

Greek with whom I chiefly pass my evenings when not engaged in these councils. He is one of the forgotten celebrities of a far different world, and in his youth took a gallant part in the Greek War of Independence. Cast down by the ungenerous forgetfulness of his countrymen and too proud to reproach them, he talks to me of the old times of Capo D'Istria and General Church. He remembers Lord Byron and Mr. Stanhope, as if he had parted from them yesterday. When once fairly warmed by these memories—and I love to set him on his noble old hobby-horse—he smokes away at his chibouque with such enthusiasm, and I at mine so thoughtfully, that we often seem to fall into a sort of cloudy trance. At the end of an hour or two the old gentleman appears to fade away. Then, clearly from out the mist, are marshalled names which will be remembered long, the patriot bands of modern Greece; and Byron is again dying, amid the poisonous swamps of Missolonghi. Thus do I seem to know, as if I had dwelt among them, the men who thought and fought, and wrought—for what?

We have our wise men and our reprobates. There is Kyrios Bamba, who is supposed to possess many extraordinary attainments, and a wisdom altogether remarkable; who says nothing with such dignity as will cause the most indifferent beholder to be impressed with respect and awe. If, after the example of most sages in small places, he keeps his wisdom very much to himself, we are not at all disposed to disparage it on that account. Like the rest of mankind we are always ready to admire what we do not know; for, with the best will in the world, it is perhaps impossible to admire what we do know.

On the other hand, among the chief of the good-for-nothings on whom our little society is disposed to look severely, is the carpenter, who has been, twice during the past year observed publicly in such a state of emotion, from the effects of liquor, as even to be unsteady on his legs while walking along the street. It is true that he has exhibited many signs of contrition, and that he several times took refuge in flight rather than meet the scrutinising glance of Miss Peabody, a lady with a swift and arrowy sharpness of tongue, lately on a visit from Smyrna to a relative who has married and settled in our little colony. I remember, however—for it was not more than nine days ago, and at about the hour when I am now writing these lines—that is, in the dusk of the evening—that, the carpenter being ill, I discerned Miss Peabody coming stealthily up the street with something hidden under her cloak. She stopped at the carpenter's door and knocked softly; but before it was half opened she took the something from under her cloak and thrust it through the aperture, after which she disappeared with great precipitation lest she should be observed. At first

I was disposed to apprehend that she had translated one of Dr. Thwackcushion's (Dr. T. is our Chaplain at Smyrna) sermons into Greek for his edification, and had chosen the present occasion as a favourable opportunity of effecting the carpenter's reform by those means; but going out in the evening to fulfil my duties towards society (which is our phrase for taking tea in these parts) I learned indirectly that Miss Peabody had been informed of the carpenter's illness, and had carried him a dish of arrowroot of her own making. I afterwards learned also that the carpenter, not knowing what to do with it, and yet having a great belief in Miss Peabody, had supposed that the arrowroot was intended to fix together the parts of a little work-box which he was making for her, and had applied it to this purpose; but finding the composition did not hold as he expected, was much confounded.

I do not know that there is anything else about us by which we differ from the great family of mankind. I have seen something of the world, and I have found men nearly alike in all places and conditions. The scene and dresses may be different, in a court and in a village, but the actors are very much the same.

ONE OF OUR LEGAL FICTIONS.

THE prayers were made, the benediction given, the bells rang out their lusty epithalamium, and by the law of the Church and the law of the land, Charlotte and Robert Desborough were henceforth one—one in interests, one in life. No chill rights or selfish individuality to sow disunion between them; no unnatural laws to weaken her devotion by offering a traitorous asylum against him; but, united by bonds none could break—their two lives welded together, one and indivisible for ever—they set their names to that form of marriage, which so many have signed in hope, to read over for a long lifetime of bitterness and despair. Yet what can be more beautiful than the ideal of an English marriage! This strict union of interests—although it does mean the absorption of the woman's whole life in that of the man's—although it does mean the entire annihilation of all her rights, individuality, legal existence, and his sole recognition by the law—yet how beautiful it is in the ideal! She, as the weaker, lying safe in the shadow of his strength, upheld by his hand, cherished by his love, losing herself in the larger being of her husband; while he, in the vanguard of life, protects her from all evil, and shields her against danger, and takes on himself alone the strife and the weary toil, the danger, and the struggle. What a delightful picture of unselfishness and chivalry, of devotedness, and manly protection; and what sacrilege to erase so much poetry from the dry code of our laws!

Like all newly-married women, this woman would have looked with horror on any proposition for the revision of the legal poem. Liberty would have been desolation to her, and the protection of the laws she would have repudiated as implying a doubt of her husband's faith. She had been taught to believe in men, and to honour them; and she did not wish to unlearn her lesson. The profound conviction of their superiority formed one of the cardinal points of her social creed; and young hearts are not eager to escape from their anchorage of trust. She was a willing slave because she was a faithful worshipper; and it seemed to her but fit, and right, and natural, that the lower should be subservient to the will of the higher. For the first few weeks all went according to the brightness of her belief. The newly-bound epic was written in letters of gold, and blazoned in the brightest colours of youth, and hope, and love; and she believed that the unread leaves would continue the story of those already turned over, and that the glories of the future would be like to the glories of the past. She believed as others, ardent and loving, have believed; and she awoke, like them, when the bitter fruit of knowledge was between her lips, and the dead leaves of her young hopes strewed the ground at her feet.

The gold of the blazoned book was soon tarnished. Its turned leaves told of love, certainly; but of a love whose passion, when it was burnt out, left no friendship or mental sympathy to keep alive the pale ashes. On the contrary, quarrels soon took the place of fading caresses, and bitter words echoed the lost sounds of fond phrases; no real heart-union wove fresh ties in place of the fragile bands which burnt like flax in their own fire; but, with the honeymoon died out the affection which ought to have lived through the hard probation of time, and suffering, and distress. It had been a love-match, but it was an ill-assorted match as well; and want of sympathy soon deepened into bitterness, and thence fell backward into hatred and disgust. The husband was a man of violent temper, and held supreme views on marital privileges. His wife, young, impassioned, beautiful, and clever, was none the less his chattel; and he treated her as such. By bitter personal experience, he taught her that the law which gave him all but uncontrolled power over her as his property, was not always the duty of the strong to protect the weak, but might sometimes—even in the hands of English gentlemen—be translated into the right of the tyrant to oppress the helpless. From high words the transition to rough deeds was easy and natural. Matters grew gradually worse; quarrels became more bitter and more frequent, and personal violences increased. More than once she was in mortal fear,

with marks of fingers on her throat, and cuts and bruises on her head; more than once relations interposed to save her from further violence. In these quarrels perhaps she was not wholly blameless. The rash passion of a high-spirited girl was not the temper best suited to such a husband's wife. Less imaginative and less feeling, she might have better borne the peculiar mode of showing displeasure to which he resorted; and had she been of a lower organisation, she might have gained more power over a man who did not appreciate her intellect, or the beauty of her rich nature. As it was—he, too violent to control his temper on the one side; she, too rash and eager to conceal her pain and disgust on the other—their unhappiness became public, and by its very publicity seemed to gain in strength. Friends interfered, many thronging about her; some, to advise patience; some, resolution; some, to appeal to her wifely love, and others to her woman's dignity; and she, halting between the two, now consented to endure, and now resolved to resist. So, things went on in a sad unhinged manner; outbreaks continually occurring, followed by promises of reformation and renewed acts of forgiveness; but no solid peace established, and no real wish to amend. Once she left the house, after a long and angry scene, during which he struck her, and that with no gentle hand either; and she would not return until heart-broken petitions and solemn engagements touched her woman's pity, and changed her anger into sorrow. She thought, too, of her own misdeeds; magnified the petty tempers and girlish impertinences which had been punished so severely; took herself to task, while the tears streamed from her dark eyes and steeped the black hair hanging on her neck, until at last imagination and repentance weighed down the balance of evil on her own side. And then he was her husband!—the father of her children, and once her lover so beloved! We all have faults, and we all need pardon, she thought; and so she forgave him, as she had done before, and returned submissively to his house. This was what the Ecclesiastical law calls condonation. And by this act of love and mercy she deprived herself of even the small amount of protection afforded by the law to English wives of the nineteenth century.

They had now three children who made up the sole summer time of her heart. Only those who know what sunshine the love of young and innocent children creates in the misty darkness of an unhappy life, can appreciate her love for hers—three bright, noble, boys. How she loved them! How passionately and how tenderly! Their lisping voices charmed away her griefs, and their young bright eyes and eager love made her forget that she had ever cause for regret or fear. For their sakes she endeavoured to be patient. Her love for

them was too strong to be sacrificed even to her outraged womanhood; and that she might remain near them, and caress them, and educate them, she bore her trials now coming fast and thick upon her, with forbearance, if not with silence.

But, matters came at last to a climax; though sooner and on different grounds than might have been expected. She and her husband parted on a trivial question of itself, but with grave results: a mere dispute as to whether the children should accompany their mother on a visit to one of her brothers, who was avowedly (very extraordinary that he should be so, after the married life she had led!) unfriendly to her husband. It was at last decided that they should not go, and after a bitter struggle. Far more was involved in this question than appears on the surface; her right to the management of her sons, even in the most trifling matters, was the real point of contention; the mother was obliged to yield, and she went alone; the children remaining at home with the father. The day after she left, she received a message from one of the servants to tell her that something was wrong at home; for, the children had been taken away, with all their clothes and toys, no one knew where. In a storm of terror and agony she gave herself up to the trace, and at last found out their hiding-place. But without any good result. The woman who had received them, under the sanction of the father, refused to deliver them up to her, and met her prayers and remonstrances with insults and sarcasms. She was obliged to return, widowed and childless, to her sister's home in the country; like a wounded panther tearing at the lance in his side, a fearful mixture of love and beauty, and rage and despair. It was well that she did return to her sister's house instead of her own home, for, her husband, enraged at her persistence in visiting her brother against his consent, ordered the servants to refuse her admittance should she present herself, and "to open the house door only with the chain across."

After balancing between reconciliation and prosecution, a divorce suit was decided on by her husband; expressly undertaken "because his wife would not return to him." By this suit, he attempted to prove that an old friend and patron, to whom he owed his present position and his former fortune, was the seducer of his wife. But, the case broke down; and the jury, without leaving their box, gave a verdict in favour of the defendant: a gentleman of known honour and established reputation. The crowded court rang with cheers, such as it had rarely echoed to before, as the verdict was pronounced; friends in every degree of life, old friends and friends hitherto strangers, supported her with their warmest sympathy; and if the readiness of the world in general to be kindly honest, and to set right a proved

wrong, could have acted directly upon the law, or could have essentially served her without its aid, she would have had ample redress. But it is the peculiar hardship of such a case that no aid but the aid of the law itself, remote and aloof, can give redress. The feelings may be soothed, but the wrongs remain.

And now began the most painful part of the sad epic, whose initiatory hymns had glided into a dirge: a dirge for ruined hopes and wasted youth, for a heart made desolate, and a home destroyed; a dirge for the shattered household gods and the fleetings of the fond visions of her heart.

The suit was ended, and the law had pronounced the accused wife innocent. But the law also pronounced the innocent mother without a claim to her own children. They were the father's property; absolutely and entirely. He placed them with his sister, a lady who shared his propensity for corporeal punishment; and who flogged the eldest child, a sensitive and delicate boy of six years old, for receiving and reading a letter from his mother. "To impress on his memory," she said, "that he was not to receive letters from her!" The yet younger was stripped naked and chastised with a riding-whip. Yet the law held back these children from their mother's love, and gave them to the charge of those who thought their education fitly carried on by such means. Time passed, and still the quarrel and the separation continued. By a small alteration in this same law of ours—this idol made by our hands, then deified and worshipped—she was at length permitted to see her boys. But only at stated times, and at certain hours, and in the coldest manner. It was her husband's privilege to deny her all maternal intercourse with her sons, and he stretched his privilege to the utmost. No touch of pity dissolved the iron bars of the law, and no breath of mercy warmed the breast of the husband and master. Against the decree of the law, what was the protesting cry of nature? A hollow whistling among the reeds of a sandy waste, which no man heeded—which no voice answered.

Years trailed wearily on. Long years of taming down her proud heart, laden almost beyond its strength; long years of battle with the wild sorrow of her childless life; long years when the mother's soul stood in the dark valley of death where no light and no hope were. But the criminal law swept on the beaten track, and no one stopped to ask over whose heart this great car of our Juggernaut passed. The mother—she to whom God has delegated the care of her young—she on whom lie shame and dishonour if she neglect this duty for any self-advantage whatsoever; she,—a man's wife, and a man's lawful chattel,—had no right to those who had

lain beneath her heart, and drunk of her life. The law in this respect is now changed; mainly, because this sufferer laboured hard to show its cruelty. The misery inflicted upon her maternal love will be endured by no other English mother.

Pecuniary matters came in next, as further entanglement of this miserable web. By the marriage settlements a certain sum of money had been secured to the children; the principal of which, neither the husband nor his creditors could touch. It belonged to the children and the mother, emphatically and exclusively. After many years of separation, the husband applied to his wife for her consent to his raising a loan on this trust-fund for the improvement of his estate. She promised that consent, if he, on his part, would execute a deed of separation, and make her a certain allowance for life. Hitherto she had mainly supported herself by authorship. After the demur of reducing the allowance she proposed, the agreement was entered into; and she then gave her consent that a loan should be raised on the trust-fund for her husband's sole advantage. She received in exchange a deed drawn up and signed by a lawyer and her husband, securing her the stipulated five hundred pounds a year for life. Three years after, her mother died, and the husband inherited the life-interest of his wife's portion from the father. At the same time a legacy of almost five hundred a year, carefully secured from her husband by every legal hindrance possible, fell to her also from her mother. When her husband knew of this legacy, he wrote to her, telling her that he would not now continue his former allowance, which had been secured, as she believed, by solemn legal agreement. She objected to this novel manner of benefiting by a legacy; and refused to entertain the proposition of a reduction. Her husband quietly told her that she must either consent to his terms, or receive nothing; when she urged the agreement, he answered her with the legal poetic fiction "that, by law, man and wife were one, and therefore could not contract with each other." The deed for which she had exchanged her power over the trust-fund was a mere worthless piece of paper.

This shameful breach of contract was followed by another law suit, where judgment was given in open court, to the effect not only that the agreement in her behalf, signed by her husband and a legal witness, was valueless according to that stanza of the marriage idyl which proclaims that man and wife are one—not only that she had no claim on the allowance of five hundred a year—but that her husband could also seize every farthing of her earnings, and demand as his own the copyrights of her works and the sums paid for them. No deed of separation had been executed

between them, and no divorce could be sued for by *her*. For, she had once condoned or pardoned her husband, and had so shut herself out from the protection of the laws.

And all this is in the laws; the laws which throw a woman helplessly on the mercy of her husband, make no ways of escape and build no cities of refuge for her, and deliberately justify her being cheated and entrapped. All these are doings protected and allowed by our laws—and men stand by and say, "It is useless to complain. The laws must be obeyed. It is dangerous to meddle with the laws!"

This is a true story; those who run may read it—have read it more than once, perhaps, before now. As an exemplification of some of the gravest wrongs of women, and as a proof how much they sometimes need protection even against those whose sworn office it is to cherish and support them, it is very noteworthy, indeed, in this country of Great Britain. Surely there is work waiting to be done in the marital code of England! Surely there are wrongs to be redressed and reforms to be made that have gone too long unmade! Surely we have here a righteous quarrel with the laws—more righteous than many that have excited louder cries.

Justice to women. No fanciful rights, no unreal advantages, no preposterous escape from womanly duty, for the restless, loud, and vain; no mingling of women with the broils of political life, nor opening to them of careers which nature herself has pronounced them incapable of following; no high-flown assertion of equality in kind; but simple justice. The recognition of their individuality as wives, the recognition of their natural rights as mothers, the permission to them to live by their own honourable industry, untaxed by the legal Right and moral Wrong of any man to claim as his own that for which he has not wrought—reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed. Justice to women. This is what the phrase means; this is where the thing is truly wanted; here is an example of the great Injustice done to them, and of their maltreatment under the eyes of a whole nation, by the Law.

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