

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines
FOR AUGUST.CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE
FIELD.

MATTHEW VI. 28.

SWEET nurselings of the vernal skies,
Bathed in soft airs, and fed with dew,
What more than magic in you lies
To fill the heart's fond view?
In childhood's sports, companions gay;
In sorrow, on life's downward way,
How soothing!—in our last decay,
Memorials prompt and true.

Relics ye are of Eden's bowers,
As pure, as fragrant, and as fair
As when ye crowned the sunshine hours
Of happy wanderers there.
Fall'n all beside—the world of life,
How is it stained with fear and strife!
In Reason's world what storms are rife,
What passions range and glare!

But cheerful and unchanged the while,
Your first and perfect form ye show;
The same that won Eve's matron smile
In the world's opening glow.
The stars of heaven a course are taught
Too high above our human thought:
Ye may be found, if ye are sought,
And as we gaze, we know.

Ye dwell beside our paths and homes,
Our paths of sin, our homes of sorrow;
And guilty man, where'er he roams,
Your innocent mirth may borrow,
The birds of air before us fleet,
They cannot brook our shame to meet;
But we may taste your solace sweet,
And come again to-morrow.

Ye fearless in your nests abide,
Nor may we scorn, too proudly wise,
Your silent lessons, undescried
By all but lowly eyes;
For ye could draw the admiring gaze
Of Him who worlds and hearts surveys;
Your order wild, your fragrant maze,
He taught us how to prize.

Ye felt your Maker's smile that hour,
As when he paused and owned you good;
His blessing on earth's primal hour
Ye felt it all renewed.

What care ye now if winter's storm
Sweep ruthless o'er each silken head?
Christ's blessing at year heart is warm;
Ye fear no vexing mood.

Alas! of thousand bosoms kind
That daily court you and caress,
How few the happy secret find
Of your calm loveliness!
Live for to-day! to-morrow's light
To-morrow's cares will bring to sight;
Go, sleep like closing flowers at night,
And Heaven thy morn will bless.

From Hogg's Instructor.

CLIFF COTTAGE.

[Continued from our last.]

LET us turn to the chamber from which the pale light shone. It was the chamber of sickness, soon to be the chamber of death. It was not a bed-chamber, at least it had not the marks and appliances of one. It had more the appearance of a library, for one side was occupied by well filled book-shelves, and a lounging chair and reading table on which the glimmering lamp was placed sustaining besides those usual accompaniments to a sick chamber, the labelled phial and a Bible. Yes, the Bible, banished too often from the business of life, finds its way at length to the chamber of death. On the bed was stretched a man evidently in the decline of years and near the termination of life. Occasionally he dozed for a few moments, and then rousing from the light and transient slumber he turned uneasily on the bed, and moved his lips though no audible sound escaped them. He was alone in the room, or thought himself to be so. There was one, however, near, who silently had opened a concealed door, and now stood by the bedside, hidden by the curtains, and heedfully watched the movements of the dying man; could he have caught a glimpse of the countenance, he would have seen that big tears of bodily or mental anguish slowly roll down the furrowed cheeks, and—But hush, the sick man speaks, he communes with himself and his God.

In agony and fervour the words burst from an overcharged heart, for they conveyed the prayer of a heart broken parent to God for a guilty son; and almost before the sound had died away, the curtain was drawn aside, the intruder bent over the bed and faintly whispered, 'Father, dear father, Herbert is here.'

The effect was electrical. The dying man started from his couch, reached the lamp, held it before the face of the unexpected visitant,

and fixed his eyes there. 'Yes, it is Herbert,' he said, as he sat down the light, and sank exhausted back upon his pillow; 'it is Herbert, but altered, since I saw him last. Herbert,' he continued, though in so low and whispered a tone as to require the utmost attention of his son to catch the import of his words; 'Herbert, I have been praying for you to-night; what night have I not? And now tell me, have you repented? I do not ask you where you come from, where you have hidden yourself these three last weary years; but have you repented? Have you sought and found mercy? Tell me, oh, only tell me that you have, and I shall be happy—happy for the first time since that dreadful day. Speak, but speak low, it must not be known that you are here.'

The young man, thus addressed, remained silent, except that his hard-breathing denoted a struggle within.

'Herbert,' repeated the mourning father, 'I am dying. In a few days, perhaps, in a few hours, I shall be in another world. Oh, let me hope to meet you there.'

'Father,' replied the young man, 'this is too much for you now. I did not know that you were ill; how could I? Let us talk of this to-morrow. But where is my mother and Lucy? Where is William? Why are you alone, and so ill, and in this room too? I could not rest without seeing you all once more; but I did not expect to find you thus.'

'What could you expect, Herbert, after—but no, I will not reproach you. To-morrow! No not to-morrow. Let it be now; say now that you have heard that voice that says, 'To-day if ye will hear my voice, harden not your heart?'

'Father,' replied Herbert, 'I will not add hypocrisy to my other sins. I will not deceive you; I cannot. That I am sorry for that most unfortunate and infatuated deed, which has cut up all my prospects, and driven me from society to hide like a hateful reptile from the vengeance of the law, I can truly say. My life has been a miserable dream of apprehension and dread since that day. But—but I have not repented. I cannot repent as you would have me repeat. Had I done this my reward would have been the gallows. It is the sanguinary law that has made me what I am.'

'Herbert,' said his father, and there was an unearthly solemnity in his tone which pierced the heart of the son; 'you think that it was a little crime that you committed—a venial offence. It was perpetrated in an hour of weakness and without premeditation. The temptation was strong, the time occupied in the action but a moment; and you conceive that you are hardly dealt with in being liable, whenever you are found, to forfeit your life for the transgression.'

'And is it not so, father? I would have restored the paltry dress, I never intended to retain it, if the—yes, it must out—if the forgery had not been discovered, the accursed bill would have been taken up, no one would have suffered, and my weakness and shame would never have been known to mortal. But I was compelled to save my life as I best could, and to avail myself of the funds I had obtained in doing it. To any punishment short of that most revengful one I would have submitted; but nothing would have availed. Nothing could save Dodd,* and nothing would have saved me, and would you have had me murdered by the law?'

'I am no casuist, Herbert, nor do I justify the law which would thus condemn you. I cannot now tell you my thoughts on that subject. But, my dear son, there is another law to which you are amenable.'

'God is more merciful than man,' replied Herbert.

'He is, and he has said 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' But my strength is failing, and I must go back to what I would have said just now. You think your crime was a venial one. Now, listen, Herbert. You have asked for your mother, your sister, and your brother. As soon as the dreadful news of your forgery and flight reached us, William hastened to London, to try and make terms for you with your employers; but they would not hear of it. He offered, on my authority, to make good the loss they had sustained by you, to the last penny. But they would receive nothing. 'We do not want the money,' John Savage said, but commercial security requires that the villain should be delivered up to justice.' Well, your brother would not give up his efforts on your behalf. He endeavoured to find out your retreat, not for the purpose, as you may well believe; of delivering you up to the law, but to persuade you to restore what you had obtained by your fraud. It was said and believed that you had escaped to America; and he thought he had traced you to Liverpool, and to an American vessel there which had sailed a week before. He followed in the next packet, to find you if possible, and see what could be done for you.'

'I did not go to America,' said Herbert, interrupting him.

'No. William discovered his mistake when he got to New York. It was not you whom he had followed, and he prepared to return—but he never did return.'

'Not return!' repeated the wretched young man.

*Dr Dodd was executed for forgery in 1777. The most powerful intercessions were made for his life, but in vain. Lord Thurlow, when appealed to, refused to entertain the petition or to exert his influence, declaring that 'if Dr Dodd be saved the Perreans were murdered.' The Perreans were two brothers, and the first victims of the law which made forgery a capital crime.

'No; he was attacked by a fever then raging there and died.'

A deep groan burst from Herbert. His father continued to speak, and although his voice scarcely rose above a whisper, he seemed to gather strength as he went on, and to be almost supernaturally supported. His voice gained firmness, and he raised himself on his pillow so as to face his son, who sat by the bedside a prey to emotions which cannot be described. As one sorrow after another was recounted by his dying parent, he hid his face in the bed-clothes, and interrupted the narrative only by broken sobs.

'Your brother died. Why should I lament it? He is happy; and I shall go to him, though he cannot return to me; I shall soon be with him. You asked for your mother. When the news reached us of William's death, your mother sank under the blow. One son dead and the other for ever lost to us in this world—a wanderer on the face of the earth—a wanderer from God and happiness too—a proclaimed felon! Your mother sank too. She died, but her last breath was employed in praying for Herbert—her first born—her guilty Herbert. Your sister—'

'For mercy's sake tell me no more,' Herbert muttered. 'Father, would you drive me to desperation?'

'I have not much more to tell, Herbert; but it is necessary you should hear it. Your sister was to have been married; you knew it then though you may have forgotten it now. Well, the blow you struck fell upon her too. She was cast off as a worthless thing because her brother—'

'Because her brother was a villain. Speak the word, father, for it is a true one.'

'I will not speak the word, Herbert; but let me go on, my mind begins to wander. Your sister is in a mad house. And here am I alone, helpless, dying. The hands that should have smoothed my pillow, and at last closed my eyes, are already in the grave, or worse. But you, Herbert; oh, do not flatter yourself that sin is a small thing. No man lives to himself; you, wherever you have hidden yourself, have not been living to yourself. God forgive you!'

The young man slowly raised his head as his father, exhausted by speaking, and yet more by the most painful effort of recalling his sorrows, sank back on his pillow. 'Father,' he said, in a tone of enforced calmness, which was strangely at variance with his bloodshot eyes and death-pale cheek—'Father! there is one thing more to do, to say.' He knelt down by the bed-side. 'Father, CURSE ME. I never wished for your blessing so fervently as I now implore your curse. This only is wanting to fill up my full measure of wretchedness, and then—'

The aged man once more raised himself from his bed, stretched out his shrunken hands, and laid them on the head of his son. Herbert shuddered as he felt their touch, but he did not draw back. 'The God of heaven bless you, Herbert, the Father of mercies forgive you. Blessed Saviour, save the poor outcast; have mercy on him; restore him; bless him. May he be brought to know that glorious truth, 'Him that cometh to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out.' And now, Herbert, my son, my dear boy, you must not remain here. Should you be seen, nothing can save you. Your liberty, your life, is in danger while you remain near this spot. Go; my best blessings are upon you; my last prayers shall be for you. Do nothing rashly; I do not know what you ought to do. The down-ward path is smooth; it is the way back—there is the difficulty. But at all events—at all risks—repent and turn to God. He will abundantly pardon, and he will direct you what to do.'

The young man threw himself by his father's side. Their tears mingled together. One embrace of undying affection, and the scene closed.

The next morning it was known in the little town of H—, and the tidings soon spread for many miles around, that the venerable and beloved but deeply tried rector of that place was dead. His only attendant had, at the sick man's request, left him, that she might obtain the repose which her long and tedious watchings had rendered necessary; and on entering his study, where, since the death of his wife he had always slept, she found him in the morning lifeless. He was raised on his knees in the bed, as though his spirit had passed away in prayer. Many followed him to the grave, and lamented him, saying, 'Ah, my brother!' but among the mourners there was not one who bore his name or owned his lineage.

We return to Cragburn. More than two years had elapsed since the last interview which we recorded between Henry Brown and Mr Evelyn. We again introduce them to the reader, but under altered circumstances. This time the place of meeting is Cliff Cottage, the visitor is the curate. But before we listen to their communications, we must, in as brief space as possible, glance at a few intervening events.

Nearly three weeks passed after the stranger, whom we have known hitherto as Henry Brown, left Cragburn before he returned. But he did return, and received back the packet from Mr Evelyn as he had delivered it into his hands. But a change so fearfully affecting as that which the compassionate curate witnessed in the young man he had never before seen, and such he prayed never to see again. One thing only accounted for it, and that but partially, his unhappy acquaintance was clad in deep mourning. For some weeks after his return, the tenant of Cliff Cottage maintained the strictest seclusion. The first place which he was seen was—to the surprise of the villagers and especially of the curate—the parish church. We

shall not avail ourselves of the chronicler's privilege, by dwelling upon the fervid eloquence of the preacher, and the unworded emotions which agitated his breast with hopes and fears; let it suffice to say that, from this time, another and a happier change became gradually visible in the new hearer. He no longer absented himself from the house of prayer, nor refused the again proffered friendship of Mr Evelyn. On the contrary, frequent and long were their communications with each other. How much or how little of the previous history of the wretched young man was divulged, it is not for us to say; but to whatever extent it reached, the confidence reposed tended only to knit together more closely the bonds so recently formed.

Three other circumstances require also to be noted, since they did not escape the observation of the rustics of Cragburn. The first is, that night after night, for weeks and months in succession, a bright light was known to gleam from one room in Cliff Cottage, long after the village was otherwise buried in darkness and hushed in repose. And day after day, as reported by the widow's son, did the recluse sit in that same room, careworn and dejected indeed, but not idle, as the quires of paper which he covered with writing would have borne witness. Occasionally his unwearied industry was interrupted by a solitary walk, or by a visit from the benevolent curate, but except on these occasions the daily task was never intermitted. Then, again, on three or four several occasions, Mr Evelyn, who had never before absented himself from his secluded home for more than a single day at most, undertook journeys of no ordinary length, judging from his time of absence, and at such times his first visit on his return was to the solitary occupant of Cliff Cottage. And, lastly it could not but be plainly visible that the health of poor Brown began rapidly to fail. His cheek assumed and retained the pallor of death, except when overspread with that hectic flush which so surely betokens consumption. A racking cough had fixed upon his lungs, and it could not be doubted that his days were fast drawing to a close.

On the day to which we have already referred, the invalid was seated by his window, supported by cushions in an easy chair. Mr Evelyn sat opposite; he had been reading to him the words of life, and had just risen from the posture of devotion; they had been praying. A silence succeeded which was broken by the emaciated sufferer. 'I believe my work in this world is now nearly over; the last month has brought me low, very low.'

'It were vain,' replied his friend, 'to attempt to raise your spirits with false hopes of recovery or even amendment. Disease has too surely marked you for its prey. But, my dear friend, I trust you can say, 'O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?'

'I know not,' was the answer; 'it were too much for one like me to exult over death and the grave. And yet I do believe, blessed be God, that my sins, which were many, are all forgiven me.'

'I can but wish,' said Mr Evelyn, (we now take up another fragment of the conversation which, be it remarked, was frequently interrupted by the distressing cough of the invalid)—'I can but wish that you had listened to my entreaties; those long nights of watching, and days of mental labour have worked your destruction.'

'And why, my dear sir, should you wish it? What had I to live for but that one thing, and, thank God, it is accomplished. That last remittance from my publisher has cleared off the score with John Savage and his brother. Ah! the readers of those papers will little guess with what a burning brain and throbbing pulse they were written; or that they have proceeded from the pen of a vile felon. But there is yet another debt to pay,' and he convulsively clasped the hand of his friend; 'you have forwarded that letter?'

'I have.'

'You did not know its contents?'

'No, certainly not.'

'Then I will tell you. I have given up my secret; and by this time the government probably knows where to find Herbert B—, the forger.'

Mr Evelyn started from his seat in intense alarm. 'My friend, my friend, my friend!' he exclaimed; 'surely this was not required at your hands. You have, as far as you can, repaired the injury you have done. Surely you do not think that your self-sacrifice can atone for your sin against God?'

'No,' replied Herbert; 'can you imagine that I think so! But I owe something to the broken law of the country.'

'It was not needed; it could not have been needed,' said Mr Evelyn, in a still agitated voice; 'I have long seen that the law which condemns to death, for a crime such as yours, is unnecessarily, cruelly severe; that justice under its influence becomes vengeance; and that the moral influence of punishment is destroyed—worse than destroyed—perverted.'

'All this I have said to myself,' replied Herbert, 'but it would not do. I broke the law, knowing its penalty, and I ought to submit to that penalty. Whatever be the result, I am now resigned. I have one favour only to ask of you. Will you be with me to the last?'

'I will do more, said Mr Evelyn. 'I have some influence; my connexions are not powerless; I have never sought their aid, but they must, they shall aid us now.'

Herbert shook his head, and a melancholy smile played upon his lips. He was thinking of Dr Dodd. And thus the friends parted.

In the middle of the night the widow's son