

L. P. Fisher

The Albany Register.

VOLUME V.

ALBANY, OREGON, NOVEMBER 29, 1874.

NO. 18.

FROM FANION TO LOVE.

"Devil!"

The word was hissed from lips like steel at white heat, as colorless and yet as burning, and the black eyes above them flashed out from beneath long, silken, and intensely midnight lashes, such deadly glances as could only be rivaled by the serpent when surrounded and coiled for the spring that would fling its venomous fangs deeply toward the tormentor's heart. The expression was commonplace enough, is daily used by thousands, but never uttered when all of malignity and enmity to death was more concentrated within its letters.

And it came, too, from the lips of a woman, girl, rather, and a most beautiful one when free from passion, when not entirely absorbed and given over to rage.

With more than the usual light, Pauline Mossart had inherited very much, also, of her father's physical strength, though, covered by the softer and untaxed tissues of womanhood, there was nothing of the exterior show of muscle. A Creole, in the strictest and purest sense of the word, she had lost nothing of the fire of the race in the transmission of blood—nothing of the sensuous ripeness of either flesh or color, that flashed suddenly and with fitful brilliancy through the soft skin, touched with olive, only just sufficient to relieve it from sallow paleness.

Her hair just missed being of the most raven blackness. Had there not been just a faint tinge of blue, such as often lingers even in the ripe berry, it would have been so. Her eyes matched the slightly-waving hair, her teeth were white and regular, beautiful, but more than ordinarily pointed and sharp. The mouth was small and the lips crimson, but the upper one arched defiantly. The nose was straight, with nostrils large and transparent, as seen in horses of the purest blood and greatest speed. Her hands and feet were small, but the limbs and arms, though tapering greatly, soon grew large and indicated the strength she possessed when aroused to action. A more intense, self-willed, passionate and determined girl could scarcely be found—one that very few would dare to cross.

But now she had met her match, for the time at least. Held by either wrist by a man much more powerful than herself she could only vent her indignation by the oft repeated words—the most vile and expressive one she had yet learned, whatever might come in the future.

They had been lovers—perhaps were so even in that mad hour to a certain extent—that is, the fire that had caused the blood to flow impetuously through their veins had not yet had time to entirely cool, though the result would be ashes. Yes, lovers had Pauline Mossart and Phillip Ransome been, though as utterly opposed by nature as the Arctic and tropics. Not that he was wanting in depths of feeling, but he was of Northern birth, and the hot kisses of the sun had never maddened his brain or heart. His love would be as firm as his native granite hills, while hers was volcanic in both its conception and expression.

For months all had been sunshine and flowers between them—he giving to her something of his firmness and self-command—she imparting something of her warmth, and both gaining by the interchange. But the wild storm had burst suddenly and fearfully, and with a hell of jealousy convulsing her nature Pauline raved like one insane, and had even attempted to revenge what she supposed to be a breaking of his vows of fealty to her with a tiny dagger she was accustomed to wear as a charm—a little, but a dangerous weapon.

Astonished, unguarded for such a movement, Phillip Ransome had received a slight wound. But with the first issue of blood he had seized her slender wrists and instantly robbed the tigress of power to inflict further harm.

Thus they stood; he controlling himself, as was his wont, and firmly, though gently as possible, compelling her to inactivity, and as she flung to the very lips with passion, boiling over with baffled rage, and impudently endeavoring to relieve her overcrowded heart by hissing out the hateful word.

"Paul," he said, as soon as he could sufficiently compose her by the force of his stronger will to listen, even though it might be actually "Pauline" in the name of heaven does this mean?"

"How dare you ask—devil?"

There appeared to be no other word that would suffice, and notwithstanding the unpleasantness, not to say somewhat dangerous situation, he could not prevent a little smile from

flashing across his face, as he said, "I will give you a coherent answer, if you please, and explain, if you can, the true import of this scene. I came to visit you, as I have long been in the habit of doing, and you accuse me of something—I cannot fancy what—and you spring upon me like an uncaged tigress. Nay, more—have drawn blood."

She glanced down at his wrist, saw the crimson stain there, started, smiled jubilantly, and hissed out from between lips wild with all-absorbing passion: "I thank heaven for it, but wish it had come from your heart."

"Will you not explain?"

"How dare you ask such a question, and of me? Look within at your own black soul."

"I see no accusation there, Paul."

"Never call me that name again."

"After this interview is finished I promise never to do so, if you wish. Now I must learn, if I can, the motive you had for acting as you have, if, indeed, one can be found."

She looked at him steadily from under her long, curled lashes, bit her lips, as if to strangle the words formed upon them, drew deep respirations, and at length said, in a more subdued tone and in a far less passionate manner:

"Mary Irving?"

"Well, what of her?"

"You were with her last evening, sir."

"I admit it. Go on."

"You remained late."

"Yes."

"You kissed her when you parted."

"No. Lips of mine have never touched those of womankind, save your own since I plighted my vows to you."

"It is false as—"

"Hush! Will you listen to me?"

"Unhand me. It is unbecoming in a gentleman to thus restrain a lady."

"Even after she has—" he was about to say, "attempted his life," but did not.

"Pshaw! This toy?" and she tore the miniature dagger from the chain by which it was suspended, threw it down and trampled it savagely under her feet. Then she looked him squarely in the eyes, with her own still showing the baleful fires of the most relentless jealousy, and continued:

"You dare not tell me that this girl—this thing—did not kiss you?"

"I did not say that, but I did that I did not kiss her."

"A miserable pretext! By heaven! she shall learn what it is to come between me and the one I loved."

"She has not attempted anything of the kind to my knowledge."

"But you were with her for hours, and when you separated her arms were flung about your neck and your lips met."

"In the latter particular you are wrong, though I frankly admit that she did attempt to kiss me, and so far succeeded as to touch my cheek."

"And you permitted it, sir?"

"Where I could not prevent I was forced to momentarily submit."

"And was that not love?"

"Is there no such thing as gratitude, Paul?"

"That name again?"

"It is one I have loved, and my grief is sore that the charm should thus rudely be broken. Ah! that want of self-restraint and passion should be permitted to turn iconoclast."

"You have not answered my question," she replied in still more subdued tones, and she noticed the deep and settled sorrow upon his face.

"Was that not love?"

"And I ask, in reply, if there cannot be such a thing as fervent gratitude? But are you calm enough to listen to the explanation you seem to demand?"

"Yes, yes," she gasped, controlling herself with a mighty effort.

"I will be brief—is possible consistent with the nature of the case and in justice to myself. The girl who has so carelessly raised your ire (as even you will be forced to admit when I have finished) was my playmate in childhood, the daughter of a very dear friend of my parents."

"And a very dear friend of yours?"

she interrupted, in a tone of stinging scorn.

"Well," he answered, after a moment given to reflection, "I see no reason to deny that. Yes, a dear friend of my own. She is a good and noble girl, and I wish to heaven there were more like her in this world. But please listen to me without interruption. I have known for a long time that her widowed mother and herself have been in serious trouble on account of a wayward son and brother, and would have proffered assistance had not delicacy forbid."

"How very thoughtful!" she murmured, and he repeated, "I have known for a long time that her widowed mother and herself have been in serious trouble on account of a wayward son and brother, and would have proffered assistance had not delicacy forbid."

silent, Paul, and listen. Last night matters reached this crisis. I happened to be passing the house, was called in, succeeded in quieting their fears, and at once took the proper measures to save young Irving from the consequences of his folly and almost crime. That, Paul, is the entire story."

"All?" gasped the girl, who had every moment grown more pale, had become almost ghastly, "but you permitted her to kiss you?"

"As I have intimated, I had no volition in the matter. But I have in another's."

"Another?" she repeated, with fear taking the place of passion, as she read the fate she most of all dreaded in the steady flashing of his eyes. "Another? What in the name of heaven can you mean?"

"Simply this, and even after what has happened, I spare you as much as is possible—simply that from this moment our engagement is at once and forever broken."

"You cannot mean it, Phill—Phillip!" and the iron sank deeply into her soul.

"Heaven knows," and the nervous twitching of nerves and misty eyes attested the deep truth of his words: "Heaven knows I regret the matter as much as you can, but there is no other alternative. I have loved you as few women have ever been loved—ever will be: but after the fierce and terrible exhibition of passion I have witnessed I would not dare to trust my future in your hands. My life might better be wrecked suddenly—as it will be—than to linger it out in a living, continuous hell. Farewell, Paul! may Heaven bless you! May you be as happy as I dreamed, but alas! but a few hours since, I should be with you for my bride!"

She had sunk into a chair and covered at his first word, had vainly attempted to fortify herself by pride, but it was no avail. The resolution was as fierce as the fire had been, and long before he had finished her head had sunk, and her face was covered by her burning hands. And when the last words were spoken, when the sound of his footsteps indicated upon her strained ears, she sprang to her feet, pressed her clinched hands to her temples to somewhat still their throbbings, stood for an instant as one transfixed, and then with a wild shout of horror fell heavily to the floor.

Two years passed and the gossip that followed that terrible episode in the life of Phillip Ransome had become almost forgotten. He had kept his own counsel as far as it was possible to do; had seared the wound by the power of a strong will, and if it rankled at times no one was the wiser, save that they might have judged from his cold and reserved manner, he never seeking the society of women, in fact avoiding them, until it became almost rudeness. He had simply spoken the truth when he said his life would be wrecked and the heart that beat against the rocks of disappointment was often sore, and the lips that never uttered the name he had loved most of all others became as iron to all terms of endearment for others. Yes, his life was wrecked—totally, hopelessly wrecked.

But of her who had been the cause when she had permitted the smooch of jealousy to sweep over her soul and destroy every flower of love brightly blossoming there?

No one, save those with whom she had lived, knew of her departure. She had vanished like a shadow—as suddenly—as totally; and when the great heart of Phillip Ransome, somewhat recovered from the effects of the stunning blow, and he became alarmed for fear she should have destroyed herself, and when he made inquiries, he was utterly baffled. No trace could be found of the star that had so suddenly been blotted from the sky of life, and he was forced to be content with the information that she was still living and well.

That was all—very little. It was true, but all, and when he commenced with himself during the dark hours he grew to feel blame for having dealt too harshly with the beautiful flower that had been born and nurtured to womanhood beneath tropical skies and tropical seas until her heart became as passion and her blood its flame.

Still the world knew nothing of this—never would from his lips seen in death. If he carried a skeleton within his breast no one should be the wiser. He threw himself into business as he had never done before, and increased in wealth and in fame, and mothers made bold to whisper to him that he should marry, and the girls tricked themselves out, and cast their most seductive glances upon him. But he was without smile, and heart like the sweet story of the alon, had become once and died, and it appeared as if nothing could ever stir the dead

ashes into warmth, not to say fire, again.

Another year and changes in business called Phillip Ransome from home to Cuba. Gladly he availed himself of the summons. He needed rest, needed change, needed something to arouse his mind from constant brooding over "what might have been."

It was at a time when the fierce population were in arms against each other—when the reins of government were being snatched from hand to hand, and human life was a thousand fold more uncertain than was generally the case—when mad passions were permitted to run riot, and the ruler of to-day was the fugitive of tomorrow—when guerrilla warfare was the rule and systematic strife the exception—when the innocent and the guilty were alike indiscriminately shot down, and trees that at nightfall were barren were hung thickly in the morning with human fruit.

But Phillip Ransome gave little heed to these things. He was no party to the feuds, took no interest in and kept himself entirely aloof from them—kept a closed mouth and depended upon his proud title of an American citizen for protection. Yet he lingered longer than was absolutely necessary. The gay society, the soft air, the almost absolute freedom from care, had many charms for him, and he understood, for the first time in his life, the true meaning of the term, "dotes far scientes."

And if the truth had been told, the beauty of the women—the sweet language that (especially when used in song) appears to "melt in the mouth," the lustrous eyes—the hair of waving ebony, and the graceful, well-developed forms had very strong attractions for him, whose heart appeared to have been chilled into stone when in his colder, native clime.

In fact, they brought vividly back to him her who had been alike as an angel from heaven and a demon from its antipodes, and his mind so changed that he would have been little surprised if she had started up before him at any moment in all her superb beauty and all her incarnation of the master passions—love and hate.

But the time came when he must tear himself away from the surroundings that had operated strangely upon his character—unnerved him to a certain degree, and made him unobedient from his customary sternness. Business would no longer permit his remaining, even had not the danger he could no longer ignore warned him to depart. The authorities had grown powerless, the strong arm of the law was weakened: midnight murderers stalked boldly abroad, and men were shot down upon their own doorsteps. More than once he had received warnings that it was very unsafe to remain, and at last he determined to tear himself away. He would sail on the morrow—would take his (probably) last walk amid scenes he had learned to love so well that they would never be forgotten.

It was an almost moonless and starless night. He stood upon the steps of his hotel, lingered before starting upon his walk, and even as he did so a shot was fired. He saw the blaze distinctly, wondered what it could mean, who could be the victim, when he was still more startled by a woman's scream, and pushing down the steps was just in time to catch in his arms the falling form of one dressed as a nun.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed, giving no heed to the fact that he might be in danger, "are you wounded—much hurt?"

"Yes, yes; may the saints—" And without ever being able to finish the final word the head sank heavily upon his shoulder, and the form became limp in his arms.

That was sufficient to awaken the tender heart of Phillip Ransome. That a woman was wounded, perhaps, no matter who or what she might be, was a golden key to his heart; and lifting her in his strong arms he carried her within—carried her to his own room, laid her upon his own bed, summoned assistance, tore away the deep hood and shrouding veil, gazed for a moment upon the bloodless face, and then sank back with a groan of anguish.

Pauline Mossart and he had met again, but under terrible circumstances. And how the words thrilled upon him when he was told that she might die—that the chances were greatly against life. All the trials of his former life were as nothing to this. But after a time she was sufficiently easy to be told of his presence—so easy who it was that stole like a shadow to her bedside, gently took her thin, white hand and softly pressed it to his lips.

"Phillip, dear Phillip," she whispered when they met, and she said of her return, "may I call you so?"

"Now and ever, Paul."

"Once I madly attempted to injure you—now I have, the Holy Virgin be praised, saved your life."

"Impossible!"

"It is true. Lying here, the gates of the other world unlatched and ready to swing open for the passage of my poor soul, my lips can utter no falsehood. I have long known of your presence here, have endeavored to watch over you night and day. I saw the cowardly assassin taking aim at you as you stood with your noble form in full view, rushed between, and heaven be praised, have saved you."

"By giving up your own life! horror!"

"No, dear Phillip; it is as it should be. Lying I would never have told you this—dying I may. I have never ceased to love you—never shall. Do what I might I could not tear your dear image from my heart, and I shall carry it with me to heaven, for, though never on earth, there you shall indeed be my husband."

"O God!"

She had fainted in his arms; he believed her dead. But it was not so. She lived—lives, and with a passion brought into subjection by trial and penance, a better wife cannot be found. But still she wears a broken toy dagger as a charm—a charm against causeless jealousy, and a warning never to be disregarded.

MEMORABLE.

What's the difference between a man cutting the end off his nose, and a boy who has just learned a task? One lessens his knows, and the other knows his lesson.

A local, describing a recent accident, says that "the ball entered the groin of the victim, and passed thence into his lumber region." The precise locality of this region is not stated.

A Democratic editor says: "We are living at this moment under absolute despotism." He married the wrong woman.

A paper says: "We have adopted the eight-hour system in this office. We commence work at eight o'clock in the morning, and close at eight in the evening."

"A Connecticut boy swallowed three marbles and four bullets recently, and, being somewhat of a bouy structure, is now utilized by the neighbors, who borrow him as a rattle-box to amuse their babes and sucklings."

A resident of Kalamazoo writes to a "school board" in Ohio, that he will take a school, as he has "taught 2 terms school and I attended 1 college 4 yrs at detroit, michigan, and am 20 yrs avage."

"I allus wear buckskin mits," observed an aged denizen of "Short Woods," as he was trying on a pair in a store, yesterday. "They is a comfortable like as enny to the hand, and save botherin' with a handkerchief."

A jealous cotemporary says that the city editor of the Jacksonville (Ill.) Journal has frozen his ears a foot deep, but that, as they have only been amputated at the second joint, he has an abundance left for the requirements of his position.

A gentleman to whom a lost pocket book was restored by a little boy, was so overcome by the honesty of the youth that he forgot to reward him.

Scene in a Hartford bake-shop—Boy presents a torn dollar bill. Little girl, who is acting chief clerk: "My father is very particular about taking torn bills."

A milk dealer who, on opening a can of milk, found a large bullfrog swimming about, sent word to the farmer who supplied him, that he thought his milk strainer was sufficiently too coarse.

In New Hampshire, the following is posted on a fence: "Notiz—Know how is alloud in these medders, any men or women letten thare haws rim the rode, wot gits later try madders adressed shall have his tail cut off by me, Obadiah Rogers."

A new Fairfield man who failed to get a thirty cent pineapple for a quarter of a dollar, wanted to know "whether we are breathing the pure air of freedom or being strangled with the fetid breath of a hellish despotism?" The storekeeper said those were the only pineapples he had.

"Lame," sighed Mrs. Partridge, "here I have been suffering for three mortal weeks. First I was seized with a bleeding pneumonia in the left hemisphere of the brain, which was exceeded by a stroke of the left ventricle of the heart." "This gave me an inflammation of the bowels, and now I'm sick with cholera morbus. There is no hope. What can you do, particularly when you see me?"