



LITERATURE.

[From the New York Spirit of the Times.]

THE BACHELOR'S BRIDAL.

A PARODY ON "THE BURIAL OF SIR JOHN MOORE."

Not a laugh was heard nor a joyous note,
As our friend to the bridal was hurried.
Not a wit discharged his farewell shot,
At the bachelor just to be married.

We married him quickly to save his fright,
Our heads from the sad sight turning.
And we sighed as we stood by the lamp's dim light,
To think he was no more discerning.

To think that a bachelor, free and bright,
And shy of the girls as we found him,
Should here by the altar, at dead of night,
Be caught in the snare that bound him.

Few and short were the words we said,
Though we heartily ate of the cakes,
Then escorted him home from that scene of dread,
And thought how awfully he shakes.

We thought as we hollowed his lowly bed,
Of the beech, the birch, and the willow, [head,
How the shovel and broomstick would break o'er his
And the tears he would shed on his pillow.

Says he, "they may talk of their friend who has gone,
And every old Bach will unbraide me,
But nothing I'll rock if they'll let me sleep on,
Neath the coverlet just as they've laid me."

But half of our heavy task was done,
Ere the clock tolled the hour for the other,
And we left with the hope that the fate he had won
Would never be won by another.

Slowly and sadly we marched down
From the top of the uppermost story,
And we never have heard from, or seen the poor man,
Whom we left not alone in his glory.

[From Blackwood's Magazine for August.]

A FAMILY FEUD.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GODFREY KINKEL.

(Concluded from our last.)

Early next morning came the Assessor, and in Zebulon's name, gave Caspar and his wife notice to quit. The woman was frightened now that things looked so serious, and would gladly have accepted the half acre of meadow. It was her opinion, that Caspar should go up stairs, and give his brother a few fair words. But, in his turn, Caspar was stubborn, and far too proud to knock under. With his two eldest sons, he walked down to the river, and forthwith cut down the trees which grew there. As they were at work, Zebulon put his nightcapped head out of the window, "Good morning to you," said he, very quietly, "and good luck to your undertaking."

It was a wretched building-ground. Squeezed up between the house and the towing path, there was space only for a single row of rooms. "All the better," thought Caspar; "I will build three stories, one over the other, and so shorten Zebulon's allowance of day-light." But on the next day the river he had to build a strong stone parapet, and that was no joke. There was so little room for the stables, that when complete, they held fewer oxen by half-a-dozen than did those of the old house. On the other hand, Caspar managed to build them in such a manner that they darkened Zebulon's side window, and intercepted his view of the village, thus depriving him of the chief amusement he had when he sat at his work.

With many curses, and much vexation, the roof was got on the house before winter came. The brothers no longer spoke to each other when they met; the whole village laughed at them, but this only strengthened them in their obstinacy. When Caspar wanted clothes made, he employed a tailor from another village. His children did their uncle all the harm they could, and had no longer any mercy on his fruit and flowers.

When spring came, and Caspar went to live in his new house, things improved a little, but yet no great deal. It is bad enough to have an enemy when one lives in a town, but in the country it is still worse. For in the country one daily meets him, at fair and market, at the tavern and at parish meetings; at work and in one's walks; and then one's foot treads sour afterwards.

One day Caspar said to the inn-keeper, "I am well housed now; I have a pleasant view all around and look right into the village; that pleases my wife, and is a great amusement to her." The inn-keeper repeated this to Zebulon, and next morning brick-layers came, and built upon three sides of Caspar's house, but upon his brother's ground, two six-foot walls, and stuck a good store of broken glass upon the top of each of them. Between these walls Zebulon planted, with his own hand, a row of young poplars, tended and watered them day after day, and paid the watchman handsomely to see that no one injured them in the night. Caspar's children got nothing from these walls but cut hands and sore knees; and

meanwhile, the poplars grew apace, and by the following spring had so fenced in Caspar's house that he had to burn candles at four in the afternoon. It was all up with the pleasant prospect that so rejoiced his wife. And what was still worse, the wall separated the children from all their old play-grounds, and now they lay the whole day by the water-side; their mother could not get them from it; and, when the river was high, she had constant anxiety and trouble. At last Caspar was obliged to hire a servant, solely to look after the children.

On a certain autumn day, soon after the after-grass had been got in, Zebulon was seated at work, when his brother's eldest son entered the room, without knocking, walked up to the tailor's board, and said, "Uncle Zebulon, father lets you know."

"Take off your cap," said Zebulon, "when you speak to your father's brother."

"My father told me nothing about that," answered the young fellow, and kept his cap on. "He bade me tell you that, up yonder, where your meadows begin, the dike and fence are worn out. Father says that concerns you as well as him; and that, if you will help and pay your share of a new stone dike, with an osier hedge, he is ready to do so too."

Then said Zebulon, "He has more need of it than I, for if there is a flood in spring, and no new dike, his house will be full of water. Tell your father, however, that I would have agreed to his proposal, if he had not sent such a clown to make it."

The lad turned on his heel, and walked away without further greeting. When he told his father the answer he had got, Caspar said, "I am not going to spend my money to protect the meadows of that niggardly churl. Thank God! I am rich, and my land lies high and dry; and though my house were to float down the Rhine, I should not be ruined."

Accordingly, no dike was made. That autumn the Rhine rose higher than usual; and when it again subsided, Zebulon walked out with an anxious heart to visit his meadows. True enough, the last remains of the old wall were washed away, and a great piece of meadow ground was stripped of its grass; there was full an acre and a half of bare earth, thickly strewn with barren sand and gravel. Zebulon easily calculated that, including the unavoidable expense of a new dike, he was a thousand dollars the poorer. And he thought to himself, "It were better that my brother had the half acre of meadow for his house, and I the whole acre over and above, which is now completely spoiled." But he quickly banished the reflection, when he walked along the wet towing-path in front of Caspar's house, and saw the whole family, great and small, hard at work with buckets, to bale the water out of the cellars, and Caspar's wife ringing her hands, because her whole year's stock of sour-kraut and newly preserved beans was spoiled in the cask. To Zebulon this sight was like a cool dressing to a smarting sore.

But there was a severe rod in pickle for Zebulon. That same autumn he heard the banns published in church, for the marriage of his eldest niece Lizzy with a young farmer of the neighborhood; and this was done with out a word to him, the nearest relative! Lizzy was a goddaughter, she had always been his favorite niece, and for many a long year he had stored up for her a heavy gold chain, with bright ducats hanging from it, which had come to him out of his mother's inheritance. And now—

The wedding day came; Zebulon was not invited. Although the autumn was far advanced, there was a warm gleam of sun, and the tables for the marriage-feast were laid out in the open air, hard by his house door. From his upper windows he beheld the joyous preparations, and swallowed his vexations as best he might; but when the bride appeared in her beautiful new dress, which he had not cut and sewn, and which, therefore, as he thought, fitted her very badly, two large and bitter tears escaped from his old eyes. He could no longer resist the sounds of mirth and rejoicing, which floated up to his ears through the branches of the poplars. He dressed himself, put the gold chain and the clinking glittering ducats, so long intended for Lizzy, in his breeches pocket, and went down stairs.

But for the spiteful walls he himself had built, he might have slipped out by the back door, and have reached the wedding party almost unperceived; as it was, he had to make a circuit, and pass between the rows of tables.

Stepping slowly and with downcast eyes, he approached the feast. Lizzy saw him and blushed crimson, her mother saw him and turned deadly pale; a malicious smile spread over the faces of most of the guests at the prominence thus given to the gross breach of family love and family usages. Caspar sprang from his seat, I believe, his intention was to offer his brother a glass of wine, and I also believe that, had he done so, Zebulon would have remained, and Lizzy's marriage would have marked the date of a new bond of harmony and affection. But just then, the youngest of Caspar's children called out the great house-dog, which upon that day was unchained, that he might share the general joy, "Towler, Towler, there is Uncle Scissors-legs!" The dog was good-tempered enough, and incapable of hurting a child; but the little rascals had more than once, when he was chained up set him at their uncle, to frighten poor Zebulon. Towler now rushed from under the table, and made a furious charge at the tailor's legs; Zebulon, who was prepared for everything, struck him a severe blow across the teeth with his walking-cane, and at the same moment Caspar gave him a tremendous kick in the ribs, so that the brute fled, back howling under the table. But Zebulon looked wrathfully at the family, and said—"I am going away; you have no need to bring dogs to drive your nearest relative from his niece's wedding." Far quicker than he came he strode through the guests and disappeared behind the angle of the house.

Quietly went Zebulon through stubble-field and pasture to the goldsmith in the nearest town, sold him the chain, and dropped the louis-d'ors he had received for it into the same pocket in which the chain had been. Then he crossed the market-place to the office of the notary, had an hour's conference with him, and made an early ap-

pointment with him for the next morning at his own house. Then he returned home, joined the drinkers at the village inn, and asked the barber and the farrier, the two greatest gossips in the parish, to come to him next morning to witness his signature. Upon their promising to do so, he treated them to the best wine, and played cards with them till late in the night. In this way he got rid of two of the gold pieces he had received for his gold chain—which was just what he desired. At midnight when the marriage-feast was at an end, he went home and to bed.

The notary came, the witnesses also. Zebulon had a female relation in the Oberland, whom he could not bear, because she had misconducted herself as a young girl and disgrace to the family had been with great difficulty averted by a hasty marriage. To her and her children he now bequeathed by will his house and land, and everything else he possessed; with a clause, providing that the bequest should be null and void, if ever the heirs suffered the walls and the row of poplars to fall into decay, or if at any time they sold any portion of the land to his brother Caspar, or his descendants. The notary's fees swallowed up the rest of the price of the chain, with the exception of a ten-groschen bit, which Zebulon threw into the poor-box on the following Sunday. He strictly and repeatedly forbade the two witnesses to divulge what had passed. They of course knew nothing more pressing than to tell it to everybody; and before evening twenty tongues had repeated to Caspar, in confidence, the edifying tale.

Money weighs heavy every where, but especially in country places, where men, and often maidens, are valued by what they possess. Caspar soon observed that he no longer passed for half so rich a man as formerly. It was very well known that Zebulon, from his garden, his rich meadows, and tailor's trade, derived about as good an income as did Caspar from his farm; and that, moreover, having neither child nor child, he did not spend a tithe of his gains. Besides this, he had his father's solid, well-built house, whilst Caspar had the unsafe, newly-constructed dwelling by the water's edge; and when the property of the latter came to be divided amongst twelve children, the share of each would be very small indeed. By the neighbors, both old and young, all these calculations were quickly made. The mayor's son of a neighboring village had long been paying attention to Anna, Caspar's second daughter, (the same who had pulled Michael off his uncle's staircase,) and on Lizzy's wedding-day they had almost come to an understanding; but now he kept away and for a long time Anna looked far less pert than was her wont. Caspar himself had hoped to be chosen assessor at the next opportunity; but when it came to an election, every body said it was not proper to bestow that office on a man who was at feud with one of his neighbors, and so the choice fell upon a richer peasant, although he, instead of one enemy, had at least half-a-dozen. In his own house, too, Caspar had daily fresh vexations to endure. His wife reproached him with his obstinacy, saying she had never seriously intended him to build on that damp spot by a river. His children, in whose hearts the seeds of hatred had been early sown, had learned, whilst playing tricks to their uncle, to despise the parents who connived at their misconduct. The elder sons and daughters looked upon their father and mother as the cause of their losing their uncle's rich inheritance; and Anna, abandoned by suitors, had not a good word left for her parents. The curse of hatred was upon the whole family, and Caspar, as he followed his oxen across the fields, would often say to himself,—"Were I but three years younger, I well know what I would do. But since this has lasted three years, it must last till my death."

And thereupon, he struck the good so sharply into the oxen that they sprang aside, and the furrow went askew. A hard winter came. In January and February it snowed incessantly; at night it froze, and the snow remained on the ground. Upon the Lower Rhine the thaw was looked forward to with much uneasiness. March was well advanced before it came; then the vane suddenly swung round from north to south-west, and in a single day the black earth every where pierced through its snowy covering. The Rhine rose, and a terrible flood was to be apprehended, if the thaw was as sudden and lasting in the mountains as in the lowlands. Had there but been a proper dike made in autumn! Now it was too late; there was barely time to think of a make-shift. Caspar's stubborn mood yielded to his anxiety for his wife, children, and home. Without again asking or waiting for his brother's help, he replaced the demolished rampart by a row of large fir stems, set deep in the ground, and filled the intervals with strong wicker-work, so as to break the force of the flood. He thus made sure of time to save at least the most valuable of his goods.

The river rose higher; Caspar took away his wife and children in a boat; the water was up to the second floor. He himself still remained in the dangerous building, like the captain of a ship, sticking to his wrecked vessel till it sinks. His fir tree barricade held together famously, and he strengthened it with a great barn-door, which he managed to fix against the weakest part of the wicker-work parapet. This increased the value of his breakwater, and further protected the house from the force of the flood. At times, when the eddies were unusually violent, the fir trees bent and cracked, as though they would have given way; but their elasticity preserved them, and again they righted themselves. If the river did not further increase—and at last the rise seemed to have discontinued—the house was saved.

But one evening dark clouds spread over the sky—a strong wind blew from the west, and drove the waves over towards the village. The rain fell in torrents, the river rose two feet an hour, and the water began to climb the walls of Zebulon's house. Zebulon lay down in his clothes upon the bed on his upper floor. His house had never yet been endangered by the floods; so he had not thought of leaving it, and had not even provided a boat; and although his brother, also blockaded in his fortress, had a skiff moored to his window, he had no mind to ask for his assistance. But, in fact, he was nowise anxious, for he relied upon the strength of his house. He kept a lamp burning and read a volume of sermons.