THE FUTURE.

BY ELIZA COOK.

It was good, it was kind, in the Wise One above
To fling Destiny's veil o'er the faces of our years.
That we dread not the blows that shall strike at our love,
And expect not the beams that shall dry up our tears.

Did we know that the voices now gentle and bland
Will forego the fond word and the whispering tone;
Did we know that the eager and warm pressing hand
Will be joyfully forward in "casting the stone."

Did we know the affection engrossing our soul.
Will end, as it oft does, in madness and pain;
That the passionate breast will but hazard its rest,
And be wreck'd on the shore it is panting to gain.

Oh! did we but know of the shadows of night,
The world would indeed be a prison of gloom;
And light would be quench'd in youth's eloquent eye,
And the prayer-lisping infant would ask for a tomb.

For if Hope be a star that may lead us astray,
And "deceiveth the heart," as the aged ones preach;
Yet 'twas mercy that gave it to beacon our way,
Though its halo illumes where we never can reach.

Though Friendship but flit, like a meteor gleam,
Though it burst like a morn-lighted bubble of dew,
Though it passes away like a leaf on the stream,
Yet 'tis bliss while we *fancy* the vision is true.

Oh! 'tis well that the future is hid from our sight;
That we walk in the sunshine, nor dream of the cloud;
That we cherish a flower and think not of blight,
That we dance on the loom that may weave us a shroud.

It was good, it was kind, in the Wise One above,
To fling Destiny's veil o'er the face of our years,
That we dread not the blow that shall strike at our love,
And expect not the beams that shall dry up our tears.

MAY PEACE BE WITH THEE.

May peace be with thee now,
Thy path be strewn with flowers,
And fancy bring unto thy heart
The warmth of summer hours.
Beauty, and love, and joy, and hope,
Be ministers to thee,
But let no slave of Mammon bend
To thee his supple knee.
Yes maiden, I would have thee rise
Above the worldly throng,
With thoughts that span the universe,
And feelings deep and strong,
Could all the powers which reign in heaven
Be servants of my will,
Time should sit lightly on thy heart,
And peace be with thee still

The rugged world is new to thee,
Thou know'st not all its wiles;
As adders nestle under flowers,
[illegible]
The false will whisper tales which seem
All honesty and truth;
The proud will dart a look of scorn
Upon thy humble youth;
The vain will preach of tinselled things
As empty as the air,
And if thy bosom be unbarred
Will strive to enter there.
But reaping still a mass of good
From out a world of ill,
May time sit lightly on thy heart,
And peace be with thee still!

Though time should cloud thy timid eye,
Thy step no more be light,
And age should gather on thee, like
The canopy of night;—
Though fond ones sit no more around
The fireside of thy home,
And all the love of olden time
Are sleeping in the tomb;—
Yet may'st thou turn into the past,
And gladly gaze before,
And see an angel's hand draw back
The bolt from glory's door.
I would not that thy faith should be
Sad, desolate, and chill;
But hope's bright image glad thy heart,
And peace be with thee still!

GOOD NIGHT.

(*From the German of Korner.*)

Good night!
To each weary toil-worn wight;
Now the day so sweetly closes,
Every aching brow reposes
Peacefully till morning light.
Good night?

Home to rest!
Close the eye and calm the breast;
Stillness through the streets is stealing,
And the watchman's horn is pealing,
And the night calls softly, "Haste!
Home to rest!"

Sweetly sleep!
Eden's breezes round ye sweep:
O'er the peace forsaken lover
Let the darling image hover.
As he lies in transport deep,
Sweetly sleep!

So, good night!
Slumber on till morning light;
Slumber, till another morrow
Brings its stores of joy and sorrow;
Fearless, in the Father's sight,
Slumber on. Good night.

A TALE OF A BREVET.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

"Hurra! mother, Hurra! Here is my commission," exclaimed Charles Gray, as, with the document in his hand, he rushed into the little parlour where his mother sat peaceably at work. It dropped from her hands.

Her son was quite a picture as he stood before her; tall, and, though very slight, giving promise of grace and strength of form, with a countenance of which honesty and benevolence of expression were the most striking attributes. The fine features were now lit up with an enthusiasm she had never yet seen.

And he was to leave her—perhaps for ever! She was a widow; but this was not her only son. A bright-faced intelligent-looking creature followed his brother into his mother's little sitting-room. Her tears flowed plentifully, while Charles, quite subdued, stood by; and he could give her no comfort, for the regiment to which he was appointed was in the West Indies. His Ensigncy had been obtained by a death vacancy from yellow fever.

"Don't cry, mamma, don't cry," said the youngest boy, climbing on his mother's knee, and trying to unclasp her hands, through which the tears fell like rain on her faded mourning garments; "don't cry. I will stay with you.—God Almighty will take care of us both, and brother Charles too. Oh, mother, don't cry so."

But tears are a woman's relief; and in the afternoon Mrs. Gray was able to set forth to purchase the young Ensign's outfit. Sorry work it was, indeed. She met many acquaintances in the street—the poor have few *friends*—and had to receive their common-place congratulations on her eldest son being "provided for," while her heart was aching at the thoughts of parting with him.

She was very poor, having little but her pension as a Colonel's widow, on which she was expected by society to live like a gentlewoman; and, to her credit be it spoken, she had done so, managing during the last two years to send her eldest boy to a public school. It was a mystery to some how she had done it; but they saw only the neat drawing-room of her small lodging,—they knew nothing of her homely meals. and the well-mended linen of herself and her youngest boy,—they little knew how her fingers and eyes suffered on those cold and dreary winter nights, when her little Willie was in bed, and she sat turning his dark jacket by a solitary candle, with a shawl round her to keep her warm, the fire having been raked out, that the coal-merchant's bill might not exceed her ability to pay it.

The King, whom her husband had served with his life,—for, though not killed in action, the effects of unhealthy climates had undermined his constitution and caused his death,—the King sat surrounded by comforts, and could have no idea of the poverty and sufferings of the widows and orphans of those to whom Parliament had voted empty thanks; and those who grumble at taxes and said there was no good in having beggarly soldiers to maintain, ate his hearty supper, and talked over the fire to his neighbour of "them military being nothing more nor hired assassins," but dreamed not of the widow and orphan left in sorrow, and unprovided with almost the necessaries of life.

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It is market-day. The streets of M———, the small town in which Mrs. Gray lived, are thronged with people. County men come in to gossip, county ladies come in to shop, and talk over the last ball, young men are exhibiting their talent in driving four-in-hand, country girls, with market baskets on their arms, are chatting and laughing together, with blooming faces and right merry voices, and hale hearty farmers, who have never known care, greet each other in the market-place. All these made a cheerful throng, and through these groups Mrs. Gray has walked down to the inn, kindly escorted by a half-pay Captain, as poor as herself. She is going to see Charles depart. It is hardly wise; but she *will* see the last of him. The landlady of the inn, albeit full of business with country gentlemen and wealthy farmers, is kind,—she shows the widow into a room looking [illegible]. All is ready. One more fond embrace,—one more last look—the cloths are drawn from the four fine bays whose hoofs clatter on the pavement beneath the arch, and the widow wrings her hands together in agony, and, covering her streaming eyes, sinks down, uttering a loud and very bitter cry!

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And now for the boy's career. He joined his regiment in Jamaica, and at the end of seven years came home. He was able to bring his mother something out of his savings; but, oh! how worn, how altered, was that young fresh happy face!

He had been laughed at for not drinking wine at his mess; he had been quizzed for not playing cards; but his indifference to the laughter and the quizzing blunted the edge of the satire, and gradually his brother-officers had learned to respect and like him. Little they knew, though, why he refused to spend a sixpence more than he could help. Little they knew of the widowed mother and the young orphan brother! William Gray took his soldier brother round all the old haunts,—the churchyard, where the rocks still held their state, and where Charles had taught him his letters on old tombstones,—the water-mill which they had been used to sit and watch together, the bridge, the trout-stream, and the sunny meadows.

Among these meadows had arisen a new mansion; it was in tolerably good taste, too, for the owner—a man who had amassed wealth as a tanner—had employed a London architect to build it. Workmen were levelling the hawthorn hedges, a plantation of young trees was thriving, several acres of ground were forming into a minature park, lodges were building, and a carriage, very handsomely appointed, drove round the newly-gravelled sweep. A chubby faced boy, in a hat and feathers, looked out of the carriage window.

"Whose smart equipage is that?" asked Charles.

"Oh, that is Mr. Robinson's, the great tanner, and that is his only son and heir. He will have a fine estate."

And the poor Ensign and his brother turned off from the *ci-devant* tanner's grounds, and sought the quiet pathway by the river side, where their mother had promised to meet them. Ah, that trio was a happy one, in spite of poverty, and anxiety, and weary, weary partings.

After two years' "slow work" in England, Spain opened her "blood-red field," and thither, still an Ensign, after nine years' service, Charles went with his regiment.

"Now for promotion or death!" he exclaimed, as he led a forlorn hope. The promotion was *promised*—and at six-and-twenty he obtained his Lieutenancy.

His mother had not the satisfaction of knowing he was promoted; she died ere he was gazetted. She died and was buried, followed to the grave by her youngest son, a youth of seventeen, and the aged half-pay Captain.

Of the younger son's career we shall speak hereafter.

Charles Gray came home from Spain to join the new corpse into which he had been promoted. The contingent fees on joining brought our poor hero sadly into debt for other matters; and learning from good authority that it would shortly be disbanded, he obtained leave of absence for six months to travel on the Continent. With his pack on his back, and with a good pair of English shoes on his feet, he prepared to take advantage of the peace. He had not, however, been long abroad, when Bonaparte's sudden return from Elba sent all travellers homewards. Charles was luckily in Normandy, and lost no time in rejoining his regiment, which was already at Portsmouth.

As this was no great distance from the town in which he had been brought up, and in which his mother now lay, beneath a plain stone slab, in the shaded churchyard, Charles wrote to his brother, apprising him of his intent to visit his old home. Once again the brothers were united for a day, the limits of the soldier's leave not permitting him a longer stay. And they parted at the grave of their mother, in the solemn twilight hour: the old coachman of the "Rocket" pulled up at the turnstile, under the aged yew tree, Charles gave a last look at his brother and their half-pay friend from the top of the hill, the lights twinkled from the quiet cottages, the watch-dogs barked as the travellers disturbed them in their repose, the open road was gained, and before daylight our hero was once more in his barrack-room, surrounded by packages; the order to embark had arrived, the ships were lying at Spithead, and his servant had made preparations accordingly.

Charles Gray had had little opportunity of knowing his Commanding Officer before the regiment reached Brussels. He saw just enough to value so fine a soldier before he lost him. He was an old veteran, and was on the point of selling his commission, in order to leave some provision for his family, when the sound of Napoleon's trumpet called all Europe to arms. Charles knew literally nothing of his character, till they met at Waterloo. A Staff Officer picked up a colour, evidently belonging to some regiment with yellow facings, which he imagined might have been lost in the *melee* by some Ensign of Charles' regiment; so riding up to the old veteran, the Aide-de-Camp put the question, "Have the —th lost a colour?"

"Lost a colour, Sir!" said the Colonel, dashing forward as if he would have ridden down the Staff Officer, "Lost a colour, Sir!—the —th!—Sir, my boys *never* lose their colours!"

His eye flashed fire, but its light was soon quenched for ever; he fell, with his gallant charger under him, even as he spoke; the Staff Officer dashed on amid the smoke of the enemy, and Charles Gray knelt down beside his Commanding Officer. He was quite dead; the upper part of the heart was carried away.

His wife died of a broken heart—nine orphans were left; three unmarried daughters found "situations"—God help them—as governesses in families who belonged to the aristocracy of wealth; and some of the sons found the Directors of the East India Company more generous masters than the authorities in the King's service.

By the time Charles Gray was fully understood and appreciated by his brother officers, the regiment was disbanded.

After weeks of anxiety, constant entreaty, and unlimited exertions, besides references to the affair of the forlorn hope, for which he was reminded he had been promoted to a Lieutenancy, he was appointed to another corps: in 1817 that, too, was disbanded! Two years elapsed, at the end of which period, when he spoke of nineteen year's service, he was reminded of some of those years being spent on half pay. It was forgotten that this was his *misfortune*, not his *fault*. Once more he was appointed to a regiment, in which he was happy in finding some of his Waterloo brethren.—Among the Ensigns, however, there was a new school of soldiers, who, though

"They carried caps and pouches,
And wore the looped clothes;"

carried also elegant canteens, and did not like the winds of heaven to "come betwixt them and their nobility."

But I do the nobility injustice in my quotation. The really noble were the most ready to practise subordination, *for they knew its value*; but there were some troublesome subjects among the aristocracy of wealth. The tanner's heir, young Robinson, was one of these. Between money and parliamentary interest, he had managed to obtain a commission, when many a poor Sub, of long service, was trying to get on full pay.

Charles Gray, although not a Captain, was in charge of a company, that is to say, he had all the trouble and responsibility of its accounts without the additional rank or pay. Young Robinson was placed in this company. He had not a single quality which fitted him for the Army. He was a consummate puppy, very ignorant, *par consequence*, very conceited; thus we generally find that those who have opened the book of knowledge are more humble in their opinion of themselves than the dull or uneducated, since in that book may be seen how much there is to learn beyond our powers.

Well, young Robinson was a constant source of annoyance to Gray; for the Commanding Officer, who played whist, and invited the wealthy Ensign to his card parties, took his part tacitly, if not openly; and Gray was looking forward to the unpleasant prospect of being on detatchment with Robinson, when he latter, fourteen months after entering the service, purhased his Lieutenancy, and became the Subaltern of a very easy-going Captain.

I have said nothing as yet of a little episode in Charles Gray's life, because it had nothing to do with my tale. The widowed half-pay Captain had a daughter. She and Charles had been playmates from her babyhood. The soldier's affections had been more firmly riveted than ever, when, on revisiting his old home, he heard from his brother of Helen's devotion to his dying mother.

It was now rumoured that his regiment would go to India. Charles wrote to his old friend, entreating the hand of his daughter. He represented the advantages of an Indian station, as regarded pay and allowances. The old officer hesitated; his daughter was prepared to abide his decision, whatever it might be; but in the end he consented. Better, he thought, to part even with his only child for ever than to "see her cheek grow pale, and the light of an ardent spirit fade from her eye."

To common observers the movements of regiments from one station to another seem harrassing enough, but only those who have felt its harrassed can judge of the miseries arising from frequent unnecessary marches and countermarches.

The bridegroom had a month's leave; at the end of that period he joined his regiment at Plymouth, where it was thought possible it might embark for India, but the Colonel-in-Chief died, and the next who obtained the appointment had not sufficient interest to get the regiment ordered to India; so when Gray and his wife were settled in their lodgings preparing to be very happy, the route arrived for Hull. They marched eastward, but were countermanded on their way and ordered to Liverpool "to await farther orders." These brought the route for Glasgow, but the transports had not arrived and they were detained six weeks in daily expectation of them. I will not detail poor Ellen Gray's misery, and after a wretched voyage in November, they landed on the Bromielaw at Glasgow.

Meanwhile, the Commander-in-Chief in Edinburgh had been making great exertions to get a favourite Highland regiment from Waterford to Scotland. Gray's corps got the route for Belfast in January. the regiment there having relieved the Highlanders, and before twelve months were over the Gray's had traversed Ireland as far as Cork, whence they were ordered to Chatham, and whence, in consequence of a new Colonel-in-Chief being appointed to the regiment it was at last ordered to India.

And now came the embarkation in a troop-ship. What squabbling, what fickery, what misery! Poor Helen felt her very nature degraded by the turmoil. She was in affliction, too, for her infant had died in Chatham barracks only the week before. So there she stood upon the wet dock on that cold December day, shivering and lonely, for her husband was engaged with his men and could do nothing for her.

The Captain of the vessel asked her into the cuddy, offering her refreshment, and at last, feeling miserably ill, she determined on decending to the den of eight feet square, which was to be her chief abode for the next six months. She was yet to learn that she was to share it with another.

Gray was to have a berth in the stern cabin under the poop cabins. This was to be the eating room of seven and twenty officers in the day time, and the sleeping place of eight at night!

She met her husband coming up the dark ladder, which made her giddier than ever to look at.

She would not complain; he looked sadly worn; the last letters were just coming on board, he would just help her into her berth and go and hear the news.

He opened the cabin door: he could not see into it at first; it had one port hole, a foot square. It was closed, as the day was stormy.

"How is this, O'Niel," said he to his servant when a light had been obtained. "All the bedding is removed from your mistress's upper berth and put into the lower one?"

"Not a bit o' me knows the raison, Sir, but a big man in a blue coat, a sort of uniform done it."

The big man in the blue coat put his head in at the door. "That's my wife's berth," said he, "she's a comin directly in this here boat as is almost alongside on us."

"Sir," said Gray, recognising an individual whom he had often seen sitting in the bar window of a Chatham inn, and not unfrequently in an "excited state" from the too free use of brandy-and-water.

"That's my wife's berth, I tell ye. I draws captain's rations, and chooses quarters as a captain, and my wife's a goin to have the top berth, that's all."

Here the big man lit a cigar at a lamp near him, and used an oath that terrified Helen, as he was told no smoking was allowed between decks.

It was too true. Although Gray had seen twenty years' service, had served in the West Indies, fought three battles led a forlorn hope in Spein, and "beat the French at Waterloo," this ordnance store-keeper and acting barrack-master, who was going as far as the Cape, was entitled to precedence and consideration before him.

There was no redress, and poor Helen Gray endured martyrdom for four months; for, not liking to increase her husband's distress, she frequently affected to be asleep, when the attentive store-keeper brought his wife her tumbler of brandy and water, and rejoiced over one himself, seated on a pyramid of boxes near the berth. [Facts.]

The Gazette, by the bye, had brought the official notice of Mr. Robinson's promotion. It came just in time to give him a berth off the cuddy.

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By a singular and rather unfortunate coincidence, Capt. Robinson became Gray's Commanding Officer.

A few years in India, however, undermined the health of poor Gray and his wife, and by the strong recommendation of the Governor General, our hero at last obtained an unattached company. It was given him in rememberance of some act of daring bravery under the walls of a fortress besieged by the British troops.

On reaching England, he was appointed, after much trouble, to a light infantry regiment, into which Robinson, having been a Major some time exchanged.

The still failing health of Captain and Mrs. Gray made them anxious for the fate of their little girl, the only one left them of five. Helen's father was dead, and Charles's brother, William Gray, earned only a precarious existence in London by his talents, which from his mother's poverty had been but little cultivated, except by his own exertions.

Helen dared not hint at selling out. She dreaded even acknowledging even to herself that hard service and unhealthy climates had worn her poor husband to a skeleton. At last, one day as a crowd of young officers shouted in their glee, making the barrock square ring with their noisy mirth, he bade the little Helen shut the window, adding with a sigh to his wife, who was working, "Helen, a barrack is no home for that fragile girl. I must think of selling out: we can live very cheaply at a little village not far from where our fathers and mothers are buried."

"Do not speak so decidedly, my love," said his wife, affecting a cheerfulness she seldom felt. "*Wait for the brevet.*"

"Ah! I should like to earn my spurs before I sell or die," said poor Gray, "but I am afraid the brevet will be of no benefit to me."

Now it was recommended by *justice*, that the brevet should be beneficial to old soldiers, of so many years' *real* service, whether the Subalterns, Captains, or Feld-Officers, and not merely to Officers who, having purchased their rank over the heads of poorer men than themselves, were senior to these unfortunates in rank, but junior by twenty years in age and *service*.

Of the style of *service* between the two classes of officers, there could, of course, be no comparison.

Captain Gray then waited for the brevet.

He was wasting away daily. His wife watched him anxiously; weeks elapsed Parliament met—great things were to be done for old officers—William Gray gathered all the news he could from authentic military sources, and even he was sanguine.

The expected brevet was published at last: it extended to a period of nine years. Major Robinson became a Brevet Lieut.-Colonel. His father was now member for N——: by the promise of six additional votes on a stirring question, he obtained the order of companion of the Bath for his son, "for important India services."

Our hero, although too noble mieded to be jealous, could not offer very hearty congratulations to Colonel Robinson, now usually in command of the Regiment, in consequence of its Colonel being an M. P., and therefore scarcely ever on duty with his corps.

Gray resolved on going to the Horse Guards himself, to see if, by retiring on half pay, any military employment might afterwards be obtained which would suit his health, and enable him to insure his life for the future support of his child.

Very ungraciously Colonel Robinson awarded him the leave. Gray was too useful a man to be easily spared. Officers who know and do their duty are usually rewarded for their abilities and steadiness by having to do the work of the ignorant, the stupid, the idle, or the vicious. Captain Gray gave his superiors no trouble, and they were consequently always unwilling to part with him!

He was to be absent a month, and to share his brother's poor lodging in Museum-street. Helen and her little girl parted from him with grieving hearts. His pale face and emaciated limbs alarmed them. Sorrow and disappointment had attenuated his frame till he was a mere shadow. What a contrast to the boy who forty years before had stood exultingly before his widowed mother, with the King's commission in his hand! Alas! the Surgeon had admitted that if he resolved on selling his commission, he must do so at once, otherwise he feared he should not be justified in giving him the necesary certificates.

He found his brother William dying! Years of toil and privation had told upon him too; and the long, cold, dull winter had increased a cough too long neglected.

But they did thus once more meet on this side of the grave. Poor William Gray had no debts; his father's chivalrous sense of honour had descended to both sons alike, and William had regularly paid his little weekly bills with the scanty earnings of his industrious pen.

"I once," said he to Charles, not long before his death, "I once found myself indulging in comforts to which my means did not entitle me. You see my father's spurs, which he wore at the battle of ——, hanging there. I was glad you spared them to me from your relics, for I have kept them in my sight many years, looking on them whenever I found my wishes stronger than my duty."

The worn-out soldier followed his brother to the grave, and returned to the solitary lodging less disposed than ever to buffet with a hard cold world; the world that God makes so beautiful, and man so sad and weary! He removed to another lodging. Twice every week he was to be found in the long narrow waiting-room at the Horse Guards. There was some comfort on those days, for in this room there was a blazing fire. He and a brother soldier, equally unfortunate with himself, were wont to meet there. Sorrow creates sympathy. Suddenly Gray was missed, but only by the old officer who had always watched his coming; his whereabouts, however, was unknown, he had kept it a secret—it was so poor a place!