

## PERILOUS CONDITION OF ST. PETERSBURG.

It is said that the soil of St. Petersburg is in many parts fathomless bog, and that the piles rather float than directly sustain the buildings above them; and it is well known that a prevalence of west winds—such as, if rare, will probably occur once in a century or two—would suffice to raise the waters of the Gulf of Finland high enough to sweep away the devoted city. It will be remembered how nearly this happened in the reign of Alexander. Nothing can be more obvious than that, in a very few years—in half the time that has elapsed since St. Petersburg arose from the marsh—if this city were not being perpetually built, the marsh would again succeed the city; the streets would be dust; the walls it covers, ruins imbedded in the mud; and the cold, spongy moss of this northern climate again creeping over it, with the acid cranberry that alone seems to flourish in its alternate bed of snow and stagnant waters. "Only the St. Isaac's cathedral, the Alexander column, and the granite quays of the Neva's bank," it is said, "would, a century hence, survive the ruins of St. Petersburg, were it not for the intervention of man's preserving hand."

## TERRORS OF SECRET POLICE.

Every man in the Empire, from Field Marshal Paskevitch, Prince of Warsaw, (until recently the only man of the first of the fourteen classes) down to the humblest individual above the condition of the serf, feels or fears that its all seeing eye is watching his conduct and often viewing it with vision distorted by private malignity, revenge, or envy. The very bridegroom often questions whether the bride does not open to him her arms to worm from him some secret which may be supposed to exist. The very existence of the civil police is based on an avowed, if an illegal system of extortion. The police masters, under the grand master, the heads of *chests* or divisions, the majors of quarters, and the nazirats or aids under them, all receive salaries merely nominal. They not only make fortunes, but are all expected on New Year's Day to make a present to the grand master, at least ten fold exceeding the amount of their pay. There is no regulation, indeed to oblige the subordinate to make the present, and there is even an edict to punish the superior for receiving any; but should the tributary offering fail, the underling would be not only removed, but degraded, and prosecuted, on some other pretext, with all the rigour an indignant master could display towards the dishonest servant who had betrayed his confidence. Should his present prove below the usual amount, he is removed to a less lucrative situation; and if, on the contrary, his ambition prompts him to sacrifice a larger portion of his iniquitous gains to swell his tribute, or that his superior activity enables him to do so, it ensures promotion to a post which yields a more abundant harvest. A constant emulation is thus kept up in crime, between those established to detect and punish it. The reader may form some idea of the extent to which trade is burdened by these vampires, from the fact that tavern keepers in St. Petersburg calculate, in a series of years, from forty to sixty per cent. of their profits to be wrung for them, directly and indirectly, by the municipal or civil police. "Man forgets and God forgives," whispered a Russian, "but the secret police neither forgets nor forgives." The frivolous conversation which took place years ago, at the dinner table, over the punch bowl, or in a moment of vexation or anger, all is noted, with the malicious comments of those who reported it. All is thrown into the balance when his fate is weighed, unknown evidence thus influencing the decision by unknown judges, of the destiny of a man who has perhaps, in reality, never offended even against the peculiar code of political and social morality which is the standard of this fearful institution. When the Russian subject has been found wanting in this balance, his disgrace overtakes him as suddenly and unaccountably as the doom of fate; and he may often waste the remaining years of his dreary existence in vain attempts to guess the cause of his punishment, his friends and relatives in conjecturing the nature of it. The grave is not more incommunicative as to what passes in the unknown regions beyond its bourne, than the secret police. It is true the enmity of private individuals, the anger or the vindictive spirit of princes, may die before them, or die with them; changes of party, and the web and woof of fresh intrigues may render meritorious what a few years before was odious in the eyes of those who have been replaced or superseded; but all these eventualities seldom bring relief to those who suffer. The Russian is not only subject to this terrible surveillance within the pale of the empire, but when he travels abroad it follows him like a shadow. In the drawing rooms of London and Paris, he dreads that the eye of the secret police may be upon him. Foreigners, in their own country, laugh at his terrors, but experience has taught him too painfully how truly they are grounded.

## A FRIENDLY WARNING.

It is four or five years since some indiscretion was committed by an individual who let his tongue run too freely. One morning an officer of gendarmie presented himself in his drawing-room, and, with the greatest urbanity desired him to follow him to the "chancery of Count Benckendorf. When the pale blue uniform of the officers or privates of this corps, who are the avowed ostensible shirr of the secret police, are once seen crossing the threshold, a visit from the angel of death alighting there could cause no greater consternation. He obeyed, as every one must do in such a case, and leaving his family a prey to their terrors, he stepped into a sledge with his dreaded visitor. He did not return that day.

nor the day following; his relatives were meanwhile assured that he was safe. Thus six months of anxiety passed away; towards the middle of the seventh the officer again made his appearance, but in such guise as to be hardly recognized by those nearest and dearest to him; his ruddy cheeks were livid, his round body was wasted into angularity, the merry sparkle of his eye was gone, and its brightness quenched for ever in his terror. He narrated as follows:—Shortly after leaving his home he was placed in a dark apartment. At nightfall he was ironed and placed upon a sort of box upon a sleigh, such as is occasionally used in winter to transport prisoners; a grating at the top let in the faint light reflected from the snow but allowed no view of the scenery through which the speed of horses was hurrying him the whole night through. An hour or two before daybreak the vehicle stopped; he was blindfolded and led into a fresh resting place. Through the whole of the next night he was carried along in a similar manner, arriving to sleep in a dark dungeon, and being again hurried forward on a road which his fears told him beyond the consolations of hope, to be that of Siberia. Thus, night after night, and day after day elapsed; the former in speeding towards the fearful solitude, the latter reposing as well as he could from the fatigues of his arduous journey. The dark night became moonlight; the moon waned again; and again the night became moonlight; and he was still forced to hasten on unintermittedly, without having seen one furlong of the way. The faint light of moonless winter's night, piercing through the narrow apertures which afforded air to his vehicle, now enabled him to distinguish the objects it contained, so well had his eyes become accustomed to the utter darkness he was kept during the day. Like all people, too, deprived of vision, after many weeks, he learned to substitute for it a sense which the eye-sight often leaves comparatively dormant—that of discerning things by touch and feeling. He had no opportunity of making any observations on the road he was travelling; but the interior of his cage he knew plank by plank, nail by nail, and it might almost be said straw by straw. He therefore, in the darkness of every day, endeavoured to make acquaintance with every fresh dungeon in which he found a night's abode. He was struck with the utter monotony and sameness of these places of relay; he had seen, as all Russians have, the battalions of the Imperial guard, where one man, to the very setting of a cross belt, to the colour of his hair, the shape of his moustache, and to the very expression of his countenance, as nearly resembles another as two peas in one shell; but he was struck, after travelling some thousand versts, to find one dungeon resembling another so closely, that every brick and stone was disposed precisely like another. At last, on one occasion, he left a piece of the hard brown crust of his rye bread marked in a peculiar manner, with his teeth. To his utter surprise, at the end of his night's journey, he found a crust perfectly similar, in the dungeon in which he lodged. He now began to doubt his own senses; sometimes he fancied he was insane; sometimes he conceived the unutterably fearful idea that he was somehow doomed to a dark and unrelieved monotony, which was to extend to the merest trifles, and that this was a means of moral torture, of which, as he approached Siberia, he was experiencing a forerunner. It is strange to say, that with these causes of suspicion, it was not till many weeks after that, the thought flashed across his mind—a thought which he discarded as an illusion, but which at last came breaking in upon him like a ray of light—that he had never moved from the same environs, and had returned to sleep every night in the same spot. Such, in fact, proved to be the case; night after night, for months, he had been hurried along the same road, to return to the same cell. It must be remembered, that this was not a punishment, but only a friendly warning, to deter a man in whom some one in power felt an interest from incurring it.

The Star of Atteghéi: the Vision of Schwartz, and other Poems, by Frances Brown.

## LET US RETURN.

"Let us return!" said the broken heart:  
Of the mountain hermit's tale—  
When he saw the morning mists depart  
From the summits grey and pale:—  
For he knew that the fan-palm cast the shade  
Of its ever-glorious green,  
Where the love of his blasted youth was laid,  
And the light of her light of her steps had been,  
Ah! thus for ever, the heart looks back  
To its young hope's funeral urn:—  
To the tender green of that early track,  
To its light let us return!

The lines of our life may be smooth and strong,  
And our pleasant path may lie  
Where the stream of affection flows along,  
In the light of a summer sky:—  
But woe for the lights thus early wane,  
And the shades that early fall,  
And the prayer that speaks of the secret pain,  
Though its voice be still and small!  
To the sweeter flowers, to the brighter streams,  
To the household hearths that burn  
Still bright in our holy land of dreams,  
To their love let us return!

'Tis well we have learned the truths of

But they came with the winter's snow,  
For we saw them not through the flowery  
prime  
Of our summers long ago  
Yet the spring is green and the summer bright  
As they were in the days of yore,  
But on our souls the love of light,  
Of their gladness come no more!  
Back—back to the wisdom of the years  
That had yet no loss to mourn,  
To their faith, that had no place for tears,  
To their joy, let us return!  
We have paused, perchance, by the quiet  
grave  
Of our young who early slept,  
And, since they left us many a wave  
O'er our weary bark hath swept;—  
But, far in the morning light enshrined,  
They gladden our backward gaze,  
Or wake, like the breath of a summer's wind,  
The soul of our better days.  
Back—back! to the living wave, we drew,  
With them from a purer urn,  
To the path of the promise lost to view,  
And its peace—let us return!

From the New York Sun.

## EDUCATION.

Among civilized nations, whether viewed as a matter of national prosperity, or individual happiness, education has ever been deemed a subject of the utmost importance. When, for a moment, we reflect on the influence which early education exerts in the formation of the human mind and character, through after life, no consideration which we can reasonably bestow on its cultivation, seems either misapplied or unnecessary. Locke judiciously observes, "Those who would lay the foundation of a sound education for youth, should provide the best instructors, less erroneous ideas be inculcated at a period when they make the deepest impression; and hence, are eradicated only with the greatest difficulty." While Pope, with equal discrimination, observes—  
"Tis education forms the tender mind,  
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

The latent purport of these views being admitted, the consideration suggests itself; do parents, in general, manifest that becoming solicitude which the responsibilities of their stations so unconditionally demand, in this respect? We pause for an answer; and we respectfully suggest that our readers will imitate our example, before they offer one—not indeed to us, but to their own scrutinizing consciences; which, however effectively lulled for a time, by the promptings of caprice, negligence or involuntary decision, will—nay, must, sooner or later—become quick and condemning witnesses against those who are compelled to reply in the negative. And, do members of the human family exist, who claim the distinction due to the image of the Godhead, and to the recipients of Reason—who would be thought important enough to be deemed accountable for the abuse of that boasted privilege which elevates them, with little difference, to a level with the angels of heaven—do such, we enquire, exist, and yet neglect those all-important duties which our queries imply? Do we speak of a father? yes, a father, the secondary author of human existence. Have you never observed his anxiety for the superior cultivation and advancement of brute sagacity? Has horse to be trained? *Solicitude* is on the rack to provide an adept for the purpose! Has he a dog, intended for his occasional amusement? *Inquiry* is tortured in pursuit of a competent instructor! Has he a monkey or a parrot? No pains are deemed onerous, provided the little idol becomes a proficient! But has he a child? whose soul is immortal; and which, for its transient happiness, as well as for its eternal woe or weal, must mainly depend on its incipient acquirements;—has he such a charge? Alas! what apathy prevails on the subject of its intellectual advancement! How widely different the feeling too frequently manifested in the subject of our theme. Behold with what calm indifference, as we too often perceive, he surrenders his inexperienced, thoughtless, perhaps wayward offspring, to the guidance of some soulless pedagogue, or literary coxcomb—notorious only for unconscious ignorance or insipid conceit. To hope to cast a valuable model from such a mould, would be to hope for the production of a miracle, where no adequate materials existed for its development.

The censor who exposes an evil has but partially performed his duty till he adduces a remedy. To effect this, we shall anticipate the apparently posing queries—"What is to be done in such cases?" "How are we (parents) to distinguish between the claims of the Pedant, or the pretender, and those of the Scholar?" To these natural, as well as reasonable inquiries, we reply:—As we possess not competent tribunals, legally authorized, to examine and qualify our teachers for their important stations in society, act, we entreat of you in the same manner, as you would do on those occasions which we have taken leave, and we opine—justly, to ridicule. Exert, by judicious inquiry, but the title of the solicitude which you manifest in providing competent instructors for your horses and your dogs;—for your monkeys and your parrots; and if, perchance, you fall in the attainment of your object,—which is by no means likely, you will, at least, have the consolation to feel, that, to some extent, you have performed your duty:—a duty paramount to all others, that of your duty to your Creator.

spring is most intimately involved. Thus, and thus only, can we hope to escape the consequences of entrusting the education of youth to incompetent teachers, who impose a blighting tax upon an unsuspecting public, to the irreparable injury of its most vital interests.

## DESPERATION.

The following is a passage from the laughable tale of "Desperation," one of the rich articles which are embraced in the "literary remains of the late Willis Gaylord Clarke." It is only necessary to premise that the writer is a Philadelphia student, who, after a stolen fortnight amid the gayeties of a Washington "season," finds himself (through the remissness of a chum) at Baltimore on his way home, without a penny in his pocket. He stops at a fashionable hotel nevertheless, where after tarrying a day or two, he finally, at the heel of a grand dinner, "omnes colus" in the private apartment, flanked with abundant Champagne and Burgundy, resolves to disclose all to the landlord. Summoning a servant he said: "Ask the landlord to step up to my room, and bring his bill."

He clatters down stairs, giggling, and shortly thereafter his master appeared. He entered with a generous smile, that made me hope for 'the best his house could afford,' and that, just then, was credit.

"How much do I owe you?" said I. He handed me the bill with all the grace of private expectancy.

"Let me see—seventeen dollars. How very reasonable! But my dear sir, the most disagreeable part of the matter is now to be disclosed. I grieve to inform you that, at present, I am out of money, but I know by your philanthropic looks that you will be satisfied when I tell you that if I had it, I would give it to you with unqualified pleasure."

"But you see my not having the change by me is the reason I cannot do it, and I am sure you will let the matter stand, and say no more about it. I am a stranger to you, that's a fact; but in the place where I came from, all my acquaintances know me, as easy as can be."

The landlord turned all colours. Where do you live, anyhow?

"In Washington, I should say Philadelphia."

His eyes flashed with angry disappointment. "I see how it is, Master; my opinion is, that you are a blackleg. You don't know where your home is, you begin with Washington and then drop it for Philadelphia; you must pay your bill."

"But I can't."

"Then I'll take your clothes; if I don't blow me tight."

"Scoundrel!" said I, rising bolt upright, "do it if you dare! do it! and leave the rest to me!"

There were no more words. He arose deliberately, seized my hat, and my only inexpressibles, and walked down stairs.

Physicians say that two excitements can't exist at the same time in one system. External circumstances drove away, almost immediately, the confusion of my brain.

I rose and looked out my window. The snow was descending as I drummed on the pane. What was I to do? An unhappy *sans culottes* in a strange city; no money, and slightly inebriated. A thought struck me.

I had a large, full cloak, which with all my other appointments, save those he took, the landlord had spared. I dressed immediately; drew on my boots over my fair drawers, not unlike small clothes; put on my cravat, vest and coat; laid a travelling cap from my trunk, jauntily over my forehead, and flinging my flue long mantle gracefully about me, made my way through the hall into the street.

Attracted by shining lamps in the portico of a new hotel, a few squares from my first lodgings, I entered, recorded some name on the books, and bespoke a bed. Every thing was fresh and neat; every servant attentive; all augured well. I kept myself closely cloaked; puffed a cigar, and retired to bed to mature my plot.

"Waiter, just brush my clothes well, my fine fellow," said I, in the morning, as he entered my room. "Mind the pantaloons; don't spill anything from the pockets; there is money in both."

"I don't see no pantaloons."

"The devil you don't! Where are they?"

"Can't tell, I'm sure; I don't know, s'elp me G—"

"Go down sir, and tell your master to come up here immediately." The publican was with me in a moment.

"I had arisen and worked my face before the glass into a fiendish look of passion. 'Landlord!' exclaimed I, with a fierce gesture, 'I have been robbed in your house—robbed, sir, robbed? My pantaloons, and a purse containing three fifty dollar notes, are gone. This is a pretty hotel! Is this the way that you fulfil the injunctions of scripture? I am a stranger, and I find myself taken in with a vengeance. I will expose you at once if I am not recompensed.'"

"Pray, keep your temper," said the agitated publican; "I have just opened this house, and it is getting a good run; would you ruin its reputation for an accident? I will find out the villain who has robbed you, and I will send for a tailor to measure you for your missing garment. Your money shall be refunded. Do you not see that your anger is useless?"

"My dear sir," I replied, "I thank you for your kindness. I did not mean to reproach you. If those trousers can be done to day, I shall be satisfied; for time is more precious than money. You may keep the others if you find time to exchange for the ones I wanted."