

Literature, &c.

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APROPOS TO THE ROYAL NURSERY?

THERE is an order of the day in even the chit-chat of society; and since the birth of the Princess Royal it is amazing how people have taken to thinking and talking about the pains and pleasures of the rising generation. Everybody is handling a coral,—all the world appears to be cutting its teeth. Little Bo-peep Margery Dame, and a great many more nursery canzonets, are actually set to music; harmonized for three voices, or arranged as duets, and dedicated to the Princess Royal.

It is curious to observe how the graver interests of life fluctuate at the instigation of trivial influences; a breath more or less sufficing to agitate the vane of public opinion. An industrious flea, or an new air plant, will create a sect, or beget a science. A year or two ago, the corruption engendered on the hot bed of civilisation having created a new crime, by causing a poor little Italian boy to be burked for dissection, as an easier mode of plunder than robbing on the King's highway, Italian boys rose cent, per cent, in public estimation. Christian people who, for twenty previous years, have seen them, their white nice or marmots, treezing in the snow or pattering in the mud,—their sharp features gaunt with famine,—their naked feet gangrened with blains,—became suddenly touched with pity. Their tears gushed forth, like the waters of Horeb, because the Daily Advertiser assured them it was a monstrous thing for helpless infants to be kidnapped at Como, and sent to London, like Whittington's cat upon a venture, to be starved, bullied, flogged, stupified with laudanum, and chopped into mince meat, in order to meet the commercial exigencies of a nation the least scrupulous in matters of traffic of any that ever drove a bargain since Joseph's brethren sold him into slavery. Nay, an artist hitherto unnoticed, rose into fame from adopting, as his school, the specific delineation of monkey boys. All the world grew tender as a chicken towards the little grinders of street organs, and the long neglected itinerant Savoyard.

We would fain have the birth of the little Princess Royal beget a similar feeling of sympathy with the juvenile classes of the community in all situations of life.

Among the gaudy blossoms of literature flowering annually on our library tables, there is one which purports to delineate the children of British nobility, in their every day attire,—purple and fine linen—furbelows and foolscaps. Without entering into the good or bad taste which allows lords and ladies in their second childhood to make a show for money of lords and ladies in their first, we are inclined to agree with a merry fellow, named Albany Poyntz, who proposes, in a contemporary periodical, a crusade or war of liberation, to enfranchise these unhappy victims of aristocratic vanity and pride, from the torture of stocks and backboards, curling irons and tight shoes.

But with all due commiseration for that suffering race, the children of the nobility, previous to ridding asunder their chains of gold, we would fain strike off the iron fetters from the still more miserable children of the poor. Before we propose a remedy for a surfeit of the milk and honey of Canaan, we are in duty bound to alleviate the tortures of the house of bondage.

It is all very well for lachrymose travellers to go and cry in the gallery of Munich over Rubens' 'Massacre of the Innocents;' or grow pensive at home over Lord Ashley's speeches in favour of factory children, or Mrs Norton's charming poem. In all homes, in all places, infant martyrs are lying within reach of the interference of the humane, bound to the rack of persecution. If the maudlin philanthropists, who have instituted a society for the suppression of cruelty to animals; and who are incessantly besetting the magistrates in behalf of some coster monger's donkey or over driven ox, would only direct their attention to the thumpings and bumpings, starvation, and flagellation, of the juvenile generation of Spitalfields or St Giles's or any other refuge of the poor, they would shew a finer sense of humanity than by protecting the tougher skins of the beasts that perish.

We look upon this as one of the most urgent duties of our nation. Children were the first pledge committed to the charge of Adam, after his fall, to enable him to work his way back to the favor of the Maker he had offended. Children are the holiest trust dedicated to our mor-

tal hands;—children are the objects whereupon we are admitted to exercise an authority approaching nearest to the power of the Creator over the created. Our responsibility is nowhere greater than in our entreatment of those hostages of God.

Yet how audaciously do we abuse our power;—not as regarding the children of our own loins; for if they are flogged hard, their roaring disturbs us; if they are starved, there is the undertaker's bill. Seriously speaking, our personal comfort is too closely embarked in their well-doing to admit of closing our hearts against their claims. But, for at least one half of the human race, these helpless beings—these chartered victims of selfishness, carelessness, and cruelty—the children of the poor, are of no more account than if they were so many earth-worms crawling forth to be trod on. The children of pride contemplate the children of the poor as Pharaoh regarded the plague of flies and other abominations infesting his kingly chamber.

We confess there are more of them in the world than the world, as at present apportioned, can well provide for. The anti population question we leave to the abler hands of Malthus and Miss Martineau. But from the moment the children encumber the earth, we hold them entitled to our good offices. The children—the children—we lift up our hands and voices in intercession for the children. The penal legislation of this moral realm is duly severe upon mothers found guilty of assisting out of a world of wo the children they have assisted into it; and even to conceal the birth of a child of shame passes for an act of criminality still more shameful. When are we to direct our retribution against the authors of the death that 'dies daily?'—against the concealers of the sufferings of the still unmurdered child? When shall we have to punish the parents who suffer the children's features to sharpen with want, while they infest the gin shop—their children's frames to sicken in filth and squalor, while they pursue the easy vocation of street beggar?—for there are two species of loungers on the pavement of every metropolis—the lounge who duns you for a halfpenny—both idle, useless creatures, in their several generations.

The lordly legislator who, as he is proceeding to the House to vote with or against Lord Ashley, according to his political animosities, damns the troublesome little brutes who run under the wheels of his cabriolet—giving them a cut with his whip, to punish them for not having been run over; is, ten to one, a man who indulges in vagaries about Prison Discipline, and gets up crack speeches once a Session upon the Penitentiary System. Why not rather direct his tender mercies towards this troublesome seed crop for the gallows and the solitary cell—this well cultivated field of vice and crime? Whilst, on one hand, we hang (to get him out of the way) some troublesome burglar, or a cut throat, who will not allow elderly lords to sleep comfortably in their beds, we are rearing up thousands of Greenacres and Courvoisiers, and patronising normal schools for the diffusion of crime. Your Corn-law supporter will scarcely pass a thistle on the king's highway without switching off its head, in the interest of agriculture, for the benefit and security of his land. Will he do nothing towards the extirpation of the human weeds of the soil. Will he not so much as uplift his hand in behalf of the 'little children.'

Scarcely a week but brings to light, before the tribunals of the land, some act of heinous barbarity committed upon the persons of children. Charles Lamb in one of his admirable essays, bewails the fate of the poor, who have to 'drag up' instead of 'bringing up' their offspring; and talks of the care worn features of the needy child, and its talk of the price of coals, or the repayment of clear starching. Why this is the very luxuriousness of pauperism!—Blessed are those who are even acquainted with the value of coals, or who can produce clear starching to be paid for. The starvelling, whose blood stagnates in its blue veins, or the little wretch who fights with the cat for the bone it has pilfered, looks with envy upon the thrifty young clearstarcher. The damp sack or dirty shavings it has to sleep upon—the cuffs and imprecations wherewith it is roused before day-break from even that uneasy couch—the miserable yearnings after food, which it wants only courage to pick and steal—are bitter evidences of the hardness of its destinies, and of our hearts, than the longing after bats and balls, and hawthorn bushes, imagined by the reader in-stincts of Elia.

From this matter of fact consideration of the children of the nobility, how are

we to find courage for the consideration of the elegancies of a royal nursery, or the fair features displayed in the 'Juvenile Annual?' The pearly skins and flaxen curls of those favorites of fortune—their joyous looks and guileless smiles, basking in the sunshine of prosperity and love, oppress us with too painful a sense of sympathy with those into whose souls the iron of destiny hath entered!—They are as angels before the fall; their ragged rivals, the howling imps, whom the wrath of the Almighty hath overtaken.

But a dawning hope persuades us that these evils are about to experience a partial remedy. Our young Queen has become a Mother!—her feelings are daily and hourly interested in the condition of a frail and tender being, in whose behalf the prayers of her kingdom are offered up to heaven. In the name of this young child, we earnestly entreat of her to take into her gracious consideration of the wants and woes, and consequent vices, of the Children of the Poor.

TO MY CHILDREN.

BY MRS. NORTON.

WHERE are ye? Are ye playing
By the stranger's blazing hearth,
Forgetting, in your gladness,
Your old home's former mirth?
Are ye dancing? Are ye singing?
Are ye full of childish glee?
Or do your light hearts sadden
With the memory of me?
Round whom, oh! gentle darlings,
Do your young arms fondly twine?
Does she press you to her bosom,
Who hath taken you from mine?

Oh! boys, the twilight hour
Such a heavy time hath grown,
It recalls with such deep anguish
All I used to call my own.
That the harshest word that ever
Was spoken to me there
Would be trivial—would be welcome—
In this depth of my despair!

Yet no! Despair shall sink not,
While life and love remain—
Though the weary struggle haunt me,
And my prayer be made in vain;
Though at times my spirit fail me,
And the bitter tear-drops fall;
Though my lot be hard and lonely,
Yet I hope—I hope through all.

From the London Atlas.

FLOWERS.

It must be a satisfaction to everybody to know that the flowers are coming in;—and to a great many people, who have been nearly converted into mould for future growth of flowers by the severity of the past winter, the satisfaction must be especially grateful. We are by no means covetous of long life; but an abiding sense of the many delights with which life is fraught tempts us to think that we ought to live as long as we can. We mean all this in its most pleasureable interpretation; for in no other point of view does the love of life seem to us either reasonable or philosophical.

The charming thoughts that are associated with flowers, with their shapes, colours, and fragrance—their poetical uses—their seasons and successions—and all that has been said about them by bookmen and lovers, lie so close at hand, and are so familiar in the aggregate to the world at large, that, like most familiar things, they are generally treated with neglect. People don't care for flowers, because they have them growing luxuriantly under their eyes, and because one crop of blossoms is no sooner wasted in the air than another crop comes out, and because, in fact, do what you will you cannot exhaust the flowers, which are endowed with a perpetual vitality, and which, without any artificial help, even against all sorts of unneighbourly difficulties will grow and flourish, and throw off their perfumes as if it were designed in the scheme of the creation to show the principle of immortality throughout the minutest works of nature.

But with all our indifference—more apparent than real—every human being loves flowers. Here is a bunch of freshly cropped violets. Not to say one word about their delicate and most exquisite aroma, it is impossible to look into their deep cups without being struck by the image of loveliness, retreating and blushing and trying to hide itself within its darkly brilliant folds they present palpably to the imagination. Well—we no sooner get this idea into our head, than we begin to recollect what has been said about violets—what Shakspeare said about them—what beautiful and passionate pictures have been drawn by poets concerning them—and what loveable spots they nestle in in the poetry of all ages and languages. In a moment of time we are thus carried away into a boundless region of contemplations, and

the chances are a hundred to one that, if we only have patience enough to dream out our dream, we shall have traversed a more expanded surface of delightful associations over this little bunch of violets than we should care to do in the noblest library in the world.

Books are great and glorious agents of civilization and happiness. They are the silent teachers of mankind, filling the mind with wisdom, and strengthening the understanding for the strife of action; making us powerful and gentle, wise and humble, at the same time. But we cannot be always buried in our books; we must sometimes go out into the sunshine; and it is necessary, in order to enjoy our books, that we should also enjoy the privilege of air and light, drinking in health and vigour, to enable us to make the best and most profitable use of our sedentary hours. In direct opposition then, to books, or rather in secret combination with them, we should place flowers—the out-of-door-books Nature has so liberally provided for us in such a rich variety of types and bindings, as to leave us no excuse for not gratifying all our individual tastes. The lover of flowers has this advantage over the lover of books, that he never can be at a loss for variety; but we suspect the classification is somewhat arbitrary, and that there is hardly any one who loves the one who does not also love the other. The best way to enjoy either is to enjoy both; to take them alternately, so that they may relieve and show each other off to the best advantage. A walk in an open field, and one hour spent in gathering wild flowers, to be afterwards grouped into a vase upon the library table, is by no means the least suggestive preparation for a morning's reading.

When you say that such a person is very fond of books, you mean that he is a constant student; but you imply no more. He may be fond of profound books or flimsy books; and it is of the last importance that you should be more explicit in your description, if you would have your friend obtain any credit for a taste above the dismal round of the circulating library. But when you say such a person is fond of flowers, it is impossible to mistake your meaning. There is no room for misconception as to what is meant by a love of flowers. You need not be a floriculturist to be fond of flowers—you need not have any knowledge of botanical names, or vegetable physiology, but it is indispensible that you should have a soul and a heart for beauty and the sensible glories of the green and bounteous earth. To love flowers, is to love nature. What may not the love of nature do for man, when all other avenues to his feelings are blocked up by selfishness, or care, or worldly influences? Let him but cherish this fertile corner in his affections—fertile in hope and goodness—and we need not despair of the darkest natured of our race. He can be reached in this one point of sympathy, when all other appeals have failed. He is vulnerable here, if the rest of his organization be as a coat of mail unto him.

Hence, flowers occupy a space in the consideration of worldly happiness, much greater than we might suspect at the first blush. They belong to the sunshine and the productive soil—to the light—to the winds—to the pathways, and the banks of the radiant depths—to the skies, whose tints they reflect, and into whose depths they ultimately fade, and above all they belong to us by right of birth and possession, and the loving nurture of our hands and eyes, and make our scientific discoveries, which have taught us how to make perpetual summer, and to inspire the roots of sweet flowering things with additional springs of propagation. And these same flowers, which are so beautiful in themselves, so luscious in the fragrance that pours through their delicate leaves, and so fragile to the touch, live where we cannot live, and by means unknown to us. On the loftiest mountains, inaccessible to the foot of man, they leap into the clouds—in the depths of the ocean where we cannot see them, they blossom and flourish—on naked rocks where there is not a particle of dust to take root in, they burst into bloom—and even amidst eternal snows they clamber and work their way into the frosted air, where we find it difficult to sustain life, reproaching us by the hardness with which their slight tendrils sprinkle their buds abroad. There is a river in Russia—the name of which we happen to forget—which in the wintry season is one mass of ice, yet its banks are covered with roses, of which it seems there is a constant succession. All flowers should be to us what these roses are to the icy stream—suggestions of health and beauty, reminiscences of the summer time, and hopeful contrasts between the morbid intervals of life and its