had allowed another to be convicted of his own crime.

"We shall not spare you," said John. "We know now the reason of your nervousness and hesitation. Spare you? Samuel Pringle, of all men living on this earth, there is not one who is not more worthy to be spared before you. In all the prisons in the world there is not a criminal so blackhearted as yourself. They have done the things for which they are in prison; you have not only done the things, but you have deliberately sent an innocent man to jail for your crime."

Samuel buried his face in his hands.

"The convict's dress you have made yourself," said John. "You have brought on him, you shall feel yourself, and worse; the disgrace which lies upon him and his shall be transferred to you and yours. Your name shall be a by-word of execration and reproach. People who hear it shall be ashamed to have such a name."

"Then Samuel Pringle cried and wept; he rolled his head upon the pillow, and wished he was dead; he moaned and whined; he declared that he repented, that he always had repented, that there was no man in the world more repentant than himself; and then, because no answer came, but every time that he raised his eyes, he saw the steady gaze of John Wybrow and the steady look of Helen Elwood, he crawled on his knees to the latter, and, seizing her hand, implored her to forgive him, and to let him go.

"You are a woman," he said. "Women are tender and pitiful. They always forgive. What good will it do George Warneford if the story does come out? He is out of prison. I learned that from my brother some three years ago. Tom saw him at Melbourne, walking about. It won't do him any good; and, oh, think of what it will be for me!"

Helen drew her hand away, but made no response. What, indeed, could she say?

"Mr. Wybrow is hard and cruel. Oh, much harder than I should be if Mr. Wybrow was in my place." He looked up furiously at his enemy, who stood motionless, with the pen in his hand. "Many a time I have done Mr. Wybrow's work in the office, and said nothing about it. Speak to him, young lady. You've got a kind heart. I know you have. Speak to him for me. Tell him that I will go straight away out of London, and he shall never see me again, since he hates me so. Straight away at once I will go; and as for George Warneford, if he has got out of prison, what more does he want? Putting in won't do him any good. Besides, he won't do this out as a last shot, partly, perhaps, as a feeler—besides, he's dead. I'm sure he's dead. Don't persecute a poor repentant sinner—don't be unchristian. Think of your own sins—not that you've got any, but perhaps Mr. Wybrow has—little ones, not big ones—just such and then how you're weighing on your mind, and taking the taste out of everything you put into your mouth."

"Now, Mr. Pringle," interrupted John Wybrow, "we have had enough of your whining. Stand up and write at this table."

Samuel obeyed, so far as standing up went. It was a groggy sort of standing at the best, and he felt, if he felt anything at all, that he hardly looked his best, for his long legs bent beneath him, his thin and sandy hair was hanging over his forehead, his lean arms hung helplessly at his sides, and his red and swollen eyes looked at his portmanteau and at the door, but between the door and himself stood the stalwart

form of John Wybrow. Samuel Pringle was neither a strong man nor a brave man. If the thought of forcible departure entered his head, it was dismissed at once.

"Sit down," said John, peremptorily. Samuel obeyed.

"Write the truth," said Helen. "Write what I dictate," said John. Samuel made a last effort.

"I'll write," he said, imploringly, "will you give me a chance of escape afterward?"

Helen looked inquiringly at John Wybrow. The criminal caught the glance.

"Only a single chance; give me but one day to get away if I can," Pringle pleaded.

"Write first," said John Wybrow. "I will make no conditions till I have got a confession."

Pringle dipped the pen in the ink. John began to dictate.

"I, Samuel Pringle, do hereby confess that I have committed the crime of forgery, and that I have allowed another to be convicted of my own crime."

"That he was entirely innocent of the offense; that it was committed without his knowledge; that he was wrongfully found guilty; that the real criminal is still at large."

"Still at large," said Pringle. "Oh, miss, help me to say that. I feel as if I am a miserable, repentant man."

But Helen's eyes showed no pity. The abject nature of the man filled her with disgust.

"Still at large. That the other forgers and embezzlers laid to George Warneford's charge were one and all the work of the same man, who has hitherto escaped punishment."

"Escaped punishment," the clerk echoed. "Oh, young lady, help him to escape altogether. I can't do George Warneford any good to see him punished. He's dead now. I am sure that he's dead, else he would have come home."

"I further declare that the real forger—"

"I can't write it," ejaculated the man. "Mr. Wybrow, let me run away, let me escape, let me go this once. It's pitiful to have a giant's strength, sir, as Shakespeare says, and it's unchristian to use it. Oh, miss, help me to say what we are, we are no Christians."

"That the real forger was myself, and no other."

Helen placed the pen in the nervous fingers from which it had dropped.

"Write the words," she said.

"I can't, I can't. It's all true, as you know, Mr. Wybrow, but I can't write the words. I feel as if the words are tearing me to a piece."

"Very likely they will," said John. "But confession is better than detection, as you will find. Come, you have no choice."

With a heavy groan he obeyed.

"Myself, I, Lord, Oh, Lord! What have I done?"

"Sign it now."

Reluctantly he signed the paper.

"Now, Miss Elwood," said John, "we two will witness this signature."

It was Helen's turn to tremble when she signed her name as one of the witnesses. For what did it mean to her, this confession of crime?

She signed the paper, and the recovery of all that made life dear, the bearing back to George of her golden shavings, a victory worth to her all the other victories in the world.

She signed. The wretched man went on whining and pleading in the same key about repentance, about the wickedness of his crime, about the wickedness of the certain death of George Warneford; but his words fell unheeded on her ears. She was thinking only about the joy and thankfulness which should be theirs when she bore to George Warneford the paper so precious to them all.

John folded up the paper and laughed. "We have won," Miss Elwood," he said. "You shall tell me afterward, if you will, what you have won. You know what is my prize."

Then he turned to Pringle, and his voice changed.

"If I had words—if there were words in the language to express the utter disgust I would use them. But there are no words strong enough. You have signed, however. We have you now utterly in our power. If you are to expect anything at all from us—the slightest mercy—you will tell us the whole story without evasion or concealment."

"You will be merciful, then?" cried Pringle, as he saw the paper folded in John's pocket book, and deposited in a place of safety. "If I tell you particulars that you would not get from any one else, you will have a little pity? Think of it, Mr. Wybrow, a whole life spent in prison. If I should not mind so much. But a life! never to get out again; never to be free; never to do what I like; never to be without the dreadful convict dress! Oh! I've dreamed of it night after night! I know it all by heart, and the misery of it. Oh, Mr. Wybrow, be merciful!"

"Sit down again, and tell us, in as few words as you can, the whole history."

He left the envelope on the table. I put the last check I had forged in an envelope exactly like his own. I made an excuse for going into his office, and I changed the envelope. Tom said that he had changed the envelope, and I should know that George Warneford would be the one on whom it would fall. It was not our fault. We had to look out for ourselves—Tom and I. Mr. Baldwin locked up the envelope when he went away; he clean forgot who had been in his room; he forgot, too, that he left his desk for a moment when I was in his office, and he swore positively that no one could have touched that envelope, except himself and George Warneford. Tom was in court when he swore to it, and when Tom told me in the evening he was laughed—that is, Tom laughed till the tears ran down his face."

Helen made an involuntary gesture of disgust.

"He laughed, miss, not me. I repented. I repented at once, and the money—hundreds of pounds it was—that Tom had through me, never got to him. Of course we don't believe a word about your repentance, and all that. Repentance, indeed! But you have done us, involuntarily, a service. Now, in return, Miss Elwood, this young lady—"

Samuel Pringle bowed, as if he were being introduced to her—his consented to one act of grace.

"And the act of grace, sir?"

"The act of grace is this. You shall have twenty-four hours' start; after that time a warrant will be taken out for your arrest, and you will take your punishment if you are caught. The punishment will be heavy, and I sincerely hope you will be caught. Now go."

Samuel Pringle seized his portmanteau and vanished. Looking out of the window they saw him running down the street till he caught a cab, in which he drove away.

"There will be no warrant in his case, I suspect, Miss Elwood. We must now wait."

"Wait a moment," she cried. "My heart is too full. Tell me, what this confession quite, tell me, does this confession mean?"

"It does. I am no lawyer, but I am certain of this. It will at least clear him in the eyes of Mr. Baldwin and the world. Miss Elwood, you have helped me to a wife; let us go to Ruth."

"Not yet," she said; "I want to get at the other man first, and I must wait. I want your advice and help. My heart is troubled with joy. Let us keep this thing to ourselves for one day yet—only one day. And to-morrow is Christmas eve. Let Ruth keep the feast with a joyful heart."

"And I must not see Ruth till to-morrow evening?"

"Not till to-morrow evening. John Wybrow, if you cannot see your fear of me when I tell you that I have waited for three years?"

"You, Miss Elwood?"

"Yes, George Warneford and I. That is my secret. You have won a wife and a sister, too, because I am to be married to George Warneford."

John took her hand and kissed it. On second thought he scooped and kissed her on the forehead.

"You will be our sister," he said, simply. "I am very glad. Where is George?"

"He is here in London. There is another of my secrets. He is the professor of the same house as Ruth."

"In the same house as Ruth, and she does not know. Once she thought she knew his voice, but it passed off. He is with me as my brother, so that we can travel together. Ruth does not suspect. But to-morrow she shall know."

John took her hand and kissed it. In the front room the gas was lit, for the professor was instructing a select class. Behind the blinds was Ruth, but John did not know this, and went away with a long, hungry heart.

George Warneford was pacing the room impatiently. He stopped with a gesture of inquiry when Helen re-entered.

"Yes, George, I have seen Mr. Baldwin, and have talked with him, and—"

"—and, Oh, my dear, dear love, we who have waited so long, can we not wait a little longer?"

She fell weeping into his arms. He soothed her and caressed her, and presently she lifted her head and raised her eyes.

"Let us remember," she said, the long and weary time of trial, and with the remembrance, let us think of all that it has done for us; how it cleared away the clouds of anger and revenge which lay on your soul; how it brought you back to your better self; how it made me a little selfish and a little more careful of others; how it brought me the dearest and best thing that can happen to a woman—the love of a good man."

"Yes, dear," he said, "but the love of a man who would fail to be all that his wife thinks him."

"What is that, I should say? 'You think me fair and pure, and I try to be fair and pure of heart. I think you noble, and you make your own nobleness out of love for me. What is love worth, except to lead man and woman upward to the higher life?'"

Then they were silent, and presently the door opened and John and Helen entered without a word.

"George," she said, after a little—they were sitting according to their old custom, side by side before the fire; Ben Croft was in his place, with his head against the wall—George, what day is this?"

"It is the day before Christmas eve."

"I remember that day three years ago. George. There were three people on a little boat together. It was a summer evening there, and they sat on the beach watching the golden sunset, as it painted the sands upon the beach and the rock behind them, where the white streamer floated night and day. They had been four months on that boat, where they were to be prisoners for three years. All their hearts were troubled with a sense of wrong. The older man was yearning for revenge upon the meddler and murderer who had brought them there."

"He was," said Ben. "He's yearning still; but he's going to have his revenge before long."

"The younger man," said Helen, in her soft, low voice, "was longing for revenge on the man who had brought him to ruin. Was he not, George?"

"He was," said George.

"Ay, ay, Miss Helen, that's very true; bless you, I don't harbor no malice against no one except Buster Tom. He's got to swing; then I shall be at peace with all mankind."

"We must forgive, if we can, even Buster Tom," she said.

"What! forget a murderer and a murderer, when I've got him under my thumb?"

The old man was inflexible on this point. That Buster Tom should be allowed to escape never entered his head. It was, if anything, a part of the great scheme of Christian forgiveness, that hanging should come first and pardon afterward. And the knowledge that he had caught him last tended greatly to soothe his soul, and prepared him for a fuller enjoyment of that season which peace and good will are especially preached to the nations of the earth."

Helen ceased to urge her point. But another pleader took up the cause of Buster Tom. It was a second letter from Rupert, written in pencil and in haste.

"Whatever you have to do with this man," he wrote to Helen, "must be done quickly. I think he is dying. Last night, after drinking enough rum to float a three-decker, or at least one of old Ben's favorite craft, and after con-"

ing till he shook the walls of the house, he broke a blood-vessel. We put him to bed, and he went on drinking rum. I was with him all night. I think, Miss Elwood, that I am getting rather tired of playing my part. The place is a den of thieves. The five pounds are already gone, and the woman of the house is throwing out hints that more will be wanted before long. Also I am expected to dance all the evening to please the sailors. After all, there is some fun in showing these timber-toed lubbers what dancing really means. But I am afraid that Dan Mizen suspects me; he is always on the watch. I shall be in the house in a few minutes. I have a doctor to see him. He reports that the patient can't last more than twenty-four hours. The woman has carried off his clothes, and I caught her searching the pockets. Also Dan Mizen has been making observations about captures and such things. My own idea is that he is trying to do something for himself out of the man's death. Act at once if there is anything to be done."

Helen read this letter aloud and waited for a response, looking to George first.

"He thought for a minute."

"If the man's testimony is to be of any use to us, he must be got at at once."

"We can do without it, George, but we shall be stronger with it."

"Then I will go myself and get it out of him."

Helen turned to Ben. "What do you think, Ben?"

"He was putting on his overcoat."

"Think?" he asked, with impatience glittering in his pale blue eyes. "What is a man to think? Here's the murderer going to cheat the gallows, and no one to interfere but me. Think? Why, that we must go to the nearest police station and arrest him, dead or alive."

"We will," said Ben, you and I. No, George—he put him back gently as he rose to go with her—it isn't altogether my fancy, but I want to finish this work myself with Ben and our friends. I want you to remain where you are, unknown and unsuspected till the time comes."

"The time? The time? Oh, Helen, I cannot believe that this will ever come."

"It has come, George; it is here all ready. Have patience for a single day—only a single day—and you will find that it has really come for you, and for Ruth, and for me. My heart is very full, dear friend; but the work is nearly finished. Do not wait for me. I am safe with Ben and Rupert."

It was nine o'clock. As Helen opened the door a van drove up, and a man, jumping down, began to hand out parcels.

"Here you are, miss," he said. "Name, Lemire."

"I will call Madame Lemire. Please bring in the things."

The professor came, Madame being out on a little Christmas marketing.

"Turkey for Mr. Lemire—sausages for Mr. Lemire—barrel of oysters, Mr. Lemire. That's all right. Case of preserved fruit—bonbons—two, two, three, five, that's right. Very sorry, sir, to be so late."

"But these can't be for me!" cried the bewildered professor.

"Quite right, sir—quite right; ordered two hours ago; nothing to pay. Stop a minute. Present for Mr. Lemire—a duck, Mr. Lemire—cod's head and shoulder, Mr. Lemire."

"But, my friend, I have ordered none of these things."

"Didn't say you did, sir. Friend, I suppose, ordered 'em all. Christmas time, you know. Hamper besides; don't know what's in the hamper. Where's that box, Jim? We was told to take very particular care of that box. Here you are, sir—box for Mr. Lemire. Think that's all, sir. You'll have to sign here—so—and here's a letter."

By this time Ruth Warneford, Antoinette and the children were gathered in the little hall going to the treasures which lay piled one above the other, cumbering the way. The professor, balancing himself on his toes, gesticulated, laughed and remonstrated. But before they knew what had happened, the man with the van had driven off, and they were left with their boxes.

"But what does it mean? Is it St. Nicholas? Is it a gift of heaven? My dear young lady," he addressed Helen, "I assure you on the word of an artist, that the resources of the establishment at this moment go no farther than the prospect of a leg of mutton, without plum-pudding, for Christmas day. You will hardly believe me, but that is the fact; and my wife has now gone out with Gaspard in the hope of purchasing that leg at a reasonable cost; and here are turkey, sausages, oysters, pheasant, wild-duck, wine—truly a Christmas dinner, and a good one."

"It is a return into Egypt."

"And the box, father. What is in the box?"

Ben produced that knife of his, which when not in active service in cutting tobacco, was useful as a screw-driver, or a crow-bar, or a maul, or a hammer, or any implement likely to be required on board a sailing ship.

With the help of this he opened the box. The contents were covered with paper.

"Stop, stop!" said Nettie. "This is too delicious. Let us carry everything into the dining-room."

All the things made a gallant show on the bare floor—such a picture might have been painted and hung upon the walls of some great banqueting hall. It would have been called Christmas. Plenty in the Olden Time. The game lay in an inner circle, surrounded by the boxes of fruit and the case of wine. The barrel of oysters formed a sort of tower in the center, and the children were gathered round the mysterious

box, over which Helen stood as guard. As was silent while she opened the first parcel.

It was wrapped in tissue-paper, as costly things should be, and on it was a card, "For Nettie." Opened, it proved to contain a winter jacket of the very finest and best. The next was marked, "For Charlotte." That contained a brand-new dress, warm and soft; and so with all the rest. For the girls, dresses; and for each of the boys—the barrels being