

OVER THE BORDER.

By WALTER BRYANT.

Caddy, the boy, was in request, and sold his information for a mug of beer. After the first laughter, which was like an explosion, or a great thunder storm, one of those during which the rain water rattles and slates fall of the roof, a universal burst of laughter when all the men ran together laughing their loudest, holding each other up, looking anxiously, pumping on the apoplectic, and encouraging each other to fresh hilarity by pointing to Nan the bride, the question actually arose if anything should be done to mark their sense of the attempted crime by those in authority. A most grievous and intolerable thing it was, indeed, that a young woman should be violently kidnapped and carried away like a sailor by a press gang, forced to ride thirty miles and more on a winter's night across the cold and rainy fells, married willy-nilly in the morning without church or parson, and this when she had not once, but many times, refused so much as to listen to proposals of marriage from the man. All were agreed that this was a thing not to be permitted. Yet, what could be done? To run away with a girl of her own free will and accord, and when she would marry the man but for wickedness of guardians, is a different thing; many a maid has fled across the border with her lover, amidst the sympathy of her friends. But in this case it was like the carrying away of the Sabine women, and no words could be found by the moralists too strong to condemn the act.

While everybody talked about it, that is to say, for a whole week, there was no much indignation that if Mathew had appeared it would have gone hard with him among the men, to say nothing of the women, who would think of no punishment too bad for him. The townsfolk talked of ducking in the river, of pillory and stocks, and I confess that the thought of Mathew in the pillory was not disagreeable to me. Yet, considering the way of the world, perhaps, if he had been young, handsome, and of pleasant speech, he might have been forgiven the attempted abduction, on the plea of love irritated. One man, we know, may steal a horse—but then he must be comely and generous—while another, if he is churlish and harsh, is clipped into jail for looking over a hedge. Which, however, they talked, Mathew kept away, nor did he return for three or four weeks, leaving his private affairs neglected, and no one knew where he was in hiding.

We had, however, a visit from Barbara. She came, she said, not out of any love to me or my mother, who had used words so injurious as regards herself, but to express her abhorrence of the crime which her unhappy brother had attempted, and her thanks for the madman of his who had defeated her. She said that she knew nothing whatever of him; where he was or what he was doing, but she hoped that when he returned he would be in a better frame of mind, and feel the remorse which ought to follow such an action. As for the pretended marriage with the old woman, she said that was a thing not to be considered seriously. My mother received her excuses coolly, and she presently went away, after another attempt to discover whether I knew anything fresh about "the boy." She desired to know, she said, not out of curiosity, because she was not a curious person, as everybody knew, but because she feared that I might, by representing the late affair in its worst light, bring about a hostile feeling and even a conflict between her brother and the boy, which could not fall of being disastrous to the latter. My mother restrained her on this point, because, she said, Mathew was already well acquainted with Ralph's case, and having shown so much bravery in the late affair, which took two men to carry off one woman, would now most certainly have the courage to turn a submissive back to the chastiser when he should appear. Barbara thereupon went away. Though I loved her not, I could not but feel pity for a woman who had done and suffered so much on behalf of this thankless brother. She was grown much older to look at during the last year or two, her face was pinched, and wrinkles had multiplied round her eyes with her constant weep. This is an age when gentlemen of exalted rank think it no sin to be put to bed helpless after a debauch of wine or punch; I hope that more sober customs may shortly prevail, else one knows not what will become of us all. Yet, though drunkenness is a fashion, I think nothing can be more miserable for a woman than to sit, as Barbara sat daily, knowing that the only man in the world she cared for is slowly getting drunk by himself in another room, which is what Mathew did. As to the idle talk about the other will and the rightful heir, I know not what she believed in her heart, or how far she joined in the wicked designs of her brother, which were about to be frustrated.

Then Mr. Carnaby, accompanied by his lady and by the vicar, came in person to express his horror of the crime and his satisfaction that it was providentially prevented. "We have discussed," said his worship, "the action which we should take in the matter. At present all we have to go upon is the evidence of Nan, who is, she says, Mathew's wife, so that if such be verily the case she cannot give evidence in the matter at all, and that of the boy Caddy, an ignorant, wild lad, who knows not the nature of an oath. Abduction is a great crime, but then Mathew, whatever were his intentions, my child did actually only run away with an old woman, and she makes no complaint, but rather rejoices, while he is rendered ridiculous. To kidnap a young girl is a hanging matter, but then, my dear, you were not kidnaped in short. We feel that to bring Mathew to justice would be difficult and perhaps impossible. To be sure, one would not wish to hang any man for the worst of crimes, and we had no desire to bring Mathew before any court of law or justice, being quite contented that the offender should feel certain of sharp and speedy justice if he made another such attempt. "Can we not sue him, at least," asked my mother, "placed in pillory?" "I would place him in pillory," his worship went on, "if the old woman were now called to see her wife—"

with what right—would lodge a complaint. But she will not. He deserves pillory at the least. And as for the rotten eggs, I would myself bring even a basket of new laid eggs, so that he should want for nothing. And I would condescend to throw them at him, if he will not complain. She even laughs and boasts that she has gotten a young husband. And then, while it is a difficult point in this doubtful case—his worship blushed and looked confused, while the vicar trembled, and Mathew, Carnaby coughed—"he was running a venture across the border, and no one knows—I say that no one can tell—who may be compromised in this affair as to whether he took across or what he brought back, or though Mathew hath great faults, there is no one more skilled—more skilled, I say."

"No one," said the vicar, which completed the sentence for his worship. "Wherefore, my dear girl," continued his worship, "I propose waiting until the man returns, when I will reprimand him with such severity as will serve to deter him—and any others of a like mind with him—from a renewal of his wickedness."

Mathew did come back, three weeks later, but although his worship sent the fugitive, carrying his pike, to the mill with a command that Mathew should instantly repair to him for admonition, and although the vicar also repaired to Mr. Carnaby's house in his best gown in order to receive the offender, and to give greater authority to the discipline, Mathew came not. He positively and discourteously refused to obey.

There, it would seem, was a direct breaking of the law, or, at least, contempt for authority, upon which imprisonment, I dare say, might have followed. But, whether from leniency, or on account of that difficulty connected with the late venture, his worship refrained from severity, and ordered instead that Mathew, for violence and contumacy, should do penance in the church. Here, indeed, was righteous retribution! He would stand, a thought, in the very place where he had caused Ralph to stand nine years before, he made to rise up before all the people, and in a loud voice to ask their pardon, and to recite the Lord's prayer. I hope I am not a vindictive woman, yet I confess that I rejoiced on learning from the fugitive that this punishment had been noted out to the evil doer. We both rejoiced, and we congratulated each other, because we thought that Ralph would also rejoice. Little did we know of that great and lofty mind when we foolishly imagined that he would ever rejoice over the fall of his enemy.

There was great excitement in the town when it became publicly known by means of the barber, who had led direct from his workshop, that this godly discipline was to be enforced on the person of Mathew Humber—a substantial man, a statesman, a miller, a man supposed (but erroneously) to be wealthy and a man already 34 years of age or thereabouts. Why, for a schoolboy or a lad of 16 or a plain rustic to stand up in this white sheet was joy enough, but for such a show of such a man this, if you please, was a rare sight indeed for the simple people. I confess that I for one looked forward with pleasure to the spectacle. Alas! who would believe that man could be found so daring! Mathew refused continuously to perform the penance! This was a great blow and heavy disappointment to all of us; and we looked to see the vicar excommunicate him. But he did not, saying that disobedience to the church brought of itself excommunication without need of any form of words. Let Mathew look to his own soul. And as there seemed no means of enforcing the punishment if the offender refused to undergo it, there was nothing more to be said.

The behavior of Nan at this time was worthy of admiration. On Mathew's return, but not until then, she walked to the mill and informed Barbara that, as her brother's wife, she was herself the mistress, but that, being accustomed to her own cottage, she should not for the present molest her in her occupation.

Then she sought her husband. It was really terrible to mark how the ravages of drink and disappointment together had made havoc with the appearance of this unfortunate man. Unfortunate, I call him, though his punishment was but the just reward of his iniquities. The failure of his plot; the consciousness of the ridicule which overwhelmed him; his shame and discomfiture; the thoughts of the old woman whom he had called his wife, the messages which he had received from his worship and the vicar—his disobedience being connected in some way with partnership in the recent venture, a dreadful vague looking forward to the future, and the constant terror lest Ralph should return, filled his mind with agitation, and gave him no peace, night or day. He neglected the work of mill and farm, he would take no meals save by himself, and he drank continually. He looked up from his last half drunken taper when Nan came in as usual. "I expected you before," he said. "What are you going to do?" "She poured out a dram and tossed it off. "I came to see my bonny husband," she said, "before I am a widow once more. Oh, man, it's an unlucky wife ye have gotten."

"Wife!" he repeated; "wife! Yes, I suppose you would pretend!" "Hark ye, brother," cried Nan, bringing down her cudgel on the table with an emphasis which reminded Mathew unobscurely of the second husband's lot, "hark ye! Sit on another truck, or you'll have a broadside that'll rake you fore and aft from stem to stern. Wife! Is husband you are, wherefore all that is yours is mine." She litened a rope into the handle of the stone jar containing the brandy and leaked it over her shoulder. "The mill is mine, so long as it is yours, which won't be long, shipment. Last night I read your fortunes, my lad. By all I can discover, you and me shall part company before long. But whether you will hang yourself, like my second man, or be hanged, like my first; or whether you will be knocked off the head—which is too good for such as you; or whether you will die by reason of taking too much rum stored, which is fatal to many an honest black; or whether you will die by hand of doctors, whereby the land lubbers do perish by multitudes—I know not. Short will be our company, as long as we eat together, let us share and share alike, and be merry and drink about—now, I want money."

He refused absolutely to let her have any money. Without any more words, this terrible woman prepared for action. That is to say, she took off her rough sailor's jacket, rolled up her sleeves, and seized the cudgel with a gesture and look so menacing that Mathew leaped down his colors.

"How much do you want?" he asked. "Short will be the voyage," she said. "Give me ten guineas. Yes, I will take ten guineas to begin with. But don't think it's my pay day. I'm not paid off, nor shall be so long as—Pity 'tis that I can't read those cards plainer. Well, my dear, I'm going. If I think I should like the mill better than my own cottage, I'll come and stay here. You shall see off and on, plenty of your wife. He! he! The bonny bride and the happy groom!"

She left him for that time. But she went often, during the brief space which remained of Mathew's reign at the mill. Each time she came she demanded money, and ran or usquebaugh; each time she threatened to live with her husband; each time she terrified Barbara with the prospect of staying there. And the man was still in his room, brooding over his past, and thinking not of repentance but of more wickedness.

One day, he rode away without telling his sister whether he was going or what he designed. He did not return that night, but two days later he rode into the town, accompanied by a grave and elderly gentleman, and after leaving the horses at the inn he walked to our cottage, and saw them at the garden gate, and my heart felt like lead, because I saw very clearly what was going to happen.

In me, I felt certain that the money would be demanded, and our house sold. Mathew, goaded by his sister, who clamored without ceasing for the money supposed to have been lent to us, and unable any longer to endure his suspense and anxiety regarding their cousin, resolved to bring matters to an issue. He was anxious indeed as to what he had delayed so long.

They came in, therefore, and the grave old gentleman opened the business. He said that he was an attorney from Morpeth, that the mortgage, of which mention had already been made to Mistress Rotherington, had been drawn up by him at the request of Mr. Mathew Humber; that he had witnessed the signature of my father, and that the business in short, was regularly conducted in accordance with the custom and the requirements of the law.

I asked him if he had seen the money paid to my father. He replied that he had not, but that it was unnecessary I informed him thereupon that the money never had been paid at all, but that my father, a demented person, as we very well know, yet not so dangerous or so well known, yet not so dangerous or so well known, had been locked up, was persuaded by Mathew that he was signing an imaginary deed of gift conveying lands which existed only in his own mind, because he had no land.

The lawyer made no reply to this at all. "Now, mistress," said Mathew roughly, "is the time to show the proofs you talked about." "My proofs, sir," I addressed the lawyer, "are, first, that my father believed himself prodigiously rich, and was scorn to borrow money of such as Mathew Humber; next, that he perfectly well remembers signing this document, which he thought a deed of gift; thirdly, that we know positively that he has had no money at all in his possession; fourthly, that the debts with indignation having borrowed money, fifthly, that Mathew, like every body else, knew of his delusions, and would certainly never have lent the money; sixthly, that £200 is vast sum, and could not have been received and spent without our knowledge. Lastly, that Mathew was known to be a base and wicked wretch who even tried to kidnap and carry off a girl whom he wished to marry."

"Every one of these proofs," said my mother, "is by itself enough for any reasonable person."

The lawyer replied very earnestly that he had nothing to do with proving the debt; that he came to carry out the instructions of his client, and to give us a week's notice—which was an act of mercy, because no clause of notice had been inserted in the mortgage; that the house would be sold unless the money lent was paid; that it was not his duty nor his business to advise us, but his own client; that the law of England provides a remedy for every wrong, and that, by the blessing of heaven, attorneys abound, and may be obtained in any town. Finally, he succeeded his duty by his client in counseling us to put our affairs in the hands of some skilled and properly qualified adviser.

This said, he bowed low and went away. I bowed by Mathew.

But Mathew returned half an hour later and found me alone. "You told me," he said, "six months ago and more, that should I attempt any harm to you and yours, you would write to the boy I waited. If your story were true, you would have written to him at once, out of fear. But your story was not true. Ah, women are all liars. I ought to have known that. Barbara says so, and she ought to know."

"Go on, Mathew," I said. "I waited. If your story had been true, the boy would have hastened home. Well, I thought I would give you another chance. I would carry you off. That would make him wince, if he was living. Yet he has not come."

Did one ever hear the like? To bring his own terrors to an end, or to an issue, he would have made use of his unwilling and wretched wife.

"SAVED."

By THE COUNTESS OF MUNSTER.

"Ah! Le bella signorina e pallidissima e stanca!" These words were addressed to me years ago by the padrona of a hotel, which my mother and I had just reached, after a long and fatiguing night journey; and trivial as these may appear, I remember them distinctly, as well as every other circumstance that occurred during the eventful four-and-twenty hours which succeeded our arrival at the Hotel d'Oro, in Florence, on the 17th September, 188—.

My letter will not travel in Italy for months, after a similes, erratic fashion; for she, poor soul, was endeavoring, through change of scene and fatigue of body, to lighten the memory of her grief; and we had started the night before from A—, to avoid the heat of a day journey, arriving in the early morning at the Hotel d'Oro, an imposing building situated on the banks of the Arno, and formerly a palace of the Este and the Medici, whose architectural ornaments and devices ornamented its walls, both within and without.

We were conducted to our apartments by the pretty padrona, and as we wearily passed through the magnificent vestibule and ascended the broad marble staircase, she curiously reminded my nervous picture I had seen in a child's story book, of a pretty little girl with long hair, who is mounting a state railing to a balcony gallery, and I like the one before us, that as we came to an abrupt turn, I positively stopped and shuddered, expecting to be met (as in the picture) by a cruel faced, velvet footed pauther, who was waiting round the corner, with open mouth and glaring eyes to spring upon its unsuspecting victim! A silly, childish story, no doubt, but just one of those which would cling to one's memory.

The curious apartments on the first piano of the Hotel d'Oro opened upon the handsome gallery, and we were conducted to ours through a doorway concealed by a heavy piece of tapestry.

"Is the signora satisfied?" asked the padrona, as she opened the door of a spacious and beautiful saloon, which owned French windows, opening upon a delightful roomy balcony.

"Oh, yes," answered my mother wearily; "but pray see us at once to our sleeping rooms, for we are very tired." The padrona took the hint, and led us to two rooms (leading out of the saloon and into each other), which were beautifully furnished, but one was so small that I indignantly declared, "Miserable! I really can't sleep in a hole—and in this heat, too!"

"Have you any other rooms you could give Lady Muriel?" my mother asked the padrona, who reflected for a moment and then said: "I have, signora. It belongs to a suite of rooms prepared for the Russian Princess Lapetka and her sick son and attendant, whom we expect in a few hours; but the doctor, who engaged them, desired us to shut up three or four of the bedrooms, as there were too many; so Lady Muriel's maid can sleep there also—close to her—just across the gallery."

My mother said, "If you are sure you have a right to give her these rooms, that will do perfectly." So all being satisfactorily arranged, I betook myself to my apartments, accompanied by the padrona; but when first I entered it, my spirits (generally daring to a fault) went down to zero. The room was so large, so gloomy! The walls were hung with dirty tapestries, which I really stamped each time a door was shut, or that one walked across the room; making the grotesque and hideous figures represented upon it, seemingly insistent with life and with an agony of concern to leap from the walls, and proffer me a dreadful welcome! The bed, too, was far from reassuring in its ghost like grandeur. It was a carved oak "four poster," an ivory and ebony crucifix would certainly never have lent the money; sixthly, that £200 is vast sum, and could not have been received and spent without our knowledge. Lastly, that Mathew was known to be a base and wicked wretch who even tried to kidnap and carry off a girl whom he wished to marry."

"Lady Muriel! Vede! Ecco in principessa ed il principe!" and then hurriedly, I ran and looked out, and sure enough the Russians had arrived, hours before they were expected, and with much curiosity I watched them as they alighted. There were several clumsy vehicles, each drawn by three horses, the princess and her lady occupying the first, the princess was helped out of her carriage by two footmen (the exact counterpart of each other), having grey Kalma faces, flat noses and eyes a little chinless, and she seemed tall and finely formed, with a clear, pale complexion, her hair and eyes the latter being unusually thick and long, and she walked with singular dignity as she entered the hotel.

The occupants of the second vehicle (a sort of sedan chair) greatly interested me. First a priest, with lowering face and shovel hat, and who had seemingly descended from one of the carriages at the rear, entered the bed carriage, and proceeded to hand out a bag, some pillows and a fur rug; then a sign to catch his eye, one of the servants entangled his foot in the shawl, dragging it completely off; and although the priest hastily replaced it and the cap (casting meanwhile a withering look at the terrified man), he would not answer Suseste's and my earnest view of the thin face and contorted figure of the sick boy. He was deadly pale, his eyes were closed, and he appeared unconscious of all around; till, strangely, and for an instant during the confusion caused by the loss of his hat, I fancied he slightly opened his eyes—and looked at me! but he was carried so quickly into the hotel that I could not be certain of the fact.

I felt no further interest in the occupants of the other carriages, but I longed to see all could of the prince, and I managed to get up; so I crept into the gallery overlooking the marble hall and waited, knowing that as his apartments were next to mine the prince must pass that way.

I hid myself over the gallery lantern, waiting, I fancied, that the prince should appear. I felt no further interest in the occupants of the other carriages, but I longed to see all could of the prince, and I managed to get up; so I crept into the gallery overlooking the marble hall and waited, knowing that as his apartments were next to mine the prince must pass that way.

some consternation in the hall, among the attendants, but I was too far off to make out the cause; at last, however, I saw them coming, carrying the prince up the stair upon a stretcher. As soon as they had nearly reached the landing I ran back and hid myself behind my own door to see them go by. It was quite a procession. First came the princess (how beautiful she was and how arrogant she looked) and by her side was the priest, talking in low, agitated whispers, while she appeared to listen in proud, silent silence to the sick boy's incoherent babble, which was carried by the doctor (whose face was deathly pale) and some servants. As the



It was quite a procession.

prince and his bearers passed I involuntarily moved out of my hiding place, and the doctor, perceiving me, started slightly, and again thought the sick boy's heavy eyelids quivered and slightly unclashed, and he followed by a troop of dirty, savage looking servants, who chattered noisily in some guttural tongue as they walked, until the priest turned and frowned them into silence.

All excitement being now over, I lay down and endeavored to sleep, but my mind would not rest; so after tossing about uneasily for an hour or two, I rose and ran into my mother, and as I was relating to her all I had seen, the padrona approached and anxiously craved an interview; and began a long story speaking so rapidly in Italian that I could not understand her, but my mother, being a good linguist, did, and was evidently deeply interested in what she heard; gradually, however, a look of horror overcame her face, and finally pointing at me, she put her finger upon her lip, a gesture which apprised me, of course, that something was going forward which I was not to know, and which, equally of course, decided me upon discovering what that "something" was; so losing no time, I ran to my maid Suseste, who was arranging my room, and asked what had happened. At first she refused to tell me, increasing my curiosity a hundred fold, by adding "the padrona had begged her to be silent." Eventually the French woman's love of gossip got the upper hand and with many nods and winks and "hushes," she confided to me that the young prince was—

"Dead!" I gasped. "Yes, dead," reiterated Suseste. She then proceeded to say that the young man had been so ill during the journey, that the doctor doubted his arriving alive; but the prince had such a longing to get to Florence that they hurried on. The doctor insisted upon traveling alone with his patient (great care and quiet being indispensable); but when they arrived within a hundred miles of Florence, the prince was taken so suddenly worse, that the carriages were stopped, and the doctor called in the priest, considering death imminent; the invalid lived, however, to be lifted into the bed, but as he was being carried through the marble hall, the doctor called out to the bearers to stop, and before the poor fellow could be placed upon a couch—

he expired. I was awe-stricken to speak; but when my astonishment had in a measure subsided, I began to reason, and I said to Suseste: "Who told you this?" "The padrona," answered the maid. "Did she see it happen?" "No," said Suseste; "for the princess begged the padrona and his wife to stay behind, and superintend the unloading of the carriages, so that the prince's luggage might be brought up at once. The dame de compagnie told the padrona how it all occurred, and she told me."

"Well!" I exclaimed excitedly, "it is a very odd story, for I saw the young prince's face twice, and he looked exactly the same both times, very pale and quiet, but not dead."

"Hush! Lady Muriel," whispered Suseste, "do not speak so loud, for the padrona, in the hurry and distress of the arrival, did not mention to the princess that you were in this room; she told the doctor."

"And what did he say?" I asked quickly. "He seemed put out at first, and said he feared the princess would be displeased, but when the padrona told him that you were 'only a signorina,' he seemed satisfied."

"And you allowed me to stay all this time in a room to which I had no right?" I exclaimed hotly (my dignity being hurt also, at being considered a nonentity). "How could you do so? I shall go at once to mamma, and—"

"Wait, Lady Muriel," interrupted Suseste; "I will see the padrona, when she can attend to us; at present they are all in such trouble about the prince's death."

"I do not believe he is dead, for as he passed me I am almost sure he opened his eyes and looked at me."

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