

THE MAIL

A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

THE MAIDEN AND HER LOVER.

[From The Clipper.]

Far, far away, beside the foam,
A little maiden had her home;
And princes wooed her, rich and gay,
But still she lightly said them nay:
She cared not if they came or went,
Within her humble home content;
For things were not as now, you know,
Long ago, and long ago.

Her father oft would musing stand,
And hold his little maiden's hand,
And, pointing, cry, "From o'er the sea
One day my wee will come to me."
And whisper as he shook his head:
"What shall I do when she is wed?"
He loved her so, he loved her so,
Long, and long, and long ago.

A lover came o'er seas, one day,
And stole her simple heart away;
But when she saw her father's tears,
And thought of all his after years,
"Go back across the sea," she cried,
And wept, "I cannot be thy bride."
For things were not as now, you know,
Long, and long, and long ago.

She watched upon the bridge, next day,
Her bonny lover sail away;
She dropped his ring into the foam,
And then at twilight wandered home.
She found her father sitting there,
The weep, and kissed his silver hair;
She loved him both, she loved them so,
Long, and long, and long ago.

The Bank Forgery;
or,
Unrepentant to the Last.

AN ENGLISH ROMANCE.

BY PHENIX DURIVAGE.

CHAPTER II.

THE "COURSE OF TRUE LOVE" RUNS FAR FROM SMOOTHLY.

On being told that his son had been invited to dine with their next door neighbor, Pembroke broke out into a torrent of angry words.

"I don't want to have anything to say or do with the fellow," he said to Stephen. "He's an upstart. Rich as a nabob he may be; nevertheless he is an upstart."

"I don't think, father, that the gentleman deserves such an appellation," the young man answered, after a short pause.

"You don't think, indeed?" exclaimed Pembroke, with a sneer. "You do not mean to put your judgment against mine?"

"I should be sorry, sir, to do ought that a son should not do," was Stephen's respectful reply.

"Then go not into that man's house, sir."

"But, sir, I have promised."

"No matter for that; you must invent some excuse for breaking that promise."

Stephen's face fell, and for some moments he remained silent.

"You seem to forget, sir, that I am no longer a schoolboy," he said, presently.

"I am ever, as you know, willing to obey you in all things; but on this one particular point I must beg to use my own will and pleasure. A man who has counted eight-and-twenty years of life cannot submit to be trampled always by his father, however wise that father may happen to be, and—"

"What on earth is the use of all these words?" burst forth Pembroke, white with rage. "If you are determined to act contrary to my wishes, do so, and take the consequences of your folly and disobedience. Not a syllable more," stopping Stephen, who was about to speak; "I won't listen to you."

The young man immediately left the apartment, and sought the presence of his mother, to whom he related the whole of the above recorded conversation.

"I am at a loss, Stephen, how to counsel you," she answered. "I would be loath to see you do anything that would annoy your father; but you are of an age to judge for yourself of what is right and of what is wrong. Let your own discretion, then, lead you."

"I see no harm whatever in going to dine with the Chesters,"

"Neither do I, my boy."

"Then, mother, I shall certainly conclude upon going."

The Chesters dined at about seven o'clock, so, likewise, did their next door neighbor. With the assistance of a couple of sticks, Pembroke could just manage to crawl into the dining room, which he had no sooner reached than he looked round for his son.

"Where is Stephen?" he growled forth, fixing his keen eyes on his wife's face.

"My son is next door, I think," she said, hesitatingly.

"Next door? Not at the Chesters', surely?"

Mary looked downward.

"Has he gone to dine with those people?"

"I believe so."

"Contrary to my wishes. Very well—very well, indeed," flashed the merchant. "He is a most disobedient son; but then he shall repent it—he shall surely repent it."

Mary made no answer, but took her accustomed seat at the dinner table, her husband sitting opposite her, looking as dark and threatening as a thunder-cloud.

Meanwhile, Stephen was seated at Mr. Chester's hospitable board with Caroline, his host's lovely daughter, near him.

Although Mr. Chester's behavior was full of courtesy toward his guest, a close observer might have seen that he was not altogether at his ease. His eyes were restless, and when he spoke, his voice sounded quite thick and tremulous as if his owner was under the influence of some strong emotion.

If Stephen were charmed by a distant view of Caroline Chester's face, what was he now that he was able to closely inspect all its many beauties? He was fairly fascinated by, and already heaved over ears in love with her; and in her sweet society he lost all recollection of his angry father at home.

Mr. Chester did not appear to keep any listening ear to the conversation of his guest and his daughter; on the contrary, he held himself aloof from them as much as possible, and was apparently considerably gratified by the fact of their being so interested in each other. The father evinced no anxiety to show off his daughter's accomplishments, nor did he herself attempt to make any display of her acquirements. At length Stephen glanced toward a piano, and asked for some music, and, without a moment's hesitation, Caroline went and seated herself at the instrument.

"Do you wish for instrumental or vocal music, Mr. Porchester?" she inquired, in a most unaffected manner.

"Oh, if you sing, let me hear your voice above every instrument in the world," he replied, taking his place near her.

"What shall I sing?"

"Whatever you please. Where shall I find your music?" he asked, looking about for some.

"Oh, you will look in vain: it has not been unpacked since we left the ship," she answered, carelessly. But no sooner had she uttered these words than she, and her father likewise, looked confused; but, strange to relate, Stephen did not remark their evident embarrassment.

"I have an excellent memory," Caroline presently continued. "I can remember a score of songs without the least reminder."

And with that she ran her fingers rapidly up and down the keys for a few seconds; then, all at once, those fingers passed, struck a chord, and afterward glided along, producing a tender, melodiously strain, to which she added her soft, melodious voice.

Stephen stood entranced, his ears drinking in the sweet sounds, breathing love's settled passions in his heart.

Caroline's singing was not of the ordinary kind. I do not pretend to say her voice was anything very grand, for it had neither volume nor flexibility; still, she had the power of entrancing every ear that hearkened to her.

In such delightful society you will not be surprised to learn that to Stephen the evening flew by with amazing swiftness. He was loath to withdraw from the hour of his departure drew near. He had been entertained so unostentatiously, yet withal so pleasantly, that he felt he could forever remain where he was.

He shook his host's hand, and parting, with comely remarks, and oh, how he lingered in bidding sweet Caroline adieu!

He hoped they might become fast friends with one another, he said—ever friends for life; and Mr. Chester and his daughter earnestly echoed all his wishes and at the same time begged him to come to them often—as often as he wished.

The more frequently we may see you, Mr. Stephen, the more we shall be pleased to remember, Mr. Chester added, as the young man lingered on the threshold of the drawing room.

"You are very kind—very kind, indeed," Stephen answered, in inexpressible delight. "I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you. I shall really feel happy to join your little home circle now and then."

Stephen then took his leave, and left the house.

On the young man's arrival at home, the door of the dining room opened and the white face of his father showed itself.

Stephen started on seeing it.

"I want you in here for a few moments," Pembroke said, in harsh accents.

"Yes, sir—very good, sir," stammered the other in reply.

The father and son were now face to face together.

"You have been next door, I understand," the former commenced.

"I have, father," Stephen replied.

"Against my wish."

The young man was silent.

"Sit down," Mr. Porchester added, authoritatively.

Stephen silently and mechanically obeyed the order.

"I believe that I stated—distinctly stated—my averseness to your becoming intimate with the people who live next door?"

The listener bowed, assentingly.

"Yet notwithstanding that, you have actually been dining with them?"

"I confess to the fact, which I hold as a blameless act on my part."

"Now, hearken to me; and heed well my words, for I shall utter no empty ones. I will, for once, overlook your lack of duty toward me; but neglect to observe my commands a second time and I will send you forth from my door a beggar. I have the power to do so, as you know, and I shall not neglect to use that power."

Stephen rose from his chair, and made as if to leave the room, but his father's voice checked him.

"I have not yet finished," Pembroke remarked.

"I beg your pardon, sir," rejoined the son, very respectfully.

"It's my impression—and I'm not very often wrong in my impressions—that those Chester people are a pair of mere adventurers. The fellow has heard that you are the only son of a prosperous city merchant, and he thinks to catch you for his daughter. You will assuredly be snared if you do not strictly follow my counsel. Remember that I have warned you; and so, good-night."

And so saying the speaker seized his pair of sticks, and dragged himself out of the apartment. As the door closed upon him, Stephen threw himself desparingly into a seat, and bowed his head upon his breast, in an attitude of great dejection. While he was sitting thus, an entrance unlooked for, and his mother appeared.

"My son!" she said, as she advanced toward him.

He raised his head at the sound of her welcome voice.

"I have overheard all that has just passed between your father and yourself," she added, taking a seat by Stephen's side; "and I am sorry to find him so full of prejudice against persons whom I honestly believe to be as thoroughly respectable as ourselves."

"Thank you, mother, thank you," Stephen responded, holding his companion's hand, and tenderly pressing it between his own. "I will not conceal from you that I like the Chesters, father and daughter both; and that I am pleased to hear you express yourself thus kindly about them. I cannot understand my father's ill feeling against our neighbors—can you?"

"I think, Stephen," she said, after a few moments' reflection, "I think, dear, were I in your place I would not act in opposition to your father's will. By giving way to him you will prevent much unpleasantness in our home. Your father, you see, is a man of great energy, conceived a strong passion for Caroline Chester, and he is inclined to brave all the effects of his father's anger rather than remain entirely out of her sight. This much, in a few words as possible, Stephen made his mother comprehend. She burst into tears while she listened to him. When he had concluded, she fell upon his neck, crying,

"Oh, my boy, my boy, I am truly grieved to hear your confession! For a time, at least—for the sake of our heart's peace. Be patient: for week or two, Stephen, and in the meantime I will do all my best endeavors in your service. Perhaps your father may soften at once when he perceives that you are acting in conformity with his wishes."

"I am a boy no longer, mother, and I feel hurt beyond expression to find my

father wishing to exercise such control over my actions. He need not fear for me. I shall never do anything that will disgrace the name I bear."

"I am sure of that, my son," was her answer; "but—"

"What, dear mother, say no more to me. I must be left to follow the advice of my own heart."

Mary heaved a deep sigh; and, after a few more words, which it is unnecessary to register here, the mother and son separated.

On the following morning, Stephen departed for the city before his father had risen.

All that day Stephen felt harassed. He had slept badly during the past night, and news had just arrived that his ship, the Pearl, was lost. A boat, containing one of the crew of the hapless vessel, had been picked up at sea, and the fate of the Pearl had been ascertained beyond all doubt.

The knowledge of this heavy loss, and also the knowledge that another blow to the house of Porchester & Son was pending, together with his heart-aching letter, Stephen felt completely wretched. He read his business letters, directed his clerks in their various duties, and listened to this person and that, with his thoughts all the while far away, dwelling upon the fair being whose image was constantly before him.

He thought how happy he might have been had his father but been kind; for he could not help thinking that the eyes of Caroline and her father would look favorably upon his suit.

He did not admit that he had fallen suddenly in love with Caroline; he would not do so. Had he not admired her from the very first hour he beheld her—and had he not been thinking of her hourly since? Thinking of her, and of how his future life might be brightened up by her presence, could he but call her his forever—that bright eye, one, with her sunny smile, and her voice so sweetly attuned!

Oh, how long and wearisome that day appeared to Stephen Porchester! Everything seemed to fret him, and to nothing could he give his attention as he ought. He issued wrong orders to those around him oftener than once, and he gave cross answers to more than one who addressed the matter to him.

When the merchant's son was thankful when the hours of business were finally over, and he could emerge once more into the outer air, and be alone with his own thoughts, which grew more and more disturbed the nearer he approached the home of his love.

He discharged his hansom cab at the corner of the square, and then on foot proceeded slowly onward.

He could see the doors and windows of the Chesters' house now. The windows were bright with light, and he fancied he could see the figure of his beloved fluttering to and fro behind the blinds.

"Oh, that he were with her there!" he exclaimed within himself.

By and by he gained his own door step. Then there arose in his heart a hard battle between his duty to his father and his love for Caroline; and he now paused on the step, uncertain how to act,—whether to follow the dictates of prudence, or those of his new born affection; whether to enter his own home or that of his neighbor. While he was thus deliberating, a hand was placed on his shoulder, and he looked around, and beheld the smiling face of Mr. Chester.

"Ah, Mr. Stephen, I'm glad to see you!" the latter cried, extending his hand, and grasping that of the young man. "I was just thinking of you; wondering whether you would pop in upon us this evening."

"Well, my dear mother, I proposed. You are only just from business, I presume? I knocked at your door this morning, and made my inquiries after your father's health. How thankful I am to find that he feels no very serious effects from his late accident! He had a most happy escape."

"He has indeed! I returned Stephen, in such a flutter as scarcely to be the master of his own voice."

"Generally speaking, your father enjoys perfect health, I believe?"

"Perfect."

"And your mother?"

"And of my dear mother, I cannot, I regret to say, pronounce so much. She has a nature exceedingly sensitive and anxious, and she ever thinks of others before herself. There are very few women in the world like my dear mother."

Stephen said, in a voice unsteady with emotion.

"I am glad to hear you express yourself thus," Mr. Chester rejoined, presently. "Few young men, nowadays, trouble themselves to speak in praise of their parents. Will you come in and say 'how do you do' to my daughter? he added, abruptly changing his speech and manner."

Stephen hesitated. He would have accepted the invitation there and then, but at that instant his mother's shadow appeared on one of the window blinds before him, and the memory of her wise and womanly counsels happily came to him.

"Thanks, Mr. Chester, but I think I cannot come in to you this evening," he faltered out, most unwillingly. "Present my compliments to Miss Chester, and—"

And here he broke down entirely, feeling that he could not find a word more to say.

"Well, then, on some future evening, not a far distant one, I hope we may expect your company," Mr. Chester said, shaking the young man's hand.

And with those words the two men separated, each entering his own dwelling.

When Stephen made his appearance in the drawing room, he found a stranger there—a sugar planter from the West Indies, whom Pembroke addressed as Mr. Zottlerland.

A yellow visaged man, with hollow cheeks and eyes, thin lips, and large teeth, was this Mr. Zottlerland. A most unpleasant looking person, very tall and ill made with immense feet and hands, and awkward manners, and a voice that resembled the croaking of a frog.

Mr. Zottlerland had had a good many business transactions with Mr. Porchester, and the gentlemen had been made well acquainted with each other years ago, by the means of pens, ink and paper, but they had never met until to-day.

The West Indian had called at the merchant's office in the city, a full half hour before Stephen had reached it that morning, and failing to find Mr. Porchester there, and knowing that he was confined to his home from the effects of an accident, he had obtained his address, and sought him out, anxious to see him on some important matter which would not admit of any delay.

Zottlerland had much to talk about to the merchant, and in the meantime he and certain speculations to set before his host, which occupied the whole day, till the door opened and Stephen appeared.

"Your son!" exclaimed the sugar planter. "Well, 'pon my word and honor, I shouldn't have thought it, Mr.

Porchester. I couldn't have imagined that you had a full grown fellow like this to call you father!"

Full grown fellow! Stephen knitted his brows together and drew his lips inward with a feeling of deep disgust for the speaker.

Then he walked to the other end of the room, where his mother was sitting alone, and entered into conversation with her.

"What on earth is this vulgarian doing here?" he asked, under his breath.

"I cannot say. All I know is that he is enormously rich, and has business to transact with your father," returned Mrs. Porchester.

Stephen laughed satirically. Whereupon, Zottlerland turned sharply round.

"What's the joke, young fellow?" he asked, familiarly. "Come, let us have it. It's one worth having. I like a laugh above all things. Now for it."

Stephen answered him not.

Zottlerland's sight was far from being keen, otherwise he would have seen the contemptuous looks with which the young man looked at him.

"What, it's a secret, is it? Oh, well; with all my heart, say 'I.' And Zottlerland showed his big teeth in a most alarming manner, and gave vent to a loud, hoarse chuckle.

Stephen still continued silent.

Better now announced, and presently the West Indian was engaged in discussing the merits of a dish of excellent soup, into which he had put nearly a whole teaspoonful of cayenne pepper.

The man was ignorant and rude before endurance; yet, strange to say, Pembroke Porchester bore with him his coarse expressions.

Seated near his host, Zottlerland, over his dessert, became suddenly confidential.

"I say, Porchester," he said, speaking in a whisper, and significantly nodding his head in the direction of Stephen—"I say, that," he denoted nice chap, that son of yours, but rather uppish. Nevertheless, I like him, and I shouldn't mind making him my son-in-law. Now, then, what do you think of that, Porchester?"

"I feel greatly flattered—greatly flattered, indeed," the merchant answered, at a loss what to say.

"Oh, you do, do you? Well, I'm glad to hear you say so."

"I was not aware that you had a family, Mr. Zottlerland."

"Well, I don't pretend to have one," was the chuckling answer. "I can't see how you can call one daughter a family."

The master of the house raised his wine glass to his lips, and stifled his laughter as best he could. He did not forget his guest's immense wealth, and the tottering condition of his own, and he was not far from this Zottlerland might become useful to him. It was politic and wise of him then to play the agreeable to the planter, and see no faults in either his speech or his behavior.

Zottlerland had a daughter, for whom he was desirous of securing a husband, and Porchester remembered that he himself had a son unmarried. Who could tell what might happen? Stephen might be able to rebuild the almost shattered fortunes of their house by wedding this rich West Indian's daughter.

These thoughts passed rapidly through the merchant's calculating brain. As he did so, the anxious look he had worn so long, gradually vanished, and a more hopeful expression took its place.

"You'd maybe like to see her?" rejoined the guest, as he heaped upon his plate a fresh supply of almonds and raisins.

"Meaning Miss Zottlerland?"

The planter nodded in reply.

"I'll bring her here some day," he hastened to say. "When shall it be?"

"I'm sure we shall be delighted to see her at any time," the merchant answered.

Then, addressing his wife, he added aloud, "My dear Mr. Zottlerland's daughter will do us the honor of dining here next week. On what day will you be pleased to fix for the event?"

"We will name the earliest," Mary rejoined, politely.

"To-morrow, if perfectly convenient to yourself and Miss Zottlerland," Mrs. Porchester answered, in the same accents as before.

"Oh, as to it being convenient to Bella, I never studied that sort of thing with her," grinned the West Indian. "If I say to her, you must do this, or you must do that, I expect that she will obey me. And, generally speaking, I am not disappointed by her."

"You are blessed in having an obedient child," answered Mr. Porchester, glancing across the table at his son; "all fathers are not so lucky as you."

Again the planter showed his large, gleaming teeth and chuckled.

"We will say to-morrow, then, Mr. Zottlerland," Mary added.

The planter's mouth was full at that moment, so he nodded his head by way of assent.

"Oh, mother, what a fearful infliction we have to look forward to!" Stephen murmured in her ear.

"I cannot be helped, my boy; we must be civil to this man, I suppose."

"He's a vulgar, hateful brute, whom I should like to smother!" cried Stephen, under his breath. "I never met his like. I wonder how my father can tolerate his presence here. As a matter to be anticipated, his daughter will resemble him in manners."

"Probably not; we shall see," Mrs. Porchester responded.

Stephen elevated his shoulder, and uttered a short, disdainful laugh.

"Ah, indeed; I expect we shall see," he retorted, meaningly. "I wish I could fall asleep, and not awake again for a whole week to come!"

CHAPTER III.

THE PLANTER AND HIS DAUGHTER.

To-morrow came, and with it the planter and his daughter—a colored woman!

Thick lipped, flat nosed, woolly haired, with a skin of a mahogany hue, stood Bella Zottlerland before the astonished eyes of the Porchesters. She was about nineteen years of age, diminutive in stature, and exceedingly thin, with large, black eyes, and white, gleaming teeth.

She was beautiful, and as black as jet. Bella will have a round sum when she marries, and a rounder sum when I shall come to be. Your son and my girl would be a good match, Porchester; think it over, will you? A quarter of a million down on the wedding day—not a farthing less."

A number of a million! exclaimed the other, his face reddening with surprise.

"Perhaps more; but I only promise the quarter, mind!"

"Yes, yes, I understand perfectly," the merchant replied. "Confound it, if she were only white!" he groaned within himself.

Unaware of the planter's matchmaking intentions, Stephen took the trouble to behave quite civilly to the little mulatto, thereby amusing his father, and delighting the wealthy planter, who was weak enough to regard the tawny Bella as a most attractive and fascinating personage.

He had been so long accustomed to the dark race that he had learned to look upon a black skin as a very brilliant matter; in fact, in Zottlerland's eyes, an ebony hued complexion was just as handsome as one of pure red and white.

"It was all prejudice to object to a bit of color different from your own," he was wont to say to people.

But, as we have already shown, the planter was a most ignorant man, in whom no sort of refinement could be expected to be found. He was extravagantly fond of his daughter, in his own peculiar way, and was ready to lavish upon her a large share of his enormous wealth, in order to purchase for her the happiness of her state. He gave her money without ever counting it, and he allowed her to dress herself according to her own taste, and as expensively as she pleased. He felt satisfied when he beheld her decked in all the colors of the rainbow, and in materials the dearest that could be bought; for he had a little judgment of what it was proper for her to wear as she herself.

On this occasion Bella wore a robe of white silk, with a train, at least, reaching two yards behind her, and a peplum of bright amber, trimmed with cherry-colored satin. Around her neck and her arms, and pendant from her ears, she carried diamonds and pearls of precious price; while on every brown finger she wore a variety of glittering gems, the very rarest that possibly could be found.

Miss Zottlerland spoke English with about as much propriety and elegance as her paternal parent; and she used her hands and fork, at dinner time, with such awkwardness that Stephen, who was narrowly watching her, almost began to suspect that she had never used such articles before.

"What do you think of her, Porchester?" the planter asked, in low voice, during the dessert. "She's fit for the son of the son of any man, eh?"