

Literature, &c.

British March Magazines.

From the London Metropolitan.

W O M A N.

BY MRS. EDWARD TURNER.

"He's dead!" How frequently is that brief but admonitory sentence uttered, without exciting any, but the most transient emotion—without a deeper or a more permanent reflection, than the next passing thought will entirely obliterate from the mind!

If men of business, perhaps, he also was one who entered eagerly into all their speculations—all their projects for the advancement of their fortunes—all their worldly-minded schemes of aggrandizement—yet "he's dead!" The intelligence is received with an exclamation of surprise—a significant shake of the head—a sensation nearly allied to pity and regret; but is not heard "as if an angel spoke;" and, as time presses, they hurry off, without farther comment, to their respective counting-houses, where the unexpected information of the rise in sugars—the depression of the money-market—the failure of some great house, in which they had placed implicit confidence; or, some equally vital and important affair, demands their immediate attention; totally absorbs their minds; and they entirely forget that they have just heard an echo of their own inevitable doom.

"For it is appointed unto all men to die." And that in a few fleeting years, nay, perhaps, months, some one will have to respond to them, to the inquiring friend, with as little salutary effect, too, it may be feared, "They're dead!"

Or, should it be the man of pleasure, who carelessly bethinks himself of one, equally dissipated and profligate, whom he has missed from the haunts of vice and fashion, and whom he can conceive may be incarcerated in a jail, but never "dream in his philosophy" of his being in his grave; still, when he is assured of the astounding and awful fact, it makes no deeper impression. The "bon vivant, the good fellow, the roué, the gamester, has passed away like a vision, to appear no more—"he's dead!" The cold hearted son of folly elevates his eye brows, utters something between an oath and an exclamation, drives to Tattersall's or the Club, details it, as a piece of news, to the loungers there, (who marvel at his coming to a natural end,) hums the last opera air, (to which the melodious voice of Grisi has lent an undying memory;) and then turns to the window, to beguile the listlessness of that time, soon to become of such value, or, to banish the impertinent remnant of the thought, that still obtrudes itself on the mind, that there really is such a thing as death!

But in neither case does it strike the survivors to ask themselves, was their friend fit to die? Was the man so completely absorbed in the business or pleasures of life, (solely appertaining to this world), prepared for another? prepared to meet the "Judge of all the earth?" prepared to render an account of his stewardship; and to hear the sentence of approbation or condemnation from the lips of a living God?

"Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" or "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It never occurs to the survivors to reflect, with a dreadful sympathy, on the fierce conflict—the mortal pangs—the agonizing throes—he must have endured, ere his throbbing pulse was hushed forever, or his glowing heart, cold and immovable, in the frigid chill of death!

Of the tender ties to existence—the regret of separation from the wife of his bosom—the family, just springing from infancy to youth, with the fairest promise of virtue and goodness, in the maturity of manhood—the friends, who have grown to his very soul, through the long and varied scenes of a chequered life, and which every vicissitude of fortune have only the more endeared to it.

Of the sudden and total eclipse of that sun, which was calmly to irradiate the evening of his days—when all the storms and trials to which the petty warfare of our passions continually expose us, had subsided into peace and tranquillity; and when, in the bosom of that flourishing and obedient family, he would have leisure to repent of his past transgressions—to warn by his experience—to admonish by his love—to convince by his tears—to convert by his prayers—and to humbly hope in the future mercy of his God.

Of the still more awful terror of appearing, at a moment's notice, as it were, before an offended Creator—He, whose commands have been set at naught, whose laws have been violated or disregarded; and yet in whose hands is the fiat of eternal happiness or misery. Oh! the convulsions of fear—the agonies of that implacable conscience, which nothing then will lull—the tortures of remorse, which, like an insatiate vulture, tear the inmost heart-strings of every man, ere it can be said of him, "he's dead!"

It is for woman—tender, sympathising, watching, prayerful woman—alone to comprehend these struggles, alone to soothe them, alone to invoke mercy and forgiveness for them, alone to feel the blessed assurance that her prayers are gone up an acceptable sacrifice before the throne of the Most High, alone to indulge the hope that him she mourneth as dead has awakened to life and immortality in the cloudless realms of everlasting light. There is an almost inspired resignation in the breast of woman, which, under the heaviest bereavement, still prompts the pious exclamation to burst from

the quivering lip—"Not mine, but thy will be done, O Lord!"

Thus, the young mother, shorn of her fairest hope, her sweetest blossom, still feels, amidst the desolation of her heart, the stillness of her hearth, that, although a flower hath faded from the earth, an angel is gained to the skies. Or, the recent widow, although, perhaps, she is suddenly precipitated from the height of luxury to the lowest abyss of misery and want by his death, still generously reflects, with that extraordinary self-abnegation, which sets the seal of superiority on her sex, that her beloved husband is a gainer by the change—that he is now released from the cares, the sorrows, the anxieties of this world, and enjoying a state of permanent and tranquil happiness in another; and the bitterness of her heart is sweetened with gratitude to the Almighty, for having taken him, and left her instead, to struggle for a brief space longer with the turmoils and calamities of this life.

Is not this the resignation that God desires from his creatures? Is not this the resignation he will hasten to reward? Most assuredly! For think of the fate of a widow, in this country particularly, than which I know nothing severer or more melancholy. Is it not enough for her to bear the loss of an affectionate, devoted husband—to be deprived for ever of all those endearing attentions which are so flattering to the mind, as proving our value in the estimation of another—but, in the very descent of the blow, when her soul is prostrated by it, when the ear is no longer blest with the fond familiar voice—when the eye is no longer fascinated by the idolized form—when the heart faints with the weight of its own loneliness and vacuity, when, in fact, "There appears no sorrow like unto her sorrow," is she made to feel the heavy hand of affliction, with all its overwhelming ponderousness, made to quit eternally the scene of all her past enjoyment, the home of her wedded life, the sight of every thing dear to her as household gods—to resign all, and for whom? that very son, whose infant associations are the dearest treasures of her tenacious and doating memory—to seek the abode of the stranger, the cold sympathy of unallied bosoms—to weep as she may, with none to speak peace to her wounded spirit. She! who only a short while before shared in all the abundance of ample fortune, loved, revered, and cherished by every member of the dear domestic circle. She! whose smile alone could impart joy to every heart, whose tear could depress every heart, whose approbation was courted as a triumph, and whose reproof was dreaded as a disgrace! But now "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she has brought forth; neither is there any who taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up." Yet can she also say, "Not mine, but thy will be done, O Lord!"

Where, again, is the man who will watch hour by hour, day by day, for months together, if necessary, with the same undiminished fondness, the same unwearied attention, by the sick bed of the wayward and irritable invalid, rendered capricious, ungrateful, and selfish by a long series of pain and disappointment, sweetly excusing every peevish word, and meekly bowing to every impatient reproach? The husband might, the lover might; but husband, lover, friend, or foe, woman is certain to be there, like an angel of comfort, stifling the rising tear, calling up the cheering smile, mingling the word of hope with the exhortation to patience and resignation, (and that, too, when, alas! there is no hope in her own despairing bosom,) and teaching by her own pious example to trust alone to the mercy of an all-sufficient Saviour.

How beautifully does Ledyard observe of her, in the following exquisite passage—"I never addressed myself in the language of kindness and friendship to a woman, whether civilized or savage, without receiving a kind and friendly answer. In wandering over the barren plains of inhospitable Denmark, through honest Sweden, frozen Lapland, rude and churlish Finland, unprincipled Russia, and the wide spread regions of the wandering Tartar, if hungry, thirsty, cold, wet, or sick, woman has ever been friendly to me, and uniformly so; and to add to this virtue, so worthy of the appellation of benevolence, these actions have been performed in so free and kind a manner, that if I was thirsty I drank the sweet draught, and if hungry ate the sweet morsel with a double relish."

David also, in his truly pathetic lamentation over Jonathan, to give his sympathizing attendants the fullest sense of his irreparable loss, sums up all the anguish of his soul in this forcible and tender conclusion:—

"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman."

What a flattering comparison, and yet how justly merited! For what can surpass the love of woman? Her amiable and endearing virtues—her tender devotedness, her inexpressive and undeviating affection, are, and ever must be, an inexhaustible subject of admiration to every reflective mind. The Scriptures abound in their praises—Poets, from the earliest ages, have delighted to sing them—the moralist, to exalt them—the historian, to record them—the man of profound piety, and the reckless libertine, alike acknowledge their mild and purifying influence—the philosopher never disdained to homage them, nor the atheist to revere them, for all have experienced their benign power in a mother, a wife, a sister, or a friend. When man is born, she ministers to the feebleness of infancy—becomes the monitor of his youth—the delight of his manhood—and the solace of his age.

These were the last words of an eminently pious clergyman, in my hearing, a very short time since, as he beheld his weeping wife, (herself bowed by the weight of years) bending fondly over his dying form. "Lord! look down

with compassion on this my beloved wife—comfort her in her sore affliction gracious God, for thy servant's sake, who ever trusted in the magnitude of thy mercy, for she loved me when I was young—she has nursed me now I am old—and truly am I enabled to say, from the experience of a long and happy home, vouchsafed to me, through thy infinite goodness, that 'The price of a virtuous woman is above rubies. The heart of her husband does safely trust in her. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.'

I knew a lovely girl of eighteen, who nursed her lover, in conjunction with his mother, (who was very aged and infirm) through a most lingering and painful spinal affection—and the only flower she beheld, during the whole of one beautiful summer, was a solitary moss rose, which the surgeon, who attended him, brought by chance in his bosom, and which he instantly presented her with, struck with the almost child-like ecstasy she expressed at seeing it—for they were lodging in a small market town, to be near a man eminently distinguished in the treatment of such cases. Another, who actually sewed the softest feathers, purloined from her pillow, to the soles of her stockings, to enable her to steal undetected to the chamber door of her lover, at midnight, who was dying of a malignant fever, and whom she was prohibited visiting in consequence, at which restriction she repined most bitterly, being but too willing, in the devoted enthusiasm of youth, to run any risks for his dear sake.

In fact, who is there in existence, whose grateful experience does not furnish some striking and disinterested instance of woman's love? simple, perhaps, as the above, but it is in trifles that affection has the most frequent opportunities of displaying itself, in all its earnest intensity, in those little every-day occurrences, which are so important to the happiness or misery of life, which draw the heart homewards, with a cord of irresistible force and fascination!

Yet, it is in the power of every woman to form a magic circle round the domestic hearth, and to allure all dear to her within its enchanting precincts. "As a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing"—so might she gather them to her bosom, did she but know, that her true element was home—did she but consider the divine influence she holds over all connected with it—did mothers but instruct their daughters betimes to feel, that it was their only proper sphere of action, and that woman assuredly became a fallen star, if she ever wandered from its circumscribed orbit!

It requires neither rank nor education to make her acquainted with her duty. Affection intuitively teaches it, to the humblest of the sex—the peer and the peasant alike tacitly confess the enjoyment of a serene fire-side—alike, feel that "a contentions woman is a continual dropping"—alike, acknowledge her as an angel of pity, delegated by a beneficent Creator, to shed light over man's otherwise darkened path—"to rejoice when he rejoiceth, to weep when he doth weep"—to lighten all his enjoyments, to mitigate all his sorrows, to teach him, both by example and precept, that "he is made perfect by suffering," and that every privation here, if endured with the fortitude and resignation becoming a Christian, will be repaid four-fold, in the inexpressible felicity awaiting him above.

It is for her to gild the winter of his days with the perpetual sunshine of her tender and vigilant devotedness—it is for her to be his guide, his companion, his friend, his firmest support, even unto the grave, surely a glorious mission upon earth! but oh! more glorious, more angelic still, it is for her, and her alone, to be a sincere and eternal mourner for him, when "He's dead!"

From Bentley's Miscellany.

A TALE OF TRANSMIGRATION.

ADDRESSED BY A MOTH TO A VERY BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY.

MORTAL, of material finer

Than thy sisterhood of clay!

Hearken to me, purest china!

While I hum a mournful lay.

List! it is a dismal duty,

And take warning from my fate:

I was once a famous beauty,

Courted by the rich and great.

Yes—but start not—these antennæ

O'ce were fingers of a hand,

Sought in wedlock, too, by many

Lords and nobles of the land.

Though now hateful to beholders,

And a scouted creature grown,

I had once a neck and shoulders

Quite as charming as your own.

Though so lovely, still my carnal

Heart was fill'd with folly full:

Hasten to the loathsome charnel-

House, and gaze upon skull.

There observe a gentle rising,

Like an Island of the sea,

Its dimensions are surprising,

'Tis the bump of vanity.

Love of dress and approbation

Was a fatal snare to me;

It has hurl'd me from my station,

And has left me—what you see.

Many lovers was my passion:

I beheld a youthful one,

Handsome,—and the height of fashion,

And I marked him for my own.

Sadly now my soul confesses

That I played a cruel part;

Yes; I favored his addresses,

And he loved with all his heart.

Would I could those days recover!  
Days forever past and gone,  
When he was a humble lover,  
And I treated him with scorn!

I, without a spark of feeling,  
Marked the anguish of his soul,  
By well bred surprise revealing  
Heart as icy as the pole.

Death, however, cut me off—in  
Anger at my shining; and,  
Though my bones are in the coffin,  
Still, in spirit, here I stand!

Once I sat in silk and ermine;  
Naked now I creep the floor;  
Eating with my sister vermin  
What I only wore before!

Mothers, who have babes to dandle,  
Let not flirting be their aim;  
I am doomed to court a candle,  
Penalty for courting 'Flames.'

Watch me how I wildly hover,  
And my dissolution mark:  
I, who have never pitied lover,  
Meet no pity from 'a spark!'

F. LOCKER.

From Fraser's Magazine.

THE DEATH CELL.

A TALE OF PARIS.

VICTOR HUGO, in one of his clever novels, has flung such a mantle of romance over the washed walls and narrow limits of the death-receiving cell of La Morgue, that every succeeding writer would necessarily approach the subject with considerable misgiving, were it not for the peculiar nature of the place.

Metropolitan institutions generally, when they possess any remarkable interest, are commonly indebted for it to some particular circumstance which has occurred within their walls, or with which they are intimately associated; and the local historian seizes upon their leading feature, and thus makes their prestige his own individual property. But the Morgue cannot be thus identified with any particular writer, however great may be his genius; for its history once told is so far from being told for ever, that every vestige of the tale of yesterday is thoroughly swept away before the dawning of to day; and the tragedy of this week will be utterly superseded by the catastrophe of the next.

The Morgue possesses a constantly recurring and constantly varying story, involving equally new scenery, new actors, and new passions; the dead play the leading parts in every drama of fear, or guilt, or suffering; and the living are made subordinate accessories in the shifting panorama of horror with which every spectacle is wound up.

The Morgue is the Omega of humanity—the grave without the coffin—the sleep without the shroud. Its interest is not the interest of this world; its scenes are not those out of which human ingenuity can weave worldly advantage or aggrandizement; its tenants are not sentient beings, jostling amid the toil and care of every-day occupations their fellow-men and fellow-laborers. The stately cathedral, the wide senate-house, busy courts of law, the palaces of royalty, and the prisons wherein vice and misery expiate their crime or their misfortune, alike upon a way by which some may profit; but the Morgue is not of these—for all who enter there with inquiry in their eye and upon their lip leave hope upon the threshold, and seek only for despair and death! It is but a step from the busy thoroughfare of the crowded quay, from contact with the fluttering grissette and the thoughtful traders—for the death-cell stands in one of the most frequented parts of the city—but one step from the hurrying vehicles whirling along, laden with youth and beauty, or freighted with merchandise, making the rude pavement rattle beneath their weight; and from the bright glare of the noonday sun, to the cold, still, dreary chamber of violent and premature death. The solid walls beat back all sounds from without; the silence of the grave is already setting upon the dead; and when at intervals that silence is broken, it is not with the cavi of competition, the lip of courtesy, or the mirthful music of revel, but with the shrill scream of too tardy recognition, the heart-groan of remorse, or the wailing of despair.

The appearance of the cell itself is very simple. It is a small, square apartment, having on one side an open grating, behind which are ranged three broad planks, supported on trestles each forming an inclined plane, and thus enabling the spectator to obtain a perfect view of the countenance of the corpse; while the garments worn by the miserable victims of murder or suicide, when received by the officials, are suspended along the walls by hooks, and carefully displayed, in order to facilitate their identification.

The place is scrupulously clean; and considering its nature, even cheerful—at least so it appeared to me—for I had thoroughly made up my mind to experience a sensation of pain and awe on my entrance there, although I had been cautious to make my visit on an occasion when I knew it to be untenanted. I expressed a feeling of this kind to the friend by whom I was accompanied, who instantly congratulated me on the fact; declaring, that so great was the impression of horror and regret which he experienced on the first occasion when he sat foot

\*Holcroft relates of an individual, that he had visited the Morgue during a period of twenty years, and that he made a calculation, by which he found that, on an average it was untenanted only two days in each month.