

## Literature, &amp;c.

From the Ladies' Companion.

## THE ESCAPE.

BY MRS. CAROLINE ORNE.

On a cold, bleak evening, late in November, a female enveloped in a weather-beaten plaid cloak, was seen hurrying along the side walk of a fashionable street in one of the Atlantic cities. Once she ascended the door steps of a splendid mansion, and was about to pull the bell, when a sudden burst of merriment from within seemed to deter her, and she again resumed her course with an air more hasty and timid than before. Having passed a dozen or more houses, she paused in front of one that, compared with the others, wore a quiet, secluded air. After some hesitation, she ventured to ring the bell. The door was opened by a servant of whom she inquired if she could see the mistress of the house.

"I will see," he replied.

In a few moments he re-appeared, and conducted her into a parlor, elegantly though not showily furnished. The inmates were a middle-aged lady, of a pale, though not sickly countenance, somewhat precise in dress and manners, and a young man who sat by the table, reading.

"I am very anxious," said the female approaching the lady, "to obtain employment in some family for a few months—are you willing to furnish me with some?"

"What kind of employment would you like?" inquired the lady.

"I should prefer needle work, either plain or ornamental, but am willing to undertake any labor whatever, that I can perform to your satisfaction."

"Well, sit down, and we will talk more about it, but first tell me your name, and if you have a recommendation from your last employer."

"My name," she replied, hesitating, a little, "is Mary—Mary Leviston."

"And the name of the family where you last resided?"

"Pardon me, madam, but I cannot tell."

She was evidently much agitated as she replied, and forgetful of the faded cloak that concealed her form, it slipped from one shoulder and revealed a rich white satin dress, trimmed with blonde, and an elegant pearl neck lace. The lady now observed for the first time that she was very beautiful, a discovery that the young man had already made, although at the time of her entrance, he was in the midst of a deeply interesting article on political economy. The lady put on a look of severity, and fixing her eyes on the neck-lace, told her that she could give no employment to a person who found means to obtain such expensive ornaments.

"Oh don't turn me away," said the girl, bursting into tears, and wringing her hands in the greatest distress and agitation. "If you do I don't know what will become of me."

The young man now hastily threw aside his book, and approaching the lady, said in a low voice, "Aunt Leonard, I beg to speak a few words with you in private."

Mrs. Leonard rose, and passing through the folding doors, to a distance that conversation carried on in an undertone could not be heard by her visitor, although, feeling some anxiety relative to a gold watch that hung over the mantel, she could keep her eye on her. "Well Percy," said she to her nephew who had followed her closely, "what have you to say that is of a nature so private?"

"Simply, that I do wish that you would take this young girl on trial—I know what your impression is, but if I ever saw innocence depicted in a human countenance, I see it in her's. Artifice may have lured her into the haunts of vice, and if she has made her escape, turn her not away from your door and compel her to turn."

"Percy," said his Aunt, "if her face were not so beautiful, were its expression, ever so innocent, do you think she would find in you so powerful a pleader?"

"She ought to," he replied, coloring, "and I think she would. Promise me, Aunt, that you will receive her."

"No, for your sake, I must turn her away."

"That you shall never do. I promised my friend Northcote, that I would spend a few weeks with him, and although it is not exactly the season to make a visit in the country, I will start to-morrow morning. Now, aunt you have no excuse, or none that you are not capable of despising, if it will prevent you from performing a good action. I have sewing enough myself that I wish to get done to employ her three months."

"Well, Percy, since you are so very earnest for her to remain, if you will promise to make your visit to your friend Northcote, I will take her for a week or two upon trial, although I should not be surprised if she should know no more about hemming and stitching than you do."

Mrs. Leonard returned, and resumed the seat she had left.

"I think you told me that your name is Mary Leviston," said she to the girl, who still sat weeping and trembling.

"I did."

"As my nephew thinks of leaving town to-morrow, to be gone for some time, and as I shall be rather lonely, I have concluded to let you remain a week or two on trial."

"Your words are a thousand times better than life to me," said she, starting up, and seizing Mrs. Leonard's hand, which she pressed hurriedly to her lips.

"Stay," said Mrs. Leonard, with an air that

showed that she was slightly annoyed; "if you

remain, there are several conditions, which you must promise to comply with."

"I will comply with any condition that you wish. All I ask is that you will suffer me to stay."

"The first condition is, that you will under no pretext whatever, leave the house except to attend church on the Sabbath, and then it must be in the company of some person I shall provide."

"That will suit me—I do not wish to go out."

"Another is that you must not attempt to hold any correspondence with your old associates."

"There is not a person upon earth with whom I wish to hold any correspondence."

"The third, and last condition is, that should any of your old acquaintance call, you will altogether refuse to see them."

"All that you require, I should have performed voluntarily."

"Well, then, you had better take off your cloak and hood, for the room is rather too warm to require such warm garments."

She withdrew to the opposite side of the apartment, and Percy observed that, at the moment she removed her hood, she tore a wreath of flowers from her hair, and crushed it in her hand, which soon afterwards, when she imagined she was not noticed, she threw into the fire.

When divested of her cloak and her hood, with her rich dress exactly fitted to her form, and her bright golden hair entwined with pearls Mrs. Leonard could not help confessing to herself that she had never seen a female so perfectly beautiful. If the admiration of Percy was graduated upon a lower scale, his countenance was no true index of his mind, and the idea of his proposed visit to the country began to grow exceedingly distasteful to him.

The next morning, at the breakfast table, Miss Leviston appeared in a calico morning dress, which Mrs. L. had provided for her, with her hair, which was plainly parted on her forehead, compressed into one heavy rich braid, which shone with a lustre almost equal to the small golden comb, which confined it to the back part of her head. Her demeanor was modest, almost to bashfulness, her color varying with every motion, from the palest hue of the blush-rose, to which dyes the leaves nearest its heart.—Mrs. Leonard was at a loss whether to attribute this fflful varying of her complexion to modesty or guilt; but Percy, who had a great deal of chivalry about him, would not have hesitated, had it been the custom in those degenerate days, to break a lance with the bravest man in the country, in vindication of her innocence.

"Have you sent to secure a seat in the stage?" inquired his aunt, as they rose from the table.

"No, but it is time enough yet; it will not start this half hour."

"You are mistaken, Percy: it lacks but just fifteen minutes of the time."

"You are right, I believe," he replied, looking at his watch, "but never mind, if I am too late, I can just as well go to-morrow."

"That will not do," said his aunt with a look and tone of severity. "If you miss the stage, I shall lend you my carriage."

"Well, aunt, since you are so earnest to get rid of me, I will send Patrick to tell the driver to call for me."

"No, it is too late now to trust to servants; go yourself, and call for your trunk as you pass."

"Just as you say, I am all obedience, but if my exile prove too tedious, I shall return before the expiration of the time I first mentioned."

"Not without writing first," replied his aunt.

"To be sure not; I shall give you fair warning."

Having said this, he shook hands with his aunt, and bowing with an air of profound respect to Miss Leviston, he left the apartment.

Mrs. Leonard, thinking it not best to task the skill of her new needle-woman too severely at first, gave her a cambric handkerchief to hem, which being performed with neatness and dispatch, she ventured to trust her with a pair of fine linen wristbands for Percy, which, according to the old fashion, when women probably found it difficult to fill up all their time, were to be stitched twice across, each stitch to embrace just two threads. She had finished one wristband entirely to Mrs. Leonard's satisfaction, when the door bell rang. Miss Leviston gave a nervous start, and rising from her chair, requested Mrs. Leonard's leave to retire to her own apartment. The person who rang proved to be Mrs. Reding, a lady with whom Mrs. Leonard was intimately acquainted, and to whom she determined to mention the case of her new seamstress, and ask her advice relative to the propriety of allowing her to remain. But Mrs. Reding had something more important to communicate, and commenced by saying,

"Have you heard the great news, Mrs. Leonard?"

"No, indeed; what news?"

"You know old Mr Draper, don't you?"

"I know there is such a person, though I am not acquainted with him."

"And you have heard of the beautiful Miss Winthrop, his niece and ward?"

"Yes."

"And of old Barner, whose property is said to exceed a million?"

"I have."

"Well, it seems that Barner took a fancy to Miss Winthrop, and asked her guardian's leave to propose to her—Mr Draper's consent being readily obtained, he proposed and was rejected. Not satisfied with this, he continued to persecute her with his addresses, and finally, it is

said, offered her guardian a heavy sum if he would, either by persuasion or threats, induce her to marry him. "Make yourself easy, Mr Barner," he said, "she shall be your bride." He found, however, that he had undertaken a difficult task, and despairing of other means to effect his wishes, locked her into her own apartment, and gave out that she had left on a visit. For several weeks she remained obstinate, but knowing herself to be entirely in her uncle's power, and becoming weary of her imprisonment, she told him if he would release her, she would marry Mr Barner. As he suspected that she intended to evade her promise, he told her that he could not trust her with her liberty till the hour arrived for the performance of the marriage ceremony. Knowing that remonstrances would prove vain, she, to appearance, meekly acquiesced. Yesterday morning was the time Mr Draper wished it to take place, but she insisted on its being deferred till the evening. A splendid bridal dress had been prepared, in which she was duly arrayed, and Mr Barner, fine as his tailor could make him, was punctual to the moment. One of the bridesmaids now entered, and whispered to Mr Draper, requesting him to give her the key to unlock the bride chamber, as her assistant had just called to her, and told her that Miss Winthrop was ready.

"But why were you not there to assist them?" inquired Mr Draper.

"I arrived rather late," she replied, "and as you happened to be out, I could not gain admittance."

Five minutes elapsed, but the bride did not appear. Mr Barner kept his eyes constantly fastened on the door by which she was to enter. Another five minutes elapsed, and Mr Barner's eyes began to ache, so that he was not only to wink, but even to rub them.

"What does the girl mean by keeping us waiting so long?" said Mr Draper, and he rang the bell.

A girl appeared at the door.

"Go tell Miss Winthrop," said he, "that she will oblige us by not keeping us waiting any longer."

The girl obeyed, and after an absence of a few minutes, returned, saying that Miss Winthrop's chamber was empty.

"I should not wonder if she had contrived to make her escape," said Mr Draper, starting up and rushing towards the stair-case, followed closely by Mr Barner. They soon proved the truth of what the girl had told them, by a peep into the deserted chamber. Bride and bridesmaids, all were gone. Mr Barner ran down stairs, and going to the front door, inquired if they had seen a lady in the dress of a bride. Being answered in the negative, he ran down street like an insane man, asking the same question of every one he met. Every exertion has been made on the part of her guardian to find her, but up to this time she has eluded all search.

Mrs. Leonard who had listened to Mrs. Reding's account without interrupting her, told her when she had finished, that she doubted not but that Miss Winthrop was at that moment beneath her roof. She then related to Mrs. Reding the incidents of the preceding evening.

"It must be she," replied Mrs. Reding. "I know her perfectly well, and your description suits her exactly."

"She did wrong," said Mrs. Leonard, "not to confide to me. I was inclined to regard her in a very unfavorable light, and had it had not been for Percy, who for the sake of her remaining, consented to leave town, I should have turned her away."

"As she was wholly unacquainted with you," replied Mrs. Reding, "she could not tell whether it would be safe to repose confidence in you or not."

"That is true. There are some who might have taken measures to return to her guardian, or rather to him who has proved himself so base a betrayer of his trust."

Both ladies agreed that it would be best for Mrs. Leonard to inform her immediately that she had discovered who she was, and to quiet her fears by assuring her, that as Mr Draper had exceeded the limits of lawful control, by confining her to her chamber in order to compel her to marry a person that was disagreeable to her, he would not be suffered to resume his guardianship.

That evening in a letter to her nephew, Mrs. Leonard related the whole story, and the next evening but one, she had the pleasure of welcoming him home.

More to tease Mr Draper than for any other reason, the secret of Miss Winthrop's abode was not suffered to transpire, and he, as well as the public, about two months afterwards were first enlightened on the subject by the following paragraph in one of the city daily newspapers:—

"Married, yesterday morning, at the residence of Mrs. Leonard, in — street, Percy Leonard, Esquire, to Miss Mary Leviston Winthrop, daughter of the late Judge Winthrop, of this city."

## THE WINTER FIRE.

When the shortened day its course has run,  
Giving place to the shades of night;  
And the last bright beam of the setting sun  
Gleams with a wavering light;  
Now sunk behind the western hill,  
Its glory fades afar;  
And trembling o'er each murmuring rill,  
Bless the evening star.

The peasant from his labor freed,  
Plods on his homeward way;  
And hails with joy the light recede,  
At the close of another day.  
The gloom of night now thickens round,  
The winds are howling high;

And whitening all the hardened ground,  
The sleet comes driving by.

The tall trees, mid the lightning's gleams,  
Bend to the tempest's shock;  
And wildly dash the foaming streams  
From every echoing rock,  
The snow falls fast, in feathery flakes,  
Overspreading hill and dale;  
And Nature in wild terror quakes,  
Beneath the furious gale.

The traveller, benighted, roams  
Across the dreary moor;  
He sees the distant cottage home,  
And seeks the friendly door.  
He gains the spot with eager haste,  
Beset with dangers dire;  
And soon within the circle's placed,  
Beside the cheering fire.

The farmer, hastening home at night,  
From fair or market fer,  
Hails once again that ruddy light,  
Like his own presiding star.  
His children haste, with joy unfeigned,  
To welcome back their sire;  
And he his easy chair has ta'en  
Beside the winter fire.

When Christmas, with his merry chimes  
And all its goodly cheer,  
Its carols and its quaint old rhymes  
Proclaim light hearts are near;  
When many a gay and joyous strain  
Awakes the minstrel's lyre,  
And friends long parted, meet again  
Around the winter fire—

There's not a joy that memory lends,  
So hallowed and so dear,  
As when we meet assembled friends,  
And happy smiles were there.  
Old tales were told, and songs were sung,  
By all in merry choir;  
And shouts of mirth and laughter rang  
Around the Christmas fire.

And when old age, with all its cares,  
Comes creeping o'er the head,  
And those we met in former years,  
Are numbered with the dead;  
Remembrance then alone is left  
To cheer the aged sire;  
Who sits, of all his friends bereft,  
Beside the winter fire.

How many a happy hour was past,  
In years long fled away;  
Without, unheeded, roared the blast,  
For all within was gay.  
What dreams of future pride and might,  
And hopes formed, to expire,  
Were first indulged in by the light  
Of the social winter fire!

From the London Punch.

## MORE SHOCKING IGNORANCE.

A short time ago *Punch* had occasion to verify his readers by publishing the Report of his Select Committee on Education, which revealed the amount of ignorance of domestic matters prevailing among young men generally. His Commissioners have just sent up to him their second Report, which relates to the knowledge of business and the affairs of life possessed by young ladies; and he has determined, at the risk of creating a fearful panic in the marriage market, to print it.

Miss Mary Anne Watkins examined.—Is the daughter of a private gentleman. Has several brothers and sisters. Is engaged to be married to a young surgeon as soon as he can get into practice. Has an idea that she ought to know something of housekeeping; supposes it comes naturally. Can sing and play; draw and embroider.—Cannot say that she ever darned a stocking. The price of brown Windsor soap is from 1s. to 1s. 3d. the packet; cannot tell what yellow comes to; never bought any. Circassian cream is half a crown a pot; does not know the price of persh. Knows how to furnish a house; would go to the upholster's and buy furniture. Cannot say how much she would expect to give for an easy chair, or for a wash-hand-stand, or for a set of tea things; should ask mama, if necessary; never thought of doing so before. Papa paid for the dress she has on; forgets what he gave for it. Has no notion what his butcher's bill amounts to in the year.

Miss Harriet Somers.—Papa is a clergyman. Is unable to say whether he is a pluralist or not. He is a curate, and has but one curacy. Expects to be married, of course. Would not refuse a young man with £300 a year. Has no property of her own. Has some skill in needle work; lately worked a brigance in red, blue, green and yellow worsted. Cannot tell how washes for the complexion.—Cannot tell how she would set about making an apple-dumpling; leaves should remain in the oven till they are done; the time they would depend upon circumstances. If she were married, would expect her husband to be ill sometimes; supposes him to be ordered calves'-foot jelly, should send for it to the pastrycook's. It never occurred to her that she might make it herself. If she tried, should buy some calves' feet; what she should do cannot say. Has received a fashionable education; known French and Italian. Likes dancing better than anything else.

Miss Jane Briggs.—Is the daughter of a respectable tradesman—a grocer and tea dealer. Looks forward to a union with somebody in her own station of life. Was for five years at a boarding school in Clapham. Really cannot say what a ledger is; it may be the same as a day book. Has an album. Has painted flowers in the album; also butterflies. Has never ironed a frill. Knows what a receipt is; it tells