

Poetry.

OCTOBER.

Solemn, yet beautiful to view,
Mouth of my heart! thou dawnest here,
With sad and faded leaves to strew
Pale summer's melancholy bier;
The moaning of thy winds I hear,
As the red sunset dies afar,
And bars of purple clouds appear,
Obscuring every western star.

I look to Nature, and behold
My life's dim emblems rustling round,
In hues of crimson and of gold—
The year's dead honors on the ground;
And, sighing with the winds, I feel,
While their low pinions murmur by,
How much their sweeping tones reveal
Of life and human destiny.

Alas for Time, and Death, and Care!
What gloom about our way they fling!
Like clouds in Autumn's gusty air,
The burial pageant of the spring.
The dreams that, each successive year,
Seemed bathed in hues of brighter pride,
At last like withered leaves appear,
And sleep in darkness side by side.

Select Tale.

WORTH FIVE HUNDRED MILLIONS.

Concluded.

I can not say exactly how the deed was accomplished; I was afraid to make inquiries, and remained secreted in my prison-home, dreading I scarcely knew what. I stole out at intervals to pick up the rumours that flew with startling rapidity from mouth to mouth. The citizens seemed alarmed at some great impending calamity. With pale, anxious faces they stood in groups at the corners of the streets, talking eagerly. I drew near one of these knots to listen, and heard it said that certain speculators had bought up immense stores of provisions recently brought to the city; that the mob, excited to madness, had broken open their warehouses; that fearful riots ensued, during which the warehouses were burnt with all they contained. Exclamations of horror escaped from the by-standers at this announcement. They believed the city doomed, and thought it prudent to leave in time. They did not imagine the truth, but I knew that the agents of the Evil One were at work, and had burnt up the provisions.

With a skill and precision that will be deemed utterly fabulous by those who can not comprehend the source whence these men derived their power, the infernal deed was repeated over and over again. The expense made a huge inroad upon my wealth, but I heeded it not, for I was impelled by a stubborn determination to accomplish the diabolical work in which I was engaged. I stationed agents at all the inlets to the city. They purchased food of every description on the false plea that they did so for the benefit of the starving populace. Then followed the ruin I contemplated. Night after night the sky was red with the glare of burning warehouses filled with provisions. Many of them were destroyed by the mob, now rendered thoroughly ferocious from hunger and the thought that others were profiting by its sufferings. My plot was being completely carried out. The people seemed to have thrown reason overboard, and unconsciously were aiding me in my designs. Telegraphic messages were sent to Boston, Philadelphia, and other large cities, imploring assistance; but their condition was as bad as ours. There also starvation was staring men in the face. My agents were abroad every where. They did not leave a stone unturned, for they bought up grain, cattle, and vegetables in distant places, and effectually prevented any efficient aid being rendered to the metropolis.

My labors were almost over—they were more than completed now by the mob. The fearful excesses to which it resorted alarmed peaceful citizens, and all who could were preparing to escape from the fated city. Day by day the panic increased. The life of any one known to possess food was not safe for an hour. Law and order were set at defiance. It was a consummation in which I silently exulted.

Ships, freighted with provisions that might have saved the famishing population, were destroyed by my orders while moored to the wharves. Others could be seen hovering off quarantine afraid to approach; for along the edge of the water the burning warehouses presented one line of flame. Many vessels were cut adrift by their owners, and, hoisting sail, they stood out to sea with all speed.

Unsuspected, I remained concealed in my secluded home, waiting for the end.

It did not arrive fast enough. People, it is true, were leaving in thousands, but they did so quietly.

I could not see them—I could not mark the diminished numbers remaining—I could not gloat sufficiently over their alarms and their sufferings. I could only hear the uproar without—the riot and tumult that day and night shook the heavens. The bodily pain I now endured excited this feverish suspense, and roused it to a pitch of frenzy. My passions were beyond all restraint. "This ruin," I said, "must be consummated at once;" and my desire to drive every living soul from the metropolis, rose with the difficulties that stood in the way. How could it be done? There was but one answer—by disease.

The idea came to me first as a whispered suggestion. It was possible, and might be tried. Nay, as I thought the matter over, it seemed feasible, and must be tried. The promptings of my black heart assumed a bolder and more daring tone, and the words continually rang in my ears—loud and louder with every moment's reflection—"Poison the Croton Reservoir!"

"Poison the Croton Reservoir!"—a devilish scheme.

But money did it. Ha! ha! From men's souls downward money can buy up all. I could tell how I went up to the Receiving Reservoir, and cautiously broached my plan to a dark-looking individual superintending the works. The proffered bait was too tempting for his virtue. At first he refused, and even threatened, but I only held up the gold before his eyes. He turned pale and trembled, and I doubled the amount of my bribe, already enormous. He hesitated and—succumbed. Ha! ha! Gold can work miracles.

The deed was done, and that same night sickness and death began to spread a black pall over the city.

I had surrendered myself now, body and soul, to the Spirit of evil. There was no drawing back, for I was purchased with a price. Sometimes when I thought of this I would gnash my teeth in very despair; and then, despair would be succeeded by a fierce hatred for the whole human race. I clutched at phantoms, and in imagination committed murder foul upon good and brave men whom I had seen in other days. Their angry spirits floated in the form of gloomy shadows above my head.

At such times I longed to exercise, in a still greater degree, the power acquired by wealth. I longed to venture beyond the walls of my prison, to see with my own eyes the wretchedness and misery I had caused; but I feared detection, and the consequent vengeance of the people. Then my mood would change. These ugly visions would be chased away. Ho! King Avarice! Right welcome Aristocrat! most ancient of all ancient orders! Though to some thou wearst a grim and grizzly aspect, I bow before thee!

Down, down, many feet below the level of the street, on my knees counting my millions—gloating over them in secret ecstasy—piling them up in fantastic pyramids to the vaulted ceiling—lying down amidst these heaps upon heaps of gold—burying myself beneath them—dazzling my eyes with their splendor—flinging the broad pieces about in mad enjoyment.

The lamp, as it hung from the ceiling, quivered while it lit up the scene.

Such were my occupations by day. By night I would steal out to mark the change that another twelve hours had wrought in the city. Gradually the hum of a busy population had died away. Labor was entirely suspended. Streets, filled a few days previous with anxious faces, seemed deserted now—tenanted only by some hunger-stricken wretch in search of food. The sudden tolling of a bell—the striking of a clock—the rumbling of a solitary car on the pavement, occasionally disturbed the stillness. These sounds and signals warned me that the metropolis was not empty, though at brief intervals the shrill whistle of the railcar told that citizens were yet leaving. And then I would hasten back to my home, shrinking from each gleam of moonlight that lay across the street.

One night, when I had gone out to note the progress of this huge destruction and desertion, I searched long and in vain for any human creature. Becoming bolder as I proceeded, I traversed Fifth Avenue, walked along Broadway as far as Union Square, and there sat down on one of the benches.

It was an unearthly sort of night. The trees drooped, and the whole scene looked wan and sickly in the moonlight. There seemed a ghastly transparency in every object. Was the end of all things at hand? I thought so; and, as the wind broke upon my ear in moans and heavy sobs, I fancied that Nature was laboring to bring forth Death.

Thoughts—wild, strange, devilish thoughts, were mine. I can remember, since I recovered from that mad delirium, but a fragment of what I felt, for a blessed forgetfulness has been my lot. But this I know, that, with my head between my knees, I shrunk up like a craven hound,—I suffered the

torment, the terror, the anguish of a repentance that came too late. It was no sincere repentance that I felt. Oh no! rather a fiendish despair—such as we are taught to believe is the doom of lost souls. For I was doubly, trebly cursed—and I gnashed my teeth when I thought that my power was even now passing away forever.

Ha! what was that—creeping—creeping stealthily through the trees? A rustling sound startled me, and sent an icy shiver through my bones. I retreated, or rather tottered back to the shade, out of which I had ventured, and glared at a form that, all unconscious of my presence, moved assassin-like along. It resembled some uncouth beast more than a man—yet man it was. Presently another, and another, and then many more appeared in sight—all gliding onward in the same quiet way. Suddenly they bounded in the air with one accord, whooping and shrieking in a manner that made the echoes ring and ring again. I was in the midst of a great troop of maniacs—stark, staring maniacs.

Like prisoners just escaped from captivity, they danced madly about in the exuberance of their joy. They shouted and gibbered unmeaningly one at the other, and so often approached the spot where, only half concealed, I was crouching, that I fancied detection inevitable. It was a hideous midnight merry-making! My own instincts were yet partially human, and I recoiled with horror from such a sight.

After I had endured an hour of terrible suspense, they passed on; but long after I had left the Square I could hear their yells far, far down the dark street, nor did I dare to stir until their voices were lost in the distance. I wiped the dank perspiration from my face, and as I touched my forehead methought it had become wrinkled and shrivelled, as though years had worn themselves out in those passing moments of terror. But silence was restored. There was no sound now save the wind, which continued to sob—sob as loud as ever. I dared not trust myself in the moonlight again, for it seemed as if these demons were transformed into fleecy clouds, and drifted across the sky to watch my movements. I hurried home, and felt once more a fiendish satisfaction when I had bolted and double-bolted the door. My fears vanished at the sight of my gold. My gold! my mountains of gold! I dived into them—plucking up the pieces in handfuls, and tossing them about with the frenzy of a madman.

I did not stir out for a week after this adventure. Day after day I listened for some token of life without. The occasional pattering of rain was the only noise that broke the monotony of that awful stillness. From the housetop I peered through the sullen mists that hung like a shroud over the city; and when the wind swept them away, among the vast misshapen mass of chimneys there was no cloud of smoke to tell that a solitary dweller had been left behind. A grim army of ogres they were, looking like threatening Vulcans, with black, haggard faces, demanding work from me, their master! But I heeded them not. They were dead—cold and dead; no life, no warmth, no breath in them!

The railway whistle was hushed; not even the sound of a horse's hoof striking the pavement, or the barking of a dog could be heard; the rolling of car and omnibus had long since ceased. New York was wholly deserted.

Satisfied of this fact, I ventured out. It was a blustering sort of a day. The wind came tearing along the empty streets as if it was possessed with devils. Then, disgusted at finding no living object whereon to vent its fury, it would, in sudden freaks, turn abruptly into by-streets, and mourn passionately down their narrow channels toward either river. I began to feel that the very blasts of heaven could be companions. I was suffering from the same racking pain. It had become settled now, and was almost beyond enduring. It animated me with the spirit of a demon.

I reached what had once been the great thoroughfare of the metropolis; and I do remember that it was with something akin to hellish delight that, standing near Grace Church, I noticed the complete desertion of Broadway. As I walked onward I found that the stores on each side were open, as if business was yet being carried on. Silks and satins, rich and rare, cloths, and costly merchandise of every description adorned the windows, into which no eyes save mine were ever destined to look again. The latest fashions, the newest style of hat or coat, might still be seen in conspicuous places; and I laughed aloud to think that such dainty garments would rot and moulder where they hung. Some had been torn down, and broken windows testified that arms had been thrust in to carry off the booty; but the plunderers, in their hurry to escape, had relinquished the prizes, leaving the street carpeted with silks for the wind, in one of its boisterous freaks, to whirl away. Peering out, be-

neath piles of dust, I sometimes detected a costly jewel, and I would instinctively grasp it, as if its value was greater than the rubbish among which it lay!

I travelled on. I found the doors of the Metropolitan and the St. Nicholas hotels open, and, before them, carriages laden with trunks and packages, waiting, perchance, for phantom passengers! The horses lay on the pavement—harnessed and dead. In every direction omnibuses and coaches, carts and cabs,—some overturned, some upright,—were forsaken by their owners, and left to decay. Electioneering placards on the walls seemed yet fresh, and nominations proclaimed, even then, the triumph of Know Nothingism.

The doors of the theatres stood invitingly open, and flaming handbills on the Broadway announced the revival of an ancient comedy. Ha! ha! ha! It was true, and devils were to be the actors!

I arrived at the Park. The City Hall loomed up dimly in the midst of a few withered trees. A broken-down platform marked the spot where old political parties were wont to assemble. The clock had stopped, and pointed to the hour of 12. The great bell was mute in its cage, and the wind, as it howled around the dome, essayed in vain to move that iron tongue of warning. It had ceased to speak.

I passed by the Daily Times office, and saw extras posted on its bulletin, announcing,

A GREAT AND ALARMING CRISIS!
SEVENTY-FIVE BANKS BROKEN UP SIMULTANEOUSLY!

THE FIRST MERCHANTS IN NEW YORK
SUSPENDING PAYMENT!
DESERTION OF THE CITY!!
ETC. ETC. ETC.

These papers were dated six weeks previous. How they gloated over the wreck in huge capitals! and how they would have gloated if they could have detailed a tithe of what I have witnessed!

I passed by churches, and their doors alone were closed—firmly closed—as if they had been swung to with giant force. Instinctively I looked up at Trinity's spire. I fancied that it moved—that it shook—tottered—was about to fall and crush me. It was only a fancy; yet I hurried my pace, for a strange chill crept over me at the thought of halting beneath its gloomy shadow. The wind kept me company all the while, and swept up every street to greet me as I went along.

At length I reached the Battery, and there it blew in fitful hurricanes, rushing out madly over the water. I could scarcely hold my footing; the rough waves rose angrily to where I stood. Even to the distant shores of Jersey and Staten Island, ships, or rather hulks, covered the surface of the sea, and drifted hither and thither, without helm or rigging. Not one was moored; not a living creature could be seen upon their decks. They looked like an array of battle-horses let loose. They charged—they recoiled—they rallied—they hurled themselves furiously one against the other; splinters were flung high in the air—they shivered—sunk—rose—crashed—sunk, and rose again in fragments! The unbridled storm, snorting in its pride and power, careered madly round and round the bay, directing its wrath now here, now there, so that the ocean represented one gigantic wreck.

Over this scene was spread a yellow, sickly, faded canopy—the reflection of a setting, a dying sun; for, in truth, I never thought to look upon its rise again. In the west, heavy clouds lifted themselves up in fantastic shapes. Anon, they took the form of the golden treasures in my vault,—even as I had often piled them up,—magnified now into mountains upon mountains. They shone like pale virgin gold.

The two scenes were alike—identical; except that here a visible sea of destruction rolled and roared at my feet. A horrible fear seized my soul; I gazed awe-struck—spell-bound—confounded; and as I thus gazed, behold! the shadow of a man standing out in dark relief against the glittering sky! It approached. My destroyer stood before me! His likeness to Bumpus was more forcible than ever. It was Bumpus transformed into a devil.

His sardonic smile was changed into a look of fiendish triumph. I knew that I was lost—unutterably and forever lost.

There was a pause.

"How like you my power?" he said, at length; "you have used it well—my demon's power of gold."

"Back, fiend! your time has not come yet."

"Ha! ha! ha!" and his mocking laugh sounded shrilly above the storm that encircled us, and the noise of the waves that beat against the quay beneath our feet.

I turned to go, but he caught me by the wrist, saying,

"Not so; you are mine now. What! you don't like me when unmasked?" His form seemed to dilate as he spoke.