

**NORMAN LESLIE. A TALE OF THE
PRESENT TIMES, IN TWO VOLUMES,
VOL. I; A LITTLE TRAITOR TO THE
SOUTH: A WAR-TIME COMEDY,
WITH A TRAGIC INTERLUDE**

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Norman Leslie. A tale of the present times, in two volumes, vol. I; A little traitor to the South: a war-time comedy, with a tragic interlude by Brady Fay

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BRADY FAY

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P R E F A C E.

THE most improbable features of the following story, viz. the leading incident and the career of Clairmont, are founded on fact. The author has availed himself of the license allotted to writers of fiction, and transformed character at pleasure, particularly that of the young lady on whose most mysterious fate the story is founded. Neither has he bound himself to a delineation of society as it existed at the period of the real occurrence, which took place many years since in New-York; yet he does not profess to have grasped the more noble materials which the higher circles of his country at this moment offer to the novelist, but has rather sketched, perhaps with a somewhat mischievous hand, certain peculiarities adapted to his purpose. He frankly bespeaks the indulgence of all the sapient and solemn critics.

The art of novel-writing, however long associated with heart-broken boarding-school girls, and sentimental chambermaids, is now as dignified as that of Canova, Mozart, or Raphael. In learning to arrange a succession of heavenly sounds, to embody sweet shapes in marble, to breathe fervid beauty on the easel, how many an inspired genius has

devoted all his hours. Is it not as exalted a study to copy from the great world those "infinite doings" of the mind and heart which make up the material of human existence?

That the writer has succeeded in accomplishing this, he dares not hope. As an humble student, and peradventure with a feeble hand, he has thrown his groupings upon the canvass, and now, like the boy-painter in the "Disowned," stands concealed behind the curtain, to hear, perhaps, some erudite Sir Joshua say—"He had better burn it!"

Paris, March 26, 1833.

NORMAN LESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

An American City—New-York Winter—Sleighbing—Certain Characters whom the Reader will do well to remember—An Incident, which perhaps he will forget before the end of the book.

" 'Twas in the flush of the summer's prime,
Two hundred years ago,
When a ship into an unknown bay
Came gliding—soft and slow.
* * * * *

All was still, on river and hill,
At the dawn of that summer's day ;
There was not a sound, save the ripple around
The ship, as she cut her way.

Then the sails flapp'd back, for the wind was slack,
And the vessel lay sleeping there ;
And even the Dutchmen exclaimed, ' Mein Got !'
As they gazed on a scene so fair."
A Vision of the Hudson : by William Cox.

A BRILLIANT January morning broke over the beautiful city of New-York. Her two magnificent rivers came sweeping and sparkling down into her immense bay, which, bound in like a lake on every side with circling shores, rolled and flashed in the unclouded sunshine. The town itself rose directly

formed to shoot through the flood with arrowy swiftness, their clean bright colours shining in the sun, bearing sometimes a thousand persons on excursions of business and pleasure, spouting forth fire and steam like monstrous dragons, and leaving long tracks of smoke on the blue heaven. Among other evidences of a great maritime power, reposed several giant vessels of war,—those stern, tremendous messengers of the deep, wafting, on the wings of heaven, the thunderbolt of death across the solemn world of waters; but now lying, like fortresses, motionless on the tide, and ready to bear over the globe the friendly pledges or the grave demands of a nation which, in the recollection of some of its surviving citizens, was a submissive colony, without power and without a name. You might deem the magnificent city, that lay thus extended upon the flood, Venice, when that wonderful republic held the commerce of the world. In a greater degree, indeed, than London, notwithstanding the superior amount of shipping possessed by the latter, New-York at first strikes the stranger entering into its harbour with signs of commercial prosperity and wealth. In the mighty British metropolis, the vessels lie locked in dockyards, or half-buried under fog and smoke. The narrow Thames presents little more than that portion actually in motion; and, in a sail from Margate to town, the vast number are seen only in succession: but here, the whole crowded, broad, and moving panorama breaks at once upon the eye; and through a perfectly pure and bright atmosphere nothing can be more striking and exquisite.

It was a frosty winter morning, and the general splendour of the scene was heightened by the fact that, for some days previous, a heavy fall of snow had come down silently and thickly from heaven, without wind and without rain. The whole pic-

ture was now glittering with tracts of stainless white. The roofs were hidden beneath fleecy masses. The trees were cased with brilliant lustre, and held out their naked branches sparkling in the sun. The shores, sloping down to the water's edge, leaned brightly to the beams of morning. Even the waves themselves bore on their bosoms, urged gently along, and dashed ever and anon against each other, thick cakes of snow-covered ice, which had drifted down from the rivers, but yet not in sufficient quantities to interrupt the navigation. The roar and thunder of the town could be heard from the bay, as the hundreds of thousands of her citizens awoke to their accustomed occupations. The shouts of artisans and tradesmen, the clink of hammers from the thronged and busy wharves and shipyards, the inspiring "heave-yoes" with which the brawny tars cheered their labours amid the mass of shipping (itself a city), the clanging of hoofs, the shuffling of feet, the ringing of bells, the clash of voices, and all the medley of sounds peculiar to the newly awakened concourse of a vast and growing population, rose cheerfully on the air. Wherever the eye wandered, it met only scenes of bustle, haste, gayety, and earnest occupation.

But if the exterior of the city presented so lively a picture, the interior was yet more inspiring. Broadway, the principal street, was now the centre of one of those gay and giddy scenes known only to the inhabitants of cold countries, and which to many offer greater attractions than the odoriferous vales and plains of Italy or Asia. True, those romantic climes where the human race enjoy a temperature so wild and pleasant as to permit of their almost dwelling in the open air even in the coldest season, have, in their softer charms, something unspeakably sweet and alluring. Those luscious ever-green valleys, those luxuriant hills,

those rich slopes, clothed with the most gorgeous fruits and the tenderest and deepest verdure, and, more than all, those gentle and transparent skies, seem beneficently designed for man in his more uncivilized state, or for the poor. It must be delightful for the penniless, the aged, and the houseless, unable to procure clothing or fuel, to find the dawn ever diffusing a genial and balmy warmth over nature. The tenant of the rude and scantily furnished hut flings open his window and admits the fragrant sweets. Mere day is to them a gift and a blessing; the sun is their cloak and their fire. Those old Italian landscapes, with the warm yellow light gleaming deliciously in through an open casement, are finely characteristic. But are we not apt to magnify the advantages of this universal and perpetual blandness of heaven? True, the half-clad fisherman flings himself carelessly down, and sleeps upon the bench; the beggar lies stretched against a sunny wall, drying the night-dews from his tattered garments, and partaking in peace the slumbers which he could not enjoy beneath the less benignant influence of the stars; the wrinkled and time-stricken dames, "the spinsters and the knitters in the sun," bring their work in front of their cottages, and, to see them, the pilgrim from a northern clime fancies them happy as the children of Eden. But I doubt whether the vigorous and enlivening joys of winter are not more conducive to health and happiness. An Italian vale, breathing its sweetest odours, and sparkling under its pleasantest sunshine, is but a dull picture compared with Broadway on the bright morning after a heavy fall of snow. No scene can be more full of life and action. Every thing appears in a whirl of delight. A spirit of joy and impulse hangs in the air, pervades all the city, and pours its fires through the veins of every living creature. The exhilarating

atmosphere braces the limbs, quickens the step, flushes the cheek, fills the eye with lustre, puts aside care, thought, and dulness, and produces a high state of animal enjoyment. Those old snow-storms have unfortunately of later years made their merry visits less frequently. The fleecy world now descends in smaller quantities, and disappears in a shorter period. I can fancy the rising generation smiling when we, of the old school, lament the forms and fashions of the last century. The young rogues, peradventure, may be amused by wondering what value we can attach to a powdered queue or a platted wristband; but, by this hand! when the elements themselves alter and remould their usages—when seasons roll in different shapes, when honest old Winter, instead of striding forward, as was his wont, wrapped in cloak and fur, his cheek glowing with the cold, and the sparry icicle glittering around his cap and beard, steals forward with only a fashionable mantle and an umbrella—Heaven save the mark! we may well lament. I cannot write calmly of those glorious old snow-storms.

One of them had now descended upon New-York, and the inhabitants, as the day advanced, seemed conscious of no other earthly object than the enjoyment of sleighing. Countless throngs of the wealthiest and most fashionable were gathered into that broad and beautiful street, which extends three or four miles in a line straight as an arrow, its long vista of elegant houses remarkable for their uniform aspect of affluence and comfort, and presenting, in their extreme neatness, and, particularly in the beauty of their entrances, a striking contrast to the street views of Paris, with only two exceptions, and to those of other continental cities without any. Its world of lovely women were abroad. Such rosy cheeks, such melting eyes as passed up and down, that dazzling day! Hundreds of sleighs, drawn sometimes by one horse and sometimes by