

## LORETTO, OR THE CHOICE

An Interesting Story for Both Old and Young.

Written by George E. Miles.

### IN FOUR PARTS.

#### PART II.

#### CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

"Yes, yes," said Lel, interested in anything relating to her father,—"you are right. Mignon dies and Felix stays with us;—now, I understand Wilhelm Meister. Have you read it? Oh, Agnes, don't be a nun!—You have mind enough for anything. If you'll only marry Melville, so that I may have you near me, that I may run in and see you when I please, plague you, play for you, sing for you, I shall be happy. I'll love some one else, and marry just to keep you from being jealous, and then—but her eyes ran over as she spoke. "Won't you stay with me a week longer?" she resumed.

"Make up your mind to return with me," replied Agnes.

"No, no, I'll stay here: I shall have enough to laugh at in Mrs. Hoity, enough to work at in Lists, enough to idle at in new poems, and enough to sleep at in the congressional debates. I understand my father now—blessings on your insight!—and come what may, I care not. Must I change my nature, because another has changed his mind, must I imitate his fickleness by playing false to myself?—Never while my name's Lel!"

Words, words, words!—the eagle soars with the arrow in its side—the shaft must be in awhile, before the wing closes.

Now for Melville. If we follow him to his rooms, we shall find him surrounded by comfort and elegance. His mantle-piece is adorned with choice castings brought from abroad, the walls are gemmed with rare paintings and engravings, selected with judgment and taste. But there he sits dejectedly before his grate: he tried to read—absurd; he tried to write—impossible; he tried to caress a noble Newfoundland dog, who appeared to have some sympathy for his master—contemptible. In the blank despair of the first shock, he felt like poor Gloster, as if another Regan had plucked his eyes out, as if the curse of love had doomed him to wander, like Vathek, with his hand forever upon his heart.

Too well remembering her manner, it seemed to him cold, disdainful, masculine, and flattering himself he had been wasting his sunlight on an obstinate icicle, he suffered from that worst arrow in Cupid's quiver—devotion to an unworthy object. But, before midnight, his senses partially returned. Had he not been unjust to Lel,—had he not thus merited the rebuke so unmercifully administered by Agnes—had she not evinced her superiority of mind and feeling by detecting and reproving his inconstancy?—But there was the rub!—Might not the knowledge of this—might not the suspicion of a lingering affection for Lel, prevent her love?—Alas! what excuse will not the human heart invent to shield itself from admitting that its want of success is its own fault! The windings, turnings, twistings of disappointed love, are too pitifully comic for analysis. A woman, in this condition, invites a tear,—a man, a laugh.

Melville was not imaginative; his affections were always guided by his reason;—yet Shakespeare himself could not have suffered more than he did then. A warm fancy is often mistaken for a warm heart, because it has all the language of sorrow, when feeling is dumb.

We shall try not to laugh at him since he grew humbler towards morning. How could she love me, he said,—what have I to attract her, besides wealth, that gilded bait which a noble nature scorns?—I have no accomplishments, no social qualities, no beauty, no grace—I never have been loved—never will be—never will attempt to be again! anybody wants me, they must court me, propose, run off with me and marry me; otherwise, I and my love are forever!—And he said all this, seriously as could be, with a burning, beating forehead and a cold hand.

Poor Melville?—in enumerating his deficiencies, he omitted "I have no religion," he did not consider the absence of this a blemish; and how few do, in all the written and unwritten tragedy and comedy of human love.

#### CHAPTER X.

Melville felt like an orphan—worse than an orphan. Sensitive creature,

he had not the courage to present himself at Mr. Almy's—his timidity and fickleness had deprived him of the society of that beautiful house, his only home. To relieve his spiritual desolation, he was tempted to seek forgetfulness in the sparkling Lethe of dissipation. But Gabriel, the ever-present and all-seeing Gabriel, failed not to visit him in these moments of despondency, and whisper words of strength and consolation. This meek, benevolent being, was the only link between him and the charming family from which he was forever exiled. Some words that fell from the Wanderer kept perpetually recurring to him—"Do you love your sister Agnes? then never let her marry." When tired with vain attempts to solve this difficult problem, he was naturally led to contemplate Lel, the bright young creature who was made for the world—and his meditations generally terminated in this remarkable wish:

"Oh, if Lel had only a little more of Agnes in her!"

One morning, as he was trying hard to read a newspaper, "Mr. Almy presented himself, and slapping him on the shoulder, as cordially as ever, said:

"Melville, what in the deuce do you mean by treating me in this way? We are to have some music to-night—the German will be there, and if you don't come, beware of me in future."

Melville, greatly relieved, thanked him, promising punctual attendance, and the generous merchant departed.

"What a happy man!" sighed Melville; "he does not seem to have a care on his mind."

At that moment there were cares enough on Mr. Almy's mind to break down three Melville's, unschooled in affliction.

"Yes, I will go!" mused Melville, in suppressed heroics; "I will go, if only to show that I am calm; I will have no eyes to count the spasms of my mouth or note the changes of my cheek—and least of all shall Agnes behold the ruin she has made!" So saying, he finished his breakfast with something of an appetite.

"Do you mean to have a ball to-night?" inquired Agnes of Lel, as they were sitting together. "Tell me, frankly, for if you do, I shall not be present."

"A ball! Nonsense," replied Lel; "it will be nothing more than one of our old Thursday evenings, with a supper. Father made me put musical in every invitation; that the ladies might dress decently on your account."

A waiter interrupted them with letters from the Colonel. They were models of brevity, if nothing else:

"DEAR AGNES,—All well, including Charley. We don't miss you more than when you were at the Convent. Respects to Almy. Ever yours, &c."

"DEAR LEL,—How goes the game? Are not your knights an overmatch for her bishops?"

The cousins looked up at each other and smiled, without exchanging letters or making any comments on their contents.

"Do you think Melville will come?" resumed Lel.

"Of course he will," replied the other.

"Now, mark me, Agnes—if I betray what I feel by the slightest symptom, I promise to enter the Convent with you. The storm in my heart, the thunder on my brow, the lightning in my eye, the rain on my cheeks, the gale on my lips, shall all be covered by a cloudless sky and sunshine without a shadow, and if you ever saw a woman who looked as though she knew not grief, nor ever could know it, you shall see her counterfeit this evening in me!"

#### CHAPTER XI.

The parlors are lighted—the lamps are glowing. Lel is in pink, Agnes in white, and Mr. Almy in black. The guests are coming—the rustling of satin and silk begins—the rooms are filling. Close by the open piano, playing with his violoncello, known but unnoticed, sat a middle-aged man, with true German impenetrability. Hard featured, thick-set, apathetic, he looked like anything but a genius. Yet, to Agnes, Mr. Almy excepted, he was the most interesting person in the room.

"Shall we commence?" said Lel to the musicians, as she took her seat. A moment's pause, and away they went at the first movement of Mendelssohn's first trio. Rapid and subtle as light, the earnest melody leaps from instrument to instrument, while unflagging and unceasing, the motherly piano underlies, connects and blends the whole. But when they

reached the Adagio, a light overspread the German's broad face—his soul shone through its unworthy casing—the living notes seemed to come, like Bob Acres' scourge, through his fingers—his hand was endowed with tones more eloquent than speech. Who, that saw him then, anticipated such a close to so much genius—so sudden, so pitious, so terrible! Like many before him of equal gifts, he has gone ignobly and unrewarded to the grave—his life wasted—his hopes blasted—his soul neglected. Like many who will follow him, he has withered, like an uprooted flower, in the hand that only prized it a moment, and cast it off as soon as it began to droop. How few that loved to hear him, strove to help him! 'Twas his own fault—sleep soundly, sweet world, sleep soundly!

Yet never to be forgotten by some are those rare moments that seem to come like wind from another clime, laden with choicer perfumes than ours! They will sometimes think of the master who sleeps far away from his fatherland, and, sometimes, pray for him. No stone marks his grave—not a tear was shed for him! It is singular that those who neglected him in life, do not honor him in ashes; for if he did not live like a genius, surely he died like one.

Again the spell of music was laid on Melville. He could not remove his eyes from Lel, who appeared to float with the magic sounds, as if she were the muse who had first inspired the beauty she was reproducing. Who can say what passed in his heart—what years were revived and re-enjoyed in those delightful and all-powerful minutes! Was there not a little more of Agnes in her, than he had lately imagined? During the playful Scherzo, a child-like smile hovered around her mouth, and during the fairy-like finale, her eyes swam in dreamy lustre.

It was over—the rooms were full. Mr. Almy's friends are there—sober looking men with the weight of the world on their shoulders, their faces screwed up by habit, rather than marked by thought, with calculation lurking in the spotless folds of their white cravats. Lel's friends are there; fair young girls absorbed in their first impressions, whose brains seem to have been conchaumed in nourishing their cultivated hair—others a little older, who rejoice in candle light as a blessed invention to "contradict the lies which the garish sun might tell of them—others decidedly old, yet firmly persuaded that dignity is superior to grace, amongst whom, let her not be forgotten, towered the immortal Mrs. Hoity.

"If these people," thought Agnes, "came here for music's sake, I am much mistaken."

She was not mistaken. During the first piece they had given signs of enjoyment, if not of appreciation; but their patience gave out in the second Trio, which was too elaborate to afford them even a pretext for a smile. They could have danced for joy when it died off like a shabby friend or a poor lover. But did they dance?

Music of another kind was heard—music from bells, and clarionets, and flutes, and fiddles. How infinitely inferior! how much more grateful!

Like veterans answering the trumpet, they fell into order—two quadrilles were instantaneously formed. Agnes, professing her inability to dance, retreated behind Mr. Almy, and enters into conversation with the German. Lel kept her promise well. Light and graceful as a fawn, she glided through every figure; her face beaming, her eyes sparkling, her arms waving. The life and soul of the room, her clear laugh rang like morning music on the hill tops, when shepherds and shepherdesses are greeting the rising sun. Not once did she falter; not once did she droop; not once did she betray, by over-acting, that beneath all this there was a silent sorrow.

But Melville, poor Melville, was not so successful. He could have stood anything but Lel's merriment and indifference, but that broke him down. "I knew she never loved me," he muttered, "but now she despises me!" Dark as death, he moved over to the German, and through him renewed his acquaintance with Agnes. But Agnes was icy cold, and slid off with Mr. Almy. A desperate purpose crossed him, to break abruptly from the company; but this was too much like Sylvius, and he was too much of a gentleman. Then he resolved to devote himself to the prettiest and richest girl in the room: but his heart failed him. He couldn't talk—he could only look at Lel, lamenting that she was just as fickle as himself.

All is bright, all is beautiful, all is

joy, all is gladness! It is so dream-like, so enchanting, so alluring, so alluring! The world is doing its best—all its ornaments are on—all its rage is off! Eyes are glancing—cheeks are glowing—whispers are flowing! The walls shut out earth—the ceiling shuts out heaven!

Agnes, Agnes, beware! A fatal stream is rushing by thee—its banks are blooming—its waters sweet! Beware! beware! Thy feet are in it; it will sweep thee out to a stormy sea! May not the ermine perish in the snow? May not the camel falter in the desert?

For a time she remained alone with Mr. Almy—it took them hours to see her beauty, but they gathered around her at last, and she stood the centre of a brilliant circle. Excited by conversation, her dark eyes flashed, the rose mantles proudly in her cheek. Introduction follows introduction—compliment follows compliment. Her praises are sounding through the room, in those terrible whispers which are meant to be heard. She is dealing with men and women of wit and information—boys and girls are listening in respectful silence. Then, all she had read and thought, come thrilling to her tongue, and gushed forth like the first waters from a long sealed fountain.

Lel trembled: she scarcely recognized the timid Lily of Loretto in the splendid woman before her. Where was Agnes? Was she dead—was she chrysalis soaring on these golden wings? Was she exchanging her immortal pinions for these feeble feathers of an hour?

Who could have guessed that all this was sleeping in Agnes, till the breath of admiration should awake it? Had she not known it? Had she not feared it? Yes! yes! But was she not enjoying it? Does not the eagle exult, when trusting to its untied wing, it finds the air its own?

"I knew it was in her," said Mr. Almy to himself; "I knew there was burning gold imprisoned within that cold marble."

The music is sounding—Mr. Almy, offering his arm to Agnes, leads the way to the supper room.

All is bright, all is beautiful, all is joyous! The table is as luscious as a Moriam's Paradise! There are loaves to cool the mouth and wines to fire the brain! Away with the past! Away with to-morrow! The blessings of a life-time are crowded in to-night. Oh! how dream-like—oh! how dove-like—oh! how winning!

Agnes is still in the ascendant—she wields the sceptre of empire, as if she were born to it. Eloquent youths are striving for her smiles and treasuring her words—transported merchants are unbending in the buzz of admiration even jealousy is mute.

"Oh," thought Lel, "could the Colonel see her now, how his old heart would leap for joy! Here is the woman of the world he wishes."

Mothers are asking her expectations—daughters her age. Sons are speculating on the state of her affections. Again the foaming wine kisses the rim of her glass—again she raises it! The flashing eye, the arched lip, the quivering nostril, the laughing brow, were all there!

"Look," whispered Lel to Melville, "behold the Wanderer!" The likeness was painful but as they looked, it vanished. The glass almost fell from her hand. Alone in a corner stands Gabriel—unnoticed until then. No longer smiling, his brow is sternly knit, though from his steady eye, which pierced her very soul, tears of anguish are falling fast. Brushing his tears away, he quietly approached Mr. Almy and drew him into the passage.

What has happened to Agnes? The queen of the room is mute and sad. As the thunderbolt shivers a blossoming tree, Gabriel's look had struck her to the ground. All she wanted from earth was a place to lie down and weep alone, the rest of her life. But they are crowding around her still—with a thousand questions, a thousand solicitations, a thousand persecutions. Where was the light that dazzled her? It is but a diabolical flame that blisters! Where was the music that enchanted her? It is but sharp discord that offends.

And now, from the supper room troop the gentlemen, in wine-rufulent. The scene is changing fast from mirth to madness, from folly to revelry, from a parlor to a bar-room.

Sickened, shamed and dispirited, Agnes rose to retire, but met Mr. Almy. White as her dress, he grasped her arm—

"You are not going, Agnes?"

"Yes."

"Stay, for God's sake!" and he mingled with the crowd. She watched him anxiously. His laugh

still rang, but it was not the same laugh—his eyes were not the same eyes—when he passed her, she saw that he was drunk as a lord.

For whose heart was this? Agnes ventured to ask him what this meant, was, for in spite of his unconsciousness to conceal his agitation, it was not apparent.

"Nothing—nothing!" was his only answer, as he fitted like a scepter from group to group, bidding them to enjoy themselves, in tones inspiring anything but happiness.

The company was gone—the last lingering drunkard has staggered off. Mr. Almy is lying on the sofa—Lel and Agnes are kneeling beside him.

"Speak! speak! I can endure the worst!" cried Lel, raising him in his arms.

"So can I," said Mr. Almy, starting up and pacing the room. "So can I endure the worst!"

He stood still and stretched the back of a chair convulsively—the veins swelled in his temples—a groan quirt from his lips—his head fell on his breast.

"Father!" sobbed Lel, "in God's name speak, or I shall die!"

He seemed not to hear her; she repeated it again and again. He placed his hands on her shoulders—he threw back her hair from her face—he fixed his eyes on hers. They remained gazing at each other, the one in terror—the other in agonizing anguish. At last, Lel, unable to stand, turned away, and, kneeling down upon her neck, he sobbed:

"My daughter, I am a sinner and unworthy—I am not fit to be your father!"

To be continued.

#### IT WAS NOT NECESSARY.

The Old Man Had Traveled a Good Deal Till the Month of May, 1880. Not long ago a \$200,000 note was sent to the United States Treasury Department. Accompanying it was a letter saying that the owner had died, and that the note was to be paid to the Treasury. The note was a \$200,000 note, and it was a very old note. It was a note that had been issued by the Treasury Department in the year 1860. It was a note that had been in the hands of the same owner for many years. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's life. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's history. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's soul. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's destiny. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's life. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's history. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's soul. It was a note that had been a part of the owner's destiny.

The story of the note is a story of a man's life. It is a story of a man who has lived a long and eventful life. It is a story of a man who has seen many changes in the world. It is a story of a man who has known many hardships. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great events. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great battles. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great victories. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great defeats. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great tragedies. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great comedies. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great adventures. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great discoveries. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great inventions. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great achievements. It is a story of a man who has been a part of many great failures. 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Settling the Northwest. Pioneers are pushing northward into British America, and railroad will soon be on their heels. A valuable mineral and timber country had. The problem is how to reach it. Long cold winters.