

**ELLEN PARRY, OR,
TRIALS OF
THE HEART**

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Ellen Parry, or, Trials of the Heart by E. E. Briggs

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E. E. BRIGGS

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ELLEN PARRY;

OR,

TRIALS OF THE HEART.

BY OLIVIA.

*"The good are better made by ill,
As odors crushed are sweeter still."*

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1850.

ELLEN PARRY.

CHAPTER I.

"Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."—ISAIAH XLVIII. 10.

See sketch of sketch
The last lingering rays of a mid-summer sun were shedding their rich light on one of the loveliest portions of park scenery in the county of Gloucester. The most fastidious and most cultivated eye in landscape gardening could have found no requirement unsatisfied in the scene before it; and yet the hand of art, if it had been exercised, had been kept in such strict subserviency to the dictates of nature, that only an artist's eye would have recognized its operations in the result. Giant oaks, whose ages were named in centuries, far spreading umbrageous elms, beeches and sycamores, were casting their long shadows over a brilliant carpet of "England's fadeless green;" and numerous groups of deer were scattered here and there, imparting to the whole that completeness, which is always wanting to such a scene as I have described in the absence of these beautiful animals. An English gentleman's park without its fallow deer, seems as unfurnished as an English peasant's fireside without the cat and dog. Various openings brought to view the distant Severn, and the Monmouthshire and Welsh mountains. The mellow evening light blending foreground and distance, supplying deficiencies, and concealing redundancies, presented a scene of most perfect harmony to the gazer's eye.

Immediately in front of the mansion which overlooked

this lordly scene, a portion of the grass had been closely shaven and carefully rolled, as if the inmates had been exercising themselves thereon in the old English sports, now so much on the decline among the upper classes, of cricket or bowling; but a target placed about the centre of the cleared space indicated that archery had been the more recent amusement. The sun had nearly touched the horizon, when two young girls about fifteen years of age, and accompanied by a youth some two or three years their senior, appeared on the terrace which was separated from the park by a ha-ha.

"How glad I am," said one of them, "to escape from that warm dining-room, and that tedious dinner. And, Caroline, what do you say to one more aim at the bull's eye? If I should hit it a third time, I shall feel my success certain to-morrow. The bows and arrows are in the oriel window in the hall, Edward, get them for us; and then help us to jump down the ha-ha. I never go through a gate, you know, when I have a choice between that and climbing a fence or a stone wall."

"I'll get your bows and arrows willingly, but the sun is just beginning to dip behind the hill, and in the twilight you are much more likely to hit wider of your mark than you have before, than to strike the bull's eye."

"Bird of ill omen! I'll prove thee a false prognosticator," was the sprightly rejoinder.

The bows were soon strung, and in the hands of the fair owners. With the light elasticity of youth they sprung from the ha-ha to the grass, and Caroline placed herself at fifty yards' distance from the target: she took her aim and drew her bow in a manner that bespoke her practised in the sport; the arrow hit the inner margin of the red circle, and an exclamation of joy burst from her companions. "That surpasses all your shots this morning, Carry, for though you hit the red every time, it was always on the outer margin," said her lively friend Ellen, as she took her stand on the spot Caroline had occupied.

Ellen now drew, but far from equalling her friend's shot, her arrow struck the outer edge of the black. Caroline drew a second and a third time, and again the arrows entered the red circle, while the shots of Ellen were more distant even than before.

"I shall try no more this evening," said the former. "I will have one more trial," said Ellen. "If the prize to-morrow were for numbers, instead of for the hit nearest the centre, I should feel sure it would be yours, but the general infelicity of my shots is so often balanced by a single supremely felicitous one, that I think it by no means a presumptuous expectation that Sir George's annual speech on presenting the prize, beginning time immemorial, 'Fair and youthful votress of Diana,' and ending, 'May you always succeed in your aims, and never overshoot your mark,' will be made to me to-morrow." The shot was successful; the arrow struck about midway between the centre and the outer margin of the gold.

"Now I'll rest on my laurels for this day at least," said Ellen, as she drew off her brace and shooting-glove, and put them into Edward's hand. He assisted them to climb up to the terrace again, and the three walked to and fro in the long mild twilight, discussing the merits of different bows, and arguing the pros and cons of the still mooted question among the initiated, whether the arrow should taper from the feathers to the pile, or from the pile to the feathers, or in each direction from the centre. Various remarkable shots at previous archery meetings were remembered and commented on; and not the least animated, or least interesting part of their conversation, was that which related to the costume in which the ladies were to appear on the morrow.

The meeting which was anticipated with so much anxious pleasure by all the young people for many miles round, took place annually in the park of a somewhat eccentric but amiable old Baronet, who resided about five miles distant from Beechland, the residence of Ellen Parry's father, and the place at which our story opens. The general kindness of his nature rendered him an object of universal regard in spite of his many eccentricities, because they were so obviously qualified by true benevolence. For twenty years he had been in the habit of summoning all the young girls between fourteen and eighteen, to an annual trial of skill in archery. The prize was given alternately for the greatest value of the whole number of shots by any one competitor, computed in the usual manner, and for the hit nearest the

centra. The prize was always presented by the old gentleman himself, on which occasion he never failed to make a speech, which brought to the minds of the elderly portion of his audience the stately courtesy and stiff phraseology of Sir Charles Grandison, and which speech invariably began and ended with the words Ellen Parry had quoted.

The next day was all that could be desired, and despite all that is said by the large and world-wide extended family of grumblers touching the variability of the English climate, and the invariable humidity of those days which are fixed upon for gipsy parties, picnics, and boating excursions, the denizens of Merry England, somehow or other, manage to enjoy as many sports "al fresco," as most other people in as high a latitude.

The carriage was at the door at eleven o'clock, and the girls prepared to take their seats in it with Mrs. Parry. They had chosen to be dressed alike, and the costume they had selected was exceedingly becoming; white skirts, with a green velvet bodice fitting closely to the figure and reaching to the throat, where it was relieved by a small white collar; a green velvet cap, with a light plume of feathers drooping on the left side, formed the head dress. The bright eyes and glowing faces rendered it very evident that each had been satisfied with the reflection of her mirror; but now nothing was to be thought of but making assurance doubly sure, by looking for the twentieth time in the cases to see that all the accoutrements were there. The examination was satisfactory, the footman closed the door and sprang to his seat. Mr. Parry and Edward Moreton mounted their horses, and the party was fairly on its way for *the fête* of the season.

The Parrys were among the earliest arrivals, and Sir George was on the steps of his mansion to hand them from the carriage, looking like a court beau of the last century, in his queue, gayly embroidered satin vest, and white neckcloth of gossamer texture, a superb *piccatee* in the button-hole of his coat, and an opera hat under his arm. His lower limbs, somewhat shrunk, alas, from their youthful proportions, were cased in silk, and his knee and shoe buckles were of large diamonds. The girls gave an intelligent look at each other as this, to them, grotesque figure bowed low over Mrs. Parry's hand, and escorted her up the

steps, as he would have led his partner forward in the *minuet de la cour*. They knew his whim of banding every lady from her carriage, and therefore quietly awaited his return. "Be prepared for a salute on your cheek, Carry," whispered Ellen, "your left cheek, precisely midway between your nose and ear; he never varies the hundredth part of an inch. I believe it is to secure himself this privilege, that he limits the age of the competitors to eighteen; after that time he thinks no gentleman should approach a lady more familiarly than to touch the gloved tips of her fingers. Here he comes; now we must be as solemn as Castilian grandees."

The ceremonial was concluded, and the girls were at length conducted to the reception room. The guests arrived in quick succession, and as almost all the young people were more or less known to each other, very animated conversations were kept up on the subject of the day's amusement, as they strolled through the grounds and conservatories. Sir George was showing to his elder guests a magnificent stove-house, which he had built for the purpose of raising the different varieties of the palma tribe, and which was now in full and very successful operation, when the turret clock struck one, and immediately afterwards a gong was sounded as the signal for the commencement of the archery.

There was a general rush to the archery ground, and the sport soon commenced, continuing, with an intermission of ten minutes at the close of every half hour, until three o'clock, when Sir George, going up to the butts, examined the shots, compared the records of the four gentlemen on whom he had conferred the office of masters of the butts, and pronounced Miss Parry the winner of the prize. The old gentleman's speech this year astonished his audience, for it pleased him to descant at large upon the sport he loved so much: at length, after telling sundry anecdotes—and how, in the time of Edward IV., every Englishman was compelled to keep a bow, that butts were ordered to be set up in every township, and the people enjoined to shoot on feast days, on pain of penalty, and furthermore, that good Bishop Latimer, of martyr memory, had preached a sermon before King Edward VI., for the express purpose of encouraging the use of the bow—he bowed to Ellen, and, with his usual conclusion, placed a morocco case containing a superb

ly chased golden arrow in the hands of the blushing and exulting girl.

Tents had been erected, in which a breakfast was prepared for the company; after which the young people danced, some of the elders strolled through the grounds, and some of the gentlemen grew animated on the subject of an expected change of ministry, and approaching elections; and matronly ladies (as I believe most matronly ladies do, all the world over,) talked of domestic matters,—a subject on which all are eloquent, and none agreeable,—till the declining sun warned them of the propriety of ordering their carriages.

"Oh, papa," said Ellen, as she kissed her father, on wishing him a good night, "I think this must be the happiest day of my life. I never can feel happier than I have felt to-day. Ever since I was a wee thing I have longed for the time when I might go to Sir George's archery fête and I have had day dreams and night dreams, sleeping dreams and waking dreams of winning the prize, and to-day my long cherished hope has been realized." Her father smiled as he kissed her, and bade her hasten to bed and sleep off her excitement; but his smile was a sad one, and a sigh succeeded it; perhaps his thoughts reverted to the time when he had aimed at objects which had been attained but objects in possession had failed to bring him the happiness he had fondly thought inseparable from them, and he had fully realized, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Mr. Parry began life with nothing—if a man can be said so to commence his voyage on its stormy sea who possesses a clear, cool judgment, sagacity, unwearied perseverance, a fine temper and robust health, a fixed object and a single eye to it. These are the tools with which success is achieved, and he can hardly be called portionless who is endowed with them. At eighteen, a junior clerk in a counting-house, not remarkable for pushing forward those employed in it, and more observable for his punctuality and promptness than for his showy talents, it did not seem very probable that he would, at a day not very far distant, take his stand among the merchant princes of his native country, save to a few who noticed his careful gathering up