

VARIOUS

THE KNICKERBOCKER,
OR NEW-YORK
MONTHLY MAGAZINE,
MARCH 1844

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Содержание

WHAT IS TRANSCENDENTALISM?	5
LINES SENT WITH A BOUQUET	10
THE ALMS HOUSE	12
APOSTROPHE TO HEALTH	17
ISABEL	18
ONE READING FROM TWO POETS	19
WHERE IS THE SPIRIT-WORLD?	22
THE TYRANNY OF AFFECTION	24
THE FRATRICIDE'S DEATH	32
A RHAPSODY	32
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	34

Various

The Knickerbocker, or New-York Monthly Magazine, March 1844 / Volume 23, Number 3

WHAT IS TRANSCENDENTALISM?

BY A THINKING MAN

This question has often been asked but seldom answered satisfactorily. Newspaper editors and correspondents have frequently attempted a practical elucidation of the mystery, by quoting from their own brains the rarest piece of absurdity which they could imagine, and entitling it 'Transcendentalism.' One good hit of this kind may be well enough, by way of satire upon the fogginess of certain writers who deem themselves, and are deemed by the multitude, transcendental *par excellence*. Coleridge however thought that to parody stupidity by way of ridiculing it, only proves the parodist more stupid than the original blockhead. Still, one such attempt may be tolerated; but when imitators of the parodist arise and fill almost every newspaper in the country with similar witticisms, such efforts become 'flat and unprofitable;' for nothing is easier than to put words together in a form which conveys no meaning to the reader. It is a cheap kind of wit, asinine rather than attic, and can be exercised as well by those who know nothing of the subject as by those best acquainted with it. Indeed, it is greatly to be doubted whether one in a hundred of these witty persons know any thing of the matter; for if they possess sense enough to make them worthy of being ranked among reasonable men, it could be proved to them in five minutes that they are themselves transcendentalists, as all thinking men find themselves compelled to be, whether they know themselves by that name or not.

'Poh!' said a friend, looking over my shoulder; 'you can't prove *me* a transcendentalist; I defy you to do it; I despise the name.'

Why so? Let us know what it is that you despise. Is it the sound of the word? Is it not sufficiently euphonious? Does it not strike your ear as smoothly as Puseyite, or Presbyterian?

'Nonsense!' said he; 'you don't suppose I am to be misled by the sound of a word; it is the meaning to which I object. I despise transcendentalism; therefore I do not wish to be called transcendentalist.'

Very well; but we shall never 'get ahead' unless you define transcendentalism according to your understanding of the word.

'That request is easily made, but not easily complied with. Have you Carlyle or Emerson at hand?'

Here I took down a volume of each, and read various sentences and paragraphs therefrom. These passages are full of transcendental ideas; do you object to them?

'No,' said my friend; 'for aught I can perceive, they might have been uttered by any one who was *not* a transcendentalist. Let me see the books.'

After turning over the leaves a long while, he selected and read aloud a passage from Carlyle, one of his very worst; abrupt, nervous, jerking, and at the same time windy, long-drawn-out, and parenthetical; a period filling a whole page.

'There,' said he, stopping to take breath, 'if that is not enough to disgust one with transcendentalism, then I know nothing of the matter.'

A very sensible conclusion. Bless your soul, that is *Carlyle-ism*, not transcendentalism. You said but now that you were not to be misled by the sound of a word; and yet you are condemning a principle on account of the bad style of a writer who is supposed to be governed by it. Is that right? Would you condemn Christianity because of the weaknesses and sins of one of its professors?

‘Of course not,’ replied he; ‘I wish to be fair. I cannot express my idea of the meaning of transcendentalism without tedious circumlocution, and I begin to despair of proving my position by quotations. It is not on any particular passage that I rest my case. You have read this work, and will understand me when I say that it is to its general intent and spirit that I object, and not merely to the author’s style.’

I think I comprehend you. You disregard the mere form in which the author expresses his thoughts; you go beyond and behind that, and judge him by the thoughts themselves; not by one or by two, but by the sum and *substance* of the whole. You strip off the husk to arrive at the kernel, and judge of the goodness of the crop by the latter, not the former.

‘Just so,’ said he; ‘that’s my meaning precisely. I always strive to follow that rule in every thing. ‘Appearances,’ you know, ‘are deceitful.’

That is to say, you go beyond or transcend appearances and circumstances, and divine the true meaning, the substance, the spirit of that on which you are about to decide. That is practical transcendentalism, and you are a transcendentalist.

‘I wish you would suggest another name for it,’ said my friend, as he went out of the door; ‘I detest the sound of that word.’

I wish we could, said I, but he was out of hearing; I wish we could, for it is an abominably long word to write.

‘I wish we could,’ mutters the printer, ‘for it is an awfully long word to print.’

‘I wish we could,’ is the sober second thought of all; for people will always condemn transcendentalism until it is called by another name. Such is the force of prejudice.

‘I have been thinking over our conversation of yesterday,’ said my friend next morning, on entering my room.

‘Oh, you have been writing it down, have you? Let me see it.’ After looking over the sketch, he remarked:

‘You *seem* to have me fast enough, but after all I believe you conquered merely by playing upon a word, and in proving me to be a transcendentalist you only proved me to be a reasonable being; one capable of perceiving, remembering, combining, comparing and deducing; one who, amid the apparent contradictions with which we are surrounded, strives to reconcile appearances and discover principles; and from the outward and visible learn the inward and spiritual; in fine, arrive at truth. Now every reasonable man claims to be all that I have avowed myself to be. If this is to be a transcendentalist, then I am one. When I read that I must hate my father and mother before I can be a disciple of Jesus, I do not understand that passage literally; I call to mind other precepts of Christ; I remember the peculiarities of eastern style; I compare these facts together, and deduce therefrom a very different principle from that apparently embodied in the passage quoted. When I see the Isle of Shoals doubled, and the duplicates reversed in the air above the old familiar rocks, I do not, as I stand on Rye-beach, observing the interesting phenomenon, believe there are two sets of islands there; but recalling facts which I have learned, and philosophical truths which I have acquired and verified, I attribute the appearance to its true cause, refraction of light. When in passing from room to room in the dark, with my arms outspread, I run my nose against the edge of a door, I do not therefrom conclude that my nose is longer than my arms! When I see a man stumble in the street, I do not at once set him down as a drunkard, not considering that to be sufficient evidence, although some of our Washingtonian friends do; but I compare that fact with the state of the streets, and what I know of his previous life, and judge accordingly.’

Well, said I, you are an excellent transcendentalist; one after my own heart, in morals, philosophy and religion. To be a transcendentalist is after all to be *only* a sensible, unprejudiced man, open to conviction at all times, and spiritually-minded. I can well understand that, when you condemn transcendentalism, you object not to the principle, but to the practice, in the superlative degree, of that principle. Transcendentalism is but an abstract mode of considering morals, philosophy, religion; an application of the principles of abstract science to these subjects. All metaphysicians are transcendentalists, and every one is transcendental so far as he is metaphysical. There are as many different modifications of the one as of the other, and probably no two transcendentalists ever thought alike; their creed is not yet written. You certainly do not condemn spiritualism, but ultra spiritualism you seem to abhor.

'Precisely so. I did not yesterday give you the meaning which I attached to transcendentalism; in truth, practically you meant one thing by that term, and I another, though I now see that in principle they are the same. The spiritualism which I like, looks through nature and revelation up to God; that which I abhor, condescends hardly to make use of nature at all, but demands direct converse with God, and declares that it enjoys it too; a sort of continual and *immediate* revelation. Itself is its own authority. The ultra-spiritualist contains within himself the fulness of the Godhead. He allows of nothing external, unless it be brother spirits like himself. He has abolished nature, and to the uninitiated seems to have abolished God himself, although I am charitable enough to believe that he has full faith in God, after his own fashion. He claims to be inspired; to be equal to Jesus; nay superior; for one of them lately said: 'Greater is the container than the contained, therefore I am greater than God, for I contain God!' The ultra-spiritualist believes only *by* and *through* and *in* his own inward light. Let him take care, as Carlyle says, that his own contemptible tar-link does not, by being held too near his eyes, extinguish to him the sun of the universe. Now the true spiritualist makes use not only of his own moral and religious instincts, but all that can be gathered by the senses from external nature, and all that can be acquired by untiring consultation with the sages who have gone before him; and from these materials in the alembic of his mind, with such power as God has given him, he distils truth.'

Truth! Ah, that is the very point in question. 'What is truth?' has been the ardent inquiry of every honest mind from the days of Adam to the present time, and the sneering demand of many an unbeliever. Eve sought it when she tasted the forbidden fruit. But since then, thank God! no prohibition has been uttered against the search after truth, and mankind have improved their liberty with great industry for six thousand years; and what is the result? Is truth discovered? How much? and how much of falsehood is mixed up with what *is* known to be true? These questions are constantly suggesting themselves to thinkers, and to answer them is the labor of their lives. Let them have free scope, ultra-spiritualists and all. Even these latter go through the same operation which you have just claimed to be peculiar to the true spiritualist. All do, whether they will or not, make use of observation, learning, and the inward light. Some arrive at one result, and some at another, because the elements differ in each. If any two could be found whose external observations, learning, intellect and inward light or instincts were precisely equal in volume and proportion, can it be doubted that these two would arrive at precisely similar results? But they are *not* equal; and so one comes to believe in external authority, and the other refers every thing to a standard which he thinks he finds within himself. The latter is deemed by the public to be a representative of pure transcendentalism, and he is condemned accordingly as self-sufficient.

And privately, between you and me, my good friend, I cannot help thinking it rather ungrateful in him, after becoming so deeply indebted to his senses, to books, and the Bible for his spiritual education, to turn round and despise these means of advancement, and declare that they are mere non-essential *circumstances*, and that a man may reach the same end by studying himself *in* himself. It is as if a man should use a ladder to reach a lofty crag, and then kick it over contemptuously, and aver that he could just as well have flown up, and ask the crowd below to break up that miserable

ladder and try their wings. Doubtless they *have* wings, if they only knew it. But seriously, I am not inclined to join in the hue-and-cry against even the ultra-transcendentalist. He has truth mixed up with what I esteem objectionable, and some truth to which others have not attained; and as I deem the eclectic the only true mode of philosophy, I am willing to take truth where I can find it, whether in China or Boston, in Confucius or Emerson, Kant or Cousin, the Bible or the Koran; and though I have more reverence for one of these sources than all others, it is only because I think I find there the greatest amount of truth, sanctioned by the highest authority. To put the belief in the Bible on any other ground, is to base it on educational prejudice and superstition; on which principle the Koran should be as binding on the Mahometan as the Bible on us. Do we not all finally resort to *ourselves* in order to decide a difficult question in morals or religion? and is not the decision more or less correct accordingly as we refer it to the better or to the baser portion of our nature?

‘Most certainly! I have often said I would not and could not believe in the Bible, if it commanded us to worship Sin and leave our passions unbridled.’

Well said! And in so saying, you acknowledge yourself to be governed by the same principle which actuates the ultra-transcendentalist; the moral sense or instinct, similar to the ‘inward light’ of the Friends. After all, I apprehend the true point in which men differ is, whether this moral sense is really an instinct, or whether it is evolved and put in operation by education. How much is due to nature? is the true question. But to solve it, is important only theoretically, for practically we all act alike; we cannot, if we would, separate the educational from the natural moral sense; we cannot *uneducate* it, and then judge by it, freed from all circumstantial bias. But whether more or less indebted either to nature or education, it is to this moral and religious sense that the ultra-transcendentalist refers every question, and passes judgment according to its verdict. It is sometimes rather vaguely called the ‘Pure Reason;’ but that is only a *term*, hardly a ‘mouthful of articulate wind.’

‘You and I shall agree very well together, I see,’ replied my friend. ‘If we dispute at all, it will be foolishly about the meaning of a word. All the world have been doing that ever since the confusion of tongues at Babel. That great event prophetically shadowed forth the future; for now, as then, the confusion and disputation is greatest when we are striving most earnestly to reach heaven by our earth-built contrivances. We may draw a lesson therefrom; not to be too aspiring for our means; for our inevitable failure only makes us the more ridiculous, the higher the position we seem to have attained.’

Very true; but we should never arrive at the height of wisdom, which consists in knowing our own ignorance and weakness, unless we made full trial of our powers. The fall of which you speak should give us a modesty not to be otherwise obtained, and make us very careful how we ridicule others, seeing how open to it we ourselves are. Every man may build his tower of Babel, and if he make a right use of his failure, may in the end be nearer heaven than if he had never made the attempt. Ridicule is no argument, and should only be used by way of a *jeu d’esprit*, and never on solemn subjects. It is very hard, I know, for one who has mirthfulness strongly developed, to restrain himself on all occasions; and what is solemn to one may not be so to another; hence we should be very charitable to all; alike to the bigots, the dreamers, and the laughers; to the builders of theoretic Babel-towers, and the grovellers on the low earth.

‘There is one kind of transcendentalism,’ replied my friend, ‘which you have not noticed particularly, which consists in believing in nothing except the spiritual existence of the unbeliever himself, and hardly that. It believes not in the external world at all.’

If you are on *that* ground, I have done. To talk of that, would be wasting our time on nothing; or ‘our eternity,’ for with that sect time is altogether a delusion. It *may* be true, but the believer, even in the act of declaring his faith, must practically prove himself persuaded of the falsity of his doctrine.

‘You wanted a short name for transcendentalism; if a long one will make *this* modification of it more odious, let us call it *Incomprehensibilityosityivityalityationmentnessism*.’

My friend said this with a face nearly as long as the word, made a low bow, and departed. I took my pen and reduced our conversation to writing. I hope by this time the reader has a very lucid

answer to give to the question, *What is Transcendentalism?* It will be a miracle if he can see one inch farther into the fog-bank than before. I should like to take back the boast made in the beginning of this paper, that I could prove in five minutes any reasonable man a transcendentalist. My friend disconcerted my plan of battle, by taking command of the enemy's forces, instead of allowing me to marshal them on paper to suit myself; and so a mere friendly joust ensued, instead of the utter demolition of my adversary, which I had intended.

And this little circumstance has led me to think, what a miserable business controversialists would make of it, if each had his opponent looking over his shoulder, pointing out flaws in his arguments, suggesting untimely truths, and putting every possible impediment in the path of his logic; and if, moreover, he were obliged to mend every flaw, prove every such truth a falsehood, and remove every impediment before he could advance a step. Were such the case, how much less would there be of fine-spun theory and specious argument; how much more of practical truth! Always supposing the logical combatants did not lose their patience and resort to material means and knock-down arguments; of which, judging by the spirit sometimes manifested in theological controversies, there would really seem to be some danger. Oh! it is a very easy thing to sit in one's study and demolish an opponent, who after all is generally no opponent at all, but only a man of straw, dressed up for the occasion with a few purposely-tattered shreds of the adversary's cast-off garments.

Note by the 'Friend.'—The foregoing is a *correct* sketch of our conversations, especially as the reporter has, like his congressional brother, corrected most of the bad grammar, and left out some of the vulgarisms and colloquialisms, and given me the better side of the argument in the last conversation; it is *very* correct. But it seems to me that the question put at the commencement is as far from being solved as ever. It is as difficult to be answered as the question, What is Christianity? to which every sect will return a different reply, and each prove all the others wrong.

Portsmouth, (N. H.)J. K. Jr.

LINES SENT WITH A BOUQUET

BY PARK BENJAMIN

I

I've read in legends old of men
Who hung up fruits and flowers
Before the altar-shrines of those
They called Superior Powers:
It was, I think, a blessed thought
That things so pure and sweet
Should be esteemed an offering
For gods and angels meet.

II

I imitate that charming rite
In this our sober day,
And, when I worship, strew sweet flowers
Along my angel's way:
And, if my heart's fond prayer be heard,
The offering I renew;
For flowers like books have leaves that speak,
And thoughts of every hue.

III

They are Love's paper, pictured o'er
With gentle hopes and fears;
Their blushes are the smiles of Love,
And their soft dew his tears!
Ah! more than poet's pen can write
Or poet's tongue reveal
Is hidden by their folded buds
And by their rosy seal.

IV

Mute letters! yet how eloquent!
Expressive silence dwells
In every blossom Heaven creates,
Like sound in ocean shells.
Press to my flowers thy lips, beloved,
And then thy heart will see
Inscribed upon their leaves the words
I dare not breathe to thee!

THE ALMS HOUSE

BY A NEW CONTRIBUTOR

It is not my purpose in the following narrative to point out all the evils arising from the modern practice of relieving the wants of the poor and destitute which prevails in this country and in England, where the arm of the law compels that pittance which should be the voluntary donation of benevolence; one consequence of which system is, that the poor claim support as a *debt* due from society at large, and feel no gratitude toward any of the individuals paying the tax. The payer of the tax, on the other hand, feeling that he can claim no merit for surrendering that which is wrung from him by force, and expecting no thanks for the act, and knowing that in many cases it operates as a bounty on idleness, hates the ungrateful burthen thus imposed upon him, and strives to reduce it to the least possible amount. In this way the ties which should bind together the poor and the rich are sundered. The benevolence of the patron and the gratitude of the dependent, which formerly existed, is changed to dislike and suspicion on the one part, and envy and ingratitude on the other.

Doubtless one design of Providence in suffering want and misery to exist in the world, is that the benevolent virtues should be kept in exercise. He who was benevolence itself, seemed thus to think, when he said: 'The poor ye have always with you.' But man in his selfishness virtually says: 'The poor we will not have with us; we will put them out of our sight.' For in many towns in New-England, and probably in other States, it is customary to contract with some individual for their support; or, in other words, to sell them by auction, to him who will support them by the year, for the least sum per head. To illustrate some of the results of this system, the following incidents are related from memory, having been witnessed by me in my native place (an interior town in New-England) at an age when the feelings are most susceptible. And so deep was the impression then made on my mind, that I am enabled to vouch for the accuracy of the details.

A meeting for the purpose of disposing of the poor of the town for the ensuing year was held at the house of the person who had kept them the previous year, (and where these unfortunates still were) as well because it was supposed he would again bid for them, as that those who wished to become competitors might ascertain their number and condition. It was in the afternoon of a day in November, one of those dark and dreary days so common to the season and climate, adding gloom to the surrounding objects, in themselves sufficiently cheerless. The house was situated on an obscure road in a remote part of the town, surrounded by level and sandy fields; and the monotony of the prospect only broken by scattered clumps of dwarf-pine and shrub-oak; a few stunted apple-trees, the remains of an orchard which the barren soil had refused to nourish; some half ruinous out-houses, and a meagre kitchen garden enclosed with a common rough fence, completed the picture without.

Still more depressing was the scene within. The paupers were collected in the same room with their more fortunate townsmen, that the bidders might be enabled to view more closely their condition, and estimate the probable expense of supporting them through the year. Many considerations entered as items into this sordid calculation; such as the very lowest amount of the very coarsest food which would suffice, (not to keep them in comfort, but to sustain their miserable existence for the next three hundred and sixty-five days, and yet screen the provider from the odium of having starved his victims,) the value of the clothes they then wore, and thus the future expense of their clothing; and other such considerations, which I will not farther disgust the reader by enumerating.

They were about twenty in number, and not greatly distinguished from the ordinary poor of a country town in New-England; unless by there being present three idiot daughters of one poor man, whose low and narrow foreheads, sunken temples, fixed but dead and unmeaning eyes, half opened

and formless mouths, indicating even to childhood the absence of that intellectual light, which in those who possess it shines through the features. Insanity also was there, that most dreadful infliction of Providence; the purpose of which lies hidden in the darkness which surrounds His throne. Its unhappy subject was with them, but not of them. His eyes were fixed upon the scene, but the uncertain fire which illumined his features was caused by thoughts which had no connection with the passing scene.

Vice, too, had its representatives; for in a community where wealth is nearly the only source of distinction, and where Mammon is consequently worshipped as the true god, the destiny of the unfortunate and of the vicious is nearly the same. And the 'poor-house' was used, as in other towns in New-England, as a house of correction, and at this time contained several professors of vice of each sex. Alas! of that sex which when corrupt is more dangerous than the other in a like condition, as the most rich and grateful things are in their decay the most noxious!

The remaining number consisted of the aged and childless widow, the infirm and friendless old man, the sick, the deformed, and the cripple; the virtuous poor, in forced and loathed contact with vice and infamy. Those of society who in life's voyage had been stranded on the bleak and barren coast of charity, and who were now waiting for death to float them into the ocean of eternity. While this scene was passing at the alms-house, another connected with it, and fitted to excite still deeper feelings, was acting in another part of the town.

A person who was that year one of the select-men,¹ and a deacon in the church, was delegated by his colleagues to bring to the alms-house the 'lone woman' who forms the chief subject of our homely story. The widow Selden (a brief history of whom it will be necessary to give) had received an education suited rather to the respectability and former wealth of her family, than to its subsequent reduced condition, became in early life the wife of a merchant of our village, a man of good character and fair prospects, to whom she was much attached. Traders in New-England where wealth is so eagerly sought, are, especially in country towns, men of much consideration, as engaged in a money-making business. Mrs. Selden, therefore, independently of her personal merits, was not likely to be neglected. Her company was sought by the best society of our place, and she exchanged visits on equal terms even with the families of the clergyman and the village lawyer.

A few years of quiet enjoyment passed, happily varied by the accession of a fair and delicate little girl, who might be seen at their cheerful meals seated in her high chair, the common object of their care and attention; and not only affording in her fragile little person the strongest bond of union, but the never-tiring subject of conversation. Sad indeed was the change in this once happy family, when the widow and orphan sat alone at the cheerless board. Death had entered and taken from them the sun of their little world. The bereaved wife might have sunk under this calamity, had not maternal solicitude been mixed with grief. With that admirable fortitude and submission to duty so common to those of her sex in similar circumstances, she at once devoted herself with increased solicitude to the remaining object of her care and affection.

For a time but little change was visible in the family arrangements, for though a sensitive she was a spirited woman. Her garden, which had been the pride and delight of her husband, still flourished in perfect neatness. After the usual time of decent seclusion, she again interchanged visits with her friends and neighbors, and continued to maintain the stand in the village society which had always been conceded to her. But this state of things did not long continue, for alas! the *gathering* as well as the *protecting* hand was removed. Her more aristocratic acquaintances now began to remark that her table showed less of plenty and variety than formerly, and that her dress, though perfectly neat, was less new and fashionable than they expected in *their* associates; for no where is the distinction between the rich and poor more rigidly enforced than in country villages. Most offensively marked is this distinction in the house of God, where if any where this side the grave ought the rich and the

¹ Men who are yearly selected by the inhabitants to superintend the business of the town, and who, among other duties, have the charge of managing the poor.

poor to meet on a level, before Him who regards not the outward estate of his creatures. But modern Christians have contrived to evade the rebuke of the apostle by the cunning device of introducing the noisy auctioneer, and under a show of fairness and equality, 'the man in goodly apparel and having a gold ring' is assigned the highest seat; and albeit a skeptic, by the weight of his purse crowds the humble worshippers to the wall and into the corners of their Father's house.

It was observed that the lone woman declined competition for those seats so eagerly sought by the more wealthy, and selected those of a humbler character, and eventually retired to the 'widow's pew,' a pew set apart, in country churches, for the gratuitous accommodation of those in that unhappy condition. Sincerely religious, the Christian widow still waited upon God in the house of prayer, but felt the whole sting of poverty when slowly and humbly wending her way to her obscure corner, her faded and well-worn dress was brushed by the new and rich garments of her former equals as they swept past her to their high seats. The neat and handsome dwelling with its trim garden was at length resigned for one which barely sheltered the mother and child from the weather, and was totally devoid of the cheap luxury of fruit and flowers which had enriched and beautified their former home.

Time wore on, and Want with its train of sordid attendants visited their dwelling. Her former associates, one after another declined her society as an equal. Occasionally calling, they were eloquent in excuses for their neglect; for when did the prosperous lack an excuse for neglecting the unfortunate? Counsel and advice were lavished upon her; for I have observed that advice is the only thing that the rich impart freely to the poor. Religion too was the frequent subject of their conversation; for how can benevolence be shown more strongly than by a concern for the well-being of the soul, which is to exist forever, in comparison with which, the transient wants of the body are as nothing? Accordingly, the poor widow, after her scanty meal, and over her dim and cheerless hearth, was exhorted by her fur-clad and well-fed *friends*, to disregard the evils of this fleeting life, and receive with resignation the chastenings of Providence; for we all needed correction, being by nature utterly sinful and depraved. And after some vague and indefinite offers of assistance, the good women would take their leave. A way of discharging duty discovered by modern philanthropists; and when accompanied by the Societies' tract, seldom fails to convince the unfortunate object of charity that to Heaven alone should they look for assistance and sympathy.

This lady, as we have intimated, possessed a large share of that generous spirit so common in her sex, which enabled her to sustain herself amid the evils which oppressed her. And nobly did the mother strive to shield from want and ignorance the little orphan, now her only care. Her own education enabled her in some measure to supply the place of teachers, which she was unable to employ. And never was maternal care better rewarded than by the improvement of the gentle being under her charge. But in this blessed employment the poor mother was interrupted. While health continued, she had been enabled by the most unremitting exertion to prevent the approach of absolute want, slight indeed as were her earnings. (The modern improvements in machinery having destroyed domestic manufacture, properly so called, and left but little for the female to earn who is not attending its motions in the noisy factory.) But illness had intervened, and diminished even that small resource; and it was apparent to all that the want of suitable food assisted in blanching still more the fair face of the poor child. Maternal love had conquered the honest pride of the poor mother so far as to constrain her to accept the slight and uncertain donations of her neighbors. But this assistance, scanty as it was, could not continue. The tax-paying husbands of the benevolent ladies who furnished it, complained that the poor-rates were heavy, and that they had already helped to pay for a house of refuge for the poor and the destitute, could not, in addition to this, support them out of it.

She was told it was her duty to place her daughter in some family to be brought up as a servant. In vain did she assert her ability to maintain herself and child when health should return. Her advisers could little sympathize with her feelings, and reproached her with pride. And she was now harassed with the fear that her delicate and cultivated little girl would be torn from her, and made a factory slave or household drudge; for such power had the laws given to the rulers of the town. But this fear,

miserable as it was, was now overpowered by another. The suggestion had reached the ear of the unhappy woman that she and her child would be conveyed to the house of the town's poor, the place we have attempted to describe. God grant that no fair reader of this homely but too true story should ever feel the misery which this fear inflicted on the mind of this friendless mother! Oh, that true Charity had been present in the person of her best representative on earth, a sensible, affectionate and liberal-minded woman, to minister to the wants, to soothe the mind of her unhappy sister-woman, and cheer her exertions for self-support! None such appeared, and the heart of the poor woman sank within her. Her exertions were paralyzed; for struggle as she might to avoid it, the alms-house, with its debased and debasing society, was ever before her eyes as her ultimate destiny. It was in vain that she endeavored to prepare her mind for this result. She could endure any degree of privation, but not degradation and infamy.

Time wore on, without any renewed hints of interference, and she began to hope that she was forgotten. Delusive hope! It was felt as a disgrace that she should suffer, when the *law* had provided a remedy, and they had paid for it. And it was therefore decreed by the magnates of the town that she must be removed, and the day had arrived (with which we commenced our narrative,) on which the paupers were to be disposed of for the coming year. Deacon S— was the person deputed by his colleagues, as we have mentioned, to convey Mrs. Selden and her daughter to the alms-house.

However prepared we may suppose ourselves to meet misfortune, the moment of its arrival takes us by surprise. We will not attempt to picture the utter desolation of mind and the despair which filled her heart, when this man arrived at her door, to convey herself, and oh! far worse, her innocent and intelligent child, to that scene of vice and debasement. Although her dislike to the measure was known, yet from her quiet and reserved manners, little opposition was anticipated. The evils of life had accumulated upon her in a regular gradation, and she had been enabled to bear their weight, up to this point, with outward composure; looking forward to, but yet hoping this last cup of bitterness would never be presented; or if presented, that some means might be found to avert it. But the dreadful crisis had arrived. Had the whole board of authority been present, I should be glad to believe, for the honor of humanity, that they would have been moved to relent, as they would not have been able to shift the responsibility from one to the other, as is the wont of such bodies when the members act separately.

When the poor woman had so far recovered from the first shock as to be enabled to articulate, she pleaded her ability to maintain herself without assistance, and her choice rather to starve than be removed. She appealed to him as the father of a daughter, and painted the ruin which would fall upon her own, exposed to the corruption and example of the place to which he was taking her. She appealed to him as a Christian, and reminded him that they had sat together before the sacred desk, and partaken of the symbols of the body and blood of the Son of Him who was in a peculiar manner the father of the widow and orphan. But her auditor was destitute of the imagination which enables the possessor to enter into the feelings of another; and these affecting appeals fell dead upon his worldly and unsympathizing nature. The man even extended his hand to urge her forward to the conveyance provided! At that moment, when all hope was dead within her, and the worst that could happen in her opinion had arrived, a change came over the unhappy woman. She suffered herself unresistingly to be led forward to her doom. The fine chords of the mind and heart, lately so intensely strung, had parted; her countenance relaxed, and her features settled down into a dead, unmeaning apathy; never again, during the short remainder of her life, to be animated by one gleam of the feelings which had so lately illumined but to destroy.

My kind, my indulgent mother! Her generous heart needed not the eloquence of my youthful feelings to induce her to rescue the poor orphan, and to cherish her as her own child. And never was kindness more richly—

I had proceeded thus far in writing this narrative, when I discovered that I was overlooked; and a gentle voice over my shoulder said: 'You should not praise your own wife; it is the same as if you should praise yourself!'

E. B.

APOSTROPHE TO HEALTH

Hygeia! most blest of the powers
That tenant the mansions divine,
May I pass in thy presence the hours
That remain, ere in death I recline!

Dwell with me, benevolent charm!
Without the attendance of health
Not the smiles of affection can warm,
And dull are the splendors of wealth.

The pageant of empire is stale
That lifts men like gods o'er their race,
And the heart's thrilling impulses fail
When Love beckons on to the chase.

Whate'er in itself joy can give,
Or that springs from sweet respite of pain,
That mortals or gods can receive,
Blest Hygeia! is found in thy train!

Thy smile kindles up the fresh spring,
The glad, verdant bloom of the soul;
Thee absent, our pleasures take wing,
And Sorrow usurps her control.

ISABEL

Hush! her face is chill,
And the summer blossom.
Motionless and still,
Lieth on her bosom.
On her shroud so white,
Like snow in winter weather,
Her marble hands unite,
Quietly together.

How like sleep the spell
On her lids that falleth!
Wake, sweet Isabel!
Lo! the morning calleth.
How *like* Sleep!—'tis Death!
Sleep's own gentle brother;
Heaven holds her breath—
She is with her mother!

ONE READING FROM TWO POETS

—My imagination
Carries no favor in it but Bertram's.
I am undone; there is no living, none,
If Bertram be away.

Shakspeare.

Should God create another Eve and I
Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart.

Milton.

I have this evening, while seated in my lonely chamber, ventured—not, I hope, with profane hands—to draw one inappreciable gem from out of the carcanet of each of the two unrivalled masters of the poetry of our language. I was curious to see the effect to be produced by a close juxtaposition of these two exquisite specimens of the soul's light; of the revelation of its original genius; of the intense brilliancy of its Truth, falling as it does in one ray upon two objects so diverse in their character as the virgin love of the retired and comparatively humble but devoted Helena, and the married constancy of the Father of our race.

The effect reminds me of an *échappée de lumière* that I once beheld in the gallery of the Vatican, when a sudden emergence of light brightened with the same gleam the calm face of the Virgin of the clouds, (called di Foligno,) and at the same instant illuminated the whole principal figure in the Transfiguration of Raffaele; floating as it does, and tending almost with a movement upward, in the air of 'the high mountain' where the miracle took place—as these two grand paintings then stood, side by side, in the solemn, in the holy quiet of that lofty and sequestered apartment. O moment! never to be forgotten, never to be obscured by any lapse of after time!

And thus, although in a less palpable world, do these two passages of immortal verse, wearing each its beam of golden light, stand in their effulgence before the sympathies of the observer alive to the charms and influences of moral beauty! Surely no other poet has the world produced comparable to Shakspeare for the revelation of the love of the yet unwedded girl; and who is there to be named with Milton, in the tenderness and truth with which he has touched upon conjugal relationship; and that necessity, that inappeasable requirement of intercommunion that accompanies, as its immediate consequence, the sacrament of the nuptial rite where there is destined to exist the real, the progressive, the indissoluble intermarriage of soul with soul!

How effectually and with what truth does the dramatic Bard raise the veil and exhibit to us the imagination of this retired girl, bred up in all the deep earnestness of mind that a country life and comparative seclusion could induce, dwelling and brooding over the form of one individual brought into intimate association with her, 'seeing him every hour' where she had little else to interest her, nor any thing to contemplate, but, as she says,

'sit and draw
His archéd brows, his hawking eye, his curls,
In our heart's table; heart too capable
Of every trick and line of his sweet favour.

.....

——it hurts not him
That he is loved of me: I follow him not
With any token of presumptuous suit.
I know I love in vain, strive against hope,
Yet, in this captious and intenable sieve,
I still pour in the waters of my love
And lack not to love still.’

Behold her as she sits, the beautiful creation!—delighting to magnify the qualities of the idol of her affections and to depreciate herself in the comparison; overlooking, perhaps incapable of once imagining the thought of his harsh and selfish and impracticable nature, and constantly endowing him with all the fresher breathings of her spiritual existence—like the Rainbow of the Waterfall, that clothes, with its own celestial dyes, the dark and shapeless mass of Rock upon whose bosom it appears to dwell! faltering, trembling, quivering, fading, disappearing; returning, resting;—glowing, yet never dazzling; liquid, yet sustained!

‘It were all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And seek to wed it, he is so above me:
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love!

This is the way in which these precious irradiations of joy beam and hover over man; startled and frightened often out of the presence even of his image while they thus adorn and decorate him; and then they love him for what they fondly dream to be the halo of his proper spirit; for the light and tenderness, the purity, the gentleness, the refinement and grace, that have their life and element and colour, only in the deep yet overflowing heart of Woman in her Love!

But then comes Wedlock; and often, with wedlock, comes marriage; or succeeds it; the marriage that God bestowed on man in Eve, when, according to that scriptural and exquisite conception, *they twain become one*. When the Rock shall as by a miracle receive into all its crevices, interstices, and pores, the beautiful existence that has played upon it! When the soul of man opens at every noble passion in succession and at every pulse, to embrace, imbibe, absorb, receive, possess, acquire, the being that we call Woman! finds her in every former want, or present wish, or bright, or unfrequented passage of the soul; now all occupied, all satisfied by her; fancies thoughts to be his thoughts which are her thoughts; and blesses himself, when he discovers it, that imaginations in themselves so sweet, should in some visit of her delicate spirit have been breathed into his Essence from a source so pure! is near her, when distant; is present with her, when absent; converses with her, without words; gazes upon her, without sight; listens to her, without sound; watches her, without motion; and has not yet lost her balmy presence when Death shall long have removed forever that precious image from his corporal sense. This is Marriage.

Out of this state descends that profound expression of the soul in Milton, (God make us thankful for him!) when he intends the verb that he escapes in the passage that adorns my Essay, should be supplied by a pulsation in the breast of Eve:

'yet loss of thee
Would never—from my heart.'

Would never?—would never be torn, out-rooted, obliterated, banished, extinguished, forgotten, diminished, obscured, from his heart. The throb of her spirit is to supply the word, or mould the thought, and vivify the pause so as to satisfy her full affection to its utmost contentment and desire. *This* is marriage. This is attainment to that state of more perfect existence which terrestrial life procures for the soul of man, never thenceforth in all its future changes to be lost. The incorporeal mingling, the mystical union of two varied emanations of life; as Light and Heat intermarry in their offset and passage from the sun; and Truth and Love from the breast of The Ineffable!

How can I live without thee! how forego
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly join'd
To live again in these wild woods forlorn?
Should God create another Eve and I
Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart: no, no, I feel
The link of nature draw me.
Bone of my bone thou art and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe.

And shall the passage of one such soul across the mere brook of Death dissolve affiances so deep, so latent, and so pure as this? This Life of Life, is it to be so suddenly quenched in man, and man himself continue to exist? Shall the soul that lingers here still retaining its identity lose that which has chiefly formed for it a distinctive being? Or entering into a happier state of existence shall it be dispossessed of all that treasure of recollection and delight on which its joys and hopes have been so largely founded? These long remembrances of mutual beneficence and good, these intertwining and interwoven affections, and the unbounded and mingling love of their common offspring, shall these all perish and the soul itself yet be styled immortal? Or,—shall the first-gone spirit meet its arriving mate upon the border of that further shore, bless it with the radiant welcome of celestial companionship and guidance, and lead it on to higher virtue in a happier state, as it hath beamed upon it and in part educated it on Earth?—Doubt this not, my Heart! Doubt this not, my Soul!

John Waters.

WHERE IS THE SPIRIT-WORLD?

BY A NEW CONTRIBUTOR

Perhaps the World of Spirits
Is the invisible air,
And every soul inherits
Its endless portion there,
When mortal lays its mortal by,
And puts on immortality.

Then round us and above us
Unseen, the souls of those
That hate us and that love us
In motion or repose,
To plan and work our good or ill,
As when on earth, are busy still.

For Enmity surviveth
This transitory life;
Spirit with spirit striveth
In an unending strife;
All roots of evil planted now
Eternally shall live and grow.

So friendship ever liveth
Immortal as the soul,
And purer pleasure giveth
As longer ages roll;
And hope and joy and inward peace
Forever heighten and increase!

Our homes and dwelling-places,
The country of our birth,
The old familiar faces
Endeared to us on earth,
And every source and scene of joy
Our spirits' senses shall employ.

So shall our true affections,
To earthly objects given,
Form intimate connections
Between our world and heaven;
And all our long existence move
In an unbroken stream of love.

THE TYRANNY OF AFFECTION

BY MRS. ENNSLO

Methinks those who preach up the dignity of human nature, and expatiate upon its original perfections, must look upon it through magic glasses: to some perceptions at least, it presents even in its best estate a picture of such abortive aims, such woful short-comings, such clouded brightness, that even in those better natures, where we feel sure that the sun of virtue *does* shine, the noxious vapors of human frailty, pride in all its various ramifications, selfishness under its many disguises, prejudice with its endless excuses, etc., etc., do so envelope it that we cannot hope to feel the warmth of its rays until some wholesome trial, some aptly-apportioned cross, clear away these paralyzing influences and force it into action.

What seems at the first glance freer from this dross than the love of man to man? the love of the creature for his fellow; the ordained test of his love to his Creator? What seems more preëminently pure than the affection of the parent for the child, who owes him not only life but the nurture which has maintained and elevated that life? Yet even here, even over this fair garden of peace, the trail of the serpent may be detected. The tyranny of deep affection is seen in every relation of life: we love a cherished object, it may be with every fibre of our heart, ay, even idolatrously; we would willingly spend and be spent to surround the beloved one with materials for enjoyment; but these materials must be of *our* selection; we would sacrifice ourselves to lead them to happiness, but *we* must point out the road to them; we will bear every thing, endure every thing, but the mortification of seeing them receive good at other hands than our own. Ah! there are some rare exceptions to this rule, but surely not more than enough to constitute it a rule.

Who that enjoyed the privilege of domestic intercourse with the venerable and venerated father of the lovely Lucy Lee; he the most beloved as well as respected inhabitant of the small town of —; she not only the prettiest but by far the most winning in her department of all the young female circle of the place, of whom she was beyond all question the ornament. Who that witnessed the fond pride with which the good old man gazed upon her, as she glided around him, ministering to his wants with that watchful ingenuity which characterizes woman's affection; who that heard the tone of tenderness which marked even the most trifling word addressed to her; a tenderness that seemed as if it might by its deep pathos invoke every beneficent spirit to watch over her for good; his early morning greeting, always accompanied by an upward look, which proclaimed a daily aspiration of gratitude to the great Giver for the precious gift; the nightly benediction which ever seemed as if it might grow into a prayer for her welfare during the hours of darkness; who that witnessed all this—and they could not be seen together without many such hourly demonstrations of the father's love for his child shining through his every word and action—but would have felt assured that this love fashioned his every plan, and marked his estimate of the things of life?

Ah! of a certainty, it must have been so; her happiness must have been safe in his keeping; and in truth, happiness had hitherto seemed hers by prescriptive right. But all lanes however long turn at last, and those most richly strewn with flowers are generally alas! by far the shortest. Eighteen summers had flown since that which saw the little Lucy installed sole possessor and sole solace of her bereaved father's heart; sole pledge of a love which deeply rooted in a breast no longer subject to the changeful fancies of youth, (for he had more than attained the prime of middle-age when the original of the precious little miniature first enchained his affections,) never revived for any other, but spent itself in a doting fondness for this fair image of the lost one. Indeed it seemed that every throb came

with a double import from his burdened heart; the parent's fondness ever mingling a tribute to the memory of her whose life had been the price of the costly gift.

It is not always that the devotion of a parent is so entirely appreciated as in this case; all Mr. Lee's efforts to promote his daughter's happiness were crowned with entire success, and until the period mentioned above, no one had ever detected on her lovely brow the semblance of a cloud. But the course of nature cannot be altered; the petted child will one day grow into the wilful woman; and however it may have been only a pleasant task to follow the windings of the childish fancy ingenious in its caprice; and only amusing to submit to the childish tyranny which pursues its own beau-ideal of sport with reckless pertinacity; there sometimes comes a change when the spoiled darling takes her first step upon the threshold of maturity; when, with all the fresh vigor of youth in her untutored will, she begins to assert her privilege, to cater for her own happiness, and fashion her future according to the visions of her own fancy. Then comes in the world with its many and diversified claims; claims so vigorously enforced, but from which it is the first impulse of the young heart to turn with loathing: it cannot bear to believe its happy independence of all such considerations at an end; it does not submit easily to these new trammels. Ah! how differently has passed the previous life! Something holy gathers round a child; it seems to move superior to the base claims of the world and its paltry rewards; and although often, it must be confessed, the young intellect is early impressed with the idea that its best efforts should be devoted to the insuring of worldly approbation, still the little one's course of life is so distinct from the busy race to which we would train it, that we cannot if we would entirely chain down its thoughts; nay, we shrink before the pure innocence which cannot even understand our weakness; and often yield a tribute to its superior dignity by concealing our own care for such distinctions.

To those too who have seen much of life, and learnt to feel its hollowness, real childishness of thought and feeling is so refreshing, that they love rather to prolong the period than to shorten it. To Mr. Lee the little Lucy seemed so entirely perfect in her infantine simplicity and purity, that had he breathed a wish for the future, it would probably have been that she should always continue his *little* Lucy; he cared for no change, and as it appeared, perceived none in her. Time passed on however, and before he had become well aware that the little fairy whose tiny form must needs so short a while since clamber on his knee to stroke and pat his cheek, had now shot up into a tall girl, who could take his arm in a long walk, or canter beside him all the morning on her well trained pony, there came a change over the course of his quiet household little startling. Visitors began to throng the hall; not those staid personages who had hitherto been wont to gather round the warm hearth in winter, or the sheltered piazza in the hot days of summer, and with feet upreared on mantel-piece or bannister, discuss the affairs of state, and the price of crops; new editions of these respected individuals now appeared; nephews and sons came in their train; young friends, more perhaps than these gentlemen were before aware of possessing, sought an introduction at their hands, or came without any, on the plea perhaps of having met at a tea-party, or some such strong necessity for acquaintanceship with the fair Lucy; while the good Mr. Lee, often to his not very pleased surprise, found on awaking from his afternoon's nap, that the book whose contents he had purposed should perform their daily office of inspiring his dreams had been laid aside, while the voice which had lulled him to sleep was now charming other and younger ears in merry though perhaps suppressed cadences. The variety in these visitors too grew somewhat annoying; new people came, and Mr. Lee liked not new people. He was a man of warm but very exclusive feelings; he loved but a few, and he liked no others: his prejudices were strong, and having lived a very secluded life, the routine of which presented no very decided obstacle to those prejudices, his estimate of men and things had not altered with the general course of the world around him. Liberal to an extreme in his dealings with men, his intercourse with them, except in matters of business, was confined to a very limited circle. Absolute in his requisitions from such as approached him as intimates, his friendship was given only to those who met his views in every respect; especially whose political opinions coincided with his own. Indeed this seemed to be with him the one grand test. Though never meddling in his own person with public life, he had

such an abstract love for its intricacies that he could at all times warm into actual enthusiasm over a newspaper; a single paragraph from the pen one of his own way of thinking sufficing to kindle his feelings into a glow of patriotism, while a civil word of dissent would seem to chill his sympathies for his kind; strong disapprobation blinding his perceptions to any good possible in those differing from his established standard. Now it was not to be expected that the young Lucy's circle would be modelled according to such restrictions; she loved her kind old father with the clinging fondness of an unweaned infant for its mother; but though again and again she would, to gratify him, toil through a whole pamphlet, its meaning as dark to her perceptions as the close and blurred print to his failing eyes, it may well be imagined that her girlish brain failed to receive any other impression from the contents than of their excessive tedium; certainly if she formed therefrom any opinion regarding his favorite party, it was most probably the not very flattering one that its members were all especially tiresome and prolix.

Either from this notion, or a contradiction natural to human nature, it so happened that among the rivals for the lovely Lucy's smiles, none seemed to possess such power in riveting her attention as a certain young gentleman, who although not only the son of a leading man in the opposition, but holding himself a somewhat prominent place in the ranks of the condemned party, yet continued with a boldness much to be wondered at to engross the young lady's time by frequent visits of most unfashionable length, in spite of Mr. Lee's open vituperations of all the manœuvres of the said party. The undaunted aspirant turned a deaf ear however to this, taking every thing that was said in good part, until one day, when suddenly his patience seemed to give out.

News had just been received of the marriage of a former school-mate of Lucy's, the daughter of an old esteemed comrade, orthodox in all his views, to an individual decidedly in the wrong on the one important point. First, how astonished, next how entirely shocked, was the good old gentleman! 'What a falling off! to give his child to —! Pshaw! what would the world come to! Where were his principles? where his wisdom? where his *honor*?' etc., etc. Lucy, frightened perhaps at her father's vehemence, turned pale. Dr. Kent, the friend and physician of the family, who chanced to be present, endeavored to calm him, but with little success; and Mr. Lillburgh, unable as it seemed to join in condemning this 'mis-alliance,' left the house somewhat abruptly. Soon after this, however, an opportune influx of papers and pamphlets caused a salutary diversion in Mr. Lee's irritated feelings; and as Lucy's most monopolizing visitor seemed quite to have disappeared, he could now enjoy his favorite luxury of drinking in, through the medium of the voice he loved so well, the words of wisdom he honored so highly.

Whether these tiresome lectures proved too burdensome for her young spirits, or some other cause operated to injure her health, did not appear; but just at this time, when Mr. Lee seemed to find his life especially comfortable and pleasant, his hitherto blooming daughter gradually began to droop; her spirits, formerly so even, were now constantly fluctuating: at times she would sit pale and *distracte* among a gay and laughing circle of her young associates, while at others, a ring at the bell, a step in the hall, would suffice to call the color to her cheek and kindle animation in her eye. It was this variation perhaps, together with certain animating plans of his own, which rendered her father insensible to her condition; for by a strange contradiction in the course of things, he seemed just at this time especially occupied with forming brilliant plans for her future. Fairly aware now of her being no longer a child, he would comment upon her dress, urge her to more ornament, and then with a knowing look speak of his anticipated pleasure in the society of two expected visitors, one staunch old veteran of the true faith, and his son, a worthy descendant, one who deserved the smiles of the fair for the brilliant speech he had made the last session. Poor Lucy at each reference to this subject would look more and more uncomfortable; but her father, thinking that she might be perhaps a little wayward; while he grew daily more enamoured of his plan, redoubled his tenderness, seeking to study her whims in every other respect. It is cruel to loose every bond but that which galls most sorely, to pluck away every thorn but that which pricks most sharply: all the perceptions gather to that point,

and the suffering is in consequence tenfold more acute. Such were Lucy's sensations, though she was perhaps scarcely conscious of them herself; while at every demonstration of her father's tenderness, the feelings which she knew to be rebels to his dearest wishes would seem to spring up and accuse her of ingratitude. This struggle could not last; at length the fond father became suddenly aware that some strange blight had fallen upon his darling, and his whole soul was convulsed at the thought that evil might possibly threaten her; he felt ready to send a proclamation through the world to summon all its skill to spend itself for her restoration. Upon second thoughts he made up his mind that there was but one man in the world to whom he would confide the precious trust; yes, he was fully assured that in the brain of Dr. Kent, the only lineal descendant of Esculapius, were to be found all the best resources of the art of healing; *he* must always and on all occasions, be more right than any one else. Why? But why ask why, when he had formed this opinion ever since Dr. Kent first assumed the M. D., and had always held it firmly. Dr. Kent was summoned and soon appeared; the startled girl, sorely against her will, was called into the room; all the usual ceremony gone through; the pulse tested, the tongue examined, etc., and then suffered to slip out of the room. Mr. Lee listened with a beating heart for the doctor's decision: this last did not deny that the young lady's appearance was strangely altered since he had last seen her, which indeed was not since the evening above alluded to, of Mr. Lee's violent irritation against his old friend. But the cause; the next thing for the doctor to do was to discover the cause. Now Dr. Kent, although some people did say that he was no student, had a considerable portion of what is called *mother-wit*; and if he did not possess the stores of learning which might have been amassed by poring over his books, he was at least without the abstraction which much scientific research is thought to occasion; he looked around him with a shrewd eye, and simply by putting two and two together, often made very successful calculations. He hesitated, reflected and recollected; 'perhaps she wanted excitement,' he said; 'perhaps there was too little variety in her life for one so young.' Mr. Lee assured him that she had always appeared very indifferent to society; that until very lately she had always seemed as happy as the day was long, and to desire no other company than that of the visitors who dropped in upon them occasionally.

'Well, we must have something more amusing for her than *visiting*; something more exciting.' The doctor here mused again for a few moments: 'You say she has seemed happy until very lately?'

'Yes, it is only lately that she has seemed to droop.'

'Well, perhaps she's been particularly dull lately; now by way of experiment, suppose you at once summon a large party to your house; let it be a very general invitation; all your acquaintances, that is the young ones, *her* acquaintances; all who have ever visited at the house; and as *you* may not be able to remember them all, it will be best to direct her to do it in your name; this will of itself furnish her with a rather exciting occupation. All this is by way of experiment I say, for it may *not* be that she needs amusement, but by the effect that company and gayety have upon her, which I shall take care to be by and watch. I have a notion that I shall be enabled to decide upon the character of her indisposition. One thing however; remember you must give me *carte-blanche* as to the course of treatment to be pursued; your prejudices, you confess you have them, must not hamper me.'

'My prejudices!' replied Mr. Lee; 'why what can they have to do with your prescriptions? You know me well enough to be aware that I do not undertake to meddle with matters I do not understand; the art of medicine for instance, to which I make no pretensions; of course I shall not interfere; only tell me what is to be done for my child, and you may be very sure no difficulty will arise on my part, should it be that I must take her to Egypt or Kamtschatka.'

'It is not probable that I shall call upon you for any such effort; on the contrary, I have a strong impression that a very simple course will answer; I was afraid you might not like its simplicity.'

'Really,' said Mr. Lee, 'that is too bad; am I that sort of person? Don't tantalize me, Doctor, but just tell me what ought to be done for my poor child, and you must be assured that *I* will not object.'

'Of course, no father would,' said Dr. Kent.

'Then why the deuce do you imagine for an instant that *I* would?'

‘Nay now,’ said the physician, ‘it is only a whim of mine, and every one must be allowed some whims: but good day; remember your promise.’

‘Oh yes, only make up your mind at once.’

Great was Lucy’s surprise, when upon being again summoned by her father, she received from him the commission just determined upon. At one moment to have her pulse felt, and the next to be told that she must prepare for entertaining a large party! What did it mean? The good father, startled at her agitation, assured her that he himself felt the want of a little more society, and that he thought it would do *him* good to have a company of gay young people about him for an evening. Lucy was afraid she could not recollect all her acquaintances. ‘Well, no matter; only invite all she *could* remember; he should be satisfied with her arrangement of the affair.’

Whatever may have been the efforts of Lucy’s memory, it is certain that only a moderate number of tickets were sent out for the appointed evening; indeed it might have been feared that the doctor’s experiment could scarcely have a fair scope in so limited a circle; but finding that his patient had had her own way in the whole, *he* seemed to feel quite assured of success. Before etiquette would have permitted the arrival of any other guest, he had taken his place close beside the fair mistress of the revels, and even after the room began to fill, seemed determined to yield his envied position to no one. Those who said Dr. Kent was no student, should have seen him then; his eye riveted on her fair young countenance, there could be no doubt he was conning *that* closely. At every fresh arrival, how he watched the eager glance of inquiry! how his gaze followed the course of the eloquent blood as it left the transparent cheek, again to burden the disappointed heart!

The doctor was still puzzled; the gay company had by no means yet wrought the change he looked for; how was this?—but he held to his watch. And now once more the door was thrown open, and a young gentleman, with a decidedly hesitating air and step, approached the youthful hostess. Ah! now the light no longer flickered in her clear blue eye; it literally danced: the awakened color left her cheek it is true, as before, but how soon it came again! ‘You positively have stood long enough, and must sit down now,’ said Dr. Kent, taking Lucy’s hand; not the tip-ends of her fingers; no, the doctor was not one either to be satisfied with any such superficial plan of action, or to forego his privileges; on the contrary, availing himself of his position of friend of the family, he possessed himself of the whole of the little delicate hand, when, old habit it might be, leading him to measure with some exactness the slender wrist thereto belonging, he pressed it most cordially, and after one or two moments of such demonstration of his affectionate regard, yielded his place beside her to the last comer.

Mr. Lee now joined him as he lounged upon a sofa, with an air of entire inattention to what was going on around him, yet turning from time to time a heedful glance upon Lucy who sat just opposite, replying more by blushes than words to the depressed tones of young Mr. Lillburgh’s voice. ‘Well, Doctor, and how goes on the experiment?’ The anxious father tried to speak calmly, but his voice trembled.

‘I am quite satisfied with my *experiment*,’ replied Dr. Kent; ‘but I will confess (you know I am a candid man) that the result makes me feel a little serious.’ Dr. Kent knew, as we all have an opportunity of knowing, that a danger, however startling, for which we are at once provided with a remedy, is soon scorned; that it must stare us very decidedly in the face, before we are willing to appreciate the said remedy. ‘Yes,’ continued he. ‘I had no idea of the deep root the disease had taken.’

‘Good heavens! my friend,’ exclaimed Mr. Lee, grasping Dr. Kent’s hand in the utmost agitation; ‘and the remedy you thought of—is the case too serious for it to be available?’

‘I trust not,’ replied the Doctor; ‘I believe indeed that if I can apply the proper remedy in time, all may be well; but as I said just now, I am a candid man, and don’t like to raise false hopes: I tell you frankly this case is not one to be trifled with; it requires nice management: the young lady is delicate, very delicate; her nervous system is now decidedly deranged.’

‘But don’t you think, Doctor, don’t you think, my good friend, that she looks a little better this evening? See how animatedly she is listening to that young man: by-the-by, who is he?’

‘Oh, no matter who he is, so he amuses Miss Lucy. But with regard to her case; I will study it seriously to-night, and tell you what result I have come to to-morrow about noon. I shall give all my mind to it, for I know how precious she must be to you; I know that nothing the world has to give, can make up to you for the most trifling evil that can assail her.’

‘Oh, nothing, nothing; but what tormenting apprehensions you fill me with! Gracious heaven! my dear Sir, she is my all; my past, my present, my future are made by her; but you will help me if you can. May Almighty wisdom aid you!’ And the agitated father rushed out of the room, unable any longer to control himself.

Dr. Kent looked after him with something of commiseration in his countenance; but being a decided enemy to homeopathic innovation, he had made up his mind that a strong dose of apprehension was positively necessary; and now, only gratified at its powerful effect, he resumed his surveillance with a heartlessly satisfied air. This was no doubt rendered the more easy to him by Mr. Lee’s continued absence from the room: the young Lucy, thus relieved from the observation which she unconsciously dreaded, growing more and more at her ease, enabled him to settle his opinion regarding her completely.

The evening finished, as all evenings will; the night also took its course as usual; but when on the following morning Dr. Kent appeared according to promise in his friend’s parlor at the appointed hour, he saw at once that it had been passed by both in a manner very different from those lately preceding it. Lucy looked as if some new impetus had been given to her whole being; too much agitated for happiness, yet with animation glowing in every feature, while the poor old father’s care-burdened brow proclaimed that anxious apprehension had completely usurped the hours destined to repose. Dr. Kent really began to fear he had been too violent in his measures; at any rate, feeling sure, as he said to himself, that the instrument had been wound up to the striking point, he took his old friend by the arm, saying he wished to speak to him in the next room on business. Of course Mr. Lee was no sooner out of hearing of his daughter, than he began to question his visitor with the utmost eagerness; upon which the doctor slowly and warily proceeded to unfold his suspicions, or rather his convictions.

It was curious to observe the changes passing over the countenance of the hearer as Dr. Kent made this disclosure. Pleased surprise was evidently the first emotion excited, but painful perplexity soon usurped its place.

‘My good friend,’ said he, as Dr. Kent finished speaking, ‘I am greatly relieved to find that you think the cause of my child’s illness so superficial; but as to the remedy you propose, believe me, I cannot consent to it; I do not believe it necessary.’

‘Believe it or not, as you will; I tell you it *is* necessary.’

‘But I tell you, Doctor, that my child is a part of myself, my own flesh and blood; and can you counsel me to become an apostate to my own principles? It has been my dearest thought that I should one day enjoy in my own seclusion the reflected lustre of my child’s brilliant position in the world, and that that position should be by the side of one whose course in life my own ripe judgment approves entirely. A man of Mr. Lillburgh’s principles cannot make her happy; I will not believe that he can. No, I have always cared for my daughter’s happiness; I will care for it still, by settling this matter for her as I best know how. No; again I say no; my only child shall not be so sacrificed!’ And Mr. Lee stamped on the floor, as if to add force to his speech.

‘When you are cool,’ said Dr. Kent, looking any thing but cool himself, ‘I will remind you of your promise, your positive promise; there is Mr. Lillburgh now approaching the house; ask both your heart and conscience how he ought to be received. Good morning to you.’

Without stopping to consult either of these counsellors, Mr. Lee hastily rang the bell. ‘We are both engaged, and cannot see the gentleman who is now coming to the door,’ said he to the servant. The doorbell was heard at the instant, and the servant hastened to obey his master’s directions.

The doctor was gone. Mr. Lee, pacing the parlor alone, imagined to himself all sorts of arguments to satisfy his conscience that he was in the right. Yet, thought he, my little darling must be made happy; all young girls love trinkets and finery; I will take her out with me this morning, and she shall indulge every caprice of her pretty fancy; pretty in every thing else but fixing itself on that Mr. Lillburgh. 'Pshaw! he shall *not* have her; call Miss here,' he continued to a servant who entered at the moment. The servant returned after a few minutes, saying that he had knocked repeatedly at her door, but received no answer. Vaguely apprehensive of something wrong, Mr. Lee hastened himself to her chamber; but how was he shocked on entering, to find his daughter lying senseless in a swoon near an open window. Ah! what voice whispered him that she had seen and heard at that window what her delicate nerves could not endure! He raised her tenderly in his arms, and having with some difficulty restored her to consciousness, placed her on the bed. 'Good heavens!' thought he, 'can it be indeed so serious!' But he could not long speculate upon this subject; Lucy's cheek, but just now so pale and marble-like, soon began to glow with fever; her pulse, but just restored to action, now told with momentarily increasing hurry that illness had seized the delicate frame; the sudden revulsion from new-born hope to despair had been too much for it. Poor Mr. Lee! what did his heart say now? Did it yet upbraid him? Dr. Kent, who had set out on a course of visits, could not at once be found, and the wretched father sat gazing in agonizing helplessness on his suffering child until the decline of the day. What would he have given to live over again the last few hours! At length the physician appeared: 'Now,' said he, on accosting Mr. Lee, 'do you think I know my own business or not? Do I make mountains of mole-hills or not? I knew what I was about, didn't I?'

'Alas, yes!' replied the other, in a self-accusing tone, 'and *I* did not; but oh! merciful Providence! is it too late now?'

'Too late? Heaven knows, poor young lady! she'd have been better off if she'd been an ugly twelfth daughter, with no one to trouble themselves much about her, instead of a beautiful darling, that must have one particular sort of happiness and no other.'

'Spare me! spare me, my friend!' implored Mr. Lee.

'I wish you had spared yourself,' grumbled Dr. Kent.

The Doctor was, it must be allowed, a little rough; but he had been so thoroughly annoyed, after having, as he thought, with unparalleled cunning and discretion detected the difficulty and provided a remedy, to find his plans thwarted by an obstinate wilfulness, that he could not help boiling over a little: his kind feelings however soon got the ascendancy; the deep contrition of the poor father touched his heart, and the lovely girl who had only increased his interest in her by making good his words, received from him the most attentive care; nor could he doubt that at length his advice was appreciated, when he heard Mr. Lee take every opportunity of mentioning Mr. Lillburgh's name with approbation and kindness, always regretting that he had made such a mistake as to send him away the last time he had called at the house.

But who may venture to choose their own time for showing kindness? Who may, having refused to 'do good when it was in the power of his hand to do it,' resume at will the precious privilege? Dr. Kent, satisfied with his friend's repentance, was willing to take any step which might avail to retrieve the mischief; but when this last would have lured back by civilities the repulsed lover, he was found to have left home the very day after his mortifying dismissal.

Let those who only by looking *back* can see the road by which misery might have been escaped, while *before* the vista seems quite closed up, conceive the deep and agonizing perplexity of the anxious father. His daughter, comforted no doubt by his frequent recurrence to the subject near her heart, and the manner in which he treated it, slowly raised her drooping head; but he, (the entire *amende* being still out of his power) hung over her night and day, oppressed by a constant sensation of guilt, scarcely aware of her partial restoration. For some days this ordeal lasted; there seemed a risk that the lover might in the bitterness of his disappointment prolong his stay indefinitely; what availed it then that

the prejudice and ambition which had exiled him were now annihilated? The eagerly coveted-prize for which he would have sacrificed his daughter's peace, had turned to ashes in his grasp.

But the door to returning happiness was not completely closed. Dr. Kent's skill, aided no doubt by Lucy's young confidence in her lover's steadfastness, kept danger at bay, until one of those opportune accidents of life, which like many of the best things in it look threateningly until time takes off the veil, occurred in the shape of a fire on the premises of the wanderer; which news, forcing him to return, the indefatigable Dr. Kent at once offered to divert his mind from this untoward circumstance, by taking him to join the family dinner of his friend Mr. Lee. The sequel may be imagined; on the strength of this friendly invitation, aided no doubt by sundry blushes and smiles on Lucy's part, Mr. Lillburgh ventured to resume his visits, and Lucy's cheek always looked so particularly rosy on such occasions, that Mr. Lee soon became too entirely happy in the result, to cavil any longer at the cause of her renovated health and spirits. Sometimes, also, memory would recall for an instant that terrible period of anxiety, and then he would treat Mr. Lillburgh with such pointed cordiality, that before very long that young gentleman was emboldened to take advantage of his civility, and make some disclosure of his *own* plans for the fair Lucy's happiness, according to the liberty of speech young gentlemen generally allow themselves when desirous of securing their own. Mr. Lee had gone too far to recede, and he soon found himself reduced to the necessity of resting all his hopes for the gratification of his favorite fancies and prejudices upon the anticipated course through life of another generation, whose future being happily so distant, promised him a long period of hope.

THE FRATRICIDE'S DEATH

A RHAPSODY

The following effort of a wild and maddened imagination, rioting in its own unreal world, is by the 'American Opium-Eater,' whose remarkable history was given in the Knickerbocker for July, 1842. The MS. is stained in several places with the powerful drug, to the abuse of which the writer was so irresistibly addicted. The subjoined remarks precede the poem: 'This extravaganza is worthy of preservation only as 'a psychological curiosity,' like Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan,' which was composed under similar circumstances; if that indeed can be called composition, in which all the images rose up before the writer as THINGS, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking, he appeared to have a distinct recollection of the whole: taking his pen, ink and paper, he instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. The state of corporeal sleep but intellectual activity, during the continuance of which the phenomenon above described occurred, was caused by a very large dose of opium, and came upon me while reading the 'Confession of a Fratricide,' published by the priest who attended him in his last moments. I should warn the reader that the fratricide, like the author, could not be said to possess the 'mens sana in corpore sano,' both having been deranged.'

Ed. Knickerbocker.

The universe shook as the monarch passed
On the way to his northern throne;
His robe of snow around him he cast,
He rode on the wings of the roaring blast,
And beneath him dark clouds were blown.

His furrow'd and hoary brow was wreathed
With a crown of diamond frost;
Even space was chill'd wherever he breathed,
And the last faint smiles which summer bequeathed,
Ere she left the world, were lost.

The leaves which wan Autumn's breath had seared
Stern Winter swept away;
Dark and dreary all earth appeared—
The very beams of the bright sun feared
To pursue their accustom'd way.

Mirth's merry laugh at that moment fled,
And Pleasure's fair cheek grew pale:
The living sat like the stony dead,
The rough torrent froze in its craggy bed,
And Heaven's dew turned to hail.

The forest trees waved their heads on high,
And shrunk from the storm's fierce stroke;
The lightning flash'd as from God's own eye,
The thunderbolt crash'd through the startled sky,
As it split the defying oak.

The proud lion trembled and hush'd his roar,
The tigress crouch'd in fear;
The angry sea beat the shuddering shore,
And the deafening voice of the elements' war
Burst terribly on the ear.

I stood by the bed where the prisoner lay;
The lamp gave a fitful light:
His soul was struggling to pass away;
Oh, God! how I pray'd for the coming of day!
Death was awful in such a night.

His cheek was hollow, and sunk, and wan,
And his lips were thin and blue;
The unearthly look of that dying man,
As his tale of horror he thus began,
Sent a chill my warm heart through:

'The plague-spots of crime have sunk deep in my heart,
And withered my whirling brain;
The deep stamp of murder could never depart
From this brow, where the Angel of Death's fiery dart
Had graven the curse of Cain.

'Remorse has oft waved his dusky wings
O'er the path I was doom'd to tread;
Despair has long frozen Hope's warm springs;
I have felt the soul's madness which Memory brings,
When she wakes up the murder'd dead.

'Tell me not now of God's mercy or love!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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