

THE ANSONIAN.

FEARLESSLY THE RIGHT DEFEND-IMPARTIALLY THE WRONG CONDEMN.

VOLUME I.

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Good Night.

Good night! I have to say good night
To such a host of peerless things!
Good night unto that fragile hand
All gently with its weight of rings;
Good night to fawn, uplifted eyes,
Good night to chestnut braids of hair,
Good night unto the perfect month,
And all the sweetness nestled there—
The snowy hand detains me, then
I'll have to say Good night again.
But there will come a time, my love,
When, if I read our stars aright,
I shall not linger by this porch
With my adieux. Till then, good night!
You wish the time were now? And I
You do not blush to wish it so?
You would have blushed yourself to death
To own so much a year ago—
What, both these snowy hands! ah, then
I'll have to say Good night again!

MIZPAH.

Evening in the Island of Jersey, and the sun already set. A wash of pure Carmine in the western sky; a film of whitish haze in the grassy bottom of a long valley scooped out between steep wooded hills. Rising out of the haze, a sort of natural embankment like a bridge, dividing the valley in two, and separating Maitre le Gaye's half from Maitre somebody else's. Barely indicated in sepian shadows, a rough, strong path, dug out of the hills, bordered in trees, and leading down to the embankment. This embankment in shadow, too, beneath the fringe on either side of lofty elms, green, leafy, beautiful in summer glory, and tipped with cadmium gold on every topmost twig. Hanging somewhat perilously over one edge of the bank, a fallen trunk; and resting upon it, a woman, young, heavy-eyed, and beautiful; her feet buried in a tuft of Guernsey daisies, gleaming like white stars in the foreground; the tall stem of a fox-glove, heavy with pendant bells of dusky shaded pink, pricking in her loose waving hair; a basket of ferns on her knee; her white, round hands clasped over the fragrant burden, and partly hidden in dainty emerald fronds; her eyes half hidden, too, beneath the cream-white lids, and long curved lashes, which rest on a cheek as rosy and purely soft as an infant's. In the background, a string of mild-eyed cows, patched with brown and white, and driven by a girl in white Brittany cap and short skirt, down among the ferns and blackberry bushes of the hillside path. A bird chirruping in the elm tree. Now and then the bark of a dog from some distant farm. Over both, the voice of the cattle-girl singing in the summer twilight—

“Que vent dire cet amour?”
Di Jeanot a Jeanneton.

So scraps of the refrain float up on the soft summer air, while Mizpah le Feuille sits waiting on the old tree trunk. Below, the brook babbles over the stones, and frogs gurgle among the long grass and water-rushes. A gray wood-beetle comes out on the log, and trots leisurely along, making a great piece of work over every little hillock of crusty yellow lichen, or red-tipped moss. Two dissipated linnets flutter twittering among the branches overhead, instead of going home to roost. Then a small brown lizard puts out his head from a hole in the bank, and begins to leisurely ascend the log. It has a slow, sanctified air, this lizard, as if it were thinking of nothing more sublunary than a prayer meeting; but happening to meet the gadding wood-beetle, it stops short, and devours him in a solemn, self-abnegatory way, much like some human Pharisee.

Mizpah sits still and waits.
By-and-bye, there is a sound of footsteps tramping over the stones down the hill-path. Out of the shadows comes the figure of a man; a man before whom Mizpah rises, letting basket and ferns fall unheeded to her feet; a man who catches her hands in his, and holds her with a passionate force—a smothered, quivering cry, as of one who has waited long for this meeting, and hungered for it mightily.

It is some seconds before he hears what Mizpah is saying, some seconds before any words are intelligible between the girl's heavy, panting breathing, that sounds like sobbing.

“Let me go, let me go,” she says twice; and at last he understands, though more from the hands striving almost desperately to free herself, than from the parted, “perfect lips,” from which all color has fled. Losing her a little, he puts one hand under the little chin, turning it towards him, and says, half-reproachfully—a very loving reproach—

“Let you go! Why, my darling, I have only just got you! Is that your greeting, Mizpah, after three years' waiting for this one moment?” He is going to kiss her as he speaks. His brave blue eyes, and handsome face, bearded and browned under suns more burning than these, are very near her own, and she is only as a little bird in his hold. In the desperation of the moment she thrusts his hand away with all the strength of both hers, and gasps out—

“Gerald! don't—for Heaven's sake don't—I am married.”
Then he lets her go—drops her as though shot to the heart by some unseen bullet;

and all the glad blood dies out of his face, leaving it ghastly in the twilight—even more ghastly than that white daisy face which a moment before was hidden against his heart.

“There is no word spoken for a moment. Only the brook babbles among the rushes, and far away the cattle-girl's song rings above the shadows—

“‘Tou, ma mie, c'est toi que j'aime,’
Di Jeanot a Jeanneton.”

With a sound like a long gasping sob, with the voice so low and broken of a dying man, he asks at last—

“Mizpah, what are you saying?”

“The truth is,” she answers, forcing her voice to steadiness, forcing back the tears, burning in her eyes, the agony striving for utterance in her heart, “I am married—married—do you hear, Gerald?—six months ago. I dared not write it to you; but it is true.”

Her voice sounds harsh, almost cruel. Looking at her, the pain brings a tinge of dull red to his face.

“‘Married!’” he says slowly. “It—it cannot be true. And your promise to me?”

“Broken,” she answers almost fiercely, but her limbs are shaking like an aspen-leaf. “Gerald, I have told you. For Heaven's sake, go away now and forget me. I am not worth remembering—not worth grieving for, or sighing over.”

He does not believe it. Looking into that fair young face, and blue innocent eyes, it would be difficult. Almost piteously he tells her so, begging some excuse, some explanation. She has never bid him meet her here to tell him, after three years' waiting, that she is utterly false and worthless—nothing more!

“What is the good of more?” she asks, her voice dead now with a sort of weary despair. “To have been false is enough. Would excuse make it better? I would not have met you at all if I had been braver—more unselfish. I ought to have written; and I tried, but—I could not.”

“I do not wonder at it,” he breaks in harshly. “You were not cold-blooded enough for that, it seems.”

“I—” she starts, as if she had been seen, she answers, flinching under his tone; “it would have spared you pain; and since I could not receive you in my husband's house, I doubt if I should have met you here.”

“And why?”

“He might be angry.”

“Angry! Who has the better right to be angry, he or I? Mizpah, do you love this man, or are you afraid of him? By Heaven, I believe you are, and that you were forced into this treachery!”

He would have caught her hands, but she draws back, whiter than ever.

“No one forced me, and I am not afraid of him. He is most kind and loveable—Oh, Gerald!” (as he interrupts by an oath wrung from him in sheer desperation) “for Heaven's sake—for pity's sake, go! What talking can undo the wrong that has been done to you? I only ask you to forget me, nothing more; not even forgiveness, unless—unless, when you are happy with some one more worthy of you, you may care—”

“Never!” he breaks in, crushing her faltering voice with the blaze of scorn in his honest eyes; “not if I were dying would I forgive you—you who have deceived me so long, and brought me back across the wide Atlantic to find you married to another—false to me. Forgive you? No, but I forgive your husband.”

The crimson has faded out of the sky. The gold is dead upon the tree-tops. Long gray shadows float up from the valley. A faint, whitish mist is building an impassable wall between the two, once so near, now so wide apart. Even the birds are gone to roost, and the gay refrain of “Jeanot and Jeanneton” has ceased to echo among the hills.

Then Gerald Dacres goes too. Without another word, without a last glance at the girl who has wronged him, he turns from her, and strides away among the trees. Only one, little star peeping through the dusky blue above sees Mizpah's agony of weeping as, with face hidden in her hands, she returns to her husband's household—alone.

Night in a sick room: a room where the red firelight leaps up in weird flashing forms against the pictured wall; where the heavy damask curtains are drawn closely across the windows, as if to shut out all sound even of the rain beating wildly against the panes without.

“Mizpah, are you there?”
“Yes, dear.”
“It is very near the end now.”
“Do you feel weaker, John?”
“No, but I feel—dying. Come closer to me, my wife. I want to talk to you.”

She is seated between the bed and the fire, a woman still young, and strangely beautiful, but with the patient gravity of middle age settled like a waxen mask over her pale face. Her movements, too, are softer and quieter than usual at her age, as she rises, and going to the bed, stoops down above the face, wrinkled and worn, deeply lined and fringed with thin gray hairs, which lie there upon the pillow.

“You have been crying,” he says, his keen anxious eyes peering curiously into her face, his nervous, withered hand tightening on hers.

“Yes,” she says simply. “It is so hard to see you suffer.”

“My dear, the bodily suffering is nothing to that which has tortured me for the last six years. Torture! I wonder I have lived so long under it.”

She makes no answer. He often utters these ambiguous allusions; but Mizpah is not an inquisitive woman. Perhaps she has had secrets of her own.

“Mizpah,” he says suddenly, “do you remember why you married me?”

“Why talk of that now, John?” she asks, flushing timidly.

“Because now is the only time I have. You were only nineteen, Mizpah, and you married because your parents' death had thrown you on my care; because the world said ill-natured things of your living with a guardian of forty-eight; because you wanted to keep a delicate little sister with you, and could not afford to do it unmarried; because—chiefest reason of all—the man you were engaged to, the man you loved, and who was away in Canada, had proved false to you; because you saw his marriage in an American paper, after for six months your letters had received no answer. Because of these reasons you married me.”

“And because you were the best and truest friend I had in the whole world,” she broke in, with quivering lips; “because Minnie loved you, and I—liked and honored you with all my heart. John, I told you all this then. Have I disappointed you, that you go back on it now?”

“You have been an angel of light to me,” he answers, hoarsely. “Oh, child! if you only knew what you are to me! If I only guessed how madly, passionately, I old enough to be your father, have loved you from the first moment I saw you till now! Mizpah, try to think of it. Try to bear it in mind when you would turn from my memory with hatred and loathing.”

“John! could that be possible?”

“I wish to Heaven it were possible to avoid it. I had meant to leave it till after I was gone, to keep the kind look on your sweet face till after I was dead; but I cannot—I—”

“John, don't say any more,” she interrupts, trembling very much. “If there is anything wrong which you have done, do not tell me. Even though it have hurt me, let me remain in ignorance. I will forgive it, whatever it be. If it be written in your papers, I will burn them unread. Trust me.”

He smiled faintly—a sad, hopeless smile. “No, child, this you could not forgive; nor shall you promise to do so. Listen to me while I have strength, and answer first. Did you not meet General Dacres the day before you were taken with that long illness, nearly six years ago?”

“Yes, John,” she says, quietly; but how fast her heart is beating!”

“And he told you that he had never married—that he had written to you constantly, and got no answer?”

“He spoke of his letters in the one that reached me—the one that told me he was coming here—but not of his marriage. Since it was not true, the report may not have reached his ears.”

“And you! Did you not speak of it?”

“No, John.”

“No? What explanation, then, did you give of your marriage with me?”

“I gave him none.” Her voice is faint with remembered anguish; but the answers are ever straight and true.

“I don't understand you,” he says. “What did you say to him?”

“I told him I was married, and bade him go away and forget me.”

“What! no more than that? And was he satisfied? Did he ask no explanations—nothing?”

“No, John; he was not satisfied. Do not talk about it—please do not.” The pain even now is greater than she can bear. He presses her hand more tightly.

“I will only ask you one thing more, Mizpah. I know that you will answer it with perfect truth. Why did you do this? Nay” (as she hesitates), “I wish to know.”

“Because I was a married woman, and my husband trusted me. Because—oh, John! forgive me—I loved Gerald so dearly, that I dared not tell him any excuse for my apparent falsehood. I know his perfect honor, I knew my own innocence; and yet I could not—John, I dared not trust to either while we loved each other. Please do not think ill of me. I knew that I loved Gerald more than my own life; and because I loved him, I sent him away.”

She is on her knees now, weeping bitterly, with her face hidden on the wrinkled hand in which hers is clasped. The firelight flickers on the wall—on the bent golden head. Only the shadows of the curtain fall upon the tortured face of the dying man. Very slowly he speaks.

“I thank God that the sin which dooms me has purified one saint more for Heaven. You have made your confession, Mizpah; listen to mine. It was I who kept back your lover's letters; I who stopped yours; I who had that advertisement inserted in the New Brunswick paper; I who invented all the uncharitable gossip which so worked upon your sensitive delicacy. And I did this because I loved you—because I thought that time, and patient idolatry, and every luxury that riches could supply, would win your love away from the remembrance of a young fellow who probably did not love you half so well, and could only have led you into poverty. God only knows how I have been punished; not only now, but in every hour and moment of these seven years which have seen you mine, and not mine. For a few months—not a year—I hoped. Then you and he met; in your fever you told me that; and hope died forever. Every day since then—every moment that has witnessed your patient obedience—your silent, uncomplaining gentleness—your sad little face sobered into age so early—so early—has been but one long punishment.”

“Hush!” she interrupts—she has sprung to her feet long before, shrinking back and away from him, with hands clenched upon her bosom, and face white and horror-stricken. “Hush, for pity's sake! I begged you not to tell me. Oh! why, why did you do it now, when it is all over, all ended past any recall?”

“Mizpah!” he begins, feebly.

“Not now, John, not now,” she cries, breaking into bitter tears. “I will be good in a moment; but don't say any more just this minute. I—I can't think.”

He makes no answer. The shadow is darker on his face; and she has turned to the door, when something, some tender womanly impulse, makes her come back to the side of the bed.

“Don't think me unforgetful,” she says; “I do forgive you—I shall soon, when I have thought of all your love and kindness. I—John, do you hear me? John!”

But there is no answer still. The first light has set in the grave. The rain beats and wails against the window. Outside the wind raves, and the branches creak, like the cries of a tortured spirit; but within all is silent, all still; for earthly love is gone—called out to meet its God—and love unselfish, love presanctified is left alone.

“Mrs. Le Feuille, may I introduce my husband's cousin, Mr. Dacres? He is quite a lion with us; only just returned from two years' travels in distant lands.”

Mizpah looks up. She is sitting slight and graceful in her widow's dress, one of a fashionable crowd in a fashionable London drawing-room. Two little red spots rush into her cheeks, and her eyes leap up with a sudden light, as she puts out her hand, saying:

“Mr. Dacres and I are old friends.”

He does not act like an old friend. He does not even seem to see her hand, but bows with grave formality; and after a word or two of common-place civility, words which the beating of her heart will hardly let her answer, he moves quietly away, and leaves the room.

So they meet again, and so they part. The locket which bears her name—that name with its quaint sacred meaning, “The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another”—still hangs at his watch-chain; but he has not forgiven her yet. He never will.

Has the Lord watched in vain?

Twilight again. The sky a pale apple green fading into blue in the east. One long bar of liquid gold down on the western horizon. Above it a bank of greyish-violet cloud fringed with fire. Far away, behind that dark clump of trees, a jingle of bells ringing for evening service. Indoors a wood fire sparkling merrily, an open window draped in lace curtains, which rustle softly in the sweet flower-laden breeze; and beside the window Mizpah seated in a low chair, the broad tulle streamers of her white cap floating like a veil round her slight, rounded figure; her golden head resting against a stand of azaleas, white and pink, in full bloom; an open letter in her lap, and a flush bright as a moss rose bud in either cheek.

There are steps in the passage, and the flush grows deeper. The bells keep ringing, but Mizpah's heart beats too loudly to hear them. The door opens and she is on her feet, her beautiful eyes shining through dazzled tears, her clasped, quivering hands outstretched, her whole womanly form heaving and panting with silent, passionate gladness. Against the gold-green background of the sunset sky, Gerald sees her standing like some medieval saint. The next moment she is in his arms, folded down upon his heart as though he could never let her go again, and kiss—lips, hands, and brow—as if the arrears of ten long summers of waiting had to be paid in that one moment.

It is not for a long time that any sensible word is spoken. The bells have rung their joy-peals all unheeded, and up above the

purple hills the moon hangs like a lamp of gold on high.

“My darling,” Gerald says, “do you know, I could hardly believe it when I got your letter this morning. I never deserved such an answer, Mizpah—indeed, I scarcely dared to hope for one at all.”

“Love does not go by desert,” Mizpah answers, “and you see I could not help loving you, Gerald. It grew in me. Besides, I felt it would come right some day. But, oh! I am glad it was not delayed much longer.”

“Thank Heaven for my meeting your sister Minnie last week,” says Gerald, stroking the bright head fondly.

“And for your confiding to her your hatred.”

“Hatred! I tried to hate you, love, but I never could.”

“And I tried to forget you, but I never could. Ah, Gerald!”—nestling closer to him, and laying one hand on his locket—“you kept the name, but I kept the verse. Verily, the Lord has watched between me and thee when we were absent one from another.”

Why the Lookout Failed.

The secretary of the English Farm Laborers' Union attributes the failure of the struggle to “want of union and cohesion among the men; the refusal of laborers to migrate to districts where work and better wages could be obtained; and the injudicious admission of old men into the Union, who expected life annuities from its funds.”

Undoubtedly these were some of the reasons. The average English peasant (poor fellow!) is so ignorant and narrow-minded as scarcely to be able to rise to the idea of anything beyond his own personal, local, and immediate advantage. Nearly all his notions are essentially selfish. If he strikes, every man in the village who does not “turn out” is a “blackleg,” a “coward,” and what not. If, for his own benefit, he “stays in,” those who leave work are “living on his money,” and ought to be “scrat” off the Union books. He grumbles at the District Secretary and grudges him his salary, quarrels with and distrusts his fellows, and always sacrifices the future to the present. Such a man is not easily managed.

Scarcely will he migrate even to a neighboring village. Hence we have an aggregate of impracticability sufficient to give us pause, independent of the last alleged obstacle—the impolitic admission of aged members into the ranks of the Union. That was a notorious mistake, but one almost necessitated by the expectations of the men. Too many of them regarded the Union as a sort of assurance or benefit society, in which they were to invest twopenny a week to gain eight shillings, just as soon as they could establish a claim to them. It was, as Americans say, a “soft thing,” especially eligible to elderly rustics within an easy distance of parish relief—which of course they expected to get also. Their indignation when the ratepayers (mostly farmers) objected to this comfortable arrangement, and referred them solely to the Union for maintenance, was very edifying. The British peasant has become so demoralized by three centuries of oppression and degradation that he looks to “the parish” as a normal providence for his old age.

For the benefit of the locked-out laborers the public contributed upward of £60,000. Of this sum the Union expended in payments to the men, in migration, and emigration, nearly half the above. Originally 2,400 men were locked out, of whom 870 have returned to work without surrendering their tickets; 400 have migrated, 440 emigrated, and 350 have returned to work since the lookout pay was stopped, many of these last having abandoned the Union. There are still 350 unemployed. These are the Union statistics, condensed from the report of its secretary.

A Washington Scandal.

A Washington correspondent says: “One of the aristocratic families is now bowed down with woe, owing to the difficulties existing between a young wife and her husband. Four years ago it was a beautiful bride and a gallant groom—an army officer. Elegant trousseau, bridesmaids, groomsman in uniform, presents of great magnificence, military band, exciting and interesting event, bridal trip, stationed first in a Western city, next in the South. The world applauding and envying; supposition that there was perfect bliss. Husband suddenly brings wife back to her parents, and charges her with infidelity. She is left in disgrace, and a suit for divorce commenced. Then she opens her heart to parents and friends, and tells how cruelly she has suffered, not only from this accusation but from systematic neglect, unkind words, and a sister-in-law who made her home a place of torment, and who studied how to widen the breach that existed between herself and husband. So instead of a quiet separation and keeping the affair as much as possible in the family, the husband, in order to be a free man, has determined to prove to the world his wife's infamy, and to make her disgrace as humiliating as possible. She has determined on a defense, and will expose him.

Private Advice to Young Men.

Don't be too sudden about it. Many a girl has said “no” when she meant “yes,” simply because her lover didn't choose the right time and pop the question gentle. Take a dark night for it. Have the blinds closed, the curtains down and the lamp turned most out. Sit near enough to her so that you can hook your little finger into hers. Wait until conversation begins to flag, and then quietly remark:

“Susie, I want to ask you something.”

She will fidget around a little, reply “yes,” and after a pause you can add:

“Susie, my actions must have shown—that is, you must have seen—I mean you must be aware that—that—”

Pause here for a while, but keep your little finger firmly locked. She may cough and try to turn the subject off by asking you how you liked the circus, but she only does it to encourage you. After about ten minutes you can continue:

“I was thinking, as I came up the path to-night, that before I went away I would ask you—that is, I would broach the subject nearest my—I mean I would know my—”

Stop again and give her hand a gentle squeeze. She may give a yank to get it away or she may not. In either case it augurs well for you. Wait about five minutes and then go on:

“The past year has been a very happy one to me. But I hope that future years will be still happier. However, that depends entirely on you. I am here to-night to know—that is, to ask you—I mean I am here to-night to hear from your own lips the one sweet—”

Wait again. It isn't best to be too rash about such things. Give her plenty of time to recover her composure, and then put your hand on your heart and continue:

“Yes, I thought as I was coming through the gate to-night how happy I had been, and I said to myself that if I only knew you would consent to be my—that is, I said if I only knew—I if I only knew that my heart had not deceived me and you were ready to share—”

Hold on—there's no hurry about it. Give the wind a chance to sob and moan around the gables. This will make her lonesome and call up all the love in her heart. When she begins to cough and grow restless, you can go on:

“Before I met you this world was a desert to me. I didn't take any pleasure in going blackberrying and stealing rare ripe peaches, and it didn't matter whether the sun shone or not. But what a change in one short year! It is for you to say whether my future shall be a prairie of happiness or a summer fallow of Canada thistles. Speak, dearest Susie, and say—and say that—that—that—”

Give her five minutes more by the clock, and then add:

“That you will be—that is, that you will—I mean that you will be—mine!”

She will heave a sigh, look up at the clock and over to the stove, and then as she slides her head over on your vest pocket, she will whisper:

“You are just right, I will!”

How to Get Along.

Do not stop to tell stories in business hours. If you have a piece of business, be found there when wanted. No man can get rich by sitting around stores and saloons. Never fool in business matters. Have order, system, regularity, liberality and promptness. Do not meddle with business you know nothing of. Never buy an article you don't need, simply because it is cheap, and the man who sells it will take it out in trade. Trade in money. Strive to avoid hard words and personalities. Do not kick every stone in the path. More miles can be made in a day by going steadily on than by stopping. Pay as you go. A man of honor respects his word as his bond. Aid, but never beg. Help others when you can, but never give what you can't afford to, simply because it is fashionable. Learn to say no. No necessity for snapping it out dog fashion, but say it firmly and respectfully. Have but few confidants, the fewer the better. Use your own brains rather than those of others. Learn to think and act for yourself. Be vigilant. Keep ahead rather than behind the times.

Reader, cut this out, and if there be folly in the argument, let us know.

Shoot Away.

It was on the edge of the wood. They had come thither from different points in pursuit of the seasonable partridge; but in the shrubbery one startled hunter discovered that the other had drawn a bead on him. “Don't shoot,” he said, “I am not a partridge.” “I must shoot,” was the response, “for I have sworn that if ever I saw a man homelier than I am I would kill him.” The intended victim gazed curiously for a moment, and then said, placidly, “Fire away; if I am homelier than you are I even wish that I were dead.” They adjourned to get a statement from a competent witness.