

Literature, &c.

From "The Recollections of a Gaol Chaplain." THE REVENGE OF AN UNRELENTING WOMAN.

Nor the least painful of the duties of a gaol-chaplain, is that of preparing a criminal for execution.

To insist on the necessity of repentance—to maintain that it must precede not only pardon, but any acceptable act of devotion—to avoid holding out too little or too much hope,—to eschew fanaticism on the one hand, and despondency on the other, to check the transports of enthusiasm by an appeal to Scripture and its "words of truth and soberness,"—to cheer the drooping spirit by a repetition of those bright and blessed promises which light the Book of Life—to watch the alternations of hope and despair in the convicts mind, and to stay them by an application to "that Tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations," is a task, the anxiety and difficulty of which those only can comprehend whose lot it is to minister to "the prisoner and the captive."

Its perplexities too, are increased in a ten fold degree, when, as in the case of Reza, guilt is resolutely denied. Firmly, but without any boisterous asseverations, or any vehemence of tone and manner, she maintained her innocence. "If my poor old master met his end unfairly, I am no party to the deed. I deserve to die; but not for that. Life has long since ceased to be desirable; and I willingly resign it. But that old man's murderer I am not."

I dwelt on the necessity of repentance, and the peculiar urgency, in her case, of devoting every moment to make her peace with God.

"Repentance!" ran her strange reply, "I know not the meaning of the term. I repent of nothing! I have much to forgive," and her eyes flashed fire, "much that I would forget, but of nothing do I repent."

I warned her fully, and I trust faithfully, of those torments which await the impenitent. She listened earnestly and attentively. No gesture of incredulity or impatience was indulged in. But when I finished, she replied in those low soft tones I so well remember.

"May there not be a dispensation of mercy beyond this world? I say not that the Bible reveals it; but I infer it; and repose on it. You warn me of torments that never end; and Scripture warrants your allusions. But my view of the character of my Creator tells me that he is far too merciful to punish his erring creatures for ever. In this creed I have lived, and shall die."

It was in vain that I proclaimed to her the peril of such sentiments.

"They are suited," said she, with a gloomy smile, "to my past life and present circumstances. Brief space have I now to adopt a new creed."

I left her, fully acquiescing in the judgment passed on her by the gaol matron,—that hers was no common mind; and had been no common fall. The next morning, Saturday, I saw her again. She was calm and self-possessed; and of her own accord touched on the evidence given on her trial. I again urged the duty of making a confession.

"I have none to make. I have nothing to disclose; nothing—at least," said she, correcting herself quickly, "nothing on that head."

"The only atonement you can make to society is to disburden."

"Society! I owe society nothing," was her hasty interruption. "I have no reparation to make; and to those who have brought me in guilty of poor Amphyll's murder, I have to say, why should I have destroyed him? Murder!" and a convulsive shudder thrilled her frame,— "murder is a crime rarely committed save from some powerful motive. No, no," and a joyous laugh rung triumphantly in that cold and cheerless cell,— "one does not dip one's hand in blood without some constraining motive. Ha, ha, ha. Forgive me sir, I wander!"

But I thought her mind did not wander; and, struck by her manner and language, I observed, "I cannot, under these circumstances, and in your present state of mind, administer to you the sacrament. You do not, I hope, expect it?"

"I do not desire it! It is for those—if I understand aright ought pertaining to that solemn mystery—who are in peace and charity with all mankind. Such a tone of feeling is not mine. Those exist whom I can never forgive!"

"And yet, you expect to be forgiven?"

"Ultimately," was her gloomy and strange reply.

She fell into a moody reverie. At times there seemed to start into those dark, fierce, fiery looking eyes. But she was silent; and finding her indisposed to listen, and unable to converse, I left her.

An hour afterwards she sent for me.

"I am unwilling, sir," she began, "that you should think me indifferent to your kind suggestions, sullen, or reckless. I am neither. I strive to listen you; but in vain. The past crowds in upon my memory. I wish to relate it. The disclosure will be a relief to me. 'Tis a strange record of error, and passion. But in your hands it may be useful. It may warn others when I am gone. Theirs will be the profit: mine the punishment!"

"My father was an army agent; his connexion was numerous; his knowledge of business good; and his reputation was fair and unassailable. The world styled him 'wealthy;' and so long as every luxury was theirs, his family were content to believe the opinion well-founded. That his habits were extravagant; and that these habits received no check, either in the way of remonstrance or example, from my mother, who fully shared the popular delusion, may account for the sequel. He died suddenly, and without a will. His accounts were investi-

gated; and it appeared that, after various claims on the firm were cancelled, a mere pittance was all that remained to my mother and her six daughters. It is true that subsequent events, and, among these, the purchase of a large landed estate by the junior partner, convinced us that we had been unjustly dealt with; but my mother had no brother, no uncle, no male relative to champion her cause. Apparently the accounts were clear; and my mother submitted in silence to the penalty they entailed on her.

"We hurried into obscurity. The reduced, sir, and the fallen, have no place in society. Its sympathies are reserved for the daring and the prosperous. The stricken deer is soon forgotten by the herd. He hurries into the nearest lair to die. All at once it was discovered that my 'father had been a most improvident man;' and 'mother a very thoughtless woman. Misfortune was sure to overtake such parties. Compassion was thrown away on them."

"A small cottage, near St. Alban's, scantily furnished, and in wretched repair, received us; and there we strove to forget the past, and to subsist on an income that never amounted to eighty pounds per annum. Many has been the drowsy homily,—many the laboured eulogy pronounced upon 'virtuous poverty.' It is the cant of the day to laud virtue in rags. The epicure surfeited with indulgence; the successful adventurer, who has obtained the height of his ambition; the statesman in the plenitude of power; and the noble in his luxurious villa, will descend glowingly on the glorious spectacle afforded by a poor but virtuous man. But the struggle, the effort, the agony to hold fast integrity when oppressed by poverty; to retain principle when beset by temptation; to abstain from sin, when its temporary and partial commission would at once relieve from the pangs of want—ah, sir, the intensity of this trial they can only appreciate whose doom it has been to brave it!"

"While we were thus deliberating upon our future plans, and arrange who should remain at home with our sorrow stricken parent, and who should earn an honest livelihood elsewhere, by the exercise of those accomplishments which lent a charm to happier days, a party made his appearance at the cottage, with an earnest tender of his services and his influence in whatever way we were pleased to command them.

"His name was St. Barbe.

"The obligations of this person to my late father were repeated and weighty. By him he had been extricated from many a difficulty; his sinking credit supported; over and over again he had saved him from arrest; enabled him by opportune advances to obtain promotion by purchase; mediated successfully between him and his haughty father, and reconciled him to a wealthy uncle, whom he had alienated by his imprudence and extravagance. Oh! if that being existed upon earth to whom the welfare of my mother and her family should have been sacred and dear, surely, surely Ivan St. Barbe was that man! His proffers of council, assistance, and personal inquiry, were tendered with apparent earnestness and sincerity; and in one or two instances accepted. His visits were repented. But it soon became apparent that a stronger magnet than that of friendship drew him to the cottage. He declared himself attached to me (I was not then the discoloured, wrinkled, and saddened being you now behold) and in private urged my assent to a secret marriage. I refused it. Strong as was the hold which he had acquired over my affections, melancholy as were my prospects, and many as were my privations, I shrunk from the web of subterfuge he was assiduously weaving round me. 'Where there is mystery, there is misery,' was my earnest and oft-repeated objection; 'at least let my own family be cognizant of our union!'

"Impossible!" was his rejoinder; "my own ruin would be the consequence."

"His representations weighed with me. He pleaded the pride of his family; the presumptuousness of a few months, perhaps weeks, would do away with all necessity for concealment; his dependence upon his father; the prospect of being disinherited should our union be divulged. Sophistries all! But I listened, and believed him. We were married by special licence, at the house of a dependant, whom he could trust, and by a strange looking clergyman whom he had known from boyhood. Three weeks afterwards I consented to accompany him to Brussels. At midnight—infatuated that I was!—without ever divulging to those who had a right to my confidence the connexion which I had formed, and the journey I was about to take, I bade adieu to my humble home for ever.

"The dream of happiness which awaited me at Brussels lasted six months. It was a bright oasis in my existence. I may well dwell upon it. But it had its moments of gloom. The frightful shadows of the future fell darkly across it. My position was painfully equivocal. I had no society. That of my own sex was out of the question; to that of the other I was indifferent. I was a stranger among strangers. St. Barbe seemed blind to this; but, the more I dwelt on the sad peculiarities of my situation, the more distinctly did conscience whisper—'Tis the punishment of thy sin!'

This feeling became at length intolerable, and the train of deception to which my position gave birth, so galling, that I begged St. Barbe to terminate this dreary concealment, and to allow me to announce to my family. His features, usually so bright and sunny, darkened as I proceeded in my suit; and before long he sternly interrupted me. "Pshaw! let me hear no more of this."

"But I was resolute, and persevered. With a muttered oath he turned from me. I clung to him. I wept. I knelt before him. I implored him to own me as his wedded wife; before man, as I was before God.

"It is time," said he, breaking from me, "that this farce should end. There is no marriage in the case."

"No marriage!" cried I, faintly. "Gracious God Ivan! do I understand you rightly? no marriage?"

"You have yourself to blame," continued he vehemently, "for forcing from me thus early this avowal. The marriage ceremony,"—and he sneered, "was read, I believe word for word. But the special licence was a clever forgery; and the clergyman a discarded groom."

"I wrung my hands with agony. 'I love you, dearest,' and his tone seemed to soften at the spectacle of my distress. Put up with a disclosure which, though hastened by your own imprudence, was sooner or later inevitable! What are forms? Love laughs at them. You are still my 'heart's best treasure.' There you reign supreme. But it would require a fairer face than even thine to bind me with Hymen's fetters. Come, smile; and be happy."

"Happy!" cried I bitterly. "Your villany, your deep and systematic villany—but words are wasted on you. I leave you to the reproaches of your own conscience. Here we part!"

"Part?" "What!" said I, sternly, "do you imagine that I would knowingly, live with you one hour as your paramour?"

"Oh!" returned he, with a careless air, "if that be your tone—agreed! agreed! I would not for the world damage such a correct code of morals! My arrangements are easily made; and I can leave Brussels at sunset."

"He flung his purse, as he spoke upon the table, and left me.

"That evening I was in Brussels—alone!

"No language that I can command can depict the mental agonies of that night. It found me deserted, betrayed, helpless, hopeless; and it left me on the verge of—madness! I can give no account of the next day. It is a blank to me. But on the following morning I rose very early; turned every valuable I possessed into cash; removed to very humble lodgings; attired myself in the plainest garb, and resolved to remain in Brussels till my little babe should see the light; and then—revenge! revenge! You start, sir, at the vehemence of my exclamations; but remember my wrongs—and their author! He had inflicted them, around whose name, when life was new, the whole tissue of my hopes and fears were woven; in whom all my dreams of earthly happiness had been wound up; for whom I had sacrificed home, and fame, and parent, and friends; all that a woman holds dear.

"My child was born. It was a sufferer from its birth. Many was the anxious days, many the weary vigil which its protracted struggles cost me. But at length they ceased; and you may form some idea of the wretchedness, the recklessness, the utter hopelessness of that hour when a mother, loosing the only object she loved on earth—parting from the only tie that bound her to existence, could kneel beside the narrow coffin, and humbly bless God that He had for ever removed the little one beyond the reach of care and sorrow!"

"Freed by death from every tie to Brussels, I hurried to England; and, like a craven, guilty being, sought, under the shades of night, my former home. There was no voice to welcome the returning penitent. My mother had long since become a tenant of the tomb; and my sisters were severed and scattered none could tell whether. At length I learnt, and but too truly, that "the disgrace of the eldest daughter had proved a death blow to the first; and had paved the way for the ruin of the others!"

"My punishment was now complete. My cup of sorrow was filled to overflowing. A low, nervous fever seized me; and at length left me the discoloured, care worn, prematurely-aged person you now behold. Never did the ravages of disease tell more decisively upon the personal appearance of any human being. Recovered, my first feeling was a passionate desire for 'Revenge!'

"Where is he," my heart whispered, "whose unbridled appetite has wrecked the peace of an entire family? Where is he, the betrayer and destroyer, so deep a traitor to the dead—so cruel and remorseless to the living? I tried to trace him but in vain. He had sold his commission, and had retired into private life; but where baffled, every inquiry. Ten years elapsed. I gained an honest, if not an easy livelihood. My business as a sempstress increased. I was punctual in my engagements, and true to my promises. Those around me saw that I was to be trusted, and gave me a decided preference. I saved money, and invested it; and to my neighbours—how little does one human being know of the trials, sufferings, and scourge endured by another!—was an object of envy! I, who brooded incessantly over my wrongs, who could never banish the dark spectre of the past, who was hourly goaded by the most bitter recollections, and whose earliest and latest thought was—REVENGE!"

[To be Concluded.]

ALL THE SAME A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE.

BY LAMAN BLANCHARD.

Nothing is more common, or in itself more ludicrous, than the spectacle of a small mind sinking under the weight of a large idea. It is like seeing a puny whipster, who has bravely lifted the sword of a Plantagenet, essaying to do mortal combat with the mighty blade.

Heroic Thumbs magnanimously dragging after them Herculean clubs, are not rare sights, though still strange.

When ordinary people get hold of a grand

notion—such as "Happen what may, it will be all the same a hundred years hence,"—it is astonishing how lightly they can afford to treat the gravest business on their hands, how insignificant the struggles of a generation become, and how easily all the little affairs of life may be allowed to run on to rack and ruin—themselves, who are to be numbered among life's little affairs, of course included.

"It will be all the same a hundred year's hence" is the cry of the selfish and cold-hearted man of the world, who, easy himself, is content to take things as he finds them—never stirring a step out of his way to assist in redressing a proved grievance—in removing an obstacle to public freedom and happiness—in tearing asunder the crippling bonds of an intolerant and enslaving prejudice.

It is the cry of sleek and comfortable patriots, who plume themselves on having no politics at all—on not caring a rush who is minister—on their superiority to party triumphs, and their indifference to factious contests. "Why should we trouble ourselves about a foolish distinction between orange and green? what does it signify which prevails? And if the purest of the two colors should happen to be the one doomed to be trampled in the dust, or dyed in martyrs blood, what about it? why fret your heart about that? it will be all the same a hundred year's hence!"

It is the common cry of man, who seeing the untaught and destitute children of the poor dropping insensibly and inextricably into crime, lift not a finger to advance the cause of education—of men who see labor degraded into a state of servitude so ruinous to body and mind, that the heart aches to think of it, and yet stir not a hair's breadth to assist it in that terrible extremity, and raise it by any small degree out of its deplorable and brutalized condition—of men, who, with the vital interests of a race at stake, while an invaluable institution is tottering under attack, or a fearful despotism is being treacherously reared up, keep within doors, seated in their arm chairs by the fire side, heedless of everything good save their chess and their master.

What they will not move out of that snug corner to do for a nation, they will not, while they are their own masters, be roused to do for any individual in the nation. Poverty may lie bruised and gasping on the doorstep, but they will not offer it the sustenance of a crust, the balm of a kind word. Tell a philanthropist of this order that the man will die of want at his gate, and his great soul, looking out of his half shut eyes, will perceive no dying object there—it will see nothing but futurity, revealing to him its benevolent secret, that, a hundred years hence, it will be all the same whether a poor devil die there or not.

A good Christian philosopher who can raise his mind to a point (and keep it there) whence a full century, with all its cradles and its graves, can be clearly overlooked, cannot be supposed to see, "with equal eye," any disagreeable subject immediately before him. It may or may not be there; the thing may be afflictive and pitiable, or otherwise; but however it be, one fact he deems certain, that it will be all the same the next century or the century after that.

A child may be falling under horses' feet, or a mother may be floating down a stream; but why, upon this principle, risk a kick or a wet jacket? Lost or saved, it will ultimately be the same thing. The house over the way may be on fire, but as it cannot cross the road, the resting of the inmates is of trifling consequence, and will be of none at all in due season. Why encounter peril and get scorched in son. Why encounter peril to avert a calamity, or to promote an escape, when the two things will be as one by and by? Why, hasten with the reprieve in one's pocket, to save the pardoned culprit from being hanged? A sharp push, be sure, will do it—another minute is enough,—but a hundred years hence, where will be the difference to him between guilt and innocence, a grave in Newgate or Westminster Abbey?

Cold blooded indifference—apathy that makes a stagnant pool of the heart's life stream—selfishness that knows not how truly to enjoy even what is miserably and stupidly called its own—never yet had so comfortable a creed. But the tendency of the false and often fatal principle is, not to stop there. He who blindly adopts it as an established philosophical reason why he should take but little trouble in the affairs of the world, and as little trouble to advance the welfare of his neighbor, often insensibly turns it, a two edged implement, against himself.

It is the insidious enemy of all exertion, all enterprise, all moral excellence, all intellectual distinction. The poet who sends forth his lines wanting any charact of clearness or consistency or strength that studious and patient labor can give, while comforting himself with the notion that his sonnet will be all the same a hundred years hence, may make up his little mind that it will be a profound secret to all the world at the period spoken of. In like manner, to take another example in the poet's opposite—the statesman that winks at a wrong when done in his own behalf, who mistakes a bench of partisans for a powerful people, and confounds the session in which he struggles with the man whose spirit he should understand, may learn that the expedient and the lapse of an essentially the same, even after the lapse of one hundred years, and that it is possible for one man to be talked of a great deal, and little thought of.

The selfish man's excuse for indifference in the affairs of mankind becomes the justification of a vicious laziness in the transaction of his own. The business which he would otherwise set about to night is deferred until the morning—the work of to-morrow is of course postponed until next week; and the duty of the