

## Literature, &amp;c.

From the Illustrated London News.  
MABEL MARCHMONT.

BY THOMAS MILLER.  
Continued from our last.

THE old Manor House, which we made mention of in a former part of our story, had of late years undergone a great change.  
"A merry spot 'twas said in days of yore,  
But something ail'd it now, the place was cur'd;"

for a cloud seemed to have settled upon it ever since the marriage of the unfortunate Amy. The ancient avenue of gigantic elms which led up to the stately and aristocratic entrance of the hall, appeared darker and more solemn than it used to look in former years; and the carriage way was overgrown with long grey grass, which stood white and bleached, and unmown, year after year. The noisy rooks, that still cawed and built in "the windy tall elm trees," were the only old familiar sounds that awakened the sleeping echo. Even the black old mastiff had ceased to bark, and only left her kennel to bark outside in the sunshine. The heavy coil of rusted chain looked as if it belonged to the chain of a ship; and the old grey weather-beaten kennel stood like a portion of her wind-bleached hull.

How different the scene a few years before, when the young and buoyant scholars gave life and beauty to the landscape, when they threw aside their books, and burst forth from the large doors of the old Manor House, like a pent up stream, that sparkles and runs in every direction, giving a voice to the silence, and throwing back a look of saucy light upon the sunshine. But the race of romps was gone. The sedate couples that paraded that long avenue, arm in arm, beneath the severe eye of their stately governess, had vanished; their shadows no more broke the golden network of the velvet sward; the "smooth shaven green" rebounded no longer beneath their elastic tread. Husbands, and children, and household cares had stepped in between; and some had pillowed their aching heads in the grave: the place they once had known, "would know them no more for ever."

Yet it was not altogether deserted, for sometimes, when the sun shone, a superannuated deaf old woman (now sole mistress of that once noble mansion) would crawl forth slowly into the sunshine, and, bow-bent with age and crime, go muttering along to herself through the grass-grown paths of the shrubberies, and the winding walks which departed youth and beauty had looked upon as their own, and there communicated to each other all those fond little secrets which make such a bird-like flutter in a woman's heart. And sometimes this deaf, half-blind old woman, would curtsy to the grey stems of the trees, and fancy that they were her boarders; and, when the wind was unusually loud, and the old boughs clashed together, with noise enough to strike the dull drum of her ears, then would she name one Miss after another, and request them not to talk so loud; she bowed to the tall white grass at times, as she passed along, mistaking it for the fluttering drapery of some passing pupil.

For more than half a century had she groped her way through the twilight cloisters of learning; and when she could no longer lead, she hired teachers—creatures who were made to move at her beck and bid, while she herself seemed to sit unseen; her cold grey sunken eyes strengthened by the shadows that screened her as she marked narrowly all that moved in the stronger and outward light. She had now made gold her god; every track that led to her abode was marked with gold; the very slime which encrusted the walls of the dark passages that led to her darling idol, glittered with the traces of gold. And so she added acre to acre, field to field, until the wide domain which had once been owned by a noble race, had become her own; and she laughed whenever her cold calculating eye fell upon the half-obliterated escutcheon, and thought of the proud possessors who were gone. Many a night had this cruel old woman sat up alone in that old Manor House, counting over her ill-gotten gold, and plotting new schemes to barter away the happiness of the unsuspecting and beautiful victims who slept their innocent sleep above her head. If an heiress eloped, and her enraged parents came, her "God-a-mercy" was ever ready; she would have the windows barred, and the walls sheet-ironed; it should never happen again. So the devil and her kept sentry for years, and winked at each other while they watched.

And now she could have built for herself a vault of gold, could have confined up her body in the very dress for which she had bartered her peace of mind; nay, even perilled her very soul. Then she began to think of death, and to wage war against the Evil One, by giving loaves and blankets to the poor; but even the poor loved her not; the old mumpers, on St. Thomas's day, accepted her dolc, and cursed the hand that distributed it. Her name was Miss Crooltey, and the poor had changed it to Cruelty, though to her face they called her "my Lady;" and woe to the wight who wanted a favor, and addressed her by any other title than that "My Lady Crooltey, of Messingham Manor House."

She kept two affectionate female servants, who would have poisoned her if they dared, but they confined their practice to the old lady's favorite cats and dogs; even her old gardener never failed to leave a rake, or hoe, or roller in her path, over which he hoped she might some fine day break her neck. As for her coachman he could scarcely see for fat and want of exercise; so contented himself with eating and drinking, and looking at his horses, as if only to

see which got the fattest. The footman was her master, and only did what he pleased; gave her to eat what he himself disapproved of; heard her when it suited him, and stood grinning behind her chair while she rung the bell that summoned him to her presence. The old steward was the only one faithful to the last, for he had risked his soul too far to retreat; he thought it hard for the old lady to insure herself in the fire-office below without a witness, so insured himself for companionship. She was a stately old dame, and would have thought death himself very ill-mannered if he did not offer her his bony arm whenever he might think well to conduct her to the grave.

And that man, whom she had been the chief instrument in getting imprisoned and maddened, was now her only boarder,—the only living wreck that pointed to the stormy and dangerous sea over which she had sailed for her ill-gotten wealth—the only thing, saving her rents, which apprised her of quarter-day, when the accustomed cheque came which paid for his board, lodging, and attendance, and which her steward always got cashed into gold, every piece of which the old lady weighed repeatedly, and sent back those which were the balance of a hair too light.

She little dreamed of the mischief she was doing, when eight years before she permitted Amy to marry a mere boy. For twelve years had her fair pupil remained at school. No one came to fetch her home at holiday-time. The man, who was now an idiot, was the only one who ever came, and that was seldom. It was not enough for the old lady that her increased salary was paid regularly. She did not like boarders at holiday time. She wanted the money without the meals—the pay without the trouble. She liked to be alone then, to count her ungodly gains. And when notice was given for Amy to quit the school, she thought she must have a little more for her trouble, and so made the best bargain she could with the friends of Alfred Etherington.

Amy's mother had then long been dead. Her father died while she was but a child. Her mother had married again to a man who accepted her hand solely for the sake of her property—for her estate joined his own. Had the law allowed him any loophole through which he could have stepped in, and claimed it, he would have done so, but finding this no easy matter, he married Amy's mother—broke her heart, and buried her in less than three years—sent his step-daughter to Miss Crooltey's school, married another lady of title, and kept the very existence of Amy a secret from his coroneted wife. Amy might have succeeded the old lady, and kept her school until she had nearly grown grey, had it not been for her ill-timed marriage with Etherington. For Amy herself knew not that when she gave her girlish hand to her youthful lover, she also gave up thousands of broad acres, which until then the law allowed her step-father to claim as his own. That juvenile antique, Miss Crooltey, was the first to communicate the tidings. She was, as she expected to be, bought over. The pretended guardian came down and took away poor Amy.

Even then the gold-loving governess proved too much for the ambitious stepfather, and the man who acted like a tool in the clever mechanic's hands, she cut sheer between them both. The letter from France announcing Amy's death, she handed over to Alfred, and then she demanded an account of what had befallen her pupil. It was soon rendered: a heavy check brought the clearest satisfaction; it tore the registry from the church book—proved the elopement of the guardian with her pupil—produced a trial in which the mad man, pleaded guilty for a promised reward—ended in a forged certificate of Amy's death, and the imprisonment of a confiding fool, who was found guilty of a crime he was innocent of, and who went mad during the ingratitude of his patron, whose petition to the Secretary of State, stating the whole truth, was never allowed to pass the walls of his prison, for it was to the interest of his gaolers to believe him mad, and lest there should be a doubt, they brought all their horrible means to bear upon him, they gave him darkness and solitude, and finished their damnable work. Then his patron stepped in, sheriff-like, and claimed the body; it was given up when the mind was dead, when mischief had wrought its worst.

Amy's marriage was the last act of that old woman's long tragedy. Not that she might have brooded over it any more than the hundred other deeds she had been guilty of; had not the presence of the poor idiot caused it at times to rise more distinctly before her, and that, too, when she found he was so constant a visitor at Miles Marchmont's, and heard the rumour of the intended marriage between Mabel and Alfred. Sathanus himself [according to De Foe's history of that dusky and over-much-slandered gentleman] sometimes likes to tread his hoof away, and mislead good christians by his foot mark—so cruel Miss Crooltey, either out of a love of mischief, or a reverence for the beauty and innocence of Mabel—whom she had often seen and admired at church—for Mabel had always curtsied to her grey hairs as she passed from the porch—began to take an interest in the forthcoming marriage; and as old Miles had danced with her fifty years before, and as Mabel's mother had been her pupil, and was married to Miles' son, soon after she left school, she introduced herself, her gold-headed stick, and fat poodle, all at once to the old man, much to his astonishment, one fine sunny day. She began by talking about the balls she had given in former times at the manor house; of the dead who then danced with her; of the few living, whose dancing days were over, like her own and Miles'; of the altered style of dress, and the decreased interest on money; regretted that she had not perceived the increase of the village of Messingham, but had let the leases of her lands so low; talked about the intended

repairs of the church, and how inconsiderate it was of her to promise one hundred pounds towards the aforesaid; and ended by sallying forth to see if the church would not do without the repairs, adding, as she crossed old Miles' threshold, "They say it has stood five hundred years, and I cannot see why it should not stand five hundred more; or, at least, as long as I live, without wanting any repairs. It has outstood the old De Lacey's."

How many and varied are the emotions which a visit to a churchyard awaken—to all it looks not like the silent City of the Dead. The cheek of the young bride may blanch as her silken dress rustles by her mother's grave, and the footsteps of the bridegroom falter as he passes the spot where his forefathers sleep. Time brings the portly nurse with the baby christening—and the future dawns upon a new race of men and women, while the old grave-stones are gradually removed, and each new comer looks round and takes his rest, disturbing nothing but a few old and forgotten bones. So streets and houses pour out the old race of inhabitants, the mute passes from the door, and makes way for the upholsterer, the dress maker finishes her mourning order, and commences the new bridal robes, the white and black waste strew the self-same floor, the room that one week echoed back the long heart-broken sobs, in a few more days resound with laughter, and ere we can say "that is the house of mourning," it has become the abode of mirth.

It might be that some such thoughts as these rose up in the memory of that old woman, as she entered the village churchyard, and gazed on the grey old pile, where the last of the De Lacey's slept. Perchance other wrecks hove up before her dim and "dazed" sight, victims which she herself had hurried to their final slumber, beneath that still green sea of station-less waves, broken only by the frozen spray of white grave stones, each of which seemed to start up like a wan and sheeted ghost, while the last red rays of sunset gilded their time-worn summits, as if their brows had been "dabbled in blood."

On one of those silent and grassy hillocks sat the poor idiot, arranging a handful of wild flowers, which he had gathered in the neighbouring fields.

The old lady walked up to where he was seated; and sat down on an adjoining bench, her thoughts divided between him, the surrounding dead, and the repairs of the old church.

"Fine morning ma'am," said the idiot, unconscious that it was evening, which was of no consequence, as the old woman could not hear a word he said. "Won't the prize at the flower show—seven hundred—this rose did it," added he, holding up a faded buttercup, "grew it in the dark—no air—no light—went mad when they saw its colour—all ran off and were locked up—mad, mad! ah, ah, ah, all went mad!" and he laughed—such a laugh as would have driven the blood back cold into the heart to have heard him.

"Oly seventeen when she died," muttered the old woman to herself, as she looked round amongst the graves, her eye gradually perceiving the objects that rose before her through the dim owl light of her old age. "It was a pretty piece of plate her mother gave me, for attending on her through her long illness; but her shame was buried with her, and they were a haughty race. It was for the best, after all, perhaps; and Dr. Mori knew better than I did, so I haven't that to answer for, and he has long since settled his account. I did expect a better legacy from him—but he behaved very handsomely." And she drew her old cloak more closely around her, for she thought the air was colder about graves than it was in other places.

"I've been a great traveller, ma'am," continued the idiot—"was two thousand years on a solitary island, where a flower was never seen—took my tongue out, and laid it by, because I had no use for it—This flower will win seven prizes—barren country, ma'am—no light to grow anything—going over again soon—made a contract with the gas company—light it up, and have beautiful vegetation."

"And he seems very happy," said the old woman, now looking at the harmless madman beside her. "Perhaps it was all for the best; he was then very acute, almost too sharp even for me. He might have forged his name to a will, or made base sovereigns, and ruined many a poor family, and perhaps he might have got hung, who knows? After all, I haven't got much on my conscience: now he can harm nobody, and he hasn't sense enough to feel trouble like me. Well, that's a blessing if I give him a shilling, and tell him it's a guinea, he doesn't know the difference, and that's a great comfort, when it is so."

"Quite enough here ma'am," said the idiot, remembering for the moment that they were in a churchyard, and still pursuing his task in arranging the wild flowers; for the golden chain of his thoughts was too shattered to hold together long. "Nice trade that of sexton; dig, dig, dig; cover all up in the same suit. I find the flowers ma'am, large—garden bigger than the world. Pretty patterns—May-blossoms for country maidens, lilies and roses for ladies, because they are pale and paint; monk's-hood and black shoes for widows—for they carried off all the prizes. Hemlock and night-shade for old women, ma'am; and poison and prison for death's-head moths—they tied the living on the back of the dead, and so left them in the grave." And he made a horrible noise betwix his teeth, then began so bite the stalks from the flowers.

Meantime Mabel and Alfred had entered the churchyard, and approached the old woman, who was Mabel's godmother. She saw them come up, and motioned Mabel to sit beside her, an offer which the latter declined; but leant heavier on the arm of her lover.

"So you are about to be married," said the old lady; "well, well, I dare say you will be

very happy, and you, sir," added she, addressing Alfred, "are but a young widower. But I dare say—let me see—eighty years has not left my memory quite so perfect as it once was; and Amy, I could tell by looking at my banker's book—for I gave up my school the quarter but one after. And her father sent me the first cheque for Mr ——— but Lord have mercy on me, I have no memory for dates now, and should forget when it was dated-day did not Mary move the large calendar every morning. I am getting older, goddaughter.

"Your mother lies there, and I sit here," continued the old lady—"Lord, Lord! who would have thought that I should have out-lived her. She was so fond of green peas, and she died just as lamb was coming into season. The last time she took tea with me, you was not above this height," and the old woman raised her stick up as she spoke. "Miss Wainwright died the Tuesday after—she had a white coffin. I have the feather pillow yet that she wished to be buried in; it was swan's down, and I changed it for the best shearman's flock. I did it all for the best. Swan's down! and so often as the young ladies were ill; besides, it felt so easy under my own head. But she died very happy—although it had been her mother's."

"What an old wretch," said Alfred, "to pluck the very pillow from the head of a dying girl. Ask her where poor Amy was buried. I would that we knew the worst, Mabel. There is something wrong, or her father would not now be here."

"I cannot," answered Mabel, "she is very old, and the remembrance of your marriage might be a pain to her—it is to me, and yet I know not why it should." She then turned round, and taking the few wild flowers which the idiot presented to her, placed them in her bodice.

"You spoke of Amy's death just now," said Alfred, hollaing into the old woman's ear. "I saw him to-day! he was inquiring about a gang of gypsies who are somewhere near to this neighbourhood. You are old, and near the grave—does his inquiry concern me, or in any way affect my marriage with your goddaughter, Mabel? If it does, tell me, while Mabel is beyond hearing. I have heard strange things whispered of late; and her father has been hovering about here for several days."

"God-a-mercy, Amy's father here," exclaimed the old lady: "why I gave him a stamped receipt for his last quarter's account; my steward sent it back by return of post—we were ever particular in matters of money. The gypsies, I see," said she, thrown for a moment off her guard: "it may be something about her baby."

"What," said Alfred, grasping the old woman's wrist, for Mabel was engaged with the idiot—"what baby? As you hope to enter that Heaven which you are so unworthy of, tell me what you hint at so darkly. Is Amy still alive?—what brought her father here?—where is the child you name? answer me, old woman, I am not a boy now." "Dear me, no," said the old lady; "how you hurt me. Leave go, and I will tell you. Well, there was a child, and Amy sold it—no—they took it from. He there," pointing to the idiot, "said it was his. But all was done for the best, although it drove him mad. Your wife Amy, the girl, was taken—but I cannot remember the names of places. They put her in a private asylum, and she made her escape. From that day to this her father knows not what befel her—he could not deceive me—I have not that on my conscience. She may be dead for aught I know. I did not know she was so rich when you married her; but I did it all for the best; for, poor thing, she had nobody who seemed to care for her. Wait awhile, and I will write. Mabel, you know, is my god-daughter. It may be worth your while to wait. I have no relation nor friend in the world. Her father is here, is he? Well, well! he is more to blame than I am, and I have enough to answer for for other people; marry have I!"

"He is," exclaimed a deep manly voice, which seemed to come from the grave beneath the old woman's feet, while a tall gentlemanly looking man emerged from the porch of the church in which he had been seated. "He is, old woman, and has now come to demand a receipt in full. We have long played a fast and loose game together. Tell me, old bag, to whom you consigned Amy's child." The sound of voices was at this moment heard without the churchyard wall, and as the old woman exclaimed, "another day, not now! another day," Mabel turned her head, and heard the terminus of a very old song, which ended with—

"Let others think of what they may,  
We gypsies have enough to day,  
And why should we not laugh and play,  
Merry as the birds in May."

[To be concluded in our next.]

## The British Magazines

FOR FEBRUARY.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

## RISE OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE.

[The following graphic account of the rise and progress of the Russian Empire, is introductory of a tale by a native author, entitled the "Heretic," in the above named periodical.]

It is now about three centuries since Richard Chancellor, pilot-major of the fleet which, under the command of Sir Hugh Willoughby, and by the advice of Sebastian Cabot, set out to discover a north east passage to China, carried his ship, the Edward Bonaventura, into Archangel. The rest of the fleet put into a haven on the coast of Lapland, where all their crews, with the gallant commander, perished miserably of cold and hunger. Chancellor, accompanied by