

Literature, &c.

From Chambers' Edinburgh Journal.
THE FIRST OFFENCE.

In the cheerful dining-room of my bachelor friend Stevenson, a select party was assembled to celebrate his birthday. A very animated discussion had been carried on for some time, as to whether the first deviation from integrity should be treated with severity or leniency. Various were the opinions, and numerous the arguments brought forward to support them. The majority appeared to lean to the side of "crush all offences in the bud," when a warm-hearted old gentleman exclaimed, "Depend upon it, more young people are lost to society from a first offence being treated with injudicious severity, than from the contrary extreme. Not that I would pass over even the slightest deviation from integrity, either in word or deed; that would certainly be mistaken kindness; but, on the other hand, neither would I punish with severity an offence committed, perhaps, under the influence of temptation—temptation, too, that we ourselves may have thoughtlessly placed in the way, in such a manner as to render it irresistible. For instance, a lady hires a servant; the girl has hitherto borne a good character, but it is her first place; her honesty has never yet been put to the test. Her mistress, without thinking of the continual temptation to which she is exposing a fellow-creature, is in the habit of leaving small sums of money, generally copper, lying about in her usual sitting-room. After a time, she begins to think that these sums are not always found exactly as she found them. Suspicion falls upon the girl, whose duty it is to clean the room every morning. Her mistress, however, thinks she will be quite convinced before she brings forward her accusation. She counts the money at night, and the next morning some is missing. No one has been in the room but the girl; her guilt is evident. Well, what does her mistress do? Why, she turns the girl out of her house at an hour's notice; cannot, in conscience, give her a character; tells all her friends how dreadfully distressed she is; declares there is nothing but ingratitude to be met with among servants; laments over the depravity of human nature; and never dreams of blaming herself for her wicked—yes, it is wicked—thoughtlessness in thus constantly exposing to temptation a young ignorant girl; one most likely whose mind, if not enveloped in total darkness, has only an imperfect twilight knowledge whereby to distinguish right from wrong. At whose door, I ask," continued he, growing warmer, "will the sin lie, if that girl sink into the lowest depths of vice and misery? Why, at the door of her who, after placing temptation in her very path, turned her into the pitiless world, deprived of that which constituted her only means of obtaining an honest livelihood—her character; and that without one effort to reclaim her—without affording a single opportunity of retrieving the past, and regaining by future good conduct the confidence of her employer."

"There is, I fear, too much truth in what you say," remarked our benevolent host, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation; "and it reminds me of a circumstance that occurred in the earlier part of my life, which, as it may serve to illustrate the subject you have been discussing, I will relate." There was a general movement of attention; for it was a well-known fact, that no manufacturer in the town of — was surrounded with so many old and faithful servants as our friend Stevenson.

"In the outset of my business career," said he, "I took into my employment a young man to fill the situation of under clerk; and, according to a rule I had laid down, whenever a stranger entered my service, his duties were of a nature to involve as little responsibility as possible, until sufficient time had been given to form a correct estimate of his character. This young man, whom I shall call Smith, was of a respectable family. He had lost his father, and had a mother and sisters in some measure dependent upon him. After he had been a short time in my employment, it happened that my confidential clerk, whose duty it was to receive the money from the bank for the payment of wages, being prevented by an unforeseen circumstance from attending at the proper time, sent the sum required by Smith. My confidence was so great in my head clerk, who had been long known to me, that I was not in the habit of regularly counting the money when brought to me; but, as, on this occasion, it had passed through other hands, I thought it right to do so. Therefore calling Smith back as he was leaving my counting house, I desired him to wait a few minutes, and proceeded to ascertain whether it was quite correct. Great was my surprise and concern on finding that there was a considerable deficiency.

"From whom," said I, "did you receive this money?"

He replied, "From Mr —," naming my confidential clerk.

"It is strange," said I, looking steadily at him. "But this money is incorrect, and it is the first time I have found it so." He changed countenance, and his eye fell before mine; but he answered, with tolerable composure, "that it was as he had received it."

"It was in vain," I replied, "to attempt to impose upon me, or to endeavour to cast suspicion on one whose character for the strictest honesty and undeviating integrity is so well established. Now, I am perfectly convinced that you have taken this money, and that it is at this moment in your possession; and I think the evidence against you would be thought sufficient to justify me in immediately dismissing you from my service. But you are a very young man; your conduct has, I believe, been

hitherto perfectly correct, and I am willing to afford you an opportunity of redeeming the past. All knowledge of this matter rests between ourselves. Candidly confess, therefore, the error of which you have been guilty; restore what you have so dishonestly taken; endeavour, by your future good conduct, to deserve my confidence and respect, and this circumstance shall never transpire to injure you." The poor fellow was deeply affected. In a voice almost inarticulate with emotion he acknowledged his guilt, and said that, having frequently seen me receive the money without counting it, on being intrusted with it himself, the idea flashed across his mind that he might easily abstract some without incurring suspicion, or at all events without there being sufficient evidence to justify it; that, being in distress the temptation had proved stronger than his power of resistance, and he had yielded. "I cannot now," he continued, "prove how deeply your forbearance has touched me; time alone can show that it has not been misplaced." He left me to resume his duties.

Days, weeks, and months passed away, during which I scrutinised his conduct with the greatest anxiety, whilst at the same time I carefully guarded against any appearance of suspicious watchfulness; and with delight I observed that so far my experiment had succeeded. The greatest regularity and attention—the utmost devotion to my interests—marked his business habits; and this without any display; for his quiet and humble deportment was from that time remarkable. At length, finding his conduct invariably marked by the utmost openness and plain dealing, my confidence in him was so far restored, that, on a vacancy occurring in a situation of greater trust and increased emolument than the one he had hitherto filled, I placed him in it; and never had I the slightest reason to repent of the part I had acted towards him. Not only had I the pleasure of reflecting that I had, in all probability, saved a fellow creature from a course of vice, and consequent misery, and affording him the opportunity of becoming a respectable and useful member of society, but I had gained for myself an indefatigable servant—a faithful and constant friend. For years he served me with the greatest fidelity and devotion. His character for rigid, nay, even scrupulous honesty, was so well known, that "as honest as Smith," became a proverb amongst his acquaintances. One morning I missed him from his accustomed place, and upon inquiry, learnt that he was detained at home by indisposition. Several days elapsed, and still he was absent; and upon calling at his house to inquire after him, I found the family in great distress on his account. His complaint had proved typhus fever of a malignant kind. From almost the commencement of his attack, he had, as his wife (for he had been some time married) informed me, lain in a state of total unconsciousness, from which he had roused only to the ravings of delirium, and that the physician gave little hope of his recovery. For some days he continued in the same state; at length a message was brought me, saying that Mr Smith wished to see me; the messenger adding, that Mrs Smith hoped I would come as soon as possible, for she feared her husband was dying. I immediately obeyed the summons.

On entering his chamber, I found the whole of his family assembled to take farewell of him they so tenderly loved. As soon as he perceived me, he motioned for me to approach near to him, and taking my hand in both of his, he turned towards me his dying countenance, full of gratitude and affection, and said, "My dear master, my best earthly friend, I have sent for you that I may give you the thanks and blessing of a dying man for all your goodness to me. To your generosity and mercy I owe it, that I have lived useful and respected, that I die lamented and happy. To you I owe it, that I leave to my children a name unscathed by crime that in after years the blush of shame shall never tinge their cheeks at the memory of their father. O God!" he continued, "Thou who hast said, 'blessed are the merciful,' bless him. According to the measure he has meted to others, do thou mete unto him." Then turning to his family, he said, "My beloved wife and children, I entrust you, without fear, to the care of that heavenly parent who has said, 'Leave thy fatherless children to me, and I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.' And you, my dear master, will, I know, be to them as you have been to me—guide, protector, and friend." That," continued the kind old man, looking round upon us with glistening eyes, "though mixed with sorrow, was one of the happiest moments of my life. As I stood by the bedside of the dying man, and looked around upon his children growing up virtuous, intelligent, and upright, respecting and honouring, as much as they loved their father; when I saw his wife, though overcome with grief for the loss of a tender and beloved husband, yet sorrowing not as one without hope, but even in that moment of agony deriving comfort from the belief that she should meet him again in that world where

"Adieus and farewells is a sound unknown;" when I listened to his fervent expressions of gratitude, and saw him calmly awaiting the inevitable stroke, trusting in the mercy of God, and at peace with his fellow men; and when I thought of what the reverse of all this might have been—crime, misery, a disgraceful and dishonoured life, perhaps a shameful and violent death—had I yielded to the first impulse of indignation, I felt a happiness which no words can express. We are told that there is more joy amongst the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. With such a joy as we may imagine theirs, did I rejoice over poor Smith, as I closed his eyes, and

heard the attendant minister in fervent tones exclaim, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." My friends, I am an old man. During a long and eventful career in business, I have had intercourse with almost every variety of temper and disposition, and with many degrees of talent, but I have never found reason to swerve from the principle with which I set out in life, "temper justice with mercy."

Such was the story of our friend. And I believe not one in that company but returned home more disposed to judge leniently of the failings of his fellow creatures, and, as far as lay in his power, to extend to all who might fall into temptation that mercy which, under similar circumstances, he would wish shown to himself feeling "that it is more blessed to save than to destroy."*

*It may not be superfluous to remark, that this little paper describes events of actual occurrence.

From the London Pictorial Times.
THE DYING GIRL.

And thou art dying, beautiful and young,
When smiles of joy should on thy lips be playing,
And though shouldst bound with sportive glee along,
Where merry maids are in the meadows maying.
The spring sun shineth through my window-pane,
The pleasant breeze with balmy breath is sighing,
And thou canst hear the feather'd minstrel's strain
In that still room where thou art pale and dying.

Why is thy spirit summon'd to the skies,
Untried by years, unvisited by sorrow?
Why art thou call'd, ere yet thy gentle eyes
Have fear'd to look upon the coming morrow?
The cheek hath never paled with anxious care,
Thy heart hath never throbb'd with guilty sadness;
Even as thyself thy course was pure and fair,
Hallow'd by love, and cheer'd with looks of gladness.

Why didst thou leave thine own immortal heaven,
For earthly guests to cherish and caress thee?
Why unto us wert thou, sweet spirit, given,
And call'd away when we had learn'd to bless thee?
Why wert thou fashion'd lovely to the sight?
Why wert thine eyes with tender radiance streaming?
Why didst thou come, young being of delight,
To fade like mirage on the pilgrim gleaming!

Selfish and weak!—why should we wish thee here?
Pass to thy home, unspotted, happy spirit;
Hasten on blissful wing to that glad sphere,
Where thou wilt glory evermore inherit,
Mingle and dwell among the angel-band,
But, oh! whilst stars beneath thy path are burning,
Think'thou at times upon our sinful land,
And plead for those whose gaze is upwards turning.

British Magazines for April.

Illuminated Magazine.

[We extract a portion of a tale by Miss Toulmin, illustrative of the sufferings of those white-slaves, the milliner's apprentices, in whose behalf the voice of Humanity is yet but too feebly heard.]

THE ORPHAN MILLINERS.

A TALE OF THE WEST END.

In one of the prettiest cottages lived for some years a widow and her two daughters. A small annuity secured to Mrs Sandford was their only dependence; and Willow dale had been chosen as a residence, because house rent was low, and the little income would go farther in such a neighbourhood than elsewhere. The even thread of poor Mrs Sandford's life was snapped suddenly at last. The funeral was over with its dull formalities, that seem so cold and are so heart-rending. Henrietta—or Etty, as she was generally called—was nineteen, and Annie five years her junior. Of course responsibility devolved on the elder sister—though, if in the multitude of counsellors there is always wisdom, they must have been sagely advised. Every member of the little community of Willow dale was a friend—though, alas! with very limited power. In one opinion they were unanimous, namely, that Henrietta should write to a wealthy cousin in the North—the only relative she could claim—and ask his advice and assistance. He expressed much regret at their bereavement, and enclosed a trifling present to assist in the purchase of mourning, and proposed that the girls should be apprenticed to a London dress-maker,—kindly considering it would be a satisfaction not to separate them, and generously offering to provide the requisite money. They were to reside in the establishment of Madame Dobiere; such an arrangement having been taken into account in the premium paid. It was night when, after a wearying journey, they arrived in the mansion in — street, Hanover square, which was to be henceforth their home.

They were almost awed at its grandeur, the brilliantly lit show room, and the noble entrance; but something the opposite of this was felt when they were ushered, after a frugal meal, into the dingy, cold, uncomfortable garret, crowded with beds, not destined to be pressed, for hours to come, by the toil worn band our orphans were about to join. The morsel of candle with which they had been entrusted, warned them to hurry their unpacking; but it was a moonlight night, and long after they had wept in each other's arms—they scarcely knew why—and endeavored to sleep, the bright light which streamed through the curtainless windows, seemed to come as if with a message to keep them from sleep. That very moonlight, which had for so many years fallen on their neat white bed, casting in the summer, when they needed no other curtain, the quivering shadow of a trained labourer! Annie was the first to sleep; but after the clocks from the neighbouring steeple had tolled one, the door was opened, and Henrietta saw a pale thin girl of twenty enter. There was nothing remarkable in her appearance; there are hundreds such rise and toil every day, and wither and die every year in the great metropolis. She attempted to address, but sleep overpowered her, and she threw herself on a bed without removing her gown. Again the church clocks struck, telling that another hour belonged to the past. Soon afterwards two apprentices were heard upon the creaking stairs; and when they had entered, and Henrietta had had time to notice them, she felt surprised that they, up an hour later, were evidently less fatigued than their companion; but the mystery was soon solved. "Poor Bessy," said one, alluding to the girl who lay dressed upon the bed; "two nights has she been up: I thought she would have fallen asleep over that fancy ball dress. Well, I suppose our turn will come before the week is out; for, though it is not the season, and I call it a shame to have such 'long hours,' she won't have 'day hands' for this country order, so what is to be done?" "Oh, don't talk," said the other; "I am so tired, and my eyes so prickly, let us go to bed when we can." And to bed they hurried, without bending the knee to ONE. Let us hope that some murmured prayer to guide and bless, mounted to his throne! From sheer bodily weariness Henrietta Sandford fell asleep before three other occupants of that gloomy attic entered singly and softly. Madame Dobiere was a little sharp-featured woman of forty, who usually dressed in black silk, or brown merino, without tuck or trimming; because ladies do not like to see milliners themselves adopt the mode they recommend. But on Sundays, and on the frequent holidays she gave herself—why Cinderella's fairy change could not have been more striking than hers. It was even said she had once been found out, in borrowing from her show room a bonnet destined for a countess. Yet I am afraid she would be shocked at the mere accusation, for Madame Dobiere stinked much for propriety. For instance, she would not suffer a brother to visit one of her resident apprentices—it was not proper where there were so many young women, whom she felt herself bound to protect; but at midnight her "day hands" might traverse the streets alone on the way to their wretched lodgings! Madame Dobiere was also one of that class, who, like the monkey in the fable, always find a "paw" to win for them the object of their desires. Mr Dobiere, (his real name was Dobs, but Madame having travelled as lady's maid in her youth, and having thus picked up a few French phrases, thought it expedient to Frenchify that plebeian monosyllable,) was a peaceable individual, whose occupation, whatever it was, called him "into the city" every morning. He was punctual as clock work, always returning at six; when if he did not take Madame to the play, and they had not a few friends to take tea, or had not some such engagement, he usually assisted his wife in arranging her accounts. Who, then, did manage the business of this pleasure loving lady? Her factotum—a woman who received a high salary, for which she certainly worked indefatigably. But Miss Smith was a greater tyrant than Madame; and was one of those harp, passionless, yet scolding women, who receive unanimously the title of shrews. To this had she been moulded by the ordeal passed by a milliner's apprentice. By degrees, Henrietta perceived how different must be their existence to that which their inexperience had painted. But they had good constitutions in their favor, and Etty bore up bravely for a while against the sedentary life—the poor living—the want of sleep—and want of relaxation; while her character was developed by intense application to acquire skill in the business; and so great was her progress, that in an incredibly short space of time she became one of the most efficient "hands" in Madame Dobiere's establishment. Yet this very concentration of her energies, perhaps, prevented her from perceiving the gradual but melancholy change that was taking place in Annie; though dearly she loved her, with an affection more protecting than is generally that of a sister; and so blended did it seem with her own life, that the most powerful motive she had felt to exertion was the hope that dear Annie's opening youth might be passed more brightly than her own could be. Thus passed the winter; and now the busy season was come. "Etty," said the child to her sister, one day, speaking in a high-pitched tone across the room—"Etty, I am so giddy—so ill!" and before Etty could fling down her work and reach her side, Annie had fainted—saved only from a serious fall by some nearer companion. "Throw some water over her," said Miss Smith, without relinquishing for a moment her own stitching out—"she'll soon come to again;—why one would think you had never seen a girl faint before me!" But the water did not restore her, and Henrietta and another carried her

from the close air was more reached their senses. "Oh sufferer—" "Oh darling—be e ed her sister! tears coursed of the elder self reproach the hollow e dear Annie, tined—" "yo surely send just to ask no, there I am think—I am for want of f what use w not eat that night—and t could muton be so dainty the girl who —" dainty i the hard D mutton. B cher, and th is a shame, are the wot to go to on even once a upon the cr Smith threw ford" said t waste half h here, do yo is promised one to help Henrietta moved. "two," mur out turning her lips. "I want to a few mom advice mee ned out of ney?" ask Jane. "A etta;" "bu salary for change it," you flies w ney a skill to get her do her mo kind-hear the poor exact reco was one s but true, t establishm ferent asp parlance, Nor was rietta's ve in six mo had been ally brea of the dea in less th ther circ mind—ay had born weeks, th feelings, ceased to She had as it affa her prep were vag and luxu thing to [The u sisters di dentally [From a lied th make TH There the poor of pover spinners a fine sh ing of a with unc blaze of kiss of stirring brave ki marble mo most up done. have se cerem I will sh outline cut, u whom t heritag This m even ea heart, tity of a a grade respect hardne stead h section his pal and sul and gu and go Hermi kingdo surely bilate.