

Literature, & c.

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From the Rose of Sharon.

EUTHANASIA.

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THE setting sun threw its rays into an open window, where an aged woman was sitting, and tinged with something of its youthful gold her thin, brown hair, now sprinkled with gray.

It was the close of a bright June day, and the little lake in front of the window sparkled and glowed in the descending light, while shadows crept along the interstices amongst the trees on its banks.

There was an expression that might have been called melancholy, but for its sweet serenity, in her deep blue eyes, as she sat in her old-fashioned, high-backed chair, and looked out upon the landscape.

But there was now a spell on her spirit, with which the quiet beauty of the scene had little to do. The Past was around her. Years long perished were floating near in the soft, pensive light.

More than two years had passed since Amy Hudson came to dwell in her native home, and this was the second birth-day,—no wonder that she was thoughtful, and that the Past came to her.

Amidst all the changes of her life, one vision never forsook her. It was of her early home. It haunted her amongst tropical groves; hovered over her pillow in her slumbers; in the delirium of sickness it came with intense power; and she prayed to live, only that she might die there.

The wish had been granted. When the last one to whom love or duty had bound her in that alien land had lain down in the unawaking sleep, she gathered up her little store, and returned to claim a never relinquished right in the old homestead, and spend her latest breath where the earliest was given.

Shallow observers were they of the mind, or they had learned it makes its own companionship; that it is sufficient for itself, and independent of outward, human sympathy. Life had taught this to the lone and aged woman, or she had not left a circle of friends to dwell among shadows.

The sun had sunk, and shadows were swiftly falling. The lightnings had ceased in the western horizon. A cool breeze had arisen, and from the trees a low quivering murmur stole to the ear of the listener.

One of them floated by, bearing the similitude of him who had been as the life of life in the wild, unhalloved devotion of her youth. Well she knew it, for she had thrown love, hope, happiness, yea, almost life herself, at its feet, and it had well nigh won her to ruin.

happy sleep. The hushed beauty of the scene was powerful on her soul, and her thoughts were serene even as the star-lighted firmament. What wonder the aged woman still gazed forth into the night? A strange, voiceless melody breathed from all surrounding things, like that heard in summer twilights long ago.

Twilight faded, and the darkness deepened. Fire flies flitted like living sparks of light on every side, and the voice of the whippoorwill rose shrill and clear amid the gloom. The aged one knew by the sound that it now sang beneath the tree where it was wont to sing in her youth.

Then she remembered the superstition that the Indians connect with this bird—how it comes to warn those who are soon to depart into the land of spirits; and she thought how it sang there in the soft summer evenings before the death of her father, and how it ceased after the bier had borne away his deserted dust.

The hours passed on. The striking of a clock in a lower room rang loud through the silent house, and banished the reveries of Amy Hudson. Night lay upon the earth, moonless and solemn, and the stars told her it was late for aged eyes to be watching; yet she only rose, and placed her night-lamp unlighted upon a small table, which she drew to the window.

Mysterious is the life of the Soul. A study for ages is that little segment that moves between the cradle and the grave; how can mortal knowledge hope to comprehend any portion of the eternal circle that revolves beyond the stars? Solemn, also, is it in its utter isolation, its individuality and separateness from all things.

This state of isolation was now on the spirit of Amy Hudson. Her life passed in review before her, but it was vapory and cold. Its stirring events, that had pressed upon her heart with such momentous weight, now came as forms of mist, so unsubstantial, that they never could have touched her with pleasure or pain.

There were also shadowy forms that had once worn garments of flesh; how dear they had been, none but the aged and lonely spectator now knew; yet they came with a strange look in their passionless eyes, as though all communion between them was forever extinct.

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seemed to say, "Farewell! our paths are no more together."

Then arose other forms to whom her soul seemed kindred, and with some of whom it now for the first time recognized the hidden link that had united them, unknown to each, in the long pilgrimage behind.

A bright, childlike face drew near, with black, and softly luminous eyes, full of a holy, intellectual light. They were bent on her with a serene, pure tenderness, such as the living cherish towards the dead, when a reminiscence of gentle beauty is all that remains of them in the mind.

Two or three years his senior, his boyish affection made impression, and she wore his flowers, sang hymns with him, and admired the spirituality and precocity of his mind.

At length he came no more in the summer days to read poetry and sing hymns. Suddenly and awfully, in the glow of his early intellectuality, he was summoned, and departed.

She never saw his grave. She shed no tear over that pure-hearted and gentle child, who was swept like a spring flower from her path, for life was full of blossoming hopes, and in her selfishness, refined and dreamy as it was, the young boy was forgotten.

Yet his existence, so brief and beautiful, had a ministry with her heart. Years after, when life had shed its flowers, the memory of that good and loving child was a rainbow shining over the field of trampled hopes; a vision that smiled, and invited her eye to the calm, bright heaven.

She now saw how a memory can be a reality, how that which has no visible existence can be an efficient agent in His hands who is ever near to those who seek His righteousness.

Then came another form, bowed, feeble, with furrowed forehead, and thin, white hair. For among departed years she traced that venerable face. She saw it in an humble pulpit, amidst unlettered worshippers.

She heard him speak of the Soul—of its burdens being lifted by submission—of the elevation it may attain above sorrow, guilt and temporal evil, by giving up its all to the will of God, and thus on earth enter into the rest of Heaven; and then she acknowledged, for the first time, the sense of worldly vanity, and heavenly blessedness.

One warm, spring Sabbath, that humble congregation waited to hear again the old preacher, and she, a young girl, was there. He came not. He never came again, for the feeble frame had worn out in its tasks, and he had gone to reap the reward of his labours.

That venerable face has arisen on many an hour. When the halls of mirth were gay with lights and music, when jeweled brows and sparkled eyes told falsehoods of the heart, and when her own danced to the measures of vanity a calm, reproving glance would glide before her, and each pulse learn the thrill of a holier aspiration.

But the good seed was choked by the tares sown by the world, and even the affections had their share in leading her away from the fount of everlasting life; yet the old preacher and his lessons were not utterly forgotten.

Another face, neither young nor old, a female face, with a sad, care worn, yet meek and submissive look. Amy Hudson wept not over her grave when she left the village, a happy bride, more than half a century ago, but she sat as a child beneath her gentle rule, and learned the first rudiments of knowledge from her lips, and all her patient care and gentle forbearance lingered in the mind of her pupil, like perfume around her memory.

ved and wounded on the tenderest point, where her heart—betrayed and wronged beyond even the possibility of an earthly reparation—was hoarding up the contempt and hatred called forth by injured pride, this phantom face had followed her daily steps, and wrought itself into her nightly dreams, until she knelt and prayed to be able to forgive as she hoped to be forgiven. Then the evil spirits left the tempted, and peaceful thoughts came and ministered unto her soul—Well might the vision of the village school mistress come to the last birthday of Amy Hudson, for it had schooled her heart in its severest trials, as well as its calmer ones.

Another face—the brow and cheek of young manhood—a fair, undarkened face, with eyes so full of soul,—eyes, that spoke the language of a purer and higher world—why came that phantasm to the lone woman?

All the latter portion of her life had been influenced by that vision. Its living prototype flitted across her path in the sad noonday, when ashes lay where hopes had been, and her heart had sought refuge in indifference and worldly folly.—She had wreathed her hair with gems, and listened to hollow words, and in the gay midnight frittered away her fleeting hours. But she paid, also, the penalty of such unthrif. The void was unfilled. She thirsted for others waters. Each night as she unbound the glittering baubles from her still beautiful hair, an incipient wrinkle told her of the false life into which she was submerged, and she keenly felt that the soul that is plunged in selfish vanity, sins against itself as much as against its Maker.

Then she held communion with a beautiful spirit, one that knew no joy, no life, save in the doing the will of God. And that face, with the deep earnestness of its gentle eyes, gleamed across her vain and mistaken course. It was as a rebuke uttered by a star beam. Cheerless, mild, yet reproving, they spoke to a spirit whose intentions were right, who had known a glimpse of better things, and whose life was full of sanctifying memories, and then the stars, in whose current of her being was changed. She awoke from her selfishness, and pledged and thought, feeling, and purpose, to a new and better covenant, and the aspirations born of that humble place of worship, beneath the voice of the old preacher, long ago, revived, and strengthened her hands to do another work that she wept in contrition. She shuddered at the life, and yet she had walked according to the laws of morality and society, and never felt that such walk might be full of sin, the of unreconciliation with God, and the sin absorbing selfishness. She had lived as if earth were all. And had so been happy? A class night had always been in her path—she saw it there—an unsubmitive and exacting selfishness, a rebellion against Providence, a practical grief, and selfishness of God.

That which time, sorrow and worldly disappointment had failed to do, was wrought by a brief communion with a heavenly mind. She, for the first time, felt the force of the Saviour's words when he said, "the weary and heavily laden come to me, and I will give rest." But she made no loud profession, she knelt at no new shrines, she forsook her old faith, but a new fire was kindled on her altar, and she looked beyond creeds and forms for the hidden things of a religion that is above all doctrines and ceremonies, the heart service that is rendered in its Holy of Holies.

That being passed away from her eye, though never from her thought. That face, so spiritual, so lovely, was shrouded among the coral lands of the Southern seas, for he went to carry light to a heathen people. She wept even at his death, for it was but the transfer of an angel to its home.

But the vision was with her always. Her lot was still in the world, and temptations thronged her way; but when the siren was sweet, and resolve wavered, these heavenward eyes were seen, and the tempter fled. Years went on, but that guardian presence was left not. Sorrow again assailed her, a trial of many kinds, but all was met by a strong in the love of God, strong in its immortality, and strongest of all, in its deep, unaltered submission. And when the days grew shorter and darker, and winter was at hand, she saw the vision that had been a guardian angel to her spirit.

The soft, earnest eyes looked into those of Amy Hudson with a serious approval, and recognition. She, too, was near the immortal state.

They gather near, until she seems to be surrounded by the holy dead—each one with its own serene beauty—calm, majestic, and kind.

That venerable pair! Is she now so purified from earthly stain she can meet them again, who were on earth the embodiments of a worth?

That sister spirit, who shrank away from the first grief—she, too, is here, and her face wears the sign of eternal bliss. She is sister now only in the loftiness and purity of her nature; those earthly ties were severed long ago.

But she comes nearer; she touches the brow of the aged one, and lo! all weariness is gone. A strange ethereality is in its stead, and she seems to float upward without an effort.

Beautiful, exceedingly beautiful, are the radiant forms who ascend with her on the fumed air, while a melody, sweeter than music, thought conceives, comes faintly on the air—the aged one, as she floats upward from the receding earth!

Morning rose to the members of the household, and as its hours went on they saw the lone woman at her wonted employment. They went into her room. They found her still sitting by the table, with her head upon her folded hands. They lifted it gently,