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A Leaf from My History

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risen. Seated by his blazing fireside, with plenty of apples and hard cider, the honest "Dutchman" enjoys his condition with gusto, and perfectly contented with his lot, he is happy in his own ignorance; and firmly believing that the earth is flat, and that the sun, moon and stars, move around it every day, caring for nothing save the cultivation of his own farm, he lives and dies as his fathers did before him.

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A LEAF FROM MY HISTORY.

The leaves of the forest shall blossom again,
And the song bird shall carol a soul thrilling strain,
But the lost one whose beauty I used to adore,
To my heart seems to murmur, "No more—never more!"

It is midnight. The hollow winds are sighing around me. The storm rages wildly without. Not a single star breaks through the gloomy veil that curtains the heavens. All is dark, and drear and miserable. This night and this equinoctial storm are to the year what the occurrence I am about to relate was in my history.

I have loved once, and only once. I was just about seventeen when I met Elmira N——. It was at a pic-nic. As I had just returned from college a Junior, I was of course expected to pay some attention to the ladies, for all of them seem to think, when a youngerster has rubbed his back against a college wall, he is admirably suited for a gallant. They are quite in the wrong here, however, for nearly every young man leaves college ruder, and less fitted to shine in female society than he was, when first loosed from his mamma's apron strings.

But to my story. The place in which we were assembled, was a small promontory that jutted out into the bright waters of the Chesapeake. On one hand the bank rose like a miniature cliff, to the height of some fifteen or twenty feet, whilst on the other it sloped gently downward to the water's very edge. Above us towered huge oaks that had defied the storms of centuries, their branches lapped and interlapped so closely, that the sunbeams seemed to seek in vain for an entrance. The earth was covered with a carpet of green, soft to the tread as velvet. It was a beautiful spot, almost lovely enough to tempt one to think the general curse had never fallen there. We danced and sported here the live-long day, and the shadows of a beautiful moonlight evening were closing fast around us, ere we dreamed of separating. Just when we were about starting, some of us mounted, and some of us rein in hand, we heard the first notes of a song; the voice was clear and melodious, yet full and strong. Looking out upon the bay, we saw a light schooner skimming along graceful as some ocean bird; the vessel was instantly recognized, and the person at helm, a fine manly slave belonging to Mr. N——, was the singer. I always loved music; and have often felt its

No. III.—May, 1849
power, but though years have passed away, though I have since listened to many a well-tuned voice, I have never heard that song equaled; I remember, it seems to me, almost every modulation of the singer's voice. The song was Highland Mary, the sweetest, in my humble opinion, the inimitable Burns ever wrote.

Some moments after the last echo had died away inland, I was startled from a dreamy reverie by a softly whispered exclamation, "how beautiful!" and this called me back from a world of fancy, to a scene scarce less pleasing. I assisted my fair companion in mounting; away we went side by side, through that brave old forest which skirted the bay shore. Who shall say it was strange that on such a night, mid such scenes, with such a companion by my side, love should be uppermost in my thoughts? But speaking of my companion, I have never met one like her since. As she rode along on a beautiful jet black pony, her countenance now but half revealed beneath that old wood's shade, and now lit up by the moon's soft beams, she looked the spirit of the place. She was a little over the medium size, with a form that Venus herself might have envied. Her features were more than faultless, they bore the stamp of intellectuality. Her eye, large, dark and brilliant, was just such a one as Byron gave Gulnare. Her hair fell in rich glossy ringlets over a neck and shoulders white and clear as finest alabaster. What wonder, then, I say, that I should love such a being? There are times when not to love were almost a crime; there are occasions when the soft language of love is the only proper one to be spoken. Whether the present was such a moment or no, I leave my reader to determine. Certain it is, however, that then my first and only vows of love were made; and they were returned. O! who that has known the joy of such an hour, can expect to find another spent as bright on life's too often tedious road. Moments like these are the pleasantest things to be met with in the garland of time; that garland that begins in buds and blossoms, and ends in blighted flowers and withered leaves. What a moment too do hours like these bequeath, when we have settled down into the calm occupations of after life. How beautiful through the vista of years, seem those brief moonlight traces on the waters of our youth.

A month had passed and my vacation was nearly over, two short weeks only remained. I dined at the house of Mr. N——, and never did Elmira seem so lovely. I never saw her so gay, and attractive; always in conversation, she excelled herself to-day. Late in the evening I left, promising to call again soon. A day or two after I heard she was unwell. I called, and found her ill but in no danger; the next news brought assurance that she was recovering, and day after day for two weeks, it was the same story. Now the time had come for me to leave; I had but another day left. I called for my horse, and started for her father's house, expecting to see her nearly well. It was a fine September morning, the air was clear and bracing, the sky perfectly cloudless, Nature now looked more charming in her half veiled
robe, in the russet tints that decked wood and field, than if she had worn the brightest livery of early spring. I would not then have seen her otherwise attired, for I was sad as I rode along, and yet I scarce knew why. I never believed much in presentiments, but the occurrences of that day have left their traces on my heart, and often now a slight tremor creeps over my frame, when I see, or fancy I see the misty and impalpable form of some approaching evil. As my journey shortened, I felt more and more depressed; I could not shake off a kind of dread that had seized upon me. Leaping from my horse, I threw the reins to a servant, and slowly strolled up the avenue. As I entered the porch that shaded the door of that noble old mansion, I heard the sound of suppressed weeping from an open window above. I had read in old Irish romances of a singular being that burdens the night wind with low mournful wailings, when any disaster threatens the house over which she watches. Though the sound I now heard was soft and smothered, though the voice was sweet and low, still upon the inmates of my heart, hope and love, it broke sadder and more terrible far than any banshee’s dreary wail.

I rapped softly, and stood trembling. The door opened noiselessly, and the sister of her I loved met me on the threshold, with the exclamation, “Oh, Elmira’s dying!” Great God, what a shock was this! A thick mist gathered before my sight—my brain grew dizzy—I reeled, and came near falling. As soon as I could command words, I asked to see her, and was ushered into her room. As I entered, she stretched forth her hand, and pronounced my name. I clasped those fingers, fairer now, and more slender than before; they were cold, and around the roots of the nails a dark purple tinge was perceptible; that was no die of henna from luxurious eastern climes,—it was the coloring of death. I glanced at her face; it was not much altered; a little of its roundness was gone, the cheek that blushed now for modesty, and now for joy, was blanched and pale, but beauteous even thus. The lips not quite so full and smiling, closed more firmly on the pearly teeth. That luxuriant hair which I had so often admired, now lay disheveled on her pillow, but rich and glossy still. Those bright and laughter-loving eyes were slightly sunken in their sockets, but they were softer now and seemingly more full of life and love, for through them the soul looked forth still.

Turning to the physician, she exclaimed in faltering accents, “Doctor, must I die?”—and as I sat with my face buried in my hands, my heart convulsively replied, “no, she cannot die!” And, indeed, I saw not why she should. I had seen one person die, but he was an old man, weak, trembling, palsied, childish, and a mere skeleton; I could understand why he should die. But she! O! she could not die! Surely two short weeks’ sickness could not stifle all the load of life that had bounded through her glowing frame, and sparkled in her glancing eye. She was not palsied, she was not a mere skeleton like the old man I had seen. O no, she would live!
God surely would not hurry one so young and fair, away from earth. Such were my thoughts as I sat there, more moved than I had ever been before, with my bosom heaving, and my heart almost bursting, and yet with an eye dry, and tearless. Roused at length, by hearing my name breathed, as I had heard it breathed of yore, I turned and saw her playing with a single tress of her hair. Taking up a pair of scissors that lay beside her, with her own hand, she severed this one little lock, and putting it into mine, she said, "don't forget me—I am dying now, but I am not afraid—I did wish to live, but that is past." For a moment her lips quivered, as if other words plead for utterance. Her eye gleamed and brightened, even 'neath the death dew that was now gathering on it. A sweet smile played upon her countenance. She was lovely in death.

I have it yet about my heart—
Her beauty of that day:
As if the robe that she should wear
In other climes were given;
That I might learn to know it there,
And seek her out in heaven.

For some moments I sat, expecting to hear her speak, to see her smile again. But her hand grew colder and colder as it lay clasped in mine. Now I wept—wept like a child, and turned away.

I saw her again, as she lay shrouded in the coffin, a wreath of wild autumn flowers upon her breast, and that same sweet smile upon her face; but she was cold and dead. Her spirit had left the lovely tenement to begin a new and brighter existence. She went into the presence of her God pure and innocent. And I have not forgotten her yet. Her image has lingered around my heart from that day to the present; and often when tempted to some youthful folly, she has seemed to stand before me, and my better nature has triumphed.

AN Imitation of "What Constitutes a State?"

What constitutes a man?
Not learning, wit, or wealth, or shouted name;
Not titled honors, or ancestral fame;
Not deeds in battle's van:
But steadfast purpose, and an honest heart;
A will that never wavers from the right;
A ready hand to gather and impart;
A mind to grasp the true, the infinite;
A soul aspiring to a blest abode;
The love of human kind,—the fear of God;
These constitute a man.