

LITERATURE, &c.

FROM THE LONDON ATHENÆUM.

THE SOUGHT, FOUND, AND LOST.

Why should not unmarried men be distinguished from the less interesting portion of their sex, by some designation equivalent to that usual among us? Why are they always Mr why we change from Miss to Mrs? Many distressing mistakes would be obviated if this were arranged—much useless expenditure of time and money saved. All mothers of daughters are aware of the awkwardness to which they are at present liable, from finding themselves occasionally necessitated either to remain in ignorance whether a new male acquaintance be married or not, or else expose themselves to a supposition of all others the most to be avoided—namely, that of any anxiety whatever on the point. I know such embarrassments do not very often occur; and yet there are occasions, when you are left to follow a trail so indistinct, that it might baffle the most experienced Indian or English husband hunter.

Some time since I was travelling through the South of Italy—for my health, as mama told papa, but, in reality, to run down game which we had started in Switzerland, but which afterwards escaped us. I did not think it a very promising affair, for my part; but mama said she was sure of success, and I knew she had never failed with any of my elder sisters. The man had not been very uncivil to me during an intimacy of some months, and this gave me high spirits; and so on we scampered over hills and down valleys. Papa sometimes wanted to stop and see the curiosities; but mama would not hear of it, averring, it was as much as my life was worth to defer for a day my journey to a warm climate; and I used to cough whenever papa awoke in the carriage, to corroborate mama's account of the delicate state of my chest.

We flew through Italy, and, where I a sentimental young lady, I should doubtless give a charming account of the duties of nature and of art, as we passed on our journey; but, I candidly admit, I could never see any good in a country walk or drive, but that it might afford opportunity for a declaration. I have been well brought up by a sensible mama, and shall not discredit her lessons. I like the observation of the Frenchman to his pastoral friend, in ecstasies over a flock of sheep, browsing at a distance—"perhaps, out of the whole, there was not one tender." I want to know the real utility of being romantic. I cannot fall in love with the marble Apollo, nor any of his set. I had rather see a living man, with a well-cut coat on his back, and a pair of trousers, the most in fashion, on his limbs. So I shall only say, we reached Naples. Mr. W. had just left the town, no one could tell us for what destination. We sent scouts abroad, in various directions, and, while awaiting their reports, I had another good opportunity for sonnet-writing, and sonnets I certainly should have indited, had I the slightest notion they could have assisted me in getting married. But I recollected, that even Sappho, in despair of finding a husband, drowned herself, and I thought there might be as many Phaons to be met with as then.

Our scouts returned, without any tidings of our runaway. Mama declared her intention of striking into the Abruzzi. Papa expostulated with her upon the danger of venturing into a country overrun with banditti, who might frighten poor Emily to death, in her present delicate state of health; and mama was suffering him to buzz on without minding him, when a carriage drove up to the door. A gentleman alighted, and mama clapping her hands, called out 'Emily!' The gentleman at once recognised her, and the next moment our marked victim was in the room. The hotel was crowded. Mama offered Mr W. the use of our room and table. He was delighted, and passed the whole evening with us. I returned his salutation quite regally. I afterwards sat near papa, gave him my undivided attention, and did my utmost to amuse him—circumstances which I saw, very much surprised poor papa. 'My nonsensical Emily and her papa are great flirts,' said mama, smiling at Mr W. 'Oh, I protest against such monopoly on the part of Mr H.' he replied.

Mama laughed. I wondered how any single man on earth could venture so decided an expression in the presence of such a mother. She would marry a man ten times over on less than that. Days and weeks passed, and still we all lived together, and still Mr W. was civil, and no living creature could be more easy and more free from all apprehensions of us. Heshowed none of that standing-on-guard manners of other single men, who are always on the *qui vive*, like a besieged town in constant fear of a *coup de main*. Either he liked me, and met his fate voluntarily, or he was a more simple person than we had taken him for. But now the question was, 'Why don't he declare himself?' and a morning did come, when he actually, after looking expressively at us, called papa to take a turn with him!

Judge how delighted Mama and I were: there could be but one subject between him and papa, whom he very naturally considered a dead bore; and how we will congratulate each other on this brilliant achievement!—how we described, for mutual gratification, his two seats in two of the best neighbourhoods in England, and his town house, and his carriages, and new horses and liveries! How proud mama expressed herself of such a daughter! and how I, as in duty bound, gave her the credit of it all, as my instructress first, and afterwards my ally!

"I wonder they don't come back, Emily, my love—why, they have been gone a whole hour and a half!" As she spoke, papa reappeared, alone. "Well," said mama, "well; what have you done with Mr. W.?"—"of course you told him how flattered we all felt!" "Flattered" rejoined papa; "I don't see anything so very flattering in it, my dear." "No, my dear! from a man of his consequence? why, you must be raving mad, my dear!" "Well, my dear," answered papa, in a deprecating tone, "I dear say you know best; only on Emily's account I thought—" "What on earth are you talking about, Mr. H.? you are never very easily understood, my dear, but I protest I find you quite incomprehensible at present. Do you or do you not agree, that Mr. W. would be a great match for my girl?" "To be sure I do, my dear." "Very well my dear, then surely we are both agreed in thinking his proposal flattering?" "Of course, my dear, you are the best judge; only I feared you might not like it; that's all my dear—no harm done." "You really are enough to drive one frantic, Mr H.! Will you have the kindness to tell me from the beginning what Mr W. said to you this morning?" "To be sure, my dear, I can have no objection; only don't hurry me so, as I may forget. First, he began by expressing the greatest regard for me and my family; and he said, my dear, that you were a very superior woman, and Emily a charming girl." "Good beginning, isn't it Emily, my love?" I nodded. "Well my dear go on!" "Yes my dear, but I don't recollect where I was." "That I was a superior woman my dear." "Oh aye; and what next?—oh, yes, that he was very peculiarly situated; that he looked on it as a most fortunate circumstance having met my family; and that from the great kindness we had shown him, he was induced to ask a favour of me." "Well that was putting the thing very handsomely, I must say—what Emily?" I nodded again. "Now my dear, do get on a little faster, will you?" "I am, my dear, getting on as fast as I can. Then he talked a long while about women being hard upon one another, 'But' says he, 'I'm sure Mrs H. does not think in that way; indeed, she told me as much herself,' and then my dear he said you said you would countenance a woman who had been talked of about a man, before being married to him—did you say so my dear?" "Tush, to be sure I did, because I know he has the character of being a little dissipated, and if he thought he married into a family that took such things quietly, he would have less hesitation about us." "Oh, well; I suppose that was what put it into his head my dear." "Put what into his head?" "To ask you my dear, to visit his wife." "Visit his what?" "His wife, my dear."

Mama's and my consternation may be imagined. The man after whom we had travelled hundreds of miles and spent hundreds of pounds in chase of, neglecting for him, all other chances—that man was married! and to his mistress too! We soon bid adieu to scenes fraught with recollections of failure and mortification, and returned to spend a triste winter in the tiresome old mansion in Nottinghamshire. But although Mama has experienced one check in her hitherto brilliant career, she is too good a general to feel utterly discomfited; and we propose taking the field again, early in the spring, to seek, find, and keep, the next time, what we sought and found, 'tis true, but also—LOST, the last time.

FROM BLACKWOOD'S NOCTES AMBROSIANÆ.

HOPE.

NORTH.—Hope is often spoken of, my dear Henry, as the chief good of life, without which it would be miserable, since there is so little of actual good given to it; so little in possession; but Hope, the promiser of good never or seldom realised, beguiles us of our real cares, and blesses us, it is said, with a delusive happiness.

TICKLER.—True it is, and of verity, that Hope meddles not with the Past.

NORTH.—She does. She brightens her to-morrows with the sunrise of yesterdays—

TICKLER.—A commonplace truth in queer apparel—like a sump at a masquerade in the character of a sage.

NORTH.—Some minds perhaps there are, my son, but yours I know is not among the number, that are fed chiefly on fallacious hope. They are bent with eager and passionate desire on some object which is hardly within their reach, and make it the chief or sole purpose of their life. Their pleasure, perhaps, is more in desire than enjoyment, and the hopes which lead them on they do not attain. They pursue a preternatural chase, in which phantoms dance before their eyes, and elude their grasp. This chase is rightly compared to the race of a child pursuing the rainbow.

TICKLER.—Is it not Hope, my boy, that commits the seed to the earth, that rejoices in the sun and shower, and watches over the growing harvest? That sees the braird in the seed—the sheaf in the braird—and in the sheaf the quatern loaf surrounded in his sovereignty by his tributary rolls?

NORTH.—Is it not Hope that freights the vessel, and long afterwards looks into the sky for the winds that are to fill its homeward sails?

YOUNG GENTLEMAN.—(Bashfully.)—Is it not Hope that plies the humblest trade which earns bread for human lips? * Not Hope distant and fallacious, but present and sustaining, still fulfilled and rarely deceived—the calm, rational, solacing forethought of prosperous success, of good speed granted to present toil, the vital spark of homely industry—the—the—

TICKLER.—Stop—don't stutter.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN.—The song of the heart which beguiles the hours of labor, and like the lays of the lark more joyful the nearer heaven.

TICKLER.—North—my old boy? Eh?

NORTH.—Well—Harry?

YOUNG GENTLEMAN.—The poor man sees his wife's and child's face before him in his solitary toils—in the silent thoughts of his unrelaxing employment—while they are preparing his meal for him in his cottage, and the little one is about to take it to her father in the field during the midday hour of rest—and—and—

Hope—* Is religion, as, with the pretty child sitting beside him with the basket on her lap, he blesses ere he breaks the bread, and includes her and her mother in his prayer.

TICKLER.—Aye, there is something very touching, my laddie, in the thought of the children of poor people, sons and daughters, separated from their parents in very early life, and working far off, perhaps on very small wages, laying by a little pence, even out of such earnings, to help them in their old age—

NORTH.—What an exquisite line that is, in the 'Cottar's Saturday Night,' and how the heart of Burns must have burned within him, as the feeling was parent to the thought, and beautified the vision of the cottage-girl, that will live for ever in that simple strain,

* And deposit her sair-worn penny-fee!

TICKLER.—Hope trims the student's midnight lamp.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN.—Rocks the cradle.

NORTH.—Digs the grave.

TICKLER.—And into each successive tumbler drops the sugar-plump after plump—just so. (Mingles.)

NORTH.—In this view of human life, the nature of Hope may be said to be this—that man is dependant for all issues, partly on himself, and partly on uncommanded events; he has, therefore, in his own true and good exertion a ground of trust, and in the uncertainty of all human events a ground of fear, hence his always fluctuating, yet still rising Hope—like the flow of the tide, where every wave that advances falls back, and yet the waters still swell on the shore.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN.—Sometimes, sir, the soul seems to itself like the sea-sand, cold, bleak, and desolate; but in a few hours it overflows with joy, just as does that bay, when the tide has again reached the shell-wreaths on the silvery shore,—and on the merry music of the breaking billows the sunny sails of long-absent ships are seen coming homewards from the main.

NORTH.—Yes—just so, my young Poet. And as thou art a young Poet, though I have seen none of your verses, what sayest thou of that Hope which is more airy and illusive; that visionary Hope which adorns the distance of life, filling the mind with bright imagery of unattainable good, promising gratification to desires which cannot be realized?

The following animated description of a STORM in the Channel, we take from a Tale in Blackwood's Magazine, entitled 'The Wet Wooing.'

The moon was still shining with unabated lustre, and we could plainly discern the bold outline of the hills beyond; while the coast of Down and the two Cope-lands lay glistening in grey obscure over our starboard bow. No sail was within sight; we had a stiff breeze with a swinging swell from the open bay; and as the cutter lay down and shewed the glimmer of the water's edge above her gunnel, the glee of the glorying sailor burst out in song.

All but O'More joined in the chorus of the last stanza, and the bold burst of harmony was swept across the water like a defiance to the eastern gale. Our challenge was accepted. "Howsomever," said Ingram, after a pause, and running his glistening eye along the horizon, "as we are not running a race, there will be no harm in taking in a handful or two of our cloth this morning; for the wind is chopping round to the north, and I would not wonder to her Sculmarten's breakers under our lee before sunrise."

"And a black spell we will have till then, for when the moon goes down you may stop your fingers in your eyes for starlight," observed the other sailor, as he began to slacken down the peak halliards; while they brought the boat up and took in one reef in the mainsail; but the word was still "helm a larboard," and the boat's head had followed the wind round a whole quarter of the compass within the next ten minutes. We went off before the breeze, but it continued veering round for the next hour; so that when we got fairly into the Channel, the predictions of the seamen were completely fulfilled; for the moon had set, the wind was from the east, and a hurrying drift had covered all the sky.

We stood for the north of Man; but the cross sea, produced by the shifting of the wind, which was fast rising to a gale, buffeted us with such contrary shocks, that after beating through it almost till the break of day, we gave up the hope of making Nesshead, and, altering our course, took in another reef, and ran for the Calf.