

**THE GENTLEMAN OF  
THE OLD SCHOOL: A  
TALE. VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649592371

The Gentleman of the Old School: A Tale. Vol. II by G. P. R. James

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**G. P. R. JAMES**

**THE GENTLEMAN OF  
THE OLD SCHOOL: A  
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*J. Ingraham*

THE

GENTLEMAN

OR

THE OLD SCHOOL.

A TALE.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 83 CLIFF-STREET.

1839.

# THE GENTLEMAN

OF

## THE OLD SCHOOL.

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### CHAPTER I.

WHEN Ralph Strafford, left alone by the bank of the stream, had gazed for some ten minutes upon the bubbling waters as they rushed rapidly by him, he was startled by hearing a sound as of some human being murmuring to itself upon the bank over his head, and the next moment a stone rolled down, followed by some earth, and bounded into the stream. It had been evidently displaced by a footstep: too short a period had elapsed since Castle Ball's departure to admit of his having gone home and returned; and Strafford drew somewhat farther back under the bank, in order to avoid the notice of any one above. He still heard a murmuring sound, however, evidently all in one tone, as of a person speaking to himself; and at length the snatch of an old ditty met his ear, beginning with the often-repeated words, "He's gone away," &c.

#### SONG.

"He is gone away, maiden,  
He is gone away;  
Thou ne'er shalt see his face again,  
For many a livelong day.  
The earth upon his breast is cold,  
The turf upon his head,  
And two small stones, six feet apart,  
Mark out the dear one's bed.  
He's close beside the dwelling-place  
Which once he made so gay;  
But still to thee it matters not,  
From thee he's gone away."

The voice was very sweet and the air very melancholy, and the lips that sung were evidently those of a woman. Strafford's curiosity was somewhat excited, and, moving round a bush that intercepted his view, he tried to obtain a sight of the singer, without himself being seen. In some degree he was unsuccessful, for the motion attracted instant notice; but the moment he put forth his head from beyond the bush, he saw the object which had raised his curiosity, though the sight by no means tended to satisfy it.

The person who sang was, as he had supposed, a woman, who had seated herself upon the edge of the bank, and was playing carelessly with the wild flowers on the verge. Her form appeared to be fine, and her dress somewhat gaudy in colours. It was by no means, however, an English costume that she wore; the waist, contrary to the custom of the day, being high and broad, and the bright blue petticoat enormously full, with the folds into which it fell sewn together at the bottom. The heavy leather shoes, which covered but clumsily the foot on which they were placed, were also stitched all over with white thread. All this part of the dress Strafford instantly recognised as belonging to various cantons in Germany which he had visited; but the headdress puzzled him a little, and he could only ascribe it to the Zigeuners or gipsies of Hungary, where he thought he recollected having seen something of the same kind. It consisted of a long thick red and yellow handkerchief or veil, drawn apparently tight over the top of the head, yet so as to leave a broad edge hanging down over the forehead as far as the eyebrows. The two ends of the handkerchief, which must have been of considerable length, were then brought down on either side, covering the greater part of the cheeks, crossing over the chin, and passing in graceful folds round the neck, so as to meet the part which fell down behind, and enclose it as they crossed each other over the shoulders. They then were brought round under the arms, and were carried up, covering the whole bosom, till they met the folds upon the neck, where the whole was fastened together by what appeared to be a silver clasp.

The rest of the dress consisted in a yellow woollen jacket, which met the bright blue petticoat we have mentioned, and fitted close to the arms.

When first Strafford set his eyes upon this figure, he was convinced in a moment that he saw a German gipsy before him; but his movement, as we have said, instantly attracted attention; the head of the woman, which had been bent down, was immediately raised, and to his surprise, instead of the yellow skin of a gipsy, he beheld a face of jetty black. The distance between them was not more than ten or fifteen yards at the utmost, so that he could see all the features distinctly. They were not those of a negro, as we commonly apply the term, but far more like those of the handsomer classes of Hindoos, with which the large, sparkling dark eyes and snow-white teeth accorded well.

She started up as soon as she saw the stranger, and for a moment seemed about to dart away. The next instant, however, her resolution was changed; and though the bank was steep and the footing dangerous, she descended easily and lightly, and in a moment stood by Strafford's side.

"Shall I tell your fortune, good sir?" she said, with a slight foreign accent; "shall I tell your fortune? I can tell it better than any of the people of your own country; the past, the present, or the future."

Strafford smiled, and answered her in German, though he could not well account for her swarthy features under such a dress. The girl laughed, and replied to him in the same tongue, but added, "That's not my language, though you think it is. You can't speak my language, or any one else here. But I can speak French better than that, though that's not my language either."

Strafford could have instantly detected that she was not a German, though she spoke a peasant dialect of the language fluently. He was resolved, however, to try her in French also; but that tongue she had still more at command, and perhaps, if she had not herself told him that it was not her native language, he might not have discovered such to be the case.

"And now," he said, "let me hear your own tongue then."

She smiled, showing all her white teeth, but still the smile was a melancholy one; and she then spoke a few liquid and musical words, of which the only one that Strafford could catch was "*ayah*."

"But now," she added in English, "shall I tell your



fortune, young sir! and shall I tell it you in your own tongue, for that's the one I see you understand the best?"

"First," said Strafford, "as you say you know the three great epochs of existence, the past, the present, and the future, let me hear something of the present and the past before we deal with the other. Can you tell me my name?"

The girl shook her head. "I do not deal with names," she said; "it is with things that I have to do."

"Well, then," said Strafford, "something of the present. What is my condition?"

"You are a wanderer," said the girl; "you are a wanderer like myself, without a house to put your head in but one, where you would not like to lay it."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, "you have come somewhat near the truth; but cannot you go on?"

"Oh yes," she said, "I can go on. But you must let me look in your hand first, and you must cross my palm with silver."

Strafford gave her a piece of money, which she took and put in a small pocket by her side, while he remarked, "It is odd that you should be able to tell me one part of my story without looking in my hand, and not the other."

"I saw that in your face," she replied. "But you want to know more; and now I'll tell you," and she took his hand in her dingy one. "A very pretty hand," she said, looking at it, and apparently comparing the colour with her own; "a very pretty hand, but too white for a soldier; yet there's blood upon it! there's blood upon it!" she cried, dropping it and starting back. "Ah! I vex you," she continued, seeing Strafford's countenance change. "Let me see again! Look! look!" she cried, "how all the spots turn to gold and azure while I look upon them. It was shed in a noble cause, young sir. It must have been shed in a noble cause. There's the blessing of the widow or the orphan upon that hand, and that blessing never falls to the ground."

"You are an extraordinary person," said Strafford. "But now go on; what of the future?"

"Some pain and grief," said the girl, shaking her head mournfully; "some pain and grief, for who ever yet loved woman without pain and grief following! Who was ever loved by two women without one of them working woe and sorrow?"

"You are mistaken," said Strafford; "in this at least, you are mistaken: I have not the good fortune to attract so much affection."

"I am not mistaken," said the girl, shaking her head mournfully. "I am not mistaken; nor is it good fortune, sir. It is you who are mistaken. It may be evil, evil, most evil, to be loved by those that we love not again. Fate never tells lies, fate never tells lies, and be you sure that love shall rend your heart before many days be over."

It may seem weak, but Strafford's heart did somewhat own the power of the words he heard, and he was grieved to hear them: but the girl still continued to hold his hand and to gaze upon it, and as she did so, he could see her dark liquid eyes sparkling, and her lips relaxing into a smile of pleasure.

"Yes," she said, "love may rend your heart, but it shall bring the balm too. Fear not, fear not," she continued, more eagerly; "give no way to apprehension. Whatever happens, whatever is done; though it may seem that all hope is over, that trust and confidence in man or woman is at an end, trouble not your thoughts for a moment. Does not the line of life speedily become clear? Is not love—the brightest fate—the end of all? Were you a farmer, or a labourer, or a servant," she continued, pointing with the finger of her right hand towards his palm, as she held it with her left, "I would tell you that you should wed the woman you will love; and that she shall bring you in marriage great wealth, the greatest wealth in all the country round. But I will not tell you so, because perhaps you may think that you would be happy with her in a cottage. You shake your head; you doubt me; you say that what I tell you is false; that it cannot be; that no circumstances can bring it to pass. You think in your own heart that I know some little about you, and mistake one person for another. I know you well, you son of unbelievers. But I tell you, it is you that are mistaken; that all that I have said is written down on the leaf of fate before my eyes; that every tittle shall happen; and by this you shall know it. Within three or four days, she who seems bound to you now by every tie; she who, for aught I know, may be promised and plighted to you, shall refuse you her hand, shall tell you to think of her no more, and shall make you as unhappy as it is pos-

sible for man to be. When that comes to pass, remember the words that you will not now believe. Remember that the same voice which spoke them tells you then neither to fear nor to doubt; for that you shall be happy notwithstanding all, and happy ere it be long. But I see again," she continued, looking once more in Strafford's palm, "I see again that she whom you love is not where you think her; and, what is more, I see that my own destiny runs with yours."

"How so, pretty maid?" demanded Strafford. "How run our two destinies together?"

"That I see not so clearly," answered the girl; "but think not, gentleman, that I mean you are to wed the Bengalee; I should as much think of a Brahmin wedding a Paria. But I still say that our destiny in some sort runs together; and I think that one day I shall bring you happy news, perhaps when you are in deep affliction."

"You are a strange being," said Strafford, "and I do not see at all how you have obtained the information regarding me which you certainly have."

"I have obtained it by God's will," replied the girl, "and by means that you little wot of. But if I sought to obtain it, or any other information, by the means that you think, I could do that too as easily as I speak; for all doors open to me, no bolts shut me out."

"What," said Strafford, with a smile, "are you magician as well as diviner? This is somewhat too much, my good lady."

"Will you prove it?" replied the girl. "It is now soon coming on to be night: write me down two words of any kind, addressed to any one that you wish to hear from, and requiring an answer; and an answer you shall have by to-morrow morning, be you where you may."

"Indeed!" said Strafford, "that is something, and a strange test too. But suppose I do not tell you where I am to be found."

"It matters not," replied the girl; "still you shall have the answer."

"Then perhaps you can take the letter by the same means that you give the answer," replied Strafford, with a smile.

"Ay! now you are jesting with me, gentleman," re-