

LOVE AND LETTERS

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Love and Letters by Frederic Rowland Marvin

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FREDERIC ROWLAND MARVIN

**LOVE AND
LETTERS**

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BY
FREDERIC ROWLAND MARVIN

"Give all to love;
Obey thy heart;
Friends, kindred, days,
Estate, good-fame,
Plans, credit, and the Muse,—
Nothing refuse."

—Emerson.



BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

1911

1000
1000
1000

TO
MY BELOVED WIFE
PERSIS


"O happy they! the happiest of their kind!
Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate
Their hearts, their fortune, and their beings blend."
Thompson.



PREFACE

The farmer who requested to be buried in Petrarch's grave that his dust might mingle with that of the poet, could not secure to himself so great an honor even though he offered one hundred crowns of gold for the privilege. He sought for himself a distinction that in no way belonged to him, and that could not under any possible circumstances be other than offensive to all lovers of art and letters. But when Lafayette sent for earth from Bunker Hill that it might be placed over his body after its interment, the selectmen of Boston saw at once the beauty and propriety of his request. They took earth from the spot where General Warren fell, and with it forwarded to Lafayette's agent a certificate stating that it was earth from one of the most sacred of places. The certificate was signed by three of the oldest men in Boston, all of whom felt that their names were honored by being thus associated with the glory of the new republic.

In these pages I seek for myself no foreign distinction to which I may lay no rightful claim. I endeavor only to associate my name with those friendly studies which are natural to all lovers of good books who delight in quiet evenings spent in the library with such volumes as dear old Charles Lamb used to touch with reverence and kiss with tenderness. Fletcher said this for me and for all who love good books long ago when he wrote:



PREFACE

“That place that does
Contain my books, the best companions, is
To me a glorious court, where hourly I
Converse with the old sages and philosophers.”

With some consciousness of my many limitations and of the imperfections in my work, I yet offer to my readers a literary fare that has filled for me many a long winter evening with delight, and that I truly hope may bring pleasure to others.

I

LOVE AND LETTERS

Ὅτι γέρον, οὔτις κείνον ἀνὴρ ἀλαλήμενος ἐλθὼν
ἀγγέλλων κείσσει γυναϊκά τε καὶ φίλον υἱόν,
ἀλλ' ἄλλως κομιδῆς κεχηρμένοι ἄνδρες ἀλήται
ψεύδοιτ', οὐδ' ἐθέλουσι ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι.
Ὅς δέ κ' ἀλητεύων Ἰθάκης ἐς δῆμον ἴκηται,
ἐλθὼν ἐς δέσποιναν ἐμὴν ἀπατήλια βάζει.
ἢ δ' εὖ δεξαμένη φιλέει καὶ ἕκαστα μεταλλᾷ,
καὶ οἱ ὀδυρομένη βλεφάρων ἀπο δάκρυα πίπτει,
ἢ θέμις ἐστὶ γυναῖκος, ἐπὴν πόσις ἄλλοθ' ὄληται.

Homer.

Ah, wasteful woman! she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing he cannot choose but pay—
How has she cheapened Paradise!
How given for naught her priceless gift;
How spoiled the bread and spilled the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift
Had made brutes men and men divine!

LOVE AND LETTERS

WHEN Mrs. Lewes, the legal wife of G. H. Lewes, died in England some time ago, an old story, false and even absurd in every detail, was revived. It was asserted that Mr. Lewes had deliberately deserted his wife, moved thereto by the powerful intellect and personal qualities of the gifted author of "Adam Bede." Mrs. Lewes was rehabilitated and readorned, and the only logical inference that could be drawn from the tender and pathetic words spoken over her grave and published from one end of England to the other was that she was a much abused woman. The real facts in the case were set forth in a statement which appeared in *The London Times*. It was made by an Edinburgh lady who was well acquainted with both Mr. Lewes and George Eliot. A due regard for truth as well as a sense of justice requires that the statement which was signed by E. Katharine Bates, and which is not so widely known as could be wished, should be published whenever the opportunity presents itself. The statement runs thus:

"Some years ago I was taking tea with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lewes, (he being the son of George Henry Lewes, to whom George Eliot left her MSS. and most of her possessions,) and the conversation turned upon the subject to which your remarks refer. I had often heard some such suggestions

made, and had greatly desired to know the truth of the matter. That afternoon Mr. Charles Lewes accompanied me downstairs to the hall door, and by a sudden and overpowering impulse I was led to ask him whether it were true that his father had left his mother owing to the influence of George Eliot. 'It is a wicked falsehood,' was his answer. 'My mother had left my father before he and George Eliot had ever met each other. George Eliot found a ruined life, and she made it into a beautiful life. She found us poor little motherless boys, and what she did for us no one on earth will ever know'; and his whole face lighted up with emotion, and the tears came to his eyes as he said this to me. He then continued in these words: 'I am the son of the woman who people say was wronged by George Eliot and by my father. I have told you the real truth of the matter, and you have my authority to repeat it wherever and whenever such a statement is made again in your presence.'

It will be generally admitted that the question asked was anything but delicate. Only the closest friendship saved it from being a piece of unqualified impertinence. Yet it is well for us and for the memory of the dead that the question was asked. It was asked none too soon. Not long after the interview the useful and gentle life of Mr. Charles Lewes came to an end in far-away Egypt.

Lewes, according to those who knew him best, was not what is commonly called "a magnetic man"; strangers found him cold and unresponsive. The Rev. O. B. Frothingham, who for