

ELECTRA:

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BELLES LETTRES MONTHLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

MAY, 1883, TO MAY, 1884.

"The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth who bore through snow and ice
A banner with this strange device,
EXCELSIOR!"

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ELECTRA:

A BELLES LETTRES MONTHLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

VOL. I.

OCTOBER, 1883.

No. 6.

OCTOBER.

Fair buds of promise have yielded their treasure,
Autumn has crowned all the bountiful year,
Filling with plenty the o'erflowing measure,
Glad'ning our hearts with its fruit and its cheer;
Beautiful, golden October is here.

Nature may wear garments gorgeous or sober;
Snow-drifts or blossoms may cover the earth;
Spring's dainty buds, or the leaves of October,
Still we *may* gather sweet garlands of worth
From even the gloom of earth's desolate dearth.

ATOLLS.

The hardy seaman, as he breasts the waves of the Indian or South Pacific sea, following one of those great thoroughfares of commerce that have been ploughed by thousands of keels before him, comes ever and anon to a singular natural phenomenon. Upon the broad open sea, where the water is a thousand fathoms deep, and no land of continent or island has for days or even weeks been in sight, he discovers a long line of foam breaking upon a narrow ledge of white stone that glistens in the sun. As he comes nearer he perceives that the ledge is only a few yards, or at most a

few rods in breadth. It rises at no point more than a few feet above the water's edge. Its upper surface has a margin of low green foliage, while here and there groups of cocoanut palms, bananas, or bread-fruit trees lift their tall fronds toward the sky. For miles and miles this narrow ledge of white, with its green border and its sentinel palms, stretches away on either hand. Its sweep is that of a graceful curve, which either brings the two ends together and unites them on the distant horizon, so as to inclose a circle of many miles in diameter, or rounds off to the far horizon

light. It glided across the grass to the main walk through the churchyard, and passed out through the gate opposite to the one by which Ella had entered.

Ella's blood was literally chilled with horror as, in overpowering fear, that was too excessive to allow of her even giving vent to it with a cry, she watched it. She did not exactly believe in ghosts, but like many people she had a vague, unreasoning dread of the supernatural; and besides, her mental powers were never of the strongest, never resolute to overcome any sudden impression. When the spectre had passed out of sight, however, her spell bound limbs resumed their faculties of movement, and with a desperate effort she hastened on; anything seemed better than remaining longer alone in that fearful, solitary place. She made her trembling way to the gate, and turned into the road beyond; but what was her terror when she saw the apparition moving on in front of her.

Again fear chained her feet to the ground where she stood; the whole moonlit landscape on each side seemed to be whirling round her; but still her eyes were fastened on that mysterious form. At length it reached the Bryants' cottage, where it passed through the door, and thus vanished from her sight.

A terrible notion now got possession of poor Ella: she must have seen Besie's ghost: the drops of cold anguish stood on her forehead, the very power of thought forsook her; with feet, that now seemed to be winged, she flew down the road and up the avenue. Soon after that, Mr. Lindhurst, Miss Nancy, Mrs. Tredwell, the housekeeper, and the whole bevy of servants were standing in the hall of the Priory, with faces of blank consternation, around Miss Ringwood, who lay there insensible. She had fainted with sheer terror the moment she entered the house, and before she could speak a word of explanation.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE KEPT PROMISE.

In the Moslem city of Khorassan,
 Adjudging the people from his divan,
 Sat Omar, the pitiless, haughty Khan.

He had sentenced assassin, knave, and thief,
 And he called to his guard with order brief:
 "Now bring to me hither the Vizier Chief,

"Who dared to defy my bidding. He
 Who let from his camp my foe go free,
 Because he had shared his salt, shall see

"That the man who can break his promise, led
 By a fancied duty, nor risk instead
 Life rather than do it, must lose his head."

The Vizier was summoned. With hurried words
 He told how a chief of the hostile Kurds,
 Who seemed but a shepherd of flocks and herds,

Had come to his tent, his eye-balls dim
Through hunger, and gaunt in every limb;
"What could I but break my bread with him?"

The face of the Khan grew wroth; his eye
Flashed fire; he deigned but curt reply:
"The soldier who breaks his word must die!"

No pallor the Vizier's cheek o'erspread;
On his bosom he only dropped his head:
"It is Fate, it is Fate!" he grimly said.

"I am ready, O master, to meet the worst,
But not till your kindness grants me first
A vessel of water to quench my thirst.

"Shall the scimiter stay till I drink?" Quick o'er
The forehead of Omar, so harsh before,
Dawned something like pity: "Till then: no more!"

The water was brought. The Vizier's brow
Shone brighter: "We all of us heard you vow,
'Till then.' Your promise is pledged me now!"

Then he dashed on the ground the goblet! "So
You have snared me, knave!" said the Khan. "But, no—
I never will break a promise. Go!"

THE ORIGIN OF GREAT MEN.—II.

The sons of clergymen and ministers of religion generally have particularly distinguished themselves in our country's history. Amongst them we find the names of Drake and Nelson, celebrated in naval heroism; of Wollaston, Young, Playfair, and Bell, in science; of Wren, Reynolds, Wilson, and Wilkie, in art; of Thurlow and Campbell, in law; and of Addison, Thompson, Goldsmith, Coleridge, and Tennyson, in literature. Lord Hardinge, Colonel Edwardes, and Major Hodson, so honorably known in Indian warfare, were also the sons of clergymen. Indeed, the empire of England in India was won and held chiefly by men of middle class—such as Clive, Warren Hastings, and their successors

—men for the most part bred in factories and trained to habits of business.

Among the sons of attorneys we find Edmund Burke, Smeaton the engineer, Scott and Wordsworth, and Lords Somers, Hardwick, and Dunning. Sir William Blackstone was the posthumous son of a silk-mercator. Lord Gifford's father was a grocer at Dover; Lord Denham's a physician; Judge Talfourd's a country brewer; and Lord Chief Baron Pollock's a celebrated saddler at Charing Cross. Layard, the discoverer of the monuments of Nineveh, was an articled clerk in a London solicitor's office; and Sir William Armstrong, the inventor of hydraulic machinery and of the Armstrong ordnance, was also trained to the law

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