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A BROKEN BETROTHAL

By Laura Jean Libbey

Author of "When Lovely Maiden Stoops to Folly," "Parted by Fate," "Parted at the Altar," Etc.

CHAPTER I.

Love steals into every heart
Some time in life: it is the will of
Heaven.
—Shelley.

It was seven o'clock on a warm June evening. The shadows of early twilight were just beginning to gather over the hills and vales of Southern Maryland as the shriek of the evening express train, which had been due at the station of Deawald some twenty minutes previous sounded shrilly in the distance.

A young and lovely girl paced impatiently to and fro on the platform, keeping well in the shadow of the building, casting anxious glances in the direction of the oncoming train, then back forlornly at a large stone building standing like a grim sentinel on the brow of an adjacent hill.

Another moment and the panting train had drawn up to the station.

With a little glad cry and another fearful glance at the stone house on the hill, the young girl sprang swiftly up the platform and stood timidly in the door of the car.

Several young gentlemen, who had been hurriedly back to their seats and busy in the aisle, stared out the window when a fresh and blooming girl entered the railway car a station below, took a single glance, and the slender girl in the doorway dressed in a natty suit of navy blue, trimmed with white and braid, and at the pretty, dimpled face, half shaded by the sailor hat that was crushed down over her brown curls, rose immediately each young fellow starting to his feet with a flush, a smile and a bow to prefer the pretty, young stranger his seat.

Not less than five of them! No wonder the young girl was slightly embarrassed and bewildered.

The train gave a sudden lurch forward, and she took the seat nearest her, with a very demure "Thank you, sir," and a drooping of the white lids over her brown eyes.

Placing her luggage in the rack overhead, he took the unoccupied seat beside her, mentally wondering who she was, whence she was going, and why such a pretty young girl was permitted to travel alone and at night.

Meanwhile, the train rushed on through the fast gathering darkness, and as the lights from the large stone house on the hill vanished from sight, the young girl hid her pretty face in her handkerchief and the slender form shook with emotion like a quivering leaf in a gale.

A thrill of intense pity stirred the heart of the young man seated beside her.

His fair, handsome face flushed. "Ah, if he could but do something—say something to comfort her!

In his great sympathy, his eager curiosity to know the cause of her grief, and his impulsiveness, he threw prudence to the winds.

"You are in trouble," he said, kindly. "Can I, a stranger, help you in any way?"

He was amazed at the face she raised from the folds of the snowy handkerchief; it was fairly convulsed with laughter, and the merry brown eyes were sparkling with suppressed mirth.

She saw the look of wonder and astonishment in the handsome face turned toward her, and again the brown curly head bent, her hat were half hidden in the folds of the snowy handkerchief with a burst of laughter.

"You must excuse me, sir," she faltered, blushing as red as a rose; "I am sorry that I disturbed you, but it was so very funny I could not keep from laughing; indeed, I could not though I tried my best."

He looked down into her face, and saw that she could not be over sixteen or seventeen years of age at most. And he thought, too, that she was a school girl from the two books, English grammar and history, she held tightly clasped in her little, slim white hands. Of course, he was more than anxious to know what it was that amused her.

Her answer had piqued his curiosity. But he was too through a gentleman to venture to inquire.

Perhaps she read the question in his eyes for she went on, with all the thoughtlessness of a school-girl.

"As the train moved out from the station at Deawald, I saw lights flashing hurriedly from room to room in the large stone house on the brow of the hill; then I knew that my flight had been discovered. It's a boarding-school. They would not let me come home to spend the vacation, but I would not stay at the school"—this with a defiant toss of the brown curls and the roguish dimples deepening in the rose-pink cheeks—"so I ran away. I'm going home to take them by surprise. I can imagine the wrath, anger and consternation on the principal's face as those lights flashed from window to window. I knew she was searching for me, and I safely whirling away beyond her reach, so I couldn't help laughing. It was so very

she added apologetically, as through the explanation quite exceeded mirth, without waiting for his she turned resolutely toward the and stared for an hour or more silence.

evidently, did not quite suit the gentleman beside her.

"It a pity it is that I'm going only as Allendale," he said to himself, ly. If she were not going much I might see her safely to the her journey—she would never And again the thought occur him that she was decidedly too nd pretty, and by far too inno- to be travelling at night alone.

you going much farther?" he at length.

young girl started and turned

going to Allendale," she said. uld scarcely repress a start of surprise.

dale!" he repeated; "why, that where I am going. I have not here for a year or more." He to make certain inquiries, but restrained him. "She would w them," he argued with him- et, he asked abruptly, "In what the village do you reside, may I the valley, or on the hill? I live there, but I do not remem- ing met you there."

answer literally took his breath

home is at Strathmore Hall, on ," she answered, "and the rea- t you have not seen me is, be- have not lived there for many ." He was listening with an in- interested face, and she went on, ly: "Major Strathmore the mas- Strathmore Hall, has been my n ever since I can remember. t me to school at Dunwold, and passed all my vacations with my who lives near Dunwold. Last he died, so I had nowhere else to vacation came, unless I went thmore Hall. My guardian wrote was to remain at the school this nd but I would not do it. I to come home and see the fire- on the Fourth. The housekeeper are glorious," she continued, astically. "They are on a grand or two reasons—one is to cele- the Fourth, of course, and the because it is the birthday of the son, poor Harry Strathmore."

do you say poor Harry Strath- asked the young man, flushing hen turning a scarlet paler.

you live in Allendale, you ought why," returned the girl. Then glance of curiosity she asked: you know Mr. Harry Strathmore,

er, perhaps, than any one else," swered, with a touch of bitter- in his voice. "Yet why do you of him as poor Harry Strath- he demanded. Somewhat haugh- blush, and her lovely eyes flashing. ause I feel very sorry for him," ed the girl, slowly. "I cried they told me the story of how her scarf for him the evening after arned from college, how the ma- ened and raged at something in one, and vowing he should never him, turned him out of the

you know did you learn what arrel was about? Did Major more ever say anything to you it?" asked the young man, with interest.

shook her head. "He will not about his son," she said. "Up Miss Violet Kensington has at the Hall a long time, trying p the major's forgiveness for his son, heart is like marble; he harshly her, to mention the name Harrathmore in his house under pain ishment."

young man sighed heavily, then the blue eyes lighted up again with dden thought.

ajor Strathmore's heart can not be ther hardened against his son, say he still continues to celebrate birthday?"

young girl laughs. "As Mr. Harbirthday is on the Fourth of July, gentleman declares it is the na- celebration he is honoring, and not a pocket should go up in a sul- be fired in honor of the son who defy him. There is a terrible and a dark mystery connected poor Harry."

in the young man's face paled, the hope died out of his blue eyes; a moment he was silent, then he his fair, handsome face toward

hope you will not think me imper- if I inquire your name," he said, a winning smile; "and, as this Mr. Harry's friend, to thank you speaking so kindly of such a scape- and thinking so well of him."

you are his friend, why do you him a scapegrace behind his back?" nded the girl. Her brown eyes d resentfully, and she looked him ht in the face.

t, did I?" he answered with a sed laugh. "I really was not e of it; pray forgive the expres- was slightly mollified.

n have not told me your name," d hurriedly, as the train slack- suddenly at the Allendale depot. he gathered up her books for her. ly name is Thora Chester, but one calls me Theo—only that, se I like it best."

nk you," he said; but Theo na- with a thrill of disappointment, this young man, quite the hand- t she had ever seen in the short n years of her girlhood, seemed e no inclination to give his own turn. Theo's pride was piqued, when he held out his white hand st her to alight from the car, she d her two little hands in the drap- of her dress affecting not to see fer of assistance and spring down steps lightly without his aid.

young man smiled at this flash irit; he knew quite well what ped it.

was five-and-twenty, and at that nowadays young men are worldly or, at least, we gather the impres- that they are.

ll I see you as far as the park he asked.

, sir," replied Theo, with dignity; m much obliged to you, but I can ery nicely without you."

He raised his hat with a low, stiff bow, which Theo admitted to her girlish heart was perfectly princely. Yet without deigning him another glance, Theo wheeled around and walked proudly along the path that led down the valley and over the hills to Strathmore Hall.

There was no moon, but even the friendly light of the stars to guide her, and Theo's heart quaked with a strange, undefinable fear for a moment, and she really did wish that she had said "yes" to the handsome young stranger who had asked so courteously "to see her safe to the park gate," although the stern warning of the principal, so oft repeated, still rang in her ears, "Never let me hear of any of the young ladies of this school making or cultivating chance acquaintances; remember, new acquaintances should be made only through the formula of an introduction of some common friend."

Yet, all the same, a pair of laughing blue eyes and a handsome face had disturbed the peace and quiet of Theo's life.

The world would never be quite the same to her again.

Poor little Theo! if she had been versed in the ways of romantic fate and love, she would have known that her heart had gone out to the handsome stranger at first sight.

Yet, with the dawning of love in a girl's heart, the tragedy of life begins, for love is either a blessing or a curse.

The handsome young stranger watched the slim girlish form disappearing in the darkness.

"It will be as well to follow at a safe distance, and see that no harm befalls her," he told himself, putting the thought into execution. "Major Strathmore's ward!" he mused. "Is this the irony of fate? I should hate her, I suppose; but I don't—quite. I am startled, bewildered."

Then with a little reckless laugh that certainly had no mirth in it, he quickened his pace, remembering that he had charged himself with the duty of seeing the young lady safe to the gate of Strathmore Hall.

"Yes, I suppose I should hate her, but I don't, quite," he repeated. "I have great reasons—I—"

The sentence was never finished, for through the trees a quick, sharp cry, as of some one in distress, floated back to him. His heart gave a quick throb; he knew it was Theo's voice.

CHAPTER II.

Theo had sped quickly along upon leaving the depot, choosing the shortest route to Strathmore Hall, which led through the valley by way of the bridge.

The wind moaned through the trees, sighing away in low, fitful sobs over the hills. Theo quickened her pace, her footfalls making no sound on the grass-grown path.

She reached the bridge in safety, and when she had traversed half its length, the moon, struggled out from behind the network of black clouds which had enveloped it, and shone down for a moment upon the sleeping earth.

And in that moment, by its dim light, Theo saw, standing scarcely ten feet from her, the figure of a man.

He was leaning both arms on the railing, gazing down into the rapids below. And the dark, swarthy face turned partially toward her, although young and rather dissipated looking, was singularly handsome with a coarse kind of beauty.

Theo stood quite still, wondering whether it would be best to pass him or to retreat and go around by the road.

While she stood there irresolute, he glanced up and saw her; then it was too late to retreat, and Theo advanced.

He watched her with an evil smile on his face—a terrible smile—that, brave as she was made her shudder.

"Great Caesar, what a little beauty!" he ejaculated, and she recognized him by his voice, at once. He had been Major Strathmore's secretary up to a month or two previous. He had been discharged, and had left vowing bitter vengeance upon all connected with the house of Strathmore. He recognized Theo quite as readily as she had him, and sprung quickly forward.

"Why, I declare, it's Theo!" he cried, grasping one of her white hands. "This is a most fortunate adventure for me, by Jove! Little Theo, and grown a thousand times prettier than ever!"

"Let go my hand," cried Theo, angrily. "How dare you even presume to speak to me, Frank Hawthorne?"

"By the light of old acquaintance," he replied, with a reckless laugh; "besides, you're just the one I wanted to see, Theo."

"Let go my hand, or I shall call for help!" cried Theo. "Rest assured Major Strathmore shall hear of this and punish you as you deserve!"

He laughed derisively.

"You wouldn't put us so many high and mighty airs if you knew what I know, my proud young lady. You had better make friends with me, for I always had quite a fancy for your pretty face, little Theo."

The strong hand clasped hers more firmly. The black sinister eyes were gleaming down into her own terrified ones, and the dark face was bending down nearer her own.

It was then that Theo uttered the quick, sharp cry the stranger had heard as he stood under the trees, as she attempted to wrench her hands from the detaining clasp of the ex-secretary.

"You contemptible coward!" she hard a voice cry, and the next instant her enemy was stretched upon the bridge. "You scoundrel, to terrify and insult a young lady! Upon my word I have half a mind to throw you over into the rapids."

And looking up, Theo saw the indignant face of the handsome young man whom she had first met on the tracks.

Again he raised his hat and bowed to her, and Theo never remembered in what words she thanked him for his timely assistance.

Her enemy had regained his feet, and stood glaring at the fair-haired stranger in a perfect fury of anger.

"So, it's you, is it, that I have to thank for this interference? We shall meet again, then you shall answer to me for this."

Without deigning a reply, Theo's protector drew the little trembling hand through his arm and led her from the bridge.

They walked on in silence. A few moments later they had reached the gate of Strathmore Park.

"Won't you come in, so that my guardian may thank you for the assistance you have rendered me?" she asked.

He looked at the gray ivy-covered stone mansion with wistful eyes for a moment, then shook his head.

"I think not," he said.

"Then you will come to-morrow?" she asked, sweetly.

A rather embarrassed smile swept over his handsome features.

"I cannot promise to do so," he answered, "much as I should like to."

Theo's pretty face flushed with pique and resentment.

"Good night and good-bye, then," she said, holding out her little slim white hand.

He bowed courteously over it for an instant, then turned and walked rapidly away in the direction of the bridge, while Theo fairly flew up the stone steps and through a low, French window that opened on the porch.

It was only the edge of the evening and she knew the family would be assembled in the drawing-room, and a moment later she burst in among them like a veritable whirlwind.

Major Strathmore sat in his favorite arm-chair by the centre-table, his head buried in his hands, an unmistakable frown on his stern, set face.

Violet Kensington, his niece, sat at the piano, running her white jeweled fingers over the ivory keys, taking furtive glances now and then at the telegram she had received late in the afternoon and which she had evidently secreted in the pocket of her dress.

A very pretty girl was Violet, she was eighteen, neither blonde nor brunette.

Violet was just that type that love with all their heart or hate with all the passionate depths of their nature. Her eyes were gray, keen and penetrating, while the long lash, so dark that it waved low upon her white cheek, were black as a raven's plume.

Her mother, Mrs. Kensington, sat near her, idly turning over the leaves of a late number of the "New York Fashion Bazar," scanning the handsome pages, intent upon finding a stylish pattern to make up Violet's new wheeled silk walking suit.

Theo burst in among the old folks like a veritable whirlwind, and in an instant the major found two sweet white arms clasped to his neck, and a gay, laughing voice was crying out:

"There wasn't the least bit of use in your writing that horrible letter you I wasn't to come home the everything, grandpa; I wouldn't stay at school away, and here I am; aren't you glad to see me, really now?"

But before the flustered, surprised major could find his voice to reply Theo had darted off to greet Violet, and to plant the shadowy excuse of a kiss on Mrs. Kensington's angry, ruffled brow much to that lady's annoyance.

"Theo," began Mrs. Kensington, sharply, "how dared you disobey the major's express orders that you were to pass the summer vacation at your boarding-school? I am amazed—shocked! Of course the major will send you back at once?"

That was a very unwise speech—she saw it the moment after it was uttered. If there was one predominant peculiarity in Major Strathmore's character it was anger at being disobeyed. No one had a right to countermand his orders, it was quite his own business as to what he intended to do.

It had been the major's intention to pack Theo straight back to school again, bag and baggage, bright and early the next morning, but he changed his mind instantly.

"Pray be kind enough to leave the management of my affairs to me, Mrs. Kensington," he said, haughtily. "Theo shall remain at Strathmore Hall and share the pleasures of the coming season with your daughter Violet."

Theo looked delighted. Violet looked blankly and helplessly at her mother. Mrs. Kensington's brow grew black as a stormy but she had the grace to wreath her mouth in smiles.

"My dear brother-in-law," she said sweetly, "your decision is always the wisest and best; but it rather changes our plans, you know. We had arranged to take Violet to Long Branch."

"What has that got to do with Theo?" demanded the major. "You can take Violet to the sea-shore—Theo shall stay here."

"I did not know but what you intended Theo to accompany us to Long Branch," murmured Mrs. Kensington; "and that step-would have been quite unwise, if my opinion; for a girl in Theo's position, who will one day be a governess, or something of that kind, should not be introduced into society as a friend of our Violet—in time she might regret it."

She spoke in a low tone; but Theo, who was standing across the room, heard every word of it, and the girl's cheeks flushed a burning scarlet, and tears of anger and wounded pride sprung to her brown eyes.

It was the first time a thought of the future—the great, barren, desolate future—flashed across her mind.

From that moment the stormy clouds of poor, hapless Theo's tragic life commenced to gather.

An hour later Violet and Theo bade each other "good night."

The next afternoon Violet and her mother were en route to Long Branch. The major had been attacked by his old enemy, the gout, and had to abandon his plan of accompanying them at the very last moment.

It would have been far better for Violet if she had not left Strathmore Hall on that eventful June day.

But then we must blindly follow the hand of fate wherever it leads, whether for weal or for woe.

Strathmore Hall was quite dull after Violet's departure. Major Strathmore, who was decidedly irritable, was confined to his room, and the cross old housekeeper was no companion for a bright, restless girl like Theo. She almost wished she had stayed at school. That afternoon, taking a copy of Tennyson's poems with her, she sauntered down to the beach, shaded brook that skirted Strathmore Park, and throwing off her broad sun-hat, sat down beneath the trees to read and dream over the quaint, romantic love idyls, but a fair, handsome face danced between her and the printed page.

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PERILS THAT THREATEN

Rev. Dr. Talmage Discusses the Destiny of the American Republic.

Monopoly the Overshadowing Curse of the United States—Nihilism Also an Evil Power—Infidelity a Great Source of Weakness.

Washington, May 28.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage speaks of some of the perils that threaten our American institutions, and points out the path of safety; text, Isaiah lxii. 4, "Thy land shall be married."

As the greater includes the less, so does the circle of future joy around our entire world include the epicycle of our own republic. Bold, exhilarant, unique, divine imagery of the text. At the close of a week in which for three days our national capital was a pageant and all that grand review and bannered procession and national anthems could do, celebrated peace, it may not be inapt to anticipate the time when the Prince of Peace and the heir of universal dominion shall take possession of this nation, and "thy land shall be married."

In discussing the final destiny of this nation it makes all the difference in the world whether we are on the way to a funeral or a wedding. The Bible leaves no doubt on this subject. In pulpits and on platforms and in places of public concourse, I hear so many of the muffled drums of evil prophecy sounded, as though we were on the way to a national funeral, and beside Thebes and Babylon and Tyre in the cemetery of dead nations our republic was to be entombed that I wish you to understand it is not to be obsequies, but nuptials; not mausoleum, but carpeted altar; not cypress but orange blossoms; not requiem, but wedding march; for "thy land shall be married."

I propose to name some of the suitors who are claiming the hand of this republic. This land is so fair, so beautiful, so affluent that it has many suitors, and it will depend much upon your advice whether this or that shall be accepted or rejected. In the first place, I remark There is a greedy, all grasping, monster who comes in as suitor seeking the hand of this republic, and that monster is known by the name of monopoly. His scepter is made out of the iron of the rail track and the wire of telegraphy. He does everything for his own advantage and for the robbery of the people. Things go on from bad to worse until in the state legislatures of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania for a long time monopoly decided everything. If monopoly favor a bill, it passes; if monopoly oppose a law, it is rejected. Monopoly stands in the railroad depot putting into his pockets in one year $200,000,000 in excess of all reasonable charges for services. Monopoly holds in his one hand the steam power of locomotion and in the other the electricity of swift communication. Monopoly has the Republican party in one pocket and the Democratic party in the other pocket. Monopoly decides national and elections—city elections, state elections, national elections. Without ballots he secures the votes of legislators giving them free passes, giving appointments to needy relatives to lucrative positions, employing them as attorneys if they are lawyers, carrying their goods higher cost less if they are merchants, and if he find a case very stubborn as well as very important puts down before him the hard cash of bribery.

Power of Monopoly.

But monopoly is not so easily caught now as when during the term of Mr. Buchanan the legislative committee in one of our states explored and exposed the manner in which a certain railway company had obtained a donation of public land. It was found out that 13 of the Senators of that state received $175,000 among them, 60 members of the Lower House of that state received between $5,000 and $50,000 each, the Governor of that state received $30,000, his clerk received $5,000, the Lieutenant-Governor received $10,000, all the clerks of the Legislature received $5,000 each, while $50,000 was divided among the lobby agents. That thing on a larger or smaller scale is all the time going on in some of the states of the Union, but it is not so blundering as it used to be, and therefore not so easily exposed or arrested. I tell you that the overshadowing curse of the United States to-day is monopoly. He puts his hand upon every bushel of wheat, upon every sack of salt, upon every ton of coal, and every man, woman and child in the United States feels the touch of that moneyed despotism. I rejoice that in 21 states of the Union already anti-monopoly leagues have been established. God speed them in the work of liberation.

I have nothing to say against capitalists; a man has a right to all the money he can make honestly. I have nothing to say against corporations as such; without them no great enterprise would be possible, but what I do say is that the same principles are to be applied to capitalists and to corporations that are applied to the poorest man and the plainest laborer. What is wrong for me is wrong for great corporations. If I take from you your property without any adequate compensation, I am a thief, and, if a railway damages the property of the people without making any adequate compensation that is a gigantic theft. What is wrong on a small scale is wrong on a large scale. Monopoly in England has ground hundreds of thousands of her best people into semi-starvation, and in Ireland has driven multitudinous tenants almost to madness, and in the United States proposes to take the wealth of 60 or 70 millions of people and put it in a few silken wallets.

Monopoly, brazen-faced, iron-fingered, nature-hearted monopoly, offers his hand to this republic. He stretches it out over the lakes and up the great railroads and over the telegraph poles of the continent and says: "Here are my heart and hand. Be mine forever." Let the millions of the people, north, south, east and west forbid the banns of that marriage, forbid them at the ballot box, forbid them on the platform, forbid them by great organizations, forbid them by the overwhelming sentiment of an outraged nation, forbid them by the protest of the church of God; forbid them by prayer to high heaven. That Herod shall not have this Abigail. It shall not be to all-devouring monopoly that this land is to be married.

Nihilism a Monster.

Another suitor claiming the hand of this republic is nihilism.

He owns nothing but a knife for universal cutthroatery and a nitroglycerin bomb for universal explosion. He believes in no God, no government, no heaven and no hell, except what he can make on earth. He slew the Czar of Russia, keeps many a king practically imprisoned, killed Abraham Lincoln, would put to death every king and president on earth, and, if he had the power, would climb up until he could drive the God of heaven from his throne and take it himself, the universal butcher. In France it is called communism; in the United States it is called anarchism; in Russia it is called nihilism, but that last is the most graphic and descriptive term. It means complete and eternal smashup. It would make the holding of property a crime, and it would drive a dagger through your heart and put a torch to your dwelling and turn over this whole land into the possession of theft and lust and rapine and murder.

Where does this monster live? In all the towns and cities of this land. It offers its hand to this fair republic, it proposes to tear to pieces the ballot box, the legislative hall, the congressional assembly. It would take the land and divide it up, or rather, divide it down. It would give as much to the idler as to the worker, to the bad as to the good. Nihilism! This panther having prowled across other lands has set its paw on our soil, and it is only waiting for the time in which to spring upon its prey. It was nihilism that burned the railroad property at Pittsburg during the great riots; it was nihilism that slew black people in our northern cities during the war; it was nihilism that mauled to death the Chinese immigrants years ago; it is nihilism that glares out of the windows of the dinkeries upon sober people as they go by. Ah, its power has never yet been tested. I pray God its power may never be fully tested. It would, if it had the power, leave every church, chapel, cathedral, school-house and college in ashes.

Let me say it is the worst enemy of the laboring classes in any country. The honest cry for reform lifted by oppressed laboring men is drowned out by the vociferation for anarchy. The criminals and the vagabonds who range through our cities talking about their rights, when their first right is the penitentiary—if they could be hushed up, and the down-trodden laboring men of this country could be heard, there would be more bread for hungry children. In this land, riot and bloodshed never gained any wages for the people or gathered up any prosperity. In this land the best weapon is not the club, not the shillelah, not firearms, but the ballot. Let not our oppressed laboring men be beguiled to coming under the bloody banner of nihilism. It will make your taxes heavier, your wages smaller, your table scanter, your children hungrier, your suffering greater. Yet this nihilism, with feet red of slaughter, comes forth and offers its hand for this republic. Shall the banns be proclaimed? If so, where shall the marriage altar be? and who will be the officiating priest? and what will be the music? That altar will have to be white with bleached skulls, the officiating priest must be a dripping assassin, the music must be the shouted groan of multitudinous victims, the garlands must be twisted of night shade, the fruits must be apples of Sodom, the wine must be the blood of St. Bartholomew's massacre. No! It is not to be to nihilism, the sanguinary monster, that this land is to be married.

Infidelity's Threat.

Another suitor for the hand of this nation is infidelity. When the midnight ruffians despoiled the grave of A. T. Stewart in St. Marks' churchyard everybody was shocked; but infidelity proposes something worse than that—the robbing of all the graves of Christendom of the hope of a resurrection. It proposes to chisel out from the tombstones of your Christian dead the words "Asleep in Jesus," and substitute the words, "Obliteration—annihilation." Infidelity proposes to take the letter from the world's Father, inviting the nations to virtue and happiness, and tear it up into fragments so small that you cannot read a word of it. It proposes to take the consolation from the broken-hearted and the soothing pillow from the dying. Infidelity proposes to swear in the President of the United States, and the supreme court, and the governors of states, and the witnesses in the courtroom with their right hand on Paine's "Age of Reason," or Voltaire's "Philosophy of History." It proposes to take away from this country the book that makes the difference between the United States and the kingdom of Dahomey, between American civilization and Borneshan cannibalism. If infidelity could destroy the Scriptures, it would in 200 years turn the civilized nations back to semi-barbarism, and then from semi-barbarism into midnight savagery, until the morals of a menagerie of tigers, rattlesnakes and chimpanzees would be better than the morals of the shipwrecked human race.

The only impulse in the right direction that this world has ever had has come from the Bible. It was the mother of Roman law and of healthful jurisprudence. That book has been the mother of all reforms and all charities—the mother of English magna charta and American declaration of independence. Benjamin Franklin, holding that holy book in his hand, stood before an infidel club in Paris and read to them out of the prophecies of Habakkuk, and the infidels, not knowing what book it was, declared it was the best poetry they had ever heard. That book brought George Washington down on his knees in the snow at Valley Forge, and led the dying Prince Albert to ask some one to sing "Rock of Ages."

I tell you that the worst attempted crime of the century if the attempt to destroy this book. Yet infidelity, loathsome, stenchful, leprous, pestiferous, rotten, monster, stretches out its hand, lohorous with the second death, to take the hand of this republic. It stretches it out through seductive magazines, and through literatures, and through caricatures of religion. It asks for all that part of the country already fully settled and the two-thirds not yet counted. It says: "Give me the east of the Mississippi, with the keys of the church and with the Christian passes. Then give me Wyoming, give me Alaska, give me Montana, give me Colorado, give me all the states west of the Mississippi and I will take those states and keep them by right of possession long before the gospel can be fully in manhood."

And this suitor presses his case appallingly. Shall the banns of that marriage be proclaimed? "No!" say the home missionaries of the west, of whom the gospel is made worthy, toiling amid fatigue and privation. "No, no! we can help it. By what we and our children have suffered we forbid the banns of that marriage!" "No!" say all patriotic societies. "Our institutions were bought at too dear a price and were defended at too great a sacrifice to be so cheaply surrendered." "No!" says the God fearing Bunker Hill and Independence Hall and Gettysburg not start this farce for such a farce." "No!" cry 10,000,000 voices. "To infidelity this land shall not be married!"

Christ.

But there is another suitor that presents his claim for the hand of this republic. He is mentioned in the verse following my text, where it says, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." It is not my figure. It is the figure of the Bible. Christ is so gracious to have this world love him that he stoops to no humiliation of similes. He compares his grace to sight to the cure of the blind man. He compares himself to a hen gathering the chickens, and in my text he compares himself to a suitor begging a hand in marriage. Deaf, blind, Christ, the King, deserve this hand. Behold Pilate's hall and the leaping expectation on the face of Christ. Behold the Calvarean massacre and the awful hemorrhage of five wounds. Jacob served 14 years for Rachel, but Christ, my Lord, the King, suffered in torture 33 years to win the love of this world. As princes at their royal birth are pledged in treaty of marriage to princes of other kings of earth, so this nation at its birth was pledged to Christ for divine marriage. Before Columbus and his crew sailed on the Santa Maria, the Pinta and the Nina for their wonderful voyage, what was the last thing they did? They knelt down and took the holy sacrament of the Lord Jesus Christ. After the shipwreck of the country's hopes on one ship had amounted to nothing, the other vessels that followed in their wake were discovered, and the first thing the crews of the three decks went down and kneeled in prayer. After Columbus had stepped from the ship to the solid ground, what did the first act of the land Jesus caught the first thing they did? They knelt down and sang the doxology. The other vessels followed, and the other ones followed, and the first act of the people was to kneel down and sing the doxology. This continent for immediate prayer, in the name of God and in the name of the Christ who was born in a manger, this nation has been dedicated to God and has been set apart