

Grandmother.

BY L. A. D. CHAMBERLIN.

I have a sunny corner in my home,
One corner where the shadows never come;
For when the glowing sun outside has set
Grandmother's sunshine lights the corner up.

Her features have the radiance of love;
Her voice the peaceful cadence of the dove;
Her silver hair a crown of glory shines,
Her winning way around all hearts entwines.

The very wrinkles on her placid face
Seem but to add a beautifying grace,
And to enhance her beauty as for aught
Do dimples on the fair, plump cheek of youth.

The children know grandmother's corner well,
And run to her their troubles all to tell.
They're sure to find their clouds all scattered
Quite, and hearts filled up again with sunshine bright.

No clouds ever dim grandmother's corner bright,
For the light she learned full well the source of light.
She draws in cheerful patience her supply,
And enters it to every passer-by.

Dear Grandmother! would every home and heart
Had such a blessing in it as thou art.
Gone be thy life, and lighter still thy days,
Till up on those shall dawn Heaven's perfect rays.

Half Won.

We've once a firm resolve is made,
Full half the battle's won.

Growing Together.

A merry heart and a smiling face
Are better far than sunny weather;
A noble life and forms of grace,
Like: lay us and flowers, grow will together.

MR. L'ESTRANGE.

A TALE OF AN ATLANTIC LINER

CHAPTER—III.

The reputation of the Atlantic Ocean has been so utterly lost, that no abuse of it by sea can defame it. As the most whimsical, wrathful, spiteful of oceans, it is but too well known. It was my fate to be a victim of its temper for six days, during which I endured all that a poor nervous invalid can suffer. Storms blew all round the compass. I seemed to be rolling night and day unceasingly, now in this direction, now in that. My bed was like a billow, I like a log tumbling over it. The steward who attended to me coolly spoke of the string of tempests as spring gales of rather a gentle sort. I have the impression that I did not sleep during these six days and nights; but this nobody will credit. I admit that I was often in a state of dull lethargy, incapable of using limbs or senses, yet conscious of what was going on near me.

Theodore was a born sailor; the more Boreas blew, the livelier he became. For the first two days, the kind fellow tended me like a woman; brought the doctor to see me, ministered to my humors, impudently with the robust man's consolations. I begged him to leave me in peace. The third day he obeyed me almost literally; for on that day I do not remember seeing him, except when he came to bed. His berth was over mine, and he had that night a long struggle to get into it, which put me into a fever of witness. I thought it was the raging waters that made him so clumsy; I now know that he had been drinking champagne. On the fourth day I saw a little of him; the fifth, he came into our stateroom several times and hurriedly. He always spoke to me, and appeared to look at me with a peculiar anxiety. Once the steward came to the door and could not open it. Theodore rose from the floor, and in an agitated voice asked what was wanted. He did not open the door, which he had bolted. I was getting a little better, and this incident struck me. Subsequent events no doubt intensified my remembrance. I seemed to know that something furtive was going on, and was uneasy, but too shattered by weakness to bestir myself.

The sixth day, Theodore remained in his berth until the afternoon. I heard him groan over my head several times and toss about uneasily. About four o'clock he got up, after drinking his fourth glass of brandy and soda. The steward eyed him very strangely. I thought; and then the man eyed me inquiringly, as he held the empty glass and talked about the improving weather. After dressing, Theodore sat on the sofa staring at the floor, as though looking through the ship's bottom. He was pale, shivered from time to time, muttered to himself, but never took his eyes from the floor. I grew alarmed as I watched him. At first I thought he was going to be sea-sick after all; that his reckless indulgence in food, drink, and tobacco had found his point of gastric toleration. But the expression of despair which cut deeper and deeper into his face, making its whiteness more marble-like continually, was not that of a sickening man; or rather, it was the manifestation of a mind diseased.

"What ails you, Theodore?" I asked, in a tone so hoarse that I did not recognize my own. Illness had indeed changed me in every way. He jumped up, as if he had been struck in the back; his eyes ran round the room, then rested on me, as if he did not know me. For a moment we stared in silence. "How do you feel, Charley?" he said, advancing to me. "How do you feel, Theodore?" "Me?" rubbing his head with both hands energetically—"me, Charley? Why, you know I am always first class."

"Don't try to impose upon me, brother; you are ill—worse than I have been." "Impose! What on earth do you mean?" His face was scarlet; he shook, and he caught at the side of the berth, as if he were falling. I got on to my elbow and tried to leave the bed but the effort was too great; my head swam; I fell back helplessly. I lay still awhile. Theodore returned to his seat on the sofa, and again fixed his eyes on the floor as before. The dinner-bell rang. "Are you going to dinner, Theodore?" I asked. He did not reply. I repeated the question. He looked at me, muttered, and began to move about. Again I asked the question. "No; I do not want to eat," he said short. "You have eaten nothing to-day." "I am not hungry.—Don't bother me, Charley."

at all; a bit out of sorts.—Lie still; you are as weak as a kitten.—What will you have for dinner?"

"I will not eat again, until you tell me what is pressing upon your mind. You frighten me, Theodore. Only something of the most extraordinary nature could have metamorphosed you into the haggard, harassed wretch that you have become. You are a perfect wreck."

He laughed, a wild, passionate, mocking laugh, and turned his head from me. The steward knocked at the door, calling to ask if I would have some dinner.

"Do have something, Charley," said Theodore, who became suddenly collected, "and I will dine with you—Here, steward, come in."

The door opened, the steward entered, and with him the doctor. After a few inquiries regarding my health, the latter said to Theodore: "I want to show you those things I spoke of in my cabin."

My brother looked at him with intense surprise, then a flash of understanding shot into his eyes, and he said in a quivering voice: "I will be with you in five minutes; I am not dressed."

I had not been alone many instants, when the steward entered my room in a stealthy manner, and came close to me, whispering: "Has your brother told you?"

"Told me! What?" "Of the row in the smoke room last night?" "What do you mean?"

"Why, you see, he was playing cards and lost a lot of money—so it is reported, for of course I was not there; and it ended in him knocking a gentleman down."

I groaned so deeply, that the man was frightened, and made clumsy excuses for mentioning the matter. I pressed his hand reassuringly, but I could not speak; then I motioned to him to leave me. How can I describe the abyss of despair into which the story hurled me? Theodore gambling, drinking, quarrelling, going to the bad already! Gambling! All at once recurred the scene of the bank notes he had held before me when I fell ill. I had forgotten it. Then returned the boy's wild behaviour at dinner-table. L'Estrange—Ah! that evil being had justified my opinion of him. Oh, why had I been ill? My absence had permitted this terrible debasement of my brother.

Hours seemed to pass before Theodore returned. He did not speak, but began to pull off his clothes, as if going to bed. The light was turned down to a glimmer. He thought I was asleep.

"Do not undress, Theodore," I said, as calmly as I could; "turn up the light."

"Do you want something, Charley?"

"Yes, I want to talk to you."

"Put it off till morning; I'm so tired that I cannot talk." He sighed wearily.

"No, Theodore; I must talk, however tired you are. Come here, unhappy boy, and tell me what you have been doing. Whom did you strike in the smoke-room?"

He recoiled from me and made for the door. I sprang out of my berth and caught him by the arm.

"Let me go, Charley, for mercy's sake! I cannot remain here; it will kill me." His looks of horror, his mad efforts to tear my hands from him, his ecstasy of terror, for an instant stunned me. Then an icy quiet came over him. I knew that something supremely serious had happened, to have changed my brother so absolutely.

"Sit down!" I said authoritatively. "Tell me the whole truth; I can bear it."

He looked at me as the bird at the rattlesnake, half fearing, half confident.

I turned to increase the light, and he again became restless. "Now, Theodore, out with it. No good can come from delay, and concealment is impossible; others will tell me. Let me know the extent of my shame from the author of it. What have you done?"

"Don't, don't speak like that, Charley; I can't bear it."

"I thought you were a man, and afraid of nothing."

"I was so once, my brother. I am not a man any longer; I am a villain, a fratricide. Oh, heavenly Father, why have I lived to commit such a crime!"

These dreadful words tore my soul as grape-shot ravages the flesh. I stared into the eyes of the miserable boy; I placed my hands upon his head, to draw him nearer to me looking into the depths of his being.

"Explain yourself. Have you seriously injured L'Estrange?"

"L'Estrange, Charley!" Here he assumed an expression so utterly unlike what I had expected, that I believed he had gone insane.

"Yes, L'Estrange, the man you struck in the gambling quarrel."

"I do not understand you, Charley," said Theodore, in something like his ordinary manner.

"Did you not strike him?"

"No."

"Did you not gamble with him?"

"No; that is, he was my partner."

I put my head against the wall; the confusion of my brain was unbearable. "Why are you so agitated, then? Why did you call yourself a fratricide? What is the meaning of all you have been manifesting for the last dozen hours?"

"Really, Charley, I cannot tell you—at least, not just now. In the morning."

"Do you wish wholly to shatter my mind and body, Theodore? You have omitted some deep wrong. My ignorance of the facts is a thousand times worse than the knowledge. If you refuse to tell me, I shall go to the smoke room, if it is now occupied, and inquire from the attendant. If he is in bed, I shall awaken him."

"But he will only tell you that the gentleman is all right again. The doctor says I have not hurt him; and we have become good friends again."

I listened to him as if he were talking in an unknown tongue. After a long silence, I said: "Then you have been suffering from a fit of temporary insanity, brought on by drinking and gambling?"

He turned away from me, trembled, did not speak.

Again my fears returned. "You are concealing something hideous from me, Theodore. It is infamy to do so. I ask for the last time, will you tell me what you have done? Answer, or I leave this cabin to return no more. If you have not confidence in me, your brother, your friend, then all is over between us. I shall not go to California, but shall find some employment in New York. You must go your own way—we shall henceforth be strangers."

A deep feeling of solemnity thrilled me as I spoke. Theodore did not answer; but he sobbed hysterically for a few minutes, and then threw himself at my feet, pulling my knees with convulsive anguish. "I cannot

endure my misery; it is too great, Charley. Would that I could atone by dying at your feet! O my broken hearted mother!—my unhappy sisters!"

"This is the very height of folly or remorse," I cried in a terrible agitation. "Theodore, in the name of those dear creatures at home, what have you done, that you act thus?"

"I will confess, Charley," he whispered, hiding his head in my breast and pulling me tightly. "Do not forgive me, though; no; God himself cannot forgive me. I have—I have stolen the money from your box—we are beggars!"

The shock was supreme! The calamity measureless, final! A cry of despair burst from my burning lips. Slowly at first, then quicker and quicker, I realized that I had duties to perform towards the lost creature, trembling at my feet, towards those helpless suffering women, dependent upon me for all things now. Though black ruin was crashing around me on every side, I must not despair; I must fight for them who had no champion but me. The hugeness of the misfortune began to steady me as I thought of it. We should reach New York more abject than the pauper emigrant. What could we do?

"Did you take all the money?" I asked Theodore in a quiet voice.

"All that was in the pocket-book," he answered whisperingly.

"Have you lost it all?"

"Yes."

"Who won it?" I demanded, a sudden curiosity arising in me. Up to this point, I had been oblivious of the history of Theodore's gambling transactions; now it seemed that I ought to know how the boy had gone wrong. In the effort to adjust myself to a new and calamitous situation, I must begin at the beginning.

"Who won the money from you?"

"A young man. He is named Barker."

"Did L'Estrange win anything from you?"

"Not a shilling, Charley."

"Tell me all about it. I am settling down. Besides, you have told me the worst."

"O Charley, I do not know how I can expose my infamy to you without you spurning me from you, as the most cruel and infatuated man in the world."

"Spare all that sort of talk, Theodore. Tell me the bare facts. Who is this man Barker? An acquaintance of L'Estrange's?"

"No, no; they are total strangers, I assure you. L'Estrange has lost more than I have."

"Enough of generalities; come to particulars. Tell me all, and from the beginning."

I will, Charley.—Well, I first played with L'Estrange, just we two. I won a lot of money from him, I don't know how. He almost seemed to be giving it to me. We played at whist, double-dummy. You remember how excited I was, and the champagne, and the greenbacks that I showed you. Well, from that I fell into a gambling fever, and I won from L'Estrange quite a hundred pounds. Then others began to play with us, the man Barker, and a young gentleman, the son of an English nobleman. This latter lost a great deal to L'Estrange; but L'Estrange lost it to me, and I lost it to Barker. Then we began to play at American games, that I never had heard of, quick games, over in a few minutes. It went on day by day. I was always in a state of excitement. I once had five hundred pounds in my pocket. I thought I was going to make my fortune before we got ashore. It was not for the money, Charley, I swear it was not; it was to make us both rich, so that we might send for mother and sisters without delay. I really did think that I was destined to obtain a heap of money, and all at once!"

"Poor simpleton!" I interrupted. "And did you believe that money so got could bring a blessing to us? Do you think that I would have shared in the fruits of gambling, Theodore?"

"Do not upbraid me, Charley; I loathe myself enough; ah! may you never know the awfulness of my remorse! Still, I did wish the money for all our sakes. I am not selfish; at least I am free from that. And you do not know what a fearful thing temptation is, Charley. I cannot tell you how the passion to win grew upon me; I could have sat up day and night playing incessantly. I wanted nothing to eat; drink, stimulating drink, was all I needed. Our stakes grew by degrees, until hundreds of pounds were won and lost in an hour or two."

"And was there nobody sufficiently manly or sufficiently moral to protest against such a scandal?" I exclaimed indignantly. "How could gentlemen witness a boy like you playing for hundreds without stopping the game?"

"Nobody knew what the stakes were but ourselves," said Theodore earnestly. "We played with counters, and the winnings were paid in the cabins of the players; we settled up three times a day. I was wonderfully lucky at first, and quite surprised at myself; the cards seemed to be charmed in my favour. Sometimes I lost nearly all my gains; but I always had a little left over from my first winnings to begin again, until yesterday. My luck quite deserted me. The young Englishman had lost all his money; and another gentleman took his place, who had never played with us before. L'Estrange and I were partners; Barker and the stranger against us. Between breakfast and lunch we did pretty well; but in the afternoon, fortune went quite away from me; I rose up at dinner-time having lost two hundred pounds. I was almost frantic, for I did not know what I should do to pay. I spoke to L'Estrange, who asked me all about our affairs."

"Did he suggest that you should take the money from my portmanteau, Theodore?" I cried, all my suspicions of the man's evil character rushing back upon me.

"No, Charley; but he said that my spell of bad luck would be over perhaps, then, and that I would be sure to win heavily next time. Besides, he said, I was bound to settle up, or he would be disgraced as my partner; so the evil spirit led me to take your money, Charley. I put off the thing as long as I could; I stood looking over the side of the ship, and a trifle would have decided me to jump overboard; and then I thought of home, and I grew more desperate than to commit suicide; I determined to try the cards again; so I took the keys from your pocket, finding you asleep, and I hastened back to play. But bad luck went on; I lost and lost, until I was again some hundreds to the good. I need say no more, Charley; I have ruined you and all of us."

The miserable boy threw himself on the floor, as if he would annihilate the memory of his sin by dashing out his brains. I lifted him up, and strove to comfort

him. My tenderness made his arguings more poignant.

"Do not be kind to me; I can bear anything but that," he groaned.

"Who, then, shall you lead back to better ways but me, Theodore? You have fallen, poor boy; you must rise again. It is a frightful decadence at the threshold of life. But we will bear it together, my brother.—And now tell me of your quarrel. Whom did you strike?"

"Barker. I could not pay the whole of my losses. He said something insulting, and I knocked him under the table."

"Do you owe him something still?"

"Yes, fifty pounds. But the doctor and some other gentlemen have made things pleasant again. I am sorry I lost my temper. The doctor has assured me that Barker is quite well again. L'Estrange has promised to square my debt; and he says I can pay him at any time."

"I am quite astounded at L'Estrange proving a friend, Theodore; I had the worst feeling against him that I have known in all my experience of men."

"You have been altogether wrong, Charley; L'Estrange is a good fellow."

Day had broken over the placid sea before our conversation terminated. Exhausted by so many agitations, and with laden hearts, we fell into our berths like dying men.

I did not wake till noon. Theodore slept, or feigned to do so. I got up, and looked out of the porthole upon the dazzling waters.

The weather was magnificent. I dressed quickly, and left the cabin. I wanted to be alone, to ponder on the frightful position of our affairs. At the instant of waking, all had burst upon me afresh; but the repose had given my mind both strength and calm. In a few days we should be at New York, penniless, planless; something must be schemed before we were shot upon the quayside like human rubbish. Further, I must preoccupy Theodore's mind with the future, or the wretched boy would do further mischief. I knew how much he would suffer from the unappeasable torments of remorse, from the shattering of all his vain self-convictions, from the shame he had heaped upon himself and me.

The deck was crowded with passengers; for, with fine weather all the invalids had been brought from their cabins and placed on chairs and couches. I paid no attention to any one, but walked slowly, thinking as I had never done before, and resting against the bulwarks from time to time, when I grew faint with useless cogitation. No; I could not imagine any expedient in our case. Friendless, beggared, broken-hearted, dismayed, what could I do? I groaned in impotent agony, and stared at the glittering sea, though I saw it not.

"Etes-vous malade, encore, monsieur?"

I started and looked down, and saw lying on a deck lounge, the figure of a lady. Her veil was wreathed round her face, pale as death; two dark, burning, pitying eyes were fixed upon me.

"Do you not recall me?" asked the lady, still speaking in French.

A moment I was confused, then I remembered her, and replied: "Pardon me, madame; I was preoccupied. I hope you are getting better. We have had rough weather."

"You have suffered much, monsieur," she rejoined, looking intently at me. "What a change! Ah! the sea is terrible."

"It is indeed, for poor weaklings like me, madame."

A bitter sigh followed my words.

"You are still very ill," said the lady. I hope the weather will be fine until we reach New York; then you will be happy. We soon forget the discomforts of ship life when we are on shore."

A mournful smile was my only comment. What had I to expect ashore?

"You do not agree with me?" demanded the lady with surprise.

"I agree that I prefer the land to the sea; yet the land does not always bring happiness?"

"Happiness?" exclaimed she. "Where do we find happiness? It is a phantom, not a reality.—Were you seeking happiness in America?"

"Yes; like millions, I am going with that intent, or rather I was." I stopped, for a sudden sob choked me.

"You have been very ill, monsieur. You are quite unmaimed. I did not think that the strong sex suffered so much."

The lady's voice was tender and pitying; it affected me in a surprising manner. I bent my head and turned from her in a paroxysm of grief. How long the fit of mental anguish lasted, I do not know; I seemed to wake out of a dream, trembling and ashamed of the weakness I had shown. The lady was speaking to her maid. I rose from the seat I had fallen into quite unconsciously, but I was so weak that I sank down again.

"You are seriously ill," said the lady; "allow my maid to bring you something." She then spoke rapidly to her attendant, who hurried away, and soon reappeared with a glass containing some sort of restorative. I drank it gratefully, and sank into a pleasant lethargy.

The lunch-bell rang; the deck became deserted; the lady and myself were alone. Gradually strength and calm returned, and I was able to thank the kind creature. Little by little our conversation expanded, until I had told her all about my plans being annihilated by my brother's folly. She was even more agitated than myself as I related the story; and at the close she got up from her couch, and begging me to excuse her hurried departure, left me.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Thrilling Incident.

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A. P. 249

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