

A SENTENCE OF OSTRACISM.

By Francis Lynde.

THERE was no doubt about the justice of the mild sentence of moral attainder which the good people of Denver had passed upon Harry Rayburn; but it certainly was an emphatic evidence of his industrious perseverance in wrong doing that he had succeeded in bringing himself into open disrepute in a community where the social freedom of pioneer days was as yet untempered by the manners of an older civilization. That the young broker richly merited his punishment will appear from Judge Tooley's statement of the case to a few friends who had accompanied him to the bar room of Charpiot's Hotel:

"As I was sayin', gentlemen, after makin' all due allowances for young blood and the progressive spirit of this free country, the fact remains that Harry Rayburn's rollin' 'em a little too high to come out square on a mill assay—ain't I right, Pete?"

The gentleman appealed to nodded approval. "That's what you are, judge. I say that when a man gets so that he can walk up to a bar an' take a drink alone, it's about time to put the bridle on him."

"That's a fact," assented a third, "and that ain't all of it—I saw Rayburn driving up and down Larimer Street with the Kennard woman, the other day. I made it my business to tell him what I thought of it, too."

"What did he say?" inquired the judge.

"Oh, he flared up and said it was his own affair; but when I went home, I told the girls they'd better drop him."

"I always thought he was a pretty square kind of a young fellow for a minin' broker," put in a quiet man who had taken a cigar in lieu of a drink. "In that deal with old Richter and the

Snow Flake—you recollect it, judge—he could a' beat the eyes out o' the old Dutchman, but he turned in and fought the syndicate, tooth and toe nail, when I know he was offered double commissions to come off."

"Oh, nobody's sayin' anything against his honesty," replied the judge. "He's square enough—it's his cussed dissipation that I can't sabel. What'll you have, gentlemen?"

Two years earlier, Rayburn had been a bit of flotsam on the restless sea of humanity that strewed its wreckage over the Colorado mountains during the Leadville excitement. A year of indifferent success as a prospector had sent him to Denver with a sufficient stock of experience to open a broker's office, and he had immediately thrown himself into the strenuous life and the self destructive excesses of the time and place with a zest which had eventually brought about the result already mentioned.

When the edict had gone forth, and the gossip of the street had published it, Jack Bates, attorney at law, and himself a sinner at large, sauntered into Rayburn's office to remonstrate.

"Harry, old man, you're getting yourself out of everybody's good books," he began. "Why don't you brace up?"

"Because I don't choose to."

"That's no reason at all. First thing you know, you'll be dropped like a hot nail. Why can't you be a little more modest about it?"

"For instance?"

"Well, say, when the spirit moves you to take the Kennard out for an airing, why won't a moonlight evening and the Golden Road answer the purpose as well as Larimer Street and the middle of the afternoon?"

Rayburn smiled and held out his cigar case to his adviser.

"Because they wouldn't, that's all. Much obliged to you, Jack, but you're wasting your time. I don't care to be respectably wicked, and I choose to go to the devil in my own way. Moreover, I'm not kicking because decent people see fit to drop me."

During this colloquy, Edward Burney, whose desk was next to Rayburn's, had apparently been absorbed in his work. When Jack Bates lit his cigar and left the office, he looked up quickly.

"I don't think you meant all that, Harry," he said. "If you did, I'm sorry for you."

Rayburn swung around in his chair and confronted the speaker.

"I think I meant it—as much as we mean anything. Why are you sorry?"

"Because I fancy I know you better than most people, and it's painful to see you making a deliberate shipwreck of yourself."

"That's all right from your point of view, Burney—you're on another line; you've a clean life behind you, an invalid father to take care of, and a sister who thinks you two are the only men on earth. In my case, it's different."

Edward Burney was correct in saying that he knew Rayburn better than most others. It was partly because he had many opportunities for observing the broker through the magnifying glass of business transactions, and partly for the reason that the lives of the two men were antipathetic enough to beget a friendship which was strong in respect on one side, and in sorrowful pity on the other.

The subject of Rayburn's perversity came up again that evening in the sitting room of the small house in Welton Street where the young engineer lived with his father and sister.

"I cannot understand why a man should deliberately throw himself away, as your friend seems to be doing," said the father, laying down his paper and looking over his spectacles at Edward, who had mentioned the occurrence at the office.

"There's a very strong motive of

some kind; Rayburn's not a man to take to dissipation for its own sake."

"Then you think he has had provocation?"

"He must have. I've observed him pretty closely, and there's an underlying streak of good metal in his character that crops out at times, in spite of his efforts to appear hard and cynical."

"Have you tried to help him?"

"Always, and in all ways but one—I've never asked him here."

Grace Burney came into the room in time to hear the latter part of this answer. "Never asked whom, Eddie?" she inquired.

"We were speaking of Harry Rayburn—may I bring him up some evening?"

"Why not? Your friends are always welcome."

"Ye—es, but——"

"But what, brother mine?" She sat upon a hassock at his feet and clasped her hands over his knee.

"Nothing that you'd quite understand. I'll bring him some day, if he'll come."

To the invitation, offered some days later, Rayburn returned a point blank refusal. "I'm not as bad as that, Burney," he said, and ended by going. That was the beginning; and as one falls under obligations to a man whom one tries to help, Burney clung faithfully to the broker, fighting the miasma of evil associations with the purer atmosphere of his home life. There were pleasant evenings at the piano, when Grace sang and Rayburn turned the music for her. There were thoughtful hours when the family gathered around the elder man's study table, and when the conversation was chiefly a dialogue between the master of the house and the guest, with the brother and sister as listeners. There were evenings when Rayburn told of his year in the mountains, relating, with the graphic vigor of a participant, the epic of that mad scramble for riches; and if the stories sometimes drifted into the substratum of pathos which underlies all human effort, there was the inspiration of a pretty face framed in soft masses of bright hair to account for it.

One evening they all ventured out to the theater. Rayburn went because he had to, and walked upon red hot plowshares all the way down to Sixteenth Street. Edward and his father went a step in advance, because the invalid needed the support of his son's arm. Rayburn had hot flashes and cold chills when he acquiesced in the arrangement and drew Grace's arm under his own. If the young girl found her companion silent and absent there was doubtless good reason for it, and when they turned into the lighted sidewalk of Sixteenth Street, she wondered why he scrutinized the face of every chance passer by as if he were determined to see behind the mask which it is the privilege of every human being to wear.

When a man is seeking for an affront, it seldom tarries. Rayburn's came while they were making their way through the crowded lobby of the theater, in the flippant remark of one vestibule lounge to another.

Rayburn looked aside quickly and identified the speaker. Then he touched Burney's shoulder. "Will you take your sister for a moment?" he asked, passing Grace forward to her brother's side. "Thank you," and he dropped back into the crowd, emerging again in front of the two loungers.

There was an eddy just here in the stream of humanity pressing forward to the box office, and Rayburn spoke pleasantly to the man behind him:

"May I ask you to give me just a little more space? Much obliged, that will do."

The punctuation of the grateful remark was a terrific blow full in the face of the offender. The man fell as if he were shot, and there was a little swirl of excitement in the eddy; when it subsided, Rayburn had disappeared.

Under similar conditions in a maturer civilization, the young broker might have expected a visit from a court officer while he was opening the mail at his office the next morning; but there were reasons other than those of environment why William Cade, familiarly known as "Cady" in the select and somewhat retired circle in which he moved, did

not prefer a charge against his assailant. One was the shy reluctance common to gentlemen of his guild about appearing in court even as a plaintiff, and another and weightier was that a point of etiquette had been raised by Rayburn's blow which was equivalent to the R. S. V. P. on a visiting card.

Between inventing a plausible excuse, which should be as far as possible from the truth, in answer to Burney's inquiries regarding his abrupt leave taking of the theater party, and watching the door for the appearance of the inevitable pistol in the hands of the punctilious Mr. Cade, Rayburn had a bad forenoon of it. Burney's proposal that they should go to luncheon together was the final jerk that snapped the thread of his equanimity.

"Not now, or at any other time," he replied roughly. "I'll tell you what it is, Burney, you've got to break off with me or you'll lose caste. I give you fair warning."

Burney looked troubled. "What has happened since last night?" he asked.

"Enough to make me understand that it will require more baseness than I've ever owned to, to induce me to continue my social relations with you and your family."

"Having said so much, you can hardly refuse to tell me more."

"If you will have it, then—sit down, you make me nervous with that monotonous march—a scoundrel standing in the lobby of the theater last night insulted your sister—do you hear that? It is what might have been expected when she trusted herself in public with a social pariah, and I ought to have shot myself before I allowed her to do it."

"What did you do when you left us?"

"I went back and beat his face in, and I've been looking for him to return the compliment with a forty four all the morning. It's God's goodness that she didn't hear what he said."

"Are you quite sure she didn't?" asked Burney quietly.

"Damnation, man, do you want to drive me quite mad? Isn't it bad enough as it stands, without any such infernal insinuations as that?"

"I had no such intentions. What I meant was that Grace is sensible enough to let such things lie at the door of the past. Her anxiety will not begin until she learns that trouble has come of it."

Rayburn frowned and tugged at his mustache.

"If I thought she cared—Burney, don't let this thing get to her; I'll go and ask the Cady's pardon, if there's no other way to stop the row."

"Is it necessary to do that?"

"I'm afraid it is—any way, I should do penance for giving his scurrilous tongue the license."

"And now you'll go to luncheon with me, won't you?"

"If I cared as much for you as you do for me, I shouldn't; I'm a bad lot, Burney—worse than you know anything about, and you'd better drop it."

Burney smiled and linked his arm affectionately in that of the broker.

"Put your verbs in the past tense and I'll believe anything you like," he said. "In the mean time, let's go and eat."

True to his promise, Rayburn sought out Mr. William Cade for apologetic purposes, devoting a portion of the afternoon to that errand of humility. The broker approached the gambler with a cool daring that was worthy of a nobler object, and threatened to drive him out of town if he did not agree to let the matter drop then and there, extorting, in addition, a promise that there should be no talk about it. Cade acceded sullenly, in unwilling deference to the colder courage of the other; but Rayburn left him with the knowledge that he had only exchanged an open antagonist for a secret enemy.

Having thus made so large a concession to the peaceful proprieties, he rewarded himself by calling, in the evening, at the house in Welton Street. He was more embarrassed than he thought possible when he found that Edward and his father had gone out. Grace received him, and the conversation jolted unevenly until it reached the incident of the previous evening. Rayburn was a master of fence, and he exhausted himself in the effort to steer clear of the subject; but his companion was not to

be turned aside. At the end of his most brilliant digression, she asked, quite irrelevantly:

"Why did you leave us so abruptly last evening, Mr. Rayburn?"

Since the subject could be no longer avoided, he plunged into it frankly.

"I'm going to ask you to withdraw that question," he said.

"What for?"

"Because I can't tell you the truth, and I don't equivocate—with you."

She looked up archly.

"That is refreshing; well, I withdraw it, with the provision that I may be allowed to account for your disappearance in my own way."

"I accept the condition. You can't think worse of me than I deserve."

"Who can say what one deserves?"

He smiled cynically.

"Everybody pretends to, and fitness doesn't seem to cut much of a figure. After all, though, I shouldn't rail; I have merited every ill thing that's ever been said of me."

An oppressive little silence followed this remark, and then Grace said thoughtfully: "That is the same as saying that you have been very wicked, isn't it?"

"It's just that."

"Why have you been wicked?"

"There is no reasonable answer to that question, because there is no excuse for deliberate sin. Provocation there may be, but it's a fatal weakness to yield to it."

"Tell me about it."

"There isn't much to tell; it's just the old story of a man's treachery and a woman's perfidy. I was going to marry her, but my friend forestalled me, and then I went into moral bankruptcy." Grace did not reply, and Rayburn resumed: "That was the beginning; after a little, the man who plunges into dissipation resembles the Malay who has run amuck without getting himself killed in the process. Satiety brings regret, and there is no hope of going back to such blessed things as self respect and honor and domesticity." His tone was an eloquent plea for contradiction, but it did not come.

Grace arose and went to the window, parting the curtains to look out into the night.

"I suppose you are right; and then there is the dreadful memory of the dead and dying by the wayside."

She spoke softly, and with averted face, meaning to say more, but her father and Edward came in, and there was no opportunity.

Rayburn left early and went down town in a perturbed and uncomfortable frame of mind.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed, cutting viciously with his stick at the overhanging boughs of the cottonwoods as he swung along; "she knows no degrees of dissipation—how should she?—and she's gone off with the idea that I've been worse than a heathen! 'The dead and dying by the wayside'—pitiful Moses! that means the wrecks that I'm supposed to have scattered along the road! I wish I could hire somebody to club me for having used that fool simile about the Malay and his creese. Now how am I ever going to explain that the villain of her imagining is as much worse than I've ever been, as I am worse than her brother?" And then a small emollient came, like a drop of oil upon troubled waters: "After all, she did not sit in judgment, with all that ghastly misapprehension; she was kind and gentle, and there were tears in her voice when she stood at the window. I wish I could have had another half hour—hello! I beg your pardon."

He had turned abruptly into the hallway of the building in which he roomed, and had almost fallen over the figure of a woman crouched upon the lowest step of the stairs. She made no reply to his apology, and by the uncertain light of the street lamp opposite, Rayburn could see that she was sobbing.

"What's the matter with you? Can I help you?"

The woman looked up at the kindly tone, and Rayburn saw a child's face stamped with the senility of sin and disease. "I reckon nobody can help me—I'm turned out to die, that's all."

"Who turned you out?"

"Bill Cade. He ain't got no more

use for me 'cause I'm sick an' played out, so he fired me."

The voice was dry and harsh, and there was fever in the dull eyes.

While Rayburn stood in a moment's perplexity, trying to determine what could be done, a shadow passed the street opening, and Rayburn felt rather than saw that it stopped and then went on. His indecision was brief. The woman was sick, and there was one place in Denver where such as she could have shelter and care. He took out his notebook, and hastily writing a few words on a leaf, tore it out and gave it to the woman.

"Just hang on to that—it'll get you in when you get there. Can you walk?"

The woman took the paper, and essaying to rise, fell back helplessly.

"Here, that won't do—let's try it again, and I'll help you;" he lifted her to her feet and steadied her. "Now, if you can creep along for a block or two till we can find a hack, you'll be all right; the Sisters 'll take care of you."

The sad little procession moved slowly up the street toward the Opera House, in front of which stood a line of carriages. Late passers by stared curiously at the spectacle of a well dressed man who was evidently sober, supporting a forlorn looking woman who was quite as evidently intoxicated; but Rayburn was too full of pity and indignation to care for appearances. When they were nearly up to the first of the carriages, he saw a man and a woman approaching from the opposite direction. He did not look up until they were passing, and then he almost dropped his helpless burden when he saw that it was Edward Burney and his sister. There was no sign of recognition on either side, but the indignation in Edward's glance and the sorrowful pity in the eyes of the young girl were not to be misunderstood.

Rayburn put his charge into the carriage and gave the driver a double fee. "Take her to the Sisters' Hospital," he said, "and be quick about it; there's no time to lose."

The man whipped up his horses, and left Rayburn standing on the curbstone,

His first impulse was to follow Burney and Grace with the intention of explaining, but the second thought magnified the hopelessness of putting his simple statement against the evidence of appearances, and he decided to wait until he could appeal first to the brother.

Reaching this conclusion, he went slowly back toward his room. He was sad and preoccupied, and so did not notice that a shadow kept pace with his own to the entrance of the hallway. He turned sharply on the step at the sound of an ominous click behind him, realized for an instant that the air was full of flame and noise, and then fell stumbling at the foot of the stairs.

Unconsciousness came to relieve the keen torture of the first few moments. When it passed, the anguish of the thought that he should die unassailed by the woman he loved kept it from returning. Nerved by a grim determination, he dragged himself on hands and knees up the stairs and across the upper hall to his room. There was a messenger call at the head of the bed, and he rang it twice before essaying to light the gas. The effort of reaching the high burner over the table sent the room whirling in dizzy circles around him, and a misty blur obscured his sight as he sank into a chair and grasped a pen. The note was brief, and it ended abruptly because of the failing light.

DEAR BURNLEY:

Case dropped me at the foot of the stairs just now, and I think I'm done for. It was on account of the woman he had driven into the streets to die. I was sending her to the Sisters when you met me. For God's sake make Grace understand this.

RAYBURN.

Five minutes later, a messenger boy entered the open door and started back in affright at what appeared to be a corpse sitting at the table with a note in its extended hand. The lad snatched the message and fled without looking behind him. With the echo of his footsteps in the empty corridor, Rayburn's stubborn resolution snapped like an overstrained bow, and he fell forward upon the table.

It is not wholly pleasurable to come back to life after a sojourn in the debat-

able land that lies between consciousness and death. Rayburn's first emotion upon opening his eyes in the semi darkness of a strange apartment was a feeling of regret at finding himself still on the hither side of the line which separates conscious suffering from whatever lies beyond it. The position of the bed did not admit a full view of the room, but the murmur of voices came to him from the invisible side, like the fanciful speech of a dream. There were two of them, and the softer was urgent and pleading.

"Why don't you tell me?—anything is better than suspense."

"I have told you, Grace; you know doctors never talk much about a critical case."

"But I want to know his very words."

There was a pause, and then again the voice of the man:

"He said there was little hope—that unless he becomes conscious within the next twelve hours, his wonderful vitality would lose the fight."

"Oh, Edward!"

The man's tone was grave and comforting: "Poor little sister; I didn't know it meant so much to you."

"Nobody knew—and now he'll die without knowing."

Rayburn's lips framed an inarticulate thanksgiving that this was one of the blessings not to be withheld. While his eyes were closed he heard a door shut softly, and the rustle of a woman's garments came across the room and stopped at his bedside. When he ventured to look again, he saw that she was kneeling with her face hidden in the bed clothes. The sight was healing, and there was a trace of the old light heartedness in his voice as he said feebly:

"No, he won't die without knowing it—he won't die at all if he can help it; there's too much to live for."

The girl did not raise her head, but her hand sought and found his on the coverlet. Then she asked shyly:

"Is there any room in your heart for me, Harry?"

"It's swept and garnished, dear; and any way, I think the other occupant was only wounded vanity."

FAVORITES OF THE PARIS STAGE.

A continuation of last month's series of sketches of the foremost figures of the French theatrical world—Febvre, Dupuis, Daubray, Simmonnet, Magnier, Yvette Guilbert, and others.

By Arthur Hornblow.

FEW actors on the Paris stage hold as enviable a place in the public esteem as Alexandre Frédéric Febvre, who has been a member of the Théâtre Français company since 1866.

M. Febvre was born in Paris in 1835, and like many other actors who owe their success to their own efforts, he did not have the advantage of the Conservatoire training. His first débuts were



Mlle. de Merode.