

Literature, &c.

From the 'Chronicles of Life.'
THE DEBTOR'S WIFE

BY MRS. CORNWELL BARON WILSON.

If she cannot check the tempest's course
East she'll point a shelter from its force.

'WHY, George how pale you look this evening,' said Mrs Morduant, as her husband entered the elegant little boudoir in which she was sitting engaged on some fancy work; 'but 'tis always thus when you stay to late in the city. Its very air seems to affect you with gloom and ennui.'

'Do not abuse the city,' said Mr Morduant with a melancholy smile, 'my dear Mary, since it affords you many luxuries. See,' he continued, unfolding a paper, 'here is an Opera Box at Mrs Morduant's service for this evening, but I suppose she will not use it, as it was given by a citizen.'

The lady smiling met the lips that jested thus with a kiss, and the next hour saw Mrs Morduant seated beside her husband, in one of the best boxes at the Opera. In the course of the entertainments several friends whom Morduant knew in the house visited their box, and at the commencement of the Ballet, he quitted his station beside his wife with two young men; saying he should just take a turn in the lobby; leaving her under the care of Lord Star, for the brief interval of his absence.—Lord Star was a nonentity for which our forefathers would have found no name, but we moderns, more cunning at invention, have called the thing a dandy. After waving about a well scented cambric handkerchief, and displaying a hand, which from its snowy whiteness and jewelled fingers, might have been mistaken for the gentler sex, Lord Star declared, 'Pon honor, he was very partial to music—very—nothing he liked to hear better, except the conversation of a fine woman.'

Having given his quiescent companion this important information, the Lordling was silent, for the best of reasons—he had no more to say.

Two hours had passed since Morduant quitted his wife: the entertainments were drawing to a close, and she began to feel vexed and uneasy, when the box door opened, and her husband and his two friends entered. The flushed cheek and wandering eye of Morduant told the mortified wife that his absence had not been unoccupied, and his boisterous and sudden elevation of spirits made her heart swell with vexation and disgust.

Morduant insisted that his companions should accompany them home to supper; and with seeming reluctance on their part, from the lateness of the hour and the fear of keeping Mrs. Morduant up, they consented. The repast was prolonged to an early hour of the morning, in talking over the merits of the opera; and as Morduant, from apparent courtesy, lighted his guests to the door, his wife fancied she heard them enter the little library that served for their breakfast room, in which stood a bureau where the private papers and money of Morduant were kept.

'George! I do not like those men whom you introduced me to last night,' said his wife to Morduant, as they sat at their morning repast, 'and I am sure they stayed some time with you, after you left the dining-room; besides, they had evidently led you into no good while you left me at the opera with that stupid exquisite, Lord Star! I hope in future you will avoid such companions.'

'My dear Mary! how many times have you hinted this since last night,' replied her husband. 'I have assured you we only went to look at the club house, of which my friends are members, and certainly had a bottle of champagne. Now don't be jealous, Mary, since I was not in the company of ladies.'

The next six months from the evening of the opera, saw a sad change both in the manners and the house of Morduant. One by one, though almost imperceptibly, its elegant ornaments glided away, under the pretence of being repaired, or exchanged for those of newer fashion, though Mrs. Morduant protested she was contented with the old ones. The beautiful time pieces vanished as if by magic from the marble chimney shelves; the handsome jewels, with which, in the first years of their marriage, Morduant had delighted to deck his wife, grew in his eyes vulgar, or out of date, they must be re-set; and for this ostensible purpose they were taken away.

Gloom and sullen ill temper sat on the brow of the husband; anxiety and melancholy on that of the wife. There seemed too an estrangement between them without any apparent cause, a coldness, a distrust for which she at least could

not account. Under one pretext or other Morduant was little at home; and his wife began to feel, though she was ashamed to acknowledge it, even to her own heart, that she was neglected. Oh! how most fatal to female virtue; when the heart of woman is made to feel this fatal truth. Then let her pray that the guardian angel who watches over her destiny forsake her not, or she is lost for ever.

One evening as she sat at a late hour awaiting the return of Morduant whose protracted absences now grew too frequent to create alarm, she was startled from her melancholy reverie by a loud knock at the street door, and the servant entering with a letter. It was from Morduant: he told her in a few hurried lines, he was arrested, and requested she would follow the bearer, with what cash and valuables she could collect in the house, to the place of his confinement.

Too probably at some period of life many of my readers may have witnessed the interior of a lock up-house. There, may be seen congregated under one roof, the dashing spendthrift, sent in, probably at the suit of a fashionable tailor for his three years bill. Look with what impatience he bestrides the narrow pathway of that grated apartment, waiting with curses on his lips, the arrival of some Shylock, whose 'monies' borrowed at a thousand per cent, are to release him from his 'durance vile,' and send him forth again into the world to plunge yet deeper into ruin. There too is the distressed but honest tradesman, shading his burning brow with his livid hand, and fearing to lift his eye, lest it should encounter those who have known him in happier scenes. There may be seen the fashionable female, whose lapse from virtue renders her hardened to such a scene, talking with easy nonchalance, her turtle soup and port wine, and ever and anon enquiring as she lifts her eye from the newspaper if her 'man of law is come?' In the opposite corner, behold the pale and anxious wife with the little basket of refreshments, whispering that consolation which she herself needs to an imprudent perhaps erring husband. To such a scene wore the footsteps of Mrs Morduant guided by the bearer of her husband's letter.

And how had Morduant's misery and disgrace arisen? He was not extravagant; not a gamester, in the usual acceptation of the word. That is he did not frequent the gambling house or the race-ground—but he did what was far more ruinous, lived on false credit, and was a Bill-accepter, that fearful tide, which has reduced half the mercantile families in England to beggary.

We will not pursue the story further. Nor follow the wretched Morduant in all the degrading stages and vicissitudes of error, till he became a temporary exile in a foreign land. We will not tell how false friends dropt from him in the bitter hour of adversity—like leaves from the tree beneath the blast of Autumn; all save one, who still clung closer to him amid the storm, as the ivy twines fonder round the oak when tempests assail it. And who was that faithful one? The maiden may anticipate—the young Bride may surmise—but the long wedded Wife who peruses these pages need go no further than her own bosom for reply.

Ten years have passed away since the commencement of our tale. In a lovely cottage in the most fertile part of Devonshire—retired from the tumults of the world, Morduant and his faithful Mary found 'that peace which the world cannot give.' Time has somewhat blanched, but cheerfulness and gratitude beam in her eye. She feels that she has been the means, under the hand of Providence, of snatching her misguided husband as a brand from the burning. Had she forsaken him, when other friends fell off, what now had he been? an outcast—a wanderer—beyond the reach of virtue ever to have been recalled. But guided, sustained, supported, by those counsels a wife only can bestow, he has passed through the valley of evil, and entered on that path alone, even in this world, can lead to peace, the path of Rectitude and Honor.

From the same.

WOMAN.

'Do you think Master will come home to night,' said a pert-looking abigail approaching the luxuriously cushioned chair, in which Mrs Montgomery had been listlessly yawning over a book for the last half hour since midnight; 'Do you think Master will come home?'

'I am sure I know not,' was the reply. 'I neither know nor care,' but the last word was almost inaudible.

'Well, I expect, for my part, to see Mr Montgomery brought home dead on

a shatter, some of these fine mornings, that's what I do!' responded the comforting domestic.

'Very likely Alice;' and this was the careless reply of one who had been wont, but a few short months before, to listen in breathless expectations for the sound of that returning step, whose foot fall was music to her ear, of her whose bosom had throbbled in agony at the mere anticipation of any ill betiding her husband. Such are the blighting changes coldness and neglect produce in the fondest heart.

The servant again approached and laid a letter on the table; 'Captain Clifford's valet gave me this two hours ago—but I thought I would not bring it you, till Master Robert had gone to bed.'

The blush of indignation rose to Mrs. Montgomery's very temples, at the confidentially familiar tone of her waiting maid—but the weakness of woman triumphed, and suppressing the burst of resentment which quivered on her lips, she threw herself back in the chair and broke the seal.

It was six in the morning ere Henry Montgomery with a flushed cheek, and an unsteady step entered his wife's chamber out of temper with himself and the whole world. His losses at play that night had been considerable, and he had recourse to wine to drown the upbraidings of conscience.

The following evening saw Mrs Montgomery at the Opera; her cheek was paler than usual, and to a close observer traces of tears stood upon it; but she seemed amused by the scene before her, and not wholly indifferent to the whispers of a handsome looking man in the uniform of an officer, who was leaning over the back of her chair.

'But for my child,' half thought, half murmured Mrs Montgomery, 'I would no longer be the neglected being that I am.'

Entering the usual sitting room, on her return from the theatre, Mrs Montgomery started back at beholding two vulgar looking men sitting with her husband, whose pallid countenance and darkened brow betokened the unwelcome reception of his guests. Glasses which contained spirits and water, stood in confusion on the table, while the whole room bore marks of disorder and vulgar revelry.

'Don't be alarmed, ma'am,' said one of the men rising and advancing towards Mrs Montgomery, don't be alarmed, it's a mere nothing I'll assure you, only for sixty pounds; ma'am. 'Why bless me,' added the speaker to the half stupid Montgomery, 'if this here gentlewoman ain't got enough of finery on her very neck to pay our demands three times over.'

The hour of man's adversity is that of woman's triumph, over all the petty feeling that take from the heavenliness of her nature. To unclasp the ornaments from her neck and arms, and fling them towards the bailiff (for such he was) who stood gazing on her, ached into silence by the intensity of her distress, and the resolution of her purpose, was but the work of a moment; as with one convulsive sob Mrs. Montgomery threw herself on the bosom of her repentant husband.

'Need we paint the sequel? None are all evil,' and the seeds of virtue which had never been quite crushed in the bosom of Henry Montgomery, sprang up to a goodly harvest.

On the following morning when Captain Clifford presented himself at Mrs Montgomery's door, a polite 'not at home,' awaited him; and from that hour, Montgomery and his wife were all the world to each other!

From the Edinburgh Cabinet Library.
CUSTOMS OF THE GREEN-
LANDERS.

THE domestic concerns of the Greenlanders are committed to the females, the men seldom either directing or assisting. It is the women who must make clothes, boots, canoes, and tents, dress leather, clean and dry the garments, gut and dismember the game, cook the meat, cut the potstone lamps, prepare oil and wicks, and build houses and tents. The business of the other sex is almost exclusively confined to catching seals and other game, and many of them consider it a degradation even to convey what they have taken from the boats to their houses or tents. In their marriages it is therefore to the former qualifications of good housewifery that the Greenlanders have regard in choosing his spouse, whilst the ladies, on the other hand, look out for a good hunter, who is skilled in catching seals. The bride has seldom any dowry, her whole portion being in general the clothes upon her back, to which is sometimes added a lamp, a kettle, a few needles, and a

round knife. The parents never interfere in marriages, and decorum requires that a girl should not choose to enter into wedlock; and she according to rule, makes great difficulties, runs to the mountains, and has usually to be dragged by force from her home, the bridegroom puts her into his oomiak, supported by some old women, carries her to his house, and they are then considered as united. Sometimes she runs away, and has to be brought back; and if her aversion is real, she continues this practice till her lover tires of the pursuit, though formerly they prevented such escapes by cutting slits in the soles of the bride's feet. At the missions marriages are contracted through the intervention of the clergyman, who is applied to for this purpose by the man. Among the heathen polygamy is allowed, though seldom practised, unless the first wife has no children, and in this case she often requests her husband to take another. Divorces sometimes occur; and all that is necessary to accomplish this object is for the husband to assume a surly face, leave the house for a few days without saying where he is going, upon which the wife takes the hint, packs up her effects, and repairs with her children to her relations. Their marriages are not very prolific, the number of children rarely exceeding five or six; and they are allowed to grow up almost as nature dictates, the parents never chastising or even reproving them. Till their sixth or seventh year they are therefore very untractable, but after that time they follow their parents willingly, and with increasing age behave still more respectfully towards them. The boys from their earliest years are regarded as the future masters of the house, and are employed by the father so as to be afterwards qualified to perform the business of men. The first sea fowl caught by them gives occasion to a great festival in the family. The affection of the parents for their children is excessive, and no method of conciliating the former is more effectual than fondling the latter; whilst he who ventures to strike or even reproach them, incurs their certain displeasure.

From the London Atlas.

THE APPROACH OF CHRISTMAS

THERE is a great and inevitable progress going forward in the world, changing the old and simple aspect of things, and produced a new state of things, totally different from what it used to be a century or two ago. This progress is as clear as the course of the sun. If we look back upon the history of the world, interpreted through the growth and decay of nations, we may at once perceive that the principle of movement and progression is inherent in the constitution of man.

From the beginning we have had conflicts and victories, the final tendency of the whole agitation being the vindication of this grand destiny of humanity. Nation after nation has given way to this necessity, and each mutation has added something to the acquisitions of society, or laid the foundation of vaster improvements than had ever been contemplated before. Egypt perished before Greece, and Rome sank before the Huns, only to make way for the march of Christianity, whose tranquillizing power prepared the soil for those seeds of knowledge that are now springing up in rich and increasing harvests of civilization.

Christianity in its green youth had its high festivals and its charities, and men rejoiced over the sweet reconciliation effected between the universal duties and special interests. But so long as it was preached through the sword and the faggot, its commemorations were like the shouts of the victors over the vanquished; and it was not till the spirit of its followers were appeased by the bloodless conquests of mind over brute force, hypocrisy, and persecution that it settled down into the heart, and subdued the turbulent passions of ambition and aggrandizement, drawing together at its sacred feasts the bitterest opponents, like men who meet over watch fires in a season of armistice.

Then came other changes. The populations of kingdoms grew thicker and thicker. The old peaceful usages of pastoral life no longer yielded subsistence for the crowds that darkened the surface. The rinds of the earth were no longer sufficient for the wants of man; and it was necessary to penetrate to the kernel. Mines were explored, the sea itself was traversed in search of means, and the clouds were pierced by the new industry that invented itself in furnaces and chambers of life and fuel in the air. Formerly men lived in bungalows on a single flat:—as their numbers increased, the bungalow sprang up story above story, 'pointing to the skies,' and the same

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