

Literature, &c.

From the Illustrated London News.
MABEL MARCHMONT.

BY THOMAS MILLER.

"God's will be done, my child," exclaimed old Abraham Marchmont, pressing his granddaughter Mabel affectionately, and raising his eyes from the holy volume which was laid upon his knees.

"Amen," echoed Mabel, as she bent lower over the garden chair, while her long brown tresses mingled with the silver hairs of her grandfather—a hoary head, which threescore and ten winters had whitened. "God hath been very good to us," added she, in a soft and tremulous voice. A tear rolled down her damask cheek as she spoke, and fell upon the old man's wrinkled hand.

"She may not be dead," murmured Abraham to himself; "it is that I fear;" and for several moments he remained silent.

"How beautiful are all His works," said the old man, his thoughts wandering for the moment from the subject they had been conversing upon, as he pointed to the western sky, broken into a thousand masses of luminous gold, into which the sun seemed fast sinking.

"Beautiful," murmured Mabel, raising his eyes, while her thoughts fell backward to the feelings nearest her heart, and she saw only the splendour of the evening sunset, as we catch glimpses of gaudy visions in a dream.

As the venerable old man sat in silence, contemplating the beauty of the sky, his thoughts wandered to Milton's description of the return of the Son of God when he had driven Satan and his angels down the yawning precipice, and all the hosts of heaven marched forth with bannered gold, and welcomed back the Holy Victor. Such seemed the sun—so stretched the clouds, like a mighty and armed host, rank above rank, along the western steep of heaven—armour, and banner and plume, and helmet, blazing in gold—broad and far along the whole skirt of the bending sky.

It was but for a few moments, and his thoughts trod painfully backward, as his eyes glanced upon the open Bible—to the beautiful history of Ruth, which he had been reading—and with a heart full, almost to breaking, he said in a sorrowful tone of voice, "Thou has been long with me. Mabel, thou hast been to me what Ruth was to the widowed Naomi—my home has been thy home—we are the last of a long race, and I have hoped and prayed that thou alone mayest be with me, when I close mine aged eyes, and sink in silence into the arms of Death."

"Speak not so sadly, dear grandfather," answered Mabel, as she threw her arms round the old man's neck, "Speak not so, or you will break my heart. I will never leave you—I never wished to leave you, strongly as you have urged my marriage with Alfred. Much as we both love him—you pain me when you name it, and yet it is ever the uppermost on your lips."

"True, true. Thou wert ever a good child," replied her grandfather, "and I am very old and foolish; it may be somewhat selfish too, now, Mabel; yet thy happiness is dearer to me than mine own. I know not why I should wish to retain one blossom on the withered rose, when all the rest have fallen off and are dead. I would, and I would not—I am fickle as a child—and yet I should like to see thee happy before I die. The old cottage will be large enough for us all! On that threshold I welcomed home thy father and mother from church—beneath this roof thou wert born; from out this doorway they were carried to their last home—and I—"

Tears choked his further utterance; Memory rose up before him with bowed head and drooping hair—her wan finger pointing to the outstretched and sleeping sea of graves—that silent sea whose green waves heave but once into hillocks, then freeze down into the ridgy roofs of the dead, silent and motionless for ever. For every sigh we heave for the past is a nipping winter stealing upon the summer of the present, and blighting the very bloom on which the heart has set its choicest pride. Unseen, and too often remarked by ourselves, we hang over the brink of the grave, wearing, footstep by footstep away, pining for what, while living we valued not aright—for what, when dead, will like ourselves rest a clod of the valley—the soil from which other hopes and loves will spring, and pine, and die.

Abraham Marchmont had seen wife and child carried over his threshold, and consigned to their tranquil resting place—to that solemn spot—where he had heard the earth fall hollow and sepulchred on the coffin lids of his own father and mother, years, years, ago, "each in their narrow cell for ever laid."

Still Mabel hung about him like a thing of light, an angel, whose brightness might chase away all memory of the grave—the last link between him and Eternity. Yet through her face, Death often peeped in upon the old man; it was like her mother's, she whom his own soul loved, that only son his wife had worshipped, these lips his own aged father had often kissed. So 'coil by coil unawound' whenever he looked steadfastly on Mabel, when he gazed on the summer of her beauty, and thought of the winter "which has been."

The old man's attention was now drawn towards the garden gate, at which an old looking visitor had entered—a man whose very look and bearing would have startled a stranger, while to Miles Marchmont it was nothing unusual, for giving him a nod of recognition, he said, "Here comes our poor idiot. They were cruel gaolers who drove him to this, Mabel. Death would have been mercy compared to such cruelty—a body without a mind. The

Philistines used not Samson so savagely, when they put out his eyes."

"I will leave you alone with him, grandfather," said Mabel, "my spirits are already sadly depressed. Poor gentleman," she added, looking at the visitor, I often wonder what he could have done, that they should have used him so unmercifully."

"There is some mystery connected with his misfortunes, which few know saving the old lady at the Manor house, where he resides," answered the old man. "The terrible and un-English plan of imprisonment has driven him to what he is—the Silent System and Solitary confinement,—which I cannot even name without being ashamed of my country, for adopting such a savage and unnatural punishment."

Mabel heaved a deep sigh, cast a silent and pitiful glance at the poor idiot, then opening a little wicket at the far end of the garden, crossed the adjoining field, and entered the neighboring wood—her favorite walk—and one which her mother had often selected on a summer evening. There is something almost holy in such places—they are hallowed by the memory of those we loved when living—and in some moods, the dead seem to be again with us, we hear them speak as they were wont to speak in days of old.

Meantime the new comer had amused himself by plucking the choicest flowers in the garden, which he placed in every button hole of his coat, and having filled those, he commenced planting them round his hat band, until he completed the wreath; then came up to the old man laughing, unconscious of the havoc he had made.

Poor fellow! it made the heart ache only to look at him. His face had once borne God's image, and been stamped with manly dignity. The high forehead was there, a waste pile, untenanted. The deep sunk eyes, that had once marked the man of thought, now lacked lustre: their fire was quenched; or, in moments of anger flamed with an unnatural light; the mild gaze was gone; they either blazed or were extinguished. The golden throne of reason had been overturned. The Goths and Vandals of our Gaols had been at work: they had killed the mind, and turned the living body loose into the world!

"Oh, God!" exclaimed the old man, rising from his garden chair, and looking at the poor idiot, "thou only knowest what this poor creature endured in his solitary cell, until his silence and his sufferings drove him mad. 'Repent and live,' are written in letters of light in Thy Holy Book—characters worthy of being emblazoned on the gates of Heaven. Despair and die stand cast in letters of iron over the prison gates that darken our land, as if marking those damnable abodes where hope enters not. Oh, dreadful thought, to know that there was not one human voice to comfort him—no human footfall to break that terrible silence—nothing but his own burning thoughts and aching head, sickening and sinking day by day, and night after night. Horrible! horrible,—even the fiends find companionship. Poor fellow. Death unto thee would have been an Angel of Mercy."

Miles Marchmont then seized the arm of the idiot, and attempted to amuse him, just as he would have done to a child, by gathering him flowers, and giving him fruit; putting the latter into his mouth, for he would have swallowed hemlock, had it been offered to him.

He was now gentle, simple and foolish as a new born babe; and very few weeks had made this melancholy change. Powerful friends had rescued him from solitary confinement and death; they just saved the living body, and no Coroner's inquest was held over the Dead Mind. He had been refractory, had cursed his savage gaolers, had yelled and shouted, had prayed aloud for death. So they gave him darkness. They thrust him into a deep dark, and silent cell; alive, they buried him; then, cruel mercy, put food into his coffin, and made the dead living man eat. A dead man suddenly awakened to life, in his dark grave, could not have listened more attentively for a sound than he did after his first struggles were over: motionless and silent did he listen in the deep darkness hour after hour. No sound came; he held his breath; he could not hear for his own loud breathing; he held his breath, and then his heart knocked awfully loud against his bosom, his very soul seemed struggling to get free, as if it loathed the living body imprisoned in this vaulted coffin. But the mind was not yet dead, it aroused the body, and the man once more sprung up; like a newly captured lion he stalked to and fro in his horrible den. He paced madly his three limited strides, striking his hot head against the cold stones, unconscious of what he did. The beaded drops stood thick upon his burning brow; his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth with parching thirst; yet his savage keepers gave him no drink. He might have been caged up in the centre of a desolate and sandy desert, where never was heard the voice of man, and looked for pity among the howling wolves that thirsted to lap his blood, as sought for it in that deep, cold stony and silent cell. Then he prayed for death, with clasped hands and streaming eyes did he pray to die. But even death seemed to shun that horrible abode, and seemed to pass on with a shudder, leaving the wretched living to die, without a stroke from his friendly dart,—pitying and passing on, and leaving the confined living to his emissaries the gaolers; for Death knew that there was but a wall between them and his own dominions—the quiet realms of the grave.

So days of agony passed, until his thoughts became knotted, and he had no separate idea; all was massed in confusion; his very mind was numbed; one great overpowering agony had seized upon each lesser sense, and left no room for cessation. His thoughts had locked themselves up in one great pain; a mountain seem-

ed to have settled upon his head, and crushed flat the mind beneath its pressure. Then they brought him forth unto the light—silent, solitary, blinding light—and he smiled, played with his fingers, and thanked them, for light and darkness were now alike to him. The sun of his reason was fast setting, and gleamed sadly upon the ruins of a shattered intellect and broken heart. Then the white walls seemed to make faces at him; and he "mopped and mowed," and returned their mocking grimaces. He could not even see the cold unfeeling eye gazing upon him through the cyclotheole in the door, while he was making armies of straw, and laughing as he blew his combatants together. Formerly, he felt cold, sinking, and hungry; and yet, when his food was slid in, he could not eat it, for it was not hunger, but despair, that preyed upon him. But now this pang had passed. The slow poison springing from that horrible bite had crept through every vein, and poisoned every drop of healthful blood. He now devoured all that was given to him, and gnashed his teeth at his keepers. His body held the mastery over his mind. His hands had triumphed, and by the aid of his brutal gaolers, forced the food into his mouth which his soul loathed—for there was no friend there kind enough to help him to die.—They crammed food into his throat, and left it in his coffin: their only dread was lest he should die.

His friends were then written to; and he was allowed once more to mingle with his fellow men. This living body, without a mind, was turned out of its grave into the sunshine; and it looked round, as if it expected to find the earth desolate; clapped its hands to its ears, and ran from the sound of living voices; sought dark and silent corners, in which to hide itself; until at last, it became reconciled to the face of man; licking, like a dog, the hand that fed it, yet lacking the sagacity which that faithful animal so often shews towards man.

And now he came fondling and caressing old Miles Marchmont, for he knew by instinct that the old man was kind to him, and was now rubbing his face against his hands; then trying to catch him a bird, chasing a bee, or plucking a flower, or sometimes peeping into the cottage window to see if supper was forthcoming, for kind old Miles Marchmont used to cut his food into small pieces, and feed him with it.

God waiteth his own good time; the day of reckoning is sure to come; that day when, if He stirreth not up the rage of man, the thunder fires of Heaven will plough deep the blackened graves for these dens of cruelty, tyranny, and savage oppression, and leave them, like the Cities of the Plain, marked only by the sullen and weltering waves, to tell of the great iniquities buried beneath. The grim and weather beaten gibbet posts, on which the bleached bones and rusty irons hung and shook, and rattled in the wind, were not half so hideous to the imagination as these silent slaughter houses are, to which thousands of our fellow creatures are now yearly consigned. There stood the deed, marked by its dreadful doom, a hideous and shocking reality, beneath which the wicked shuddered and the good man prayed. Death then claimed his victims in the open noon of day, but now he has to dive into deep cells and silent prisons, where the flapping of his wings spread no awe, where the voice of Pity is never heard, "where the wicked never cease from troubling, and the weary are never at rest," until hushed in the lap of our mother earth, where they sleep the sleep that awakens not, until the last trumpet has sounded.

But we must leave the old man and his visitor for a brief period, and follow the footsteps of the beautiful and disconsolate Mabel, into the dim twilight of the greenwood, where she wandered alone, hanging her head aside, and looking very unhappy. "She may not be dead," were the words that rung in Mabel's ear, for they had been uttered more than once during the day by her grandfather, and the very thought was enough to make a maiden, who loved like Mabel, very miserable.

Alfred Etherington, Mabel's accepted lover and intended husband, at the age of seventeen, married a young lady scarcely six months older than himself. It was a childish match—a boarding school courtship; where they made love over the high wall of the old Manor House, and ate the peaches to show their consancy. A gold watch presented by the young lady won the consent of the governess, who had little to care for, saving her half-year's salary, and perhaps the more readily consented, as notice had been given that the "lady-love" was to quit the academy at the expiration of the six months. Alfred succeeded equally as well with the old parson, with whom he was a favorite; and as there was no one at hand who had any interest in prohibiting the bans, the "boy and girl" were made "man and wife." The village bells rung merrily on the occasion, and, saving that by night the fingers were drunk, nothing remarkable occurred until about a week afterwards, when the young lady's guardian [while she was out nutting with her husband in the woods] drove up to the old Manor House in a post chaise for the purpose of taking her from school. An explanation, of course, took place. Mrs Etherington was sought and found; she shook her ringed finger at her guardian, talked about love and death, and in one or two hours afterwards was seated beside her guardian in the post chaise, waving her white handkerchief at her husband as she departed; while he, poor fellow, stood with both hands thrust into the very bottom of his trousers pocket, whistling a most melancholy air.

The young lady's guardian seemed to be a man of the world; he made, to use a homely phrase, "but little bother about the matter," said "what was done could not be undone," spoke about settlements, and the necessity of two days absence—of bringing back some of her friends from London, and celebrating the

marriage in high style; and away went the chaise, postboys and all, and from that day to the evening Mabel wandered alone in the greenwood, the "bonny bride" was never seen. Three months, however, after her departure, a letter sealed with black, and bearing the French post mark, reached the disconsolate husband, and told him in pretty plain language that his young wife was dead, requesting him also to make no further enquiries about her family, but, like a good boy, to draw his two hundred pounds annually, which was invested in the funds, and spend it in the best way he might choose.

Of course he went into mourning, engraved the name of Amy [or he never knew her by any other name, and it was short,] on many a tree; tried his hand at an elegy, and could not, for the life of him, find a rhyme to correspond with the second line of the first verse, for it was "coffin'd;" was much courted and pitied by all the young ladies in the boarding school; had sly hints thrown out by old mothers who had marriageable daughters, that it was mocking Providence to mourn so long for the dead, and so many lovely faces round him, ought to seek for comfort in—*Two Hundred* a year. A widow felt for him like a mother, wished only that he were her child. One of sixty could not bear to look upon him, he so much resembled her poor dear husband when he was young. Another at forty had commenced a novel upon him, entitled "The Mysteries of the Manor House;" and had actually invited him to tea to hear the first volume read. While Misses without end beset him—beginning with bib and tucker, and ending with a terrible bustle—of sighs, besetments, oghs, hems, whispers, &c.

So four years glided away; and at the expiration of that time he became acquainted with honest Miles Marchmont. He was then a young man, and Mabel a maiden under sixteen, yet the mistress of her grandsire's household; and never yet was found matron who bore her new dignity with greater honor than did our youthful Mabel. Everything she did became her. Whether she helped her grandfather's servants to brew or bake, cream or churn, she still looked the mistress.

"She was the prettiest low-born lass that ever Ran on the greensward. Nothing she did but seemed

To smack of something greater than herself— Too noble for her place."

SHAKESPEARE.

And Alfred loved her—loved her like a man; "he who does more is no man." Here we give a whole blank volume to be filled up by the imagination of our readers. It begins with what he said, and ends with what he did; it is sweet and very pastoral.

"She may not be dead," said and sighed sweet Mabel. A woodbine in love could not have sighed or said it more sweetly, although it had wooed its opposite neighbor of the dell, the wild rose, between the twain of which our Mabel then walked, "half spied, so thick the blushing roses round about her blowed."

"Hang not thy head aside, sweet Mabel, like Desdemona's maid," called Barbara; "who had a song, an old thing it was, called 'Willow, willow, willow,' and who went about the house all day singing it;" a picture which only the poet has painted, shame to our artists, tho' he whom she loved proved false.

We know not, Mabel, but that the muskrose of the dell [a pearl flushed and perfumed home, hung in a silent world of green,] may in summer time nourish some fair spirit amid its fragrance. We cannot tell what the butterflies say to the flowers, when they shake the downy silver from their folded wings, and give unto them a fresher bloom. The golden belted bees may have a language of their own sweeter than the murmuring that we hear, and with which they allure the blossoms to give up their honey. The brook bubbling to the brambles may possess eloquence which is lost upon us, and dies away among the whisperings of the tufted reeds. The lettered flowers that strew the dale may be the pages of a book, which only the hovering angels can read, and thy fate may be recorded therein, dear Mabel.

"Nay, droop not thy pretty head,—the sun is fast sinking. 'She may be dead,' dear Mabel. The wild roses above thy brow, and the grey old stem against which thou leanest, can tell thee nothing. The forest brook braiding along between its mossy banks, will but add to thy melancholy by its sound, my Mabel. Hie thee home to him who loves thee with a holy love, for the round moon will soon arise, and the song of the nightingale [which silly poets have written so much about] will tully thy poor brain. Thy chamber window, with its snow white curtains, peeps through the twinkling leaves of the vine, and seems to look for thee through the last gleam of sunset. Even thy bird hanging in the open casement hath called thee home. Although fairies sleep under the blossoms after sunset, dear Mabel, the dreamy old wood is a safer couch for thy beauty than the six stifled streets of cities. But the night air is cold, and the blue of the twilight grows deeper; as for the blossoms, they are all asleep—so, good night, love born Mabel.

[To be concluded.]

New Works.

Wanderings of a Jurymen Tailor through Europe and the East, during the years 1824 to 1840. By R. D. Hothaus. Translated by W. Howitt.

A PEEP INTO THE CITY OF BUKAREST. Bukarest did not look by any means so handsome close at hand as at a distance. It has a dirty, narrow, unpaved, and hobly streets; a filled with thick planks and beams, for a canal three feet deep runs through the middle. Into these canals all kinds of filth is thrown, so that