

Literature, &c.

THE ANNUALS FOR 1843.

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THE LOST CHILDREN.

BY MRS. L. H. SIGOURNEY.

THERE was a sickness in the dwelling of the Emigrant. Stretched upon his humble bed, he depended on that nursing care which a wife, scarcely less enfeebled than himself, could bestow. A child, in its third summer, had been recently laid in its last rest, beneath a turf mound under their window. Its image was in the heart of the mother, as she tenderly ministered to the wants of her husband.

'Wife, I am afraid I think too much about poor little Thomas. He was so well and rosey, when we left our old home, scarcely a year since.—Sometimes I feel if we had but continued there, our darling would not have died.'

The fear which had long trembled, and been repressed by the varieties of conjugal solicitude, burst forth at these words. It freely overflowed the brimming eyes, and relieved the suffocating emotions which had striven for the mastery.

'Do not reproach yourself, dear husband. His time had come. He is happier there than here.—Let us be thankful for those that are spared.'

'It seems to me that the little girls are growing pale. I am afraid you confine them too closely to this narrow house, and to the sight of sickness.—The weather is growing settled. You had better send them out to change the air, and run about at their will. Mary, lay the baby on the bed by me, and ask mother to let little sister and you go out for a ramble.'

The mother assented, and the children, who were four and six years old, departed full of delight. A clearing had been made in front of their habitation, and by ascending a knoll, in its vicinity, another dwelling might be seen environed with the dark spruce and hemlock, in the rear of these houses was a wide expanse of ground, interspersed with thickets, rocky acclivities, and patches of forest trees, while far away, one or two lakelets peered up with their blue eyes deeply fringed. The spirits of the children, as they entered this unenclosed region, were like those of the birds that surrounded them. They playfully pursued each other with merry laughter, and such a joyous sense of liberty as makes the blood course lightly through the veins.

'Little Jane, let us go further than ever we have before. We will see what lies beyond these high hills, for it is just past noon, and we can get back long before supper-time.'

'O yes, let us follow that bright blue bird, and see what he is flying after. But don't go in among these briars that tear the clothes so, for mother has no time to mend them.'

'Sister, sweet sister, here are some snow drops in this green hollow, exactly like those in my old dear garden so far away. How pure they are, and cool, just like the baby's face when the wind blows on it! Father and mother will like us to bring them some.'

Filling their little aprons with the spoil, and still searching for something new, or beautiful, they prolonged their ramble, unconscious of the flight of time, or the extent of space they were traversing. At length, admonished by the chillness, which often marks the declining hours of the early days of spring, they turned their course homeward. But the returning clue was lost, and they walked rapidly, only to plunge more inextricably into the mazes of the wilderness.

'Sister Mary, are these pretty snow-drops good to eat? I am so hungry, and my feet ache, and will not go.'

'Let me lift you over this brook, little Jane, and hold tighter by my hand, and walk brave as you can, that we may get home and help mother to set the table.'

'We won't go so far next time, will we? What is the reason that I cannot see any better?'

'Is not that the roof of our house, dear Jane, and the thin smoke curling up among the trees? Many times before have I thought so, and found it only a rock, or a mist.'

As evening drew its veil, the hapless wanderers, bewildered, hurried to and fro, calling for their parents, or shouting for help, until their strength was exhausted. Torn by brambles, and their poor feet bleeding from the rocks which had strewn their path, they sunk down, moaning bitterly. The tears that overpowered the heart of a timid child,

who for the first time, finds night approaching, without shelter or protection, wrought on the youngest in insupportable anguish. The elder, filled with sacred warmth of sisterly affection, after the first paroxysms of grief, seemed to forget herself, and folding the little one in her arms, rocked her with a gentle movement, soothing and hushing her like a nursing.

'Don't cry; O don't cry so, dearest; say your prayers, and fear will fly away.'

'How can I kneel down here in the dark woods, or say my prayers, when mother is not by to hear me? I think I see a large wolf with sharp ears, and a mouth wide open, and hear noises as of many fierce lions growling.'

'Dear little Jane, do say, "Our Father who art in Heaven." Be a good girl, and when we have rested here awhile, perhaps He may be pleased to send some one to find us, and fetch us home.'

Harrowing was the anxiety in the lowly hut of the emigrant, when the day drew towards its close, and the children came not. A boy, their sole assistant in the toils of Agriculture, at his return from labor, was sent in search of them, but in vain.—As evening drew on the inmates of the neighboring house, and those of a small hamlet, at considerable distance, were alarmed, and associated in the pursuit. The agony of the invalid parents, through that night, was uncontrollable; starting at every footstep; shaping out of every breeze the accents of the lost ones returning, or their cries of misery. While the morning was yet grey, the father no longer to be restrained, and armed with supernatural strength went forth, amid the ravages of the fever, to take part in the pursuit. With fiery cheeks, his throbbing head bound with a handkerchief, he was seen in the most dangerous and inaccessible spots,—caverns, ravines,—beetling cliffs,—leading the way to every point of peril, in the frenzy of grief and disease.

The second night drew on, with one of those sudden storms of sleet and snow, which sometimes chill the hopes of the young Spring. Then was a sadder sight,—a woman with attenuated form, flying she knew not whither, and continually exclaiming, 'My children! my children!' It was fearful to see a creature so deadly pale, with the darkness of midnight about her. She heeded no advice to take care of herself, no persuasion to return to her home.

'They call me? Let me go! I will lay them in their bed myself. How cold their feet are.—What! is Jane singing her nightly hymn without me? No! No! She cries. Some evil serpent has stung her!' and shrieking wildly, the poor mother disappeared like a hunted deer, in the depths of the forest.

Oh! might she but have wrapped them in her arms, as they shivered in their dismal recess, under the roots of a tree, uprooted by some wintry tempest! Yet how could she imagine the spot where they lay, or believe that these little wearied limbs had borne them, through bog and bramble, more than six miles from the parental door! In the niche which we have mentioned, a faint moaning sound might still be heard.

'Sister, do not tell me that we shall never see the baby any more. I see it now, and Thomas too! dear Thomas! Why do they say he died, and was buried? He is close by me, just above my head. There are many more babies with him,—a host. They glide by me as if they had wings. They look warm and happy. I should be glad to be with them, and join their beautiful plays. But O, how cold I am! Cover me closer, Mary. Take my head into your bosom.'

'Pray do not go to sleep quite yet, dear little Jane. I want to hear your voice, and to talk with you. It is so very sad to be waking here all alone. If I could but see your face when you are asleep, it would be a comfort. But it is so dark, so dark!'

Rousing herself with difficulty, she unties her apron, and spreads it over the head of the child, to protect it from the driving snow; she pillows the cold cheek on her breast, and grasps more firmly the benumbed hand, by which she so faithfully led her, through all their terrible pilgrimage.—There they are! One moves not the other, keeps virginal, feebly giving utterance, at intervals, to a low, suffocating spasm, from a throat dried with hunger. Once more she leans upon her elbow, to look on the face of the little one, for whom as a mother she has feared. With love strong as death, she comforts herself, that her sister slumbers calmly because the stroke of the destroyer has silenced her sobbings.

Ah! why came ye not hither, torches that gleam through the wilderness, and men who shout to each other? why came ye not this way? See! they plunge into morasses, they cut their path through tangled thickets, they ford waters, they ascend mountains, they explore forests,—but the lost are not found.

The third and fourth nights come, and depart. Still the woods are filled with eager searchers.—Sympathy has gathered them from remote settlements. Every log cabin sends forth what it can spare for this work of pity and of sorrow. They cross each other's track. Incessantly they interrogate a reply. But in vain. The lost are not found!

In her mournful dwelling, the mother sat motionless. Her infant was upon her lap. The strong duty to succour its helplessness, grappled with the might of grief, and prevailed. Her eyes were riveted upon its brow. No sound passed her white lips. Pitying women, from distant habitations, gathered around and wept for her. They even essayed some words of consolation. But she answered nothing. She looked not towards them. She had no ear for human voices. In her soul was the perpetual cry of the lost. Nothing overpowered it but the wail of her living babe. She ministered to its necessities, and that heaven-inspired impulse saved her. She had no longer any hope for those who had wandered away. Horrid images were in her fancy,—the ravening beast,—black pits of stagnant water,—birds of fierce beak,—venomous, coiling snakes. She bowed herself down to them, and travelled as in the birth hour, fearfully and in silence. But the helpless babe on her bosom touched an electric chord, and saved her from despair. Maternal love, with its pillar of cloud and of flame, guided her through the desert, that she perished not.

Sunday came, and the search was unabated. It seemed only marked by a deeper tinge of melancholy. The most serious felt it fitting to go forth at that sacred season, to seek the lost, though not, like their Master, girded with the power to save. Parents remembered that it might have been their own little ones, who had thus strayed from the fold, and with their gratitude, took some of the mourner's spirit into their hearts. Even the sad hope of gathering the dead for the sepulchre, the sole hope that now sustained their toil, began to fade into doubt. As they climbed over huge trees, which the winds of winter had prostrated, or forced their way among rending brambles, sharp rocks, and close woven branches, they marvelled how such fragile forms could have endured hardships by which the vigor of manhood was impeded and perplexed.

The echo of a gun rang suddenly through the forest. It was repeated. Hill to hill bore the thrilling message. It was the concerted signal that their anxieties were ended. The hurrying seekers followed its sound. From a commanding cliff, a white flag was seen to float. It was the herald that the lost were found.

There they were.—near the base of a wooden hillock, half cradled among the roots of an uprooted chestnut. There they lay cheek to cheek, and hand clasped in hand. The blasts had mingled in one mesh their dishevelled locks, for they had left home with their poor heads uncovered. The youngest had passed away in sleep. There was no contortion on her brow, though her features were sunk and sharpened by famine.

The elder had borne a deeper and longer anguish. Her eyes were open, as though she had watched till death came; watched over that little one, from whom, through those days and nights of terror, she had cared and sorrowed like a mother.

Strong and rugged men shed tears when they saw she had wrapped her in her own scanty apron, and striven in her embracing arms to preserve the warmth of vitality, even after the cherished spirit had fled away. The glazed eyeballs were strained, as if to the last they had been gazing for her father's roof, or the wreath of smoke that should guide her there.

Sweet sisterly love? so patient in all adversity, so faithful unto the end, found it not a father's house where it might enter with the little one, and be sundered no more? Found it not a fold, whence no lamb can wander and be lost? a mansion where there is no death, neither sorrow nor crying?—Forget it not all its sufferings for joy, at that Redeemer's welcome, which in its cradle it had been taught to hush.—Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

SUNNEYEYE,

A LEGEND OF THE THAMES.

By Charles H. Brainerd.

No portion of New England is so deeply fraught with events of interest in the early history of America as the territory on either side of the river Thames extending from Norwich to New London. This delightful tract of country was once in the possession of a powerful tribe—the Mohegans. They were a noble race of beings, and were distinguished for their bravery and prowess in battle and their strong friendship to the white. The chief of the tribe was Uncas, whose deeds of noble daring form a prominent feature in the history of the aborigines of our country. But this once numerous race have become nearly extinct; a small remnant reside on the western bank of the river, about six miles from Norwich. Through the benevolence of the neighbouring citizens a small church and schoolhouse were some time since erected, and the efforts thus made to improve their temporal and spiritual condition have to a certain extent been successful.

While visiting this little settlement a few months since, I gathered from an Indian whose head had been whitened by the frosts of eighty winters, the following narrative which forms a melancholy passage in the history of Uncas.

His declining years were cheered by the society of an only daughter, the beautiful Sunneyeye. In her were combined all those peculiar traits of beauty which distinguish the Indian female. Her form was of perfect symmetry, and the mild expression of her countenance was a true index of her gentle disposition—she was the idol of her father's heart, and he clung to her as to the vital principle of his life. His affection was repaid by her unceasing attention to his comfort and the daily manifestation of her dutiful regard.

'Thus stands an aged elm in ivy bound,
Thus youthful ivy clasps an elm around.'

Early trained to the fatigues and hardships of savage life, she roamed unattended through her native forests, and bounded from rock to rock with the fleetness of the antelope, or plunged fearlessly into the rapid current of the Thames. Her bounty and gentleness were the theme of admiration among her tribe, and many were the noble sons of the forest who knelt at her feet and sued for her hand in marriage—but though she bestowed on all a look of tenderness, her heart remained proof against the soft spell of love.

It was on an afternoon near the close of summer, that a gallant ship from England sailed up the Thames, and anchored near the Mohegan settlement. Shortly after, a boat containing her officers landed upon the shore. They directed their steps to the dwelling of Uncas, where they were received with that cordiality which had ever characterized his treatment of the whites. The lieutenant of the ship was a tall, athletic youth, with a form like an Apollo, and a countenance indicative of energy and daring, heightened in expression by a hazel eye of extreme beauty; he was one formed to captivate the heart of women. Sunneyeye, seated in one corner of the rude cabin, watched him with intense interest, and from that moment a new and indescribable emotion took possession of her heart. Long did the officers tarry at the hut of the chieftain—the wine cup was passed freely round, and their boisterous mirth betrayed its exhilarating effect. It was near the hour of midnight when they left the shore and rowed back to the ship. Having grown stupid from the deep potations they had imbibed, they failed to notice the absence of the young lieutenant, who lingered near the hut of Uncas. He had attentively gazed upon Sunneyeye, and, struck with admiration of rare beauty, he resolved to entice her from her forest home, and carry her to England. Leaving the cabin unobserved by his companions, he concealed himself behind a tree until the plashing of oars informed him they were rowing to the ship. Carefully looking around him, lest his movements might be observed, he entered the cabin. Uncas had fallen asleep, and was stretched upon the floor.

Sunneyeye was seated near him, her eyes were bathed in tears, and her face expressed the deepest grief. She started at the sudden appearance of the officer, but his kind looks reassured her. No time was to be lost. Addressing Sunneyeye in those accents of tenderness which are sure to find their way to woman's heart, he urged her to leave the home of her childhood, and accompany him to England. He pictured to her imagination scenes of splendor and magnificence, and promised to make her the