

Literature, &c.

From the Illuminated Magazine.
THE WAYFARING TREE.

MORNING and evening, in the hour of prime, and at that uncertain time when twilight's banner still floats flammantly along the sunless west, and night pushes a slender cohort of dim and distant stars in the purpling uplands in the east—have we not greeted thee. O! many-centuried and reverend friend, with this continually-recurring verse? And through years of change (years that have wrought so little change in thee) have we not come to love thee as a dear companion; to reckon thee among the "old familiar faces" we should grieve to miss; to invest thee with a life and sentiment appertinent rather to the moral and the inward, than the physical and the outward world; and to note thy varying aspect as minutely as lovers watch the changeful countenance of those they dote upon?

Spring weaves for thy aged limbs a subtle drapery of vivid green; Summer depends its hues; an Autumn dyes the wool with russet gold and crimson—"motley, your only wear," until the tattered garb falls piecemeal to the ground, and the cold, keen sky of winter glitter above a mighty maze of leafless limbs and branches bare. But in all seasons we must claim from thee the attributes of majesty and beauty, suffering no change with changing vesture, and knowing no abatement with the diminution of thy commingling leaves.

Wert thou not a sappling—a slender shoot from some chance scattered acorn, when England's sod first felt the pressure of a Norman's foot? Did outlawed bowmen, as they rustled past thee (thou wast a youngling even then) mingle with their discourse of reverie approving mention of King Rufus's death? Did ever palmer from the land of Palestine couch him awhile beneath thy spreading arms, and bless the greener garb of England's soil, the softer gleam of England's sky? Wert ever flouted by the glittering pennons of the partisans of York and Lancaster, while ruddy watch-fires shed a lurid light upon thy outstretched boughs? Did ever witness that brave retinue sweep by, which made the progress of Virgin Bees such showy, glittering spectacles? Were thy green branches riven from the, what time the "king enjoyed his own again," to garish burly burghers' doorways, and stir the spleen of silent sour republicans? For all of these were thy contemporaries, and thou survivor of them all.

As century after century, in solemn sequence, marshalled by memory, glides shadow like before the eye, we seem to recognise a thousand episodes and "old world tales," linked with the history of this myriad-leaved and antique oak—this green and living temple now jubilant with song; and there are modern instances recalled to mind by the "wayfaring Tree," which we would fain record before they too, become insured among the partially remembered or totally forgotten things of yesterday. We could wish to show there is a literal and obvious, as well as occult and poetic meaning in the often quoted verse of Wordsworth—

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

"Good by, Kate, dear Kate; let us part at the old Wayfaring tree. We both have cause to love it well; nor will this parting make us love it less. Nay, Kate; no tears. Think of my prospects, think of the aid which I shall now be in a position to render to our mother; think, too—There, there! I thought my bonny Kate would smile again." And the young man thrust back a cloud of jetty ringlets from his sister's forehead, and pressed his lips upon its smooth expanse, with an earnestness and warmth, which seemed to indicate the fervour and the fulness of his love.

"I know these tears are childish, Harry; but I know, too, or at least have read that commerce with the world soon deadens a young man's heart—effaces the images impressed upon it in his earlier years, and fills the mind with evil fantasies and feverish desires. Not that I distrust you, my brother," she continued, laying her hand upon his shoulder, and lifting up her quivering eyes to his, "but I do fear, I do distrust the weakness of our common nature."

"A grandame's tale, Kate; a grandame's tale, and nothing better—fit only for a school-boy, and not," he added, drawing himself up to his full stature—"not worthy to be told to men."

"That very gesture—that impressive emphasis—adds some confirmation to its truth and value, Harry," rejoined the maiden, in tones of mingled archness and reproach. "It is a spark struck out from smouldering pride, that only waits the accession of a little fuel, to kindle it into a consuming blaze. Devoutly do I hope, however, that the event may prove your sister Kate no true prophetess."

"Amen! my moralizing Kate. Let us not cloud our parting with any more such sombre sermons. Harry Salter shall be a great man yet, and you, my pretty one, and our mother—Heaven keep her! ladies both. And so, another kiss, Kate, and then good-bye."

And straining his sister in his arms, not without mingling a tear or two with hers, the young man bade her an affectionate adieu. He loitered awhile upon the summit of the hill until the receding figure of his sister disappeared behind an angle of the sloping lane; then glancing hurriedly at the grey church-tower, the clustering chimneys and fantastic

gables of the hall, and the row of poplar trees which grew hard by his mother's cottage, he struck into the fields, gained the main road, and in another hour had taken his seat upon the coach which bore him towards—

If, at that moment, when the pang of parting was mingled with a host of good resolves, both tempering his sanguine expectations, the youthful traveller could have analysed his feelings, it is probable that he would complacently have pronounced them unselfish and disinterested in the extreme. And for the nonce, the estimate would have been erroneous. Yet, it must not be concealed, that in general there was a strong tincture of selfishness, and a strong desire for self aggrandisement interwoven with the better principles of his nature; nor was the new sphere of life into which he was about to be inducted, one precisely calculated either to conceal or to obliterate these blemishes upon his character.

His father had been master of the village school, and, dying, bequeathed two children to the care, and a very slender pittance for the maintenance of, his widow. Of these two children, Henry was the elder, having just attained to his majority; while his sister was his junior by four years. The interest of a family connection had procured for him a situation in the only banking house in—, and thither we have already seen him on the road.

Of his subsequent career brief mention may suffice. Habits of unweird application and industry, combined with much self-taught and practical knowledge of the minutiae of his business, contributed materially to aid the advancement of his prospects, and to push his fortune to a height, which even he, sanguine and ambitious as he was, had never dreamed of reaching half so rapidly. His letters home were brief and business-like. Distance and increasing duties prevented him, he said, from paying them a visit, and moderate remittances were enclosed as substitutes, occasionally accompanied by the gratuitous tender of much sound worldly advice. Of the latter, more especially, there was a liberal donation when Kate intimated her intended marriage to a fellow-villager, the bailiff of an absentee esquire. Something like dissidence, too, was hinted on the brother's part, which failed, however, in shaking the already settled purpose of his sister, who became the wife of Edmund Sible in the very week in which Henry Salter became the son in law and partner of the wealthy banker, his old employer.

Twelve years had elapsed since the date of the parting previously described, when, towards the close of an autumn day, a carriage halted at the foot of the Wayfaring Tree, and a man of gentlemanly exterior and prepossessing mien alighted from it, directed the postillion to proceed leisurely towards the "Royal Oak," at the same time indicating with his cane its position in the village, which lay bowered in the trees below. As the carriage disappeared, the stranger, folding his arms, stood with the immovability of a statue upon the green ring of turf which environed the ancient tree; while his eyes wandered excuriously, and with an interest that was evidently heightened by mental associations, over the valley which lay in gathering shade and deep tranquillity beneath. The sun, dipping behind a clump of trees upon a western eminence, yet glowed in fiery broken fragments between their black and interlacing stems. A pile of glittering clouds, some purple and massive, shaped like islands floating on a pearly sea; others crimson and plumed, like the pinions of an oriental bird; and others lambent and wreathing as a wind fed flame, embossed the heavens above. Here and there misty exhalations wound upwards from between dark masses of luxuriant foliage, and seemed to indicate the presence of a rivulet in the sward below. White gables gleamed spectrally through leafy orchard trees, and where the grey church tower rose up, the hovering smoke from neighboring cottages hung like a vapoury crown around the antique pile. There was that, in the hour and prospect, which might almost have created a soul under the ribs of death; and the absorbed and motionless aspect of the stranger acknowledged to the full the influences of the season and the scene.

"Another half hour so consumed," at length exclaimed the stranger, "would absolutely transform me to a boy again. I suppose all men have their weak moments, and this is mine. But whom have we here? Kate, as I live and that respectable clothshop is my brother-in-law, and her husband, I presume. Umph!" And the banker (since it will be readily surmised that it was he), slowly advanced towards the individuals, whose approaching footsteps had so abruptly put an end to his soliloquy. Though unexpected, their interview elicited but a moderate display of cordiality. Upon the part of Katharine Sible, there was a continual struggle between her old affection for her brother and a certain sense of deference extorted by the consciousness of his superior wealth and elevated station. The deportment of her husband was respectful, but self-possessed, while his greeting was acknowledged by the banker with a stiff and ceremonious condescension.

When the inquiries of the latter, with reference to his mother's health and welfare, had been answered, and minor questions satisfied, he claimed his sister's private ear upon a matter of particular importance, on which, indeed, his present visit hinged; and, taking her aside, engaged with her a close and earnest conversation.

As their colloquy continued, there was a degree of warmth and even of asperity infused into it, which plainly intimated that the turn it had assumed was as distasteful as unexpected to the sister.

During the preceding week, Kate had written to her brother, soliciting a somewhat heavy loan, in order to enable her husband to enter upon the occupancy of a farm then vacant. Unwilling, from a variety of motives, to concede to the request, and equally unwilling to decidedly to refuse it, the banker had resolved upon a personal interview as the most fitting medium, through which to communicate his disinclination to grant the favour sought.

Accordingly, with much prolixity and needless verbiage, he urged upon his sister, as his reasons for refusal, the scarcity of money, his inability to withdraw any portion of his floating capital from the channels in which it was employed, and last, though certainly not least, the disinclination which he felt to advance so considerable a sum upon mere personal security. It is scarcely necessary to intimate that the two former were mere fictitious obstacles, the whole pith of his objections being concentrated in the latter. Kate remonstrated, mildly at first, then angrily, then grew indignant, reproached him bitterly, and the conversation eventuated in a serious rupture.

The following morning, Mr Salter took his departure from the village, poorer in self respect, poorer in the affection of his kindred. Before the advent of another year, Katharine Sible and her husband were located in the Red-hill farm, not, however, through the instrumentality of the banker, but by the friendly and munificent assistance of the bailiff's late employer.

Twelve more eventful years have flown, and a man still in the prime of life, clad in a plain and unobtrusive garb, accompanied by a graceful girl of seventeen, with a countenance remarkable for its mirthful sweet expression, pause in their ramble, and seat themselves upon a bench erected round the trunk of the old Wayfaring tree. The relationship which subsisted between them cannot be that of parent and child, for he himself is childless, but their affinity is evidently close. Some minutes they spent in silent admiration of the scene, and then the elder thus addresses his companion:—

"While we tarry for a space beneath the shadow of our sheltering friend, you shall hear the narrative, Kate which I have often promised you."

"A kind thought, uncle, and I will promise in return, that you shall find 'fit audience though few,'" archly rejoined the maiden.

"Your mother may have told you how, at this tree, we parted first, and how at this tree we met again. You must have heard, too, how my avarice and selfishness laid a temporary ban upon the prospects of your parents, and—as my conscience whispers me—a heavier ban upon my own. Not avarice alone, but pride impelled me to refuse. I had become the associate of men of wealth and title, and I felt a species of contempt (you may well frown, Kate) for the alliance which your mother had, contrary to my suggestions, formed; I was unwilling, therefore, to give my new relation further prominence in the world. Often and often, in after years, has that refusal to perform an act of kindness—nay of positive duty—sat heavily upon my heart, retributively followed, as it was, by the death of her, through whom the wealth so prized originally became my own. Three years alone elapsed between my second parting from your mother, and my wife's disease. As yet, Kate, there are trials which you have never known, and this is of them. Another and another followed in My patron and benefactor, and indeed, my second father, drooped from the moment of his daughter's death, and followed her within a year or something less. He was a man of large and liberal heart—his mind more comprehensive and expanded than that of the most mere money changers; and gratitude, affection, reverence all these owed and freely rendered him, in his last hours I was unceasingly beside his bed, and closed his dying eyes. And when from that dim room I issued out once more into the glare of day and noisy haunts of men, I found I had emerged from it an altered, and I hope a wiser man."

Hackney'd in business, wearied at the oar? Which thousands, once fast chain'd to, quit no more,

But which when life at ebb runs weak and low, due to consoling and kindling mood. All wish, or seem to wish, they could forego,—

I relinquished those active occupations which my circumstances no longer rendered it imperative on my part to follow up, and with my mind's eye filled with pictures of the green valley and secluded village in which my earlier years were spent, I determined once more to make my home where I had first drawn breath. Without equipage, without attendants, in humble garb and altered mien, I appeared upon the threshold of your father's house. It was my whim to represent myself a beggared bankrupt, friendless and penniless. The artifice was perfectly successful, attended only by a far different result than what I could have relied upon. Your parents both received the ostensible outcast with a welcome by him most unmerited. The evil he had done was recompensed by good, and thrifty competence was lavish of the liberality which rigidly wealth had avariciously withheld. You know the rest, Kate. It is a history pregnant with profitable matter for reflection; do not, forget it, dear."

"And what may the moral be which you would deduce from it, uncle, since I have heard you say every history has its moral?" inquired the niece.

"It is this," he rejoined, drawing a small volume from his pocket, and folding back a page that had been doubled down, "Read it, Kate."

And the maiden, with a musical emphasis, read the following lines:—

If Thou be one whose heart the holy forms Of young imagination have kept pure, Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know that pride,

How'er disguised is its own majesty, Is littleness! that he who feels contempt For any living thing, hath faculties Which he has never used; that thought with him

Is in its infancy. The man whose eye Is ever on himself, doth look on one, The least of Nature's works, one who might move

The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds,

Unlawful ever. O be wiser, Thou! Instructed that true knowledge leads to love; True dignity abides with him alone

Who, in the silent hour of inward thought, Can still suspect, and still revere himself, In lowliness of heart.

The maiden then closed the book, and both arose.

"A beautiful and simple truth," she observed, as they retraced their steps; "I shall never fail to think of it, and think of you, as often as I pass the Wayfaring Tree."

[The same periodical contains an article from the pen of Angus B. Reach, entitled "THE SENATORIUM, OR THE HOME IN SICKNESS," from which we take the following extracts:]

You are alone. You are poor—perhaps living in chambers or lodgings. You are wrestling with your malady as you best can in solitude. The world bustles and hurries on as usual around you; but it minds you not. You are not able to fight and struggle for yourself, and the crowd rushes by; no man stopping to cheer you or aid you. After all solitude and neglect are what make sickness terrible. With the prostration of your physical strength comes nervous and mental weakness. You are ashamed of yourself for giving way as you do. In health you could not conceive it possible; you would have perhaps said you had more nerve than to take on so; but "Nerve" has little chance against the wasting fever and the helpless limbs.

Alone! 'tis a dreadful word in sickness. We remember that never as a boy did we really pity Robinson Crusoe until the fever and ague came upon him in his desolate island, and he lay by turns burning and shivering in his cave. Then, and not till then, was he helpless. Then and not till then, knew he the full force of the words he taught his parrot, "Poor Robinson Crusoe!"

Sickness in a cave in the island of Juan Fernandez. Sickness, and poverty perhaps, in a lodging in London! Which is the most melancholy? To be alone, because there is the solitude of the desert and the sea around you; or to be alone amid millions; your poverty and want making the crowded city to you as a desert or a sea.

You lie and count the slow hours passing. The full hum of London—that sublimest of sounds—rolls in at your opened window, and tells you that, stricken as you are, heart-sick and utterly overthrown, the grand machine, of which you form now so useless a part, is whirling on in its unwearying course without pausing for an instant to glance at those fallen from its mechanism, and crushed beneath its wheels. Ten—eleven—twelve—how slowly these hours pass. To watch the jingling chimes from the steeples around has become one of your sad amusements; but you try to shut out the noise when that doleful minute-bell warns you that Death has been busy near.

"Who can it be for? Perhaps for some one who has died of my sickness. I heard that it was raging. That minute-bell may soon ring again—when I shall not hear it! Oh, I wish I had somebody to speak to; somebody might call in. I would not leave my friends if they were ill. But no; no one comes—no one asks for me—no one cares for me. It would not be so if I were at home; that is, if I had a home."

Now, how many thousands are there in London whose cases may be similar in a few hours? Persons of small property—clerks—reporters—students—literary men—governancees—and their situation in illness must always be particularly deplorable—all that large class of society, in short, composed of those toiling and struggling on amid the competition and heartlessness of London—in a great measure isolated from friends—although, perhaps, boasting of plenty of acquaintances, and whose circumstances do not permit them to reconstruct round themselves that home—that web of domestic ties and affections, which they left to throw themselves upon the world and their own resources. How constantly exposed to all the horrors of solitary neglected illness, are such unfortunates. Comfortless and cheerless, however, as they may be in lodgings and chambers, the hospital is an idea which they would shrink from with horror. True, at any of these excellent institutions, they might have the best of medical advice, and the most careful attendance; but the feeling of honest independence is strong within them. "The cold charity of man to man," stern necessity only would force them to endure, and many a privation would be undergone, many a sigh would be stifled—perhaps many a proud heart would break, ere a reluctant consent could be wrung out—to lie down in the wards of an hospital.

An old lady, reading the account of the death of a venerable lawyer, who was stated to be the father of the bar, exclaimed, "Poor man, he had a noisy set of children."