

Poetry.

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

I can see that I grow older,
And I note it day by day!
I can feel my heart grow colder,
As its pleasures pass away;
At the tell-tale glass I linger,
As with faded eye I trace,
Solemn tokens which Time's finger
Has engraven on my face.

But one moment can restore me
To my boyhood and my prime;
Sweet memories come o'er me
Of that brief and blessed time;
Then I hear a father's blessing,
And I feel a mother's kiss;
And again I am caressing
One who's shared with me my bliss.

Who shall say the past must perish
'Neath the Future's coming waves?
What the soul delights to cherish,
From Oblivion's depth it saves!
Looking backward, on I'm gliding,
Till I reach the final shore,
Where the Present is abiding,
And where change shall come no more.

Select Tale.

THE TOMB'S SECRET.

BY AN OLD SEXTON.

"Oh! how glorious 'tis
To right the oppressed, and bring the felon vile
To just disgrace."

Old Mr. Wimble had been dead fifteen years.—I remember what a "smart funeral" he had, how particularly his nephew, Simon Wimble, instructed me in regard of my duty. "Proper respect for the deceased," was his motto on that occasion, and great was his anxiety lest the omission of some necessary form might cast a reflection upon the sincerity of his grief; and well he might be anxious, for never, in the course of my long funeral experience, have I witnessed a more heedless, and utterly formal ceremony than that with which old Mr. Wimble was consigned to his long home.

Simon wept, and so did his wife. Their white handkerchiefs were thoroughly wet with crocodile tears. Mrs. Simon kissed the cold brow of the corpse when I put it in the coffin, and her husband sighed, and uttered some expressions of sorrow, with melo-dramatic precision and eloquence. But the burden of their mourning was done at the grave, in the presence of the occupants of at least twenty carriages. People doubted that their grief was sincere, but were persuaded uncle's hundred thousand dollars would prove an all-sufficient consolation.

There was one real mourner—Alice Wimble, whom the old man had adopted, and to whom he had given his name. She was a sweet girl of sixteen summers, so beautiful, and so affectionate, that the old man's heart yearned towards her with a father's pride.

Her foster-father had frequently been heard to say he should remember her handsomely in his will; and great was the surprise of all the friends of the family, when, after his death, it was found that he had left no will. Simon was his nephew and sole heir; and when the rich man was securely locked up in the ancestral tomb, all the property was passed over to him, and Alice was turned out of doors.

I do not mean to say, Simon told her in so many words to leave the house, or even that he did not make some kind of a proposition in regard to her future support. Between such as Alice and himself there could be no sympathy, no fellowship, any more than there could be between a devil and an angel. Though he used no hard words to her, and though he did not neglect to tell her that the home of her late foster-father was as much her home as ever, she could not help feeling she was in his way; that her presence was a burden to him. She bore his coolness patiently for a few weeks, and then fled from the roof that had been the home of her childhood. She had been well educated, and soon obtained a situation as teacher, in which capacity she continued, until a poor, but very worthy young man offered her his hand and heart. She was lonely and friendless, and to be loved by an honest man for her own sake, though he were poor and nameless, was all she asked.—They were married.

Mr. Reed, her husband, was one of those anomalies among men, who are facetiously said to be too honest to thrive in business. He failed two or three times, struggled as a clerk, and resorted to all manner of experiments to get along. It is true, he

always got enough for his family to eat, but this was about all, and I doubt not they had frequently been pinched even for the necessaries of life. All agreed that they were very poor; but still James Reed was strictly honest.

Fifteen years after the death of old Mr. Wimble, Alice was the mother of four children. They had the poor man's blessings, but the father's life was an anxious struggle to provide for them even the commonest comforts of home. Alice, the gentle, pretty Alice, was wan and pale; but her heart was yet warm and true, and sad and bitter as had been her lot, she did not once regret that she had joined it to that of James Reed.

Fifteen years after the death of his uncle, Simon's wife died, and I was called upon to open the family tomb again. The key had not been turned since the burial of old Mr. Wimble, and it required all the strength of Spade, assistant, and myself, to swing it upon its rusty hinges. But we got it open after much effort. The interior presented such a chaos of confusion as would have appalled any but an old sexton. In the middle of the narrow vault lay a heap of broken coffins, intermingled with skulls, bones, and half decayed graves.

"How is this, Mr. Mortal?" said Spade, starting back when he beheld the pile of the emblems of mortality.

"This ought to have been attended to before."
"I should think so."

"Two years ago I spoke to Mr. Wimble about opening the tomb. But he did not wish it to be opened."

"He has no taste about keeping a tomb nice or neat," remarked Spade. How did he suppose these folks could rest quietly, huddled up in a heap like this?"

"Probably he did not anticipate such a fall as has taken place here, though I told him the coffin were nearly gone."

"Now I remember, didn't he say he meant to open it himself?"

"He did: I believe he tried to do so, but could not get the door open. But we must put things in order."

Old Mr. Wimble's body had been placed at the top of four others. The coffin at the bottom of the pile had probably been there for fifty years, and the weight of the others had crushed it. The fall of the next three above it had broken them, while that of Mr. Wimble had been split open without being reduced to a perfect wreck like the others.

The crash had evidently taken place a short time before we opened the tomb: for Mr. Wimble's remains were but little more than a skeleton. Although we had no authority from Simon to do so, we determined, under the circumstances, to commit the bones of all but the last buried to the vault between the tombs, and to repair the coffin of Mr. Wimble, and to restore his remains. Spade took hold of it to pull it out. As he did so, a large package slipped through the fracture.

"What was that, Mr. Mortal?"

"Hand it to me Spade."

He obeyed, and I found it to be a document written upon parchment. On further examination I ascertained it to be the will of old Mr. Wimble.—His lawyer had disclosed the fact of his having made a will, after the funeral, but it was supposed that the testator had destroyed it—especially as he had declared his intention of making another, for the purpose of altering several of the legacies to charitable associations. His sudden illness, it was surmised, had found him unprepared in this respect to die.

"What is it, Mr. Mortal?" asked Spade.

"Can you keep a secret, Spade—a secret which this tomb has kept for fifteen years?"

"I can and will."

"The—ahem," exclaimed Spade, "I always knew Simon was a—well, a scoundrel!"

"No doubt of it; if you had seen him weep when we buried the old man, you might have known what he was. I see now why he wanted to open the tomb himself."

"Who has the property by this will?"

"Alice—Mrs. James Reed—has twenty thousand; and I suppose it will do her a good deal of good about this time. But let us fix up the tomb."

It required some time to do this, and when we had closed the lower vault, and replaced the coffin of Mr. Wimble, we received a visit from Simon.—I explained to him the condition of the tomb, when we opened it, and could see that he was very much disturbed.

"Have you opened my uncle's coffin?" he asked, with considerable perturbation.

"No."

But I neglected to inform him that the coffin opened itself; or rather, that an overruling Providence, who watcheth over the innocent, had done so for me.

Satisfied that his secret was safe, he departed, and I locked up the tomb lest he should pay it another visit.

Mrs. Wimble was duly consigned to her resting-place, and the tomb again closed. As soon as the funeral was over, I set out for old Mr. Brief, who had made the will, and informed him of my discovery.

The old lawyer declared he had always suspected that Simon had destroyed it; and after remarking that "Providence works in a mysterious way," we proceeded to discuss our future course. Brief was one of those nice, quiet old men, who never like to make a fuss, and it was finally decided that Simon should have a chance to pay over Alice's portion without exposure.

I had kept up a kind of speaking acquaintance with Alice since her marriage; so I had no difficulty in finding her. The reader can judge of her surprise when I stated the nature of my business. Poverty, cold and dreary, even though peace and love rendered it endurable, had been her lot; now plenty came unexpectedly to shower its blessings upon her humble hearth-stone.

I took her in the carriage I had brought, and with Brief drove to the residence of Simon Wimble. He was very polite to us, and inquired why he was honored with the visit at such a time.

"We come on business," replied Brief.

"Then I cannot receive you. I wonder that you come to the house of mourning on a business errand," said Simon, passing his white handkerchief over his eyes—there were no tears there; it was only a way he had at such times.

"Our business is imperative," added Brief.

"Another time," and Simon waved his hand for us to depart.

"I have come to demand the sum of twenty thousand dollars for this lady, the amount left her by the will of her late foster-father. You can give me your check, or otherwise secure her the property; but it must be done now," continued Brief, coolly and firmly.

Simon sank into a chair, and I could hear him groan with anguish. He glanced at me, and I doubt not my presence assured him that the tomb had given up its secret.

"Here is the will, if you are in doubt," said the lawyer.

"I will pay the money—but I am ruined—lost!"

"The check," said the lawyer, heedless of the miserable man's anguish.

Simon took a check-book from his secretary, and drew the amount in several checks on different banks, and handed them to the lawyer.

"Ruined!" moaned he, in piteous accents.

"Here is the will," said Brief, tossing him the document. "Even a tomb would not conceal it! Do you believe in God, Mr. Wimble?"

"I do! Oh, Alice, forgive me!"

"For my dead father's sake I do," replied Mrs. Reed.

"You don't deserve any consideration, after such a rascally deed, but your secret is safe," said Brief.

We explained to him what we had done, and quieted him with the assurance that he should not be exposed. We took our leave, and at Mrs. Reed's request we dined with her that day.

I need not stop to tell the reader how happy the legacy made the Reed family, or the satisfaction I felt in placing a fortune in the hands of an honest man—a man too honest to thrive amid the jugglery and deceit of the world. Not only peace, but "peace and plenty" preside in his happy home.

Simon Wimble, conscience stricken and fearful lest his sin should find him out, lingering in misery but a few months after the death of his wife, and then I placed him by the side of the uncle whom he had wronged.—*Boston True Flag.*

A CONSIDERABLE GRIEF.—"Mrs. Briggs" said a neighbour who stepped into the house of the former, just as she was in the act of seating herself at the dinner table, "have you heard of the dreadful accident?" "Why, no—what is it?" "Mr. Briggs has fallen from his wagon and is killed." Is it possible? Well, wait until I finish my dinner, and then you'll hear crying!"

Punch's excellent caricature is headed, "The Austrian Thimble-erig." Prussia stands by, saying with a drunken chuckle, "It's all fair, I just won a bottle of champagne." France is a gentleman passing on horseback—Turkey is trying to get a glimpse of the game"—England is inquiring into its merits, and Russia is watching the fun, over the fence. Austria says—"Now then, I'll bet any gent a sovereign, he don't tell me which thimble the peace is under!"

A NIGGER LIBEL.—"I say, Sambo, does ye know what makes the corn grow so fast when you put the manure on it?" "No, I don't hardly." "Now I'll jist tell ye, when the corn begins to smell the manure, it don't like the fumery, so it hurrles out of the ground, and sits up as high as possible, so as not to breaff the bad air."

Miscellaneous.

A RICH LECTURE ON ASTRONOMY.

Ethan Spikes, Esq., of Hornbury, Maine, writes the following letter to the *Portland Transcript & Eclectic*, descriptive of matters and things in that part of the country. Our readers will enjoy his amusing report of the lecture on Astronomy.

"Mistress Editor:—Perhaps in a letterary pint of view, our town haint been so 'formed as site order. While Pollyticks and millingarty interest has been carried farder perhaps than in any other place on the airth, yet except in my own ease, literatoar hasn't gone beyond coarse hand on the single rool of three. Ferlosophy has been quoted below pork; syence hasn't compared with Syder string beans has been generally set higher than astronomy; letters, triginometry, and pumpkins was ahead of poetry. Naow, haowsever, the tables has turned bottom side ender. Syence is riz!"

"We've got a Li-see-um! The ery of Letters is begun, the tree of nollidge has sprouted; interlect biles over matter—that ere interlect, which has ben dormouse, is naow raoused like a sleepy lion gittin away from Jordan. The fust lecture of the season was gin last night by James Peabody, who's ben one quarter to an academy."

"General subject—*Astronomy*

"Particklerditto—*Comics.*

"I haint time to gin you more'n a digestive-fac-sensilla of the lecter:—

"James begun by observin that ef anybody supposed that the stars warnt a heap bigger than they looked, they were simighty behind-hand. Why, says he, ther's that ar keetle shiner called Satan, says he, den't look bigger than a tater, and yet according to Herklys—who knows the heavenly bodies jist as easy as I know father—is sumwhat larger than the hull county of Oxford! An the leetlest star you can pick out is as big as a cart wheel. At this point Deacon Elderberry riz, and said this was goin to far, twas regular blasfemy, contrary to Scriptur, and agin common sense.—Then he tuck his hat and cleared, fust spittin out his torbacker end as a testimony agin the doctrine.

"After speakin of the milk-way—which he said was longer than the Cumberland or Oxford Canawl—an the moon, which the unlearned considered to be green cheese, but which syence demonstrates to be jackorn-lantern on a large scale, the lecterer proceeded to the partickler part of his subject—

"Comics or Blazin Stars."

"Comics, says James—he says—are of two kinds, the Tame and the Wild. The fust ones is made of old moons as aint no good and called by onedecated shooten stars, but we of the seools call em metres. This difference led the speaker to remark that lamnin is everything.

"The wild kind, says James, is a different critter; bein composed of knebelous matter, hyfalutien gaas, osside east iron, and salts uf harmonin, makes it highly savage and ossartin. They fust appeared about Deuteronomy or perhaps a keetle later in the year six, and was diskivered spontaneously from Portland observers on Pompey's pillow in Rooshy. They are peaky things, says he, ollers gittin up wars, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Oneasy and restless, travellin about faster than a ralerode, but never reachin anywheres in partickler. Kinder loomiated Peter Raggs. Mighty ossartin, they are, cant be depended on. Father Millar engaged one to do a partickler job in '45, but it probably got better terms somewhere else, and that ere job remains ondone this day.

"But naow, says James, we comes to consider their tails. Talk about the moon's 'wondrous tale.' Why the tails of all these plannets in the cidereal heavings wouldn't make one for a first-rate comic! Longer than the nagmetie paragraph and widur than Sebago pond, they stretches out over the universal danerpy in the unlimited nau-gacity of either, now sweepin down among the elongate concavities of diurnal convexities, and agin soarin upwards, till lost in the great hyperion!

"James was so up by this peroration that he had to be carried hum on a cheer. This mornin however, was well as could be expected, and if convalescence doesn't set in, he'll be about in a day or two.

"ETHAN SPIKES."

The Lynn News tells a good story of two boys one of whom was boasting the beauties of his father's house. "It has got a cupola," said he "and its going to have something else."

"What is it?" asked his interested companion. "Why, I heard father tell mother this mornin, that it's going to have a mortgage on it!"