



## LITERATURE.

## MY WIFE IS A WOMAN OF MIND.

Written by R. MATHEW, the original Editor of "Punch."

My wife is a woman of mind,  
And Deville, who examined her bumps,  
Vowed that never was found in a woman  
Such large intellectual lumps.  
Ideality, big as an egg,  
With Casualty great was combined.  
He charged me ten shillings, and said,  
Sir, your wife is a woman of mind.

She's too clever to care how she looks,  
And will horrid blue spectacles wear;  
Not because she supposes they give her  
A fine intellectual air:  
No! she pays no regard to appearance;  
And combs all her front hair behind;  
Not because she is proud of her forehead,  
But because she's a woman of mind.

She makes me a bushel of verses,  
But never a pudding or tart;  
If I hint I should like one, she vows  
I'm an animal merely at heart;  
Though I've noticed she spurns not the pastry,  
When'er at a friend's we have dined,  
And has always had two plates of pudding—  
Such plates—for a woman of mind!

Not a stitch does she do but a distich:  
Mends her pens, too, instead of my clothes;  
I have not a shirt with a button,  
Nor a stocking that's sound at the toes;  
If I ask her to darn me a pair,  
She replies ship has work more refined;  
Besides, to be darning of stockings—  
Is it fit for a woman of mind?

[From Dickens' Household Words.]

## THE GHOST THAT APPEARED TO MRS. WHARTON.

When my mother was a girl, some rumours began to steal through the town where she lived, about something having gone amiss with old Mrs. Wharton: for, if Mrs. Wharton was not known to all the townspeople, she was known and respected by so many, that it was really no trifling when she was seen to have the contracted brow and the pinched look about the nose that people have when they are in alarm, or living a life of deep anxiety. Nobody could make out what was the matter. If asked, she said she was well. Her sons were understood to be perfectly respectable, and sufficiently prosperous; and there could be no doubt about the health, and the dutifulness, and the cheerfulness, of the unmarried daughter who lived with her. The old lady lived in a house which was her own property; and her income, though not large, was enough for comfort. What could it be that made her suddenly so silent and grave? Her daughter was just the same as ever, except that she was anxious about the change in her mother. It was observed by one or two that the clergyman had nothing to say, when the subject was spoken of in his hearing. He rolled and nodded his head, and he glanced at the ceiling, and then stuck his chin deep into his shirt-frill; but those were things that he was always doing, and they might mean nothing. When inquired of about his opinion of Mrs. Wharton's looks and spirits, he shifted his weight from one foot to the other, as he stood before the fire with his hands behind him, and said, with the sweet voice and winning manner that charmed young and old, that, as far as he knew, Mrs. Wharton's external affairs were all right; and, as for peace of mind, he knew of no one who more deserved it. If the course of her life, and the temper of her mind did not entitle her to peace within, he did not know who could hope for it. Somebody whispered that it would be shocking if a mortal disease should be seizing upon her: whereupon he, Mr. Gurney, observed that he thought he should have known it if any such thing was to be apprehended. As far as a fit of indigestion went, he believed she suffered occasionally; but she did not herself admit even that. Dr. Robinson, who was present, said that Mrs. Wharton's friends might be quite easy about her health. She was not troubled with indigestion nor any other complaint. People could only go on to ask one another what could be the matter. One or two agreed that Mr. Gurney had made very skilful answers, in which he was much assisted by his curious customary gestures; but that he had never said that he did not know of any trouble being on Mrs. Wharton's mind.

Soon after this, a like mysterious change appeared to come over the daughter; but no disasters could be discovered to have happened. No disease, no losses, no family anxieties were heard of; and, by degrees, both the

ladies recovered nearly their former forgetfulness and ease of manner—nearly, but not altogether. They appeared somewhat subdued, in countenance and bearing; and they kept a solemn silence when some subjects were talked of, which often turn up by the Christmas fire-side. It was years before the matter was explained. My mother was married by that time, and removed from her smoky native town, to a much brighter city in the south. She used to tell us, as we grew up, the story of Mrs. Wharton, and what she endured; and we could not have had not been ashamed, have gone on to say, as if we had still been little children, "tell us again." When we were going into the north to visit our grandparents, it was all very well to tell us of coal waggons that we should see running without horses, or iron rails laid down in the roads; and of the keelmen rowing their keel-boats in the river, and all at once kicking up their right legs behind them, when they gave the long puff; and of the glass-houses in the town, with fire coming out of the top of the high chimneys; and of the ever-burning mounds near the mouths of the coal-pits, where blue and yellow flames leaped about, all night, through the whole year round. It was all very well to think of seeing these things; but we thought much more of walking past old Mrs. Wharton's house, and perhaps inducing Mr. Gurney to tell us, in his way, the story we had so often heard my mother tell in hers.

The story was this:—

One Midsummer morning Mrs. Wharton was so absent at breakfast, that her daughter found all attempts at conversation to be in vain. So she quietly filled the coffee-pot, which her mother had forgotten to do, and in the middle of the forenoon ordered dinner, which she found her mother had also forgotten. They had just such a breakfasting three times more during the next fortnight. Then, on Miss Wharton crossing the hall, she met her mother in bonnet and shawl, about to go out, so early as half-past nine. The circumstance would not have been remarked, but for the mother's confused and abashed way of accounting for going out. She should not be gone long. She had only a little call to make, and so on. The call was on Mr. Gurney. He had hardly done breakfast, when he was told that Mrs. Wharton wished to speak with him alone.

When he entered the study, Mrs. Wharton seemed to be as unready with her words as himself; and when he shook hands with her, he observed that her hand was cold. She said she was well, however. Then came a pause during which the good pastor was shifting from one foot to the other, on the hearth-rug, with his hands behind him, though there was nothing in the grate but shavings. Mrs. Wharton, meantime, was putting her veil up and down, and her gloves on and off. At last, with a constrained and painful smile, she said that she was really ashamed to say what she came to say, but she must say it; and she believed and hoped that Mr. Gurney had known her long enough to be aware that she was not subject to foolish fancies and absurd fears.

"No one further from it," he dropped, and now she fixed her eyes on his face. Her eyes fell under his, when she went on.

"For some time past, I have suffered from a most frightful visitation in the night."

"Visitation! What sort of visitation?"

She turned visibly cold while she answered, "It was last Wednesday fortnight that I awoke in the middle of the night—that is between two and three in the morning, when it was getting quite light, and I saw—"

She choked a little, and stopped.

"Well!" said Mr. Gurney, "What did you see?"

"I saw at the bottom of the bed, a most hideous—a most detestable face—gibbering, and making mouths at me."

"A face?"

"Yes; I could see only the face (except, indeed, a hand upon the bedpost), because it peeped round the bedpost from behind the curtain. The curtains are drawn down to the foot of the bed."

She stole a look at Mr. Gurney. He was rolling his head; and there was a working about his mouth before he asked—

"What time did you see that night?"

"Now," she replied, "you are not going to say, I hope, that it was nightmare. Most people would; but I hoped that you knew me better than to suppose that I eat such suppers as would occasion nightmare, or that I should not know nightmare from reality."

"But my dear Mrs. Wharton, what else can I say?"

"Perhaps you had better listen further, before you say any thing."

"I have seen the appearance on three occasions since."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, on three several nights, about the same hour. And, since the first appearance, my supper has been merely a little bread and butter, with a glass of water—close to exclude nightmare, as I would exclude any thing whatever, that could possibly cause an appearance so horrible."

"What sort of face is it?"

"Short and broad; silly, and yet sly; and the features gibber and work—Oh! fearfully!"

"Do you hear it come and go?"

"No. When I wake—and I never used to wake in the night—it is there: and it disappears—to say the truth—while my eyes are covered; for I cannot meet its eyes—I hear nothing. When I venture a glance, sometimes it is still there; sometimes it is gone."

"Have you missed any property?"

"No: nor found any trace whatever. We have lost nothing; and there is really not a door or window that seems ever to have been touched; not an opening where any one could get in or out."

"And if there were, what could be the object? What does your daughter say to it?"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Wharton, rising quickly, "she does not, and indeed she must not know a word of it. I ought to have said, at first, that what I am telling you is entirely

in confidence. If I told my daughter, it must then go further. We could not keep our servants a week, if it got out. And if I should want to let my house, I could not find a tenant. The value of the property would go down to nothing; and, in justice to my daughter, I must consider that; for it is to be hers hereafter. And we could never have a guest to stay with us. No one would sleep in the house a single night. Indeed, you must not—"

"Well, well; I will not mention it. But I don't see—"

He paused; and Mrs. Wharton replied to his thought.

"It is difficult to form conjectures,—to say anything in such a case, which does not appear too foolish to be uttered. But one must have some thoughts; and perhaps—if one can talk of possibilities—it is possible that this appearance may be meant for me alone; and therefore, if I conceal it from my daughter—till I am convinced whether it is meant for me alone—"

"I would soon try that," observed Mr. Gurney. Seeing Mrs. Wharton look wistfully at him, he continued—

"My advice is that you have your daughter sleep with you, after hearing your story. Try whether she can see this face."

"You do not think she would?"

"I think she would not. My dear friend, if I were a medical man, I could tell you facts which you are little aware of,—anecdotes of the strange tricks which our nerves play with us,—of delusions so like reality—"

"Do you think I have considered that?" exclaimed the poor lady. "Mr. Gurney, I did not think that you would try to persuade me out of my senses, when I tell you, that four times I have seen in daylight, and when wide awake, and in perfect health, what I have said."

Mr. Gurney was very gentle; but, as he said, what could he suggest but indigestion, or some such cause of nervous disturbance? Yet his heart smote him when his old friend laid her forehead against the mantle-piece, and cried heartily.

He did all he could. He tried indefatigably, though in vain, to persuade her to let her daughter share the spectacle; and he went the same day, when Miss Wharton was out for her walk, and the servants were at dinner, to examine the house. He made no discovery. The gratings of the underground cellars were perfect. The attics had no trap-doors; and the house had no parabet. The chimneys were too high and narrow for any one to get in at the top. No window or door was ever found unfastened in the morning. Mrs. Wharton did not think she could engage for courage enough to get out of bed, or to look beyond the curtains. Nor could she promise not to draw her curtains. The face had never appeared within them; and they seemed a sort of protection where there was no other.

Without having made any promises, she went so far as to start up in bed, the next time that she saw the face. The eyes winked horribly at her; the head nodded—and was gone. The beating of her heart prevented her hearing anything that time; but once or twice during the autumn she fancied she heard a slight and swift footstep in the passage. She always left her room-door open, for the sake of the same sort of feeling of security that most people crave when they shut and bolt theirs. If this was a ghost, bolts would not keep it out; and she could fly the more easily through the open door if her terror should become too great to be endured alone. For the first time she now burned a night-light in her chamber, as the nights lengthened, and not a dim, flickering rush candle, but a steady wax-light. She knew that her daughter wondered at the strange extravagance; but she could not bear darkness, or a very feeble light, when the thing might be behind the curtain.

Throughout October the visits were almost nightly. In the first week in November they suddenly ceased; and so many weeks passed away without a return, that Mrs. Wharton began to be a little alarmed about her own wits, and to ask herself, whether, after all, it was not possible that this was a trick of the nerves. One night in January, that doubt, at least, was settled: for there, at the same bedpost, was the same face. Mrs. Wharton was now, after this interval, subdued at once. She had borne, for half-a-year, her pastor's suspicions of her digestion and of her wisdom, and now, she really wanted sympathy. She let him tell her daughter (let him, rather than tell it herself, because he could make light of it, and she could not); and she gladly agreed to let her daughter sleep with her. For long, she gained nothing by it. During the whole fortnight that the visits now continued, Miss Wharton never once saw the face. She tried to wake the moment her mother touched her; she tried to keep awake; but she never saw the face; and after that fortnight, it did not come again till April.

One bright May dawn, she saw it. Her mother pulled her wrist, and she waked up to a sight which burned itself in upon her brain. She suppressed a shriek at the moment; but she could not tell Mr. Gurney of it afterwards, without tears. She wanted that day to leave the house immediately; but the thought of her mother's long suffering with this horror, the consideration of the serious consequences of declaring themselves ghost-seers in the town, and of the disastrous effect upon their property, and of the harmlessness of the ghost, induced her to summon up her courage, and bear on. She did more. When a little inured, she one night sprang out of bed, rushed round the foot of it, and out upon the landing. The stairs were still dim in the dawn; but she was confident she saw something moving there—passing down to the hall. As soon as she could make the servants attend her, she told them she believed some body was in the house; and all the four women—two ladies and two maids—went, armed with pokers and shovels, and examined the whole house. They found nothing, neither in the chimneys, nor under the beds, nor in any closet—nothing from cellar to attic. And when the maids had recovered a little, they agreed what a tiresome and wearying thing it was when ladies took fancies. This was only their first night of disturbance. Miss Wharton called them up three times more; and then she gave the matter up. The servants