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Ythias and Damon

OR,

A NEW WAY

TO

Y OLD DEBTS.



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PHILADELPHIA.
1881

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PYTHIAS AND DAMON

OR,

A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS.

Sweet is the love in maiden eyes

When young desire and duty strive,

And bright the flame that's kept alive

Upon the altar Love supplies ;

Sweet are a mother's thoughts that rise

A mingling hope and recollection,

But sweeter, sweeter are the ties

Of friendship's pure affection.

The burst of sentiment above

Was prompted by the tale below,

Which tells what passed some years ago

Between a pair of worthies of

The city called Fraternal Love.—

A pair who claimed for signs armorial

Two rabbits and a turtle dove

Bearing the word “Censorial.”

Although this famous town possessed

Many good men and christians true,

None equalled those alluded to.

Of all their time they spent the best

In righteous fear and trembling, lest

But trade was not their natural bent,
 In fact the purpose of their firm
 Was ill-expressed by such a term.
 That they were primarily meant
 For saving souls, was evident
 To anyone, but being laymen,
 They prosecuted this intent
 As “Pythias and Damon.”

Such were the names their sign displayed,
 And praises were on every lip
 That mentioned the copartnership.
 They scorned the emoluments of trade
 As tending only to degrade,
 And warp our notions of propriety,
 Unfitting one, as Pythias said,
 For gentlemen's society.

Their perfect virtue never tripped,
 They never chewed the bitter cud
 Of dark remorse, for in the bud,
 All promptings of the flesh were nipped.
 So being thoroughly equipped
 For purging out the sin that lingers
 In human hearts, few chances slipped
 Between their pious fingers.

This righteous twain made such advance,
 Each in his own extensive set,
 That it was soon an even bet
 None would escape their vigilance.
 But now a man who'd lived in France
 Appeared upon the town's horizon
 Of course they looked at him askance,
 As one to keep their eyes on.

Here was indeed a case for zeal.

The stupid Frenchmen rarely know
 What to keep back and what to show,
 Which often leads them to reveal
 The thing a Yankee would conceal
 Most carefully, and never blab it,
 Although as crooked as an eel,
 And wanton as a rabbit.

He'd lived in France ! and what was more,
 He spoke the language pretty well !—
 Enough to send *two* souls to ———,
 And so it wasn't long before
 The righteous minded Damon swore
 He'd found such darkness in the fellow,
 Not all the waves on Jordan's shore
 Could wash him even yellow.

'Twas not, perhaps, exactly true,
 But when the mind's entirely free
 From tincture of impurity,
 We're apt to judge what others do
 Severely,—there were reasons too.

To put it plain, I don't suppose if
 You read this person's history through
 You'd find he was a Joseph.

This was enough, for Damon quite
 (Though free from all ill-will, of course)
 Made chastity a hobby-horse.
 He didn't know the luckless wight,
 Not even, as I think, by sight,
 And, heaven knows, he hated quarrels,
 But he went in with all his might,
 For purity of morals.

His end, too, fully justified
 The means, as ends will always do,
 When we've morality in view
 His object was, as moral guide,
 To stop the spreading far and wide
 Of Spiritual contamination,
 And who could blame him if he tried
 A slight exaggeration?

The indictment was concubinage,
 In its most aggravated form ;
 The importation of a swarm
 Of lady friends, whom he'd engage
 To put the righteous in a rage ;
 French, English, Irish, Scotch and others,
 Young maidens, fifteen years of age,
 Their mothers and grandmothers.

This, and a good deal more beside,
 Our zealous Damon spread about,
 And, not to leave the slightest doubt,
 He thought it proper to provide
 The names of some who certified.

'Tis true they wickedly objected ;
 But wasn't Jesus Christ denied ?
 That was to be expected.

What troubled him exceedingly
 Was this ; the man whom he accused,
 Most unexpectedly refused
 To bear it with a due degree
 Of Christian equanimity.

In fact, he formally requested
 Retraction and apology,
 Against which D, protested.

Then growing less and less discreet,
 He even asked for something more,
 And being answered as before,
 And told his ways were obsolete,
 He fell into a violent heat,
 And sallied forth so well provided
 That, meeting Damon on the street,
 The latter was cowhided.

Now, like the one of Syracuse,
 Our Damon taught his blood to pass
 The filter of Pythagoras,
 And, thereby, in a measure lose
 The corpuscles, which most infuse
 The brain with tragic thoughts abhorrent ;
 So sending Pythias the news,
 He went and got a warrant.

Thus come we to the second part
 Of this, my tale ; if this were all,
 It should not have been told at all.
 I could not find it in my heart
 To prostitute the rhyming art
 Digging up hatchets ; these I bury.
 What's gone before is from the start
 Merely preliminary.

No ! purest friendship is my theme :
 Two manly hearts that beat as one
 Beneath the tempest or the sun ;
Two minds that in the hour supreme
 Think but one thought ; a perfect team .
 The tender mystical communion
 Of two sweet souls, that fondly dream
 Of some seraphic union.

Great was the wrath of Pythias.

The blood within him boiled as though
 Himself had taken every blow,
 And all his words were ominous,
 Then Damon came and said ; and thus
 Stern P., while awful cholera pricks him,
 “ It wouldn’t pay to make a fuss,
 But wait awhile, we’ll fix him !”

Thenceforth from that eventful day,
 While Phoebus drove the shining car ;
 While pallid Cynthia shone afar,
 How most to harm with least delay
 Held o’er their souls despotic sway.

No thing on earth had virtue drastic,
 To purge the absorbing thought away,
 Not even Gum elastic.

Soon wastes the rankling breast that pens
 From outward gaze a pious hate.
 As luck would have it, ere too late,
 That special providence, which kens
 The needs of earthly denizens,
 Sent in the foeman's application
 For membership to our Young Mens'
 Christian Association.

Dark gleamed the wrathful Pythias' eye,
 When first he saw the ballot board ;
 “ Now vice shall have a just reward, ”
 He muttered, “ Yes, the hour is nigh !
 And deuced lucky, by the by,
 For Damon's getting awful nervous.—
 How sweet to serve a dear ally,
 While rendering Heaven a service !

The audacious stranger failed to see,
 How Damon's cowhiding could weigh
 So much with this Y. M. C. A.,
 Of which he was not ; happily
 The wretch ignored the fact that he
 Was bosom friend to one commanding
 Great influence through piety,
 And lofty moral standing.

His dupe was told the risk he ran,
 In putting up the villain's name,
 And counselled to withdraw the same.
 But he, though member of the clan,
 Was not a very pious man ;
 They seldom are in his vocation,
 (Ship fighting), so when they began,
 He asked an explanation.

O, magic Solidarity !
 O, grinder of all grist we bring
 Into the just and proper thing !
 O,——stop, the lyric ecstasy
 Entirely overpowers me.

Such subjects as the one before us,
 Require so much apostrophe,
 There ought to be a chorus.

'Twas more than wrong to say "explain,"
 When all men knew that this was thus,
 For virtue and for Pythias.
 The thing was so exceeding plain,
 So proper too, and such a gain
 For Christ, that why the Saint Consistory
 Sought other reasons, must remain
 The model of a mystery.

Nevertheless a search was made,
 And very strong objections found
 Against the person, on the ground
 That he who fathered and defrayed,
 Had followed a forbidden trade,
 Had been for years without a pang, or
 Regret, except when badly paid,
 A hardened "paper-hanger."

It mustn't be supposed that all
 The many ways of taking in
 The neighbor, were accounted sin,
 Or thought unworthy, not at all.
 The list was so extremely small
 That even "Rubber Scraps" were lawful,
 But making paper for a wall,
 Was utterly too awful.

To cut a tiresome story short,
 The foul impostor's base career
 Was ended, as they say, right here.
 It seems that finding he was caught,
 And knowing there was nothing for it,
 He straightway doused his vital taper ;
 Hanged to a wall, as some report,
 Just like a piece of paper.