

Literature, &c.

The American Magazines.

From the Columbian Magazine.

THE OLD MAN'S DREAM.

BY REV. M. N. McDONALD.

An old man slept in his elbow chair
 At close of a Summer day,
 And his cheek was fanned by the idle wing
 Of a zephyr in its play,
 And he recked not the sound of a busy
 wheel
 That was humming its ceaseless lay.
 A weary wight was the old man now,
 And he slept, though a hammer's fall
 Was clinking still, with its heavy stroke,
 Close down by the cottage wall;
 For he labored all day in the factory
 The busiest of them all.

But he woke at last with a sudden start,
 And then with a smile said he,
 "Oh a beautiful dream I have surely had
 Of a far off country;
 Good wife, lay by the wheel a space,
 And I'll tell it unto thee.

"Not here by the latticed pane I sat,
 Nor slept in my elbow chair,
 For my limbs were the active limbs of
 youth,
 So tall and straight and fair,
 And my dim old eyes they had found their
 light,
 And dark were my locks of hair.

"I was young again as I once had been,
 And I roamed away at will,
 With a glad free step o'er a spreading plain
 And a bright and breezy hill,
 And I was not forced to toil for bread
 Within the roaring mill.

"A shadowy veil of golden haze
 All over the landscape lay,
 And methought, as I looked on the fairy
 scene,
 'Twas the morn of a Summer day,
 But never a Summer sun, I ween,
 Shone out with such heavenly ray.

"It tinged the breast of a lovely stream,
 Which flowed through that region wide;
 A broad, still river, that peacefully
 In the sunlight seemed to glide,
 With soft green pastures and flowery fields,
 Sloped down to its silver tide.

"And I minded me well if thou were there,
 Though I was not all alone—
 And I said, 'Good wife, shall we meet
 again?
 Then a low, yet pleasant tone,
 Made answer, 'She'll come to thee by and
 by,
 But the time is still unknown.'

"And I laid me down by that shining stream
 Neath a cool and grateful shade,
 Where harps, methought, in the leafy
 boughs,
 A murmuring music made;
 And sweet was the rest of that grassy
 couch,
 And the winds that round me played.

"There was no hum of the jarring wheels
 Each sound of labor slept—
 And they told me—I saw bright creatures
 there—
 That an endless rest they kept,
 And, but that all tears were wiped away,
 For gladness I could have wept.

"Our children's faces and forms I saw—
 There was not a cloud between—
 I knew them all, they were fairer grown,
 And yet were the same, I ween;
 And they came to my side as they would
 have come
 Had we parted yestere'en.

"I looked on each in my dream but now;
 The smile of our gallant son,
 And the soft blue eyes of my darling Jean,
 With our queenly Marion,
 And golly shod o'er each fair young head
 A golden-glorious shone.

"They spake to me kind and loving words,
 And pointed me far, to where
 The dazzling gates of a city stood
 Upreared in the silent air,
 And told me the Lord of that happy land
 Would give me a portion there.

"Oh, sweet was the calm of my spirit then
 So blessed as I seemed to be,

That I would not have asked another boon
 Save this, of a surety,
 That thou mightest have shared my joy
 good wife,
 In that far off country."

Another day and another eve,
 And the old man slept again
 In his elbow chair when his toil was done,
 As he sat by the lattice pane,
 And the good wife put her wheel aside,
 And called him, but all in vain.

She called him twice, and she called him
 thrice,
 Her hand on his shoulder pressed,
 But he gave no heed, and his silvery hair
 Drooped down on his quiet breast,
 For the weary man, with his life-toil o'er,
 Had passed to the Land of Rest.

From the Columbian Magazine.

THE MERCHANT CLERKS.

BY MRS. C. H. BUTLER.

"Truth severe—by frolic Fiction dressed."
 [Continued from our last.]

NEARLY a year had passed since the scenes last related, and rapidly on the broad road to ruin has George sped his way. It is evening, and alone in his chamber sits this reckless youth. On a table before him are wine and glasses, and several letters and tradesman's bills, are lying scattered about. He leans his head upon his hands—his brow is clouded and his look almost ferocious. At length springing from his chair, he rapidly paced back and forth the room, exclaiming with an oath:

"What am I to do? Cursed luck! Thrown out of my situation; my salary already overdrawn to the amount of three hundred dollars. What's to be done? Who would have thought the old churls would turn me off? Hang me if I did. Pretty business. Then there's my board bill due for six months. How the old Jezebel will rave when she finds it out. No more soft speeches to that silly fool, her daughter—pah,—will answer in place of bank notes. Ah my sweet pretty Fanny; and taking a letter from his pocket he glanced carelessly over it. "Poor foolish little dear how she loves me!" he continued, "well my beauty, we'll have some gay hours yet."

At this moment a young man of gay and dashing appearance entered, upon whose handsome features vice and immorality had already set their stamp.

Turning out a glass of wine he drank it off, then slapping George upon the shoulder, cried:

"How now, man? in the dumps! Hang care I say. What's the matter with you? You look as if you had been listening to a sermon."

"Matter enough Rivers; but what is the news with you? Any better luck this time?"

"Luck! no. The old lady flatly refuses to sepl out another cent for a month. Come, George, you must let me have a cool fifty."

"I can't, Tom, upon my soul. I'm done for. Turned away Tom. You may well stare. Yes I—George Wheeler, am shamefully turned out of the house of Dickens & Co. Think of that, but I swear, I'll have my revenge!"

"Pshaw! turned away, eh? but they paid you well, George? Accounts all nicely squared, and amount due you sang in your pocket eh?"

"Not a copper, I tell you—not a cent. Hark ye, I have already overdrawn my salary three hundred."

"W-h-e-w!"

"But I've had the good of it. Hang me if they can get that back. But it is all up with me now—board, washing, tailors' bills all due; why, the devil will be to pay."

"But not the tailor or the landlady; so make your mind easy. You must give them all the slip, bye and bye. Come, take another glass and let's talk over matters. Now I'll tell you what it is, George, if you will follow my advice I'll put you into a way of making money enough."

"Well, but how, Rivers?"

"Where's your diamond ring?"

"Priscilla?"

"Pah! Your breast pins?"

"Priscilla?"

"You're a fool, George! But you have got your watch, have you not?"

"I have."

"Very well. First take it to the pawn-broker and raise something upon it, then go with me and in half an hour I will wager you double your money. Come along."

A few moments brought them to Chatham street, that hive of pawn-brokers, where the watch was disposed of for about half its value. Then crossing the Park they turned down Broadway and were soon within the unholy wall of a gaming house.

Here the foot fell noiseless upon the yielding surface of beautiful carpets, the walls were fluted with crimson silk bordered with a drooping foliage of golden leaves and acorns. Immense mirrors in richly wrought mouldings gave back the scene on every side—spreading out saloon upon saloon until the eye wearied with its splendor. There were no windows, but here in the day as in the night, and in the night as in the day, still burned on those magnificent chandeliers, lightning up this charnel-house of the soul with more than noon-day brightness.

With all his follies George had never yet gambled. But now the fatal step was taken. Urged on by Rivers, goaded by the reflection that through his own folly he was now penniless, reckless of all save the chance of gain in the stake he was about to throw, George rushed on to destruction.

Unfortunately he won. Another throw of the dice, and still he wins. Another still winning until intoxicated with wine and luck he returned to his lodgings. The next night found George again at the same enticing scene, and again successful. But the third night all his luck forsook him.

Oh the agony, the hope, the fear, anger and despair which by turns agitated the bosom of the wretched youth as the night wore on. Finally, in the one wild hope of success, he staked a sum he knew he was not possessed of, and like a madman fixed his glassy eye upon the fatal dice—need we say he lost?

It was a dark stormy night in November that farmer Wheeler and his wife were suddenly aroused from their sleep by a loud, quick knocking at the door.

"Who's there?" demanded the gruff voice of the farmer, springing from his bed at the unwanted sound.

"There was no answer save by a repetition of the knock still louder and more impatient.

"Who's there, I say; speak. I open no doors to stragglers."

"Father, open quickly; it is your son—it is George."

Ere the last words were spoken the bolt was quickly withdrawn and, with an exclamation of joy, the old man held out his hand to welcome his child! The ear of the aged mother too had caught that beloved voice, and springing forward threw her arms around him while tears of gladness choked all utterance.

But when by the light of the candle, which the old man now placed upon the table, the pale haggard face of George was revealed to them, both parents started back with dismay. His eyes were sunken and bloodshot—his hair dishevelled—his lips and cheeks of marble paleness, and from his garments the rain dripped upon the sanded floor.

"George, boy; is it possible? Can this be my son?" said the father.

"My poor, poor boy, you are sick. Kindle a fire, quick father, that I may get something warm for the poor fellow and some dry clothes. Oh George, George, what is the matter? cried the poor mother with a fresh flood of tears.

"Father," said George, unheeding this fresh burst of grief, and in a voice whose hollow tones made the old man shudder, "Father, you must give me money; all you have, and that without delay."

"What money, money! Good God, what am I to learn?" and he sank trembling into a chair.

"You'll know soon enough," was the blunt reply. "Come, I must have the money—must have it, I tell you," added George with violence.

"No boy," said his father struggling to gain some composure, "no money will I give you until I know what it is for. Go pull off your wet clothes, sit down and warm yourself and then I'll listen to you."

"I tell you every moment is an age. Stop not for inquiries, you will not sleep the easier for the knowledge. Give me the money at once then let me be off. Quick, quick."

The old man still hesitated.

"Give it to him; give it to him! Oh he has some terrible reason for asking it!" besought his weeping wife.

It was enough. Going to a large wooden chest, Mr Wheeler drew forth a small bag, and handed it to his son.

"Here George, is one hundred dollars. Take it, but tell me for the love of God, tell me, you are not guilty of crime!"

"Is here all?" exclaimed George, eagerly clutching the bag. "Only one hundred dollars, father you have more. Give it to me."

"Yes, boy, I have more, but a small sum more—the earnings of many a hard day's toil, which we have put by to support us when our old limbs are too feeble to work."

"Give it me, father—all, every cent!"

"Ungrateful boy, would you beggar us?" said the old man sternly.

"I have to thank you in part for my present misery!" exclaimed George, confronting his father with a look of bitterness. "It was your advice has done it. When the Tempter was nigh, and vice, in pleasure's alluring garb, beckoned me astray from virtue and duty, could I have but remembered your voice but once lifted in tones of warning and entreaty, I might have halted in my mad career; but no; your well remembered parting words now hissed through my brain anew from the Devil's mouth; and on, I pushed 'till so far lost I heeded no entreaties—needed no tempter but my own wicked will. Five years since I left your roof a happy innocent boy! I return with guilt and misery! and you—you, Father, have aided me to this bitter portion of the world's experience."

The wretched old man buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

For one moment Nature wrestled with depravity in the heart of George. He threw his arms round his mother's neck and a hot tear fell on her wrinkled brow. Then tearing himself from her embrace, he seized a hand of his father, pressed it to his lips and rushed forth into the tempest.

The cold rain beat upon his head, in long furious gusts the wind came roaring down, shrieking and groaning as it swept through the

naked forest where his gloomy path lay. The dead leaves whirled and rattled before him, and all the 'voices of the night' were as the voices of fiends driving him on to destruction! He clears the wood, and before him stretch the open fields, but he is no longer alone.

See, crouching beneath the slight shelter of a tree by the road side is a female; her mantle which she folds so tightly around her is dripping with wet, her face is buried in her hands, and her long hair escaped from the frail bonnet, now matted by the wind and rain, clings cold about her. Hark! a footstep! See how eagerly she rises from the damp earth; her ear is bent to the forest. Yes, he comes, and with a scream of joy, she rushes forward. She is in his arms. Alas! poor Fanny Blakeley!

A check for one thousand dollars had been forged upon the house of Dickens & Co. Suspicion rested strongly upon George Wheeler, so lately dismissed from their counting room. His lodgings were searched; he had absconded, but they there found sufficient proof to convict him. In the hurry of his flight he had left behind some papers which too plainly told the tale of guilt. Officers of justice were immediately in pursuit, and telegraphic despatches forwarded to our principal cities.

At the very moment he thought himself most secure, with only a few yards between him and the vessel which was to bear him from the country, George Wheeler was arrested for forgery with his companion, borne back to New York a prisoner. Need we say that his companion was the deluded Fanny—ignorant of his crime—ignorant of all save that she loved him and would follow him even to death.

We will now return to follow the fortunes of Arthur. It was during the occurrence of these sad scenes that he was one morning summoned into the private counting room of his employer.

"Arthur," said Mr. Emerson, "you are now of age. In your duties to our house you have ever been faithful and indefatigable, and we now most cheerfully offer you our assistance in whatever plans or wishes you may have formed for the future. Say, then, is it your intention or your desire to commence business for yourself?"

"Such would be my wish, my dear sir," answered Arthur, "but you are aware I have no capital except the little I have been able to save from my salary, and my father is in no situation to assist me."

"But if a capital was offered you, say of ten thousand dollars, to which we would add five thousand, you would then go into business?"

"Ah my dear sir," said Arthur, "this is merely apocryphal. No one can offer me ten thousand dollars; yet I thank you most gratefully for your proffered loan in such a case."

"Not apocryphal at all, Arthur. Ten thousand has already been offered you—is now ready for your acceptance."

"It is impossible!" exclaimed the astonished youth, "you amaze me, who can have taken such an interest in me?"

There was a rustling and certain low grumbling sounds from behind the little green curtain at one end of the office, and newspaper in hand forth issued the identical old gentleman with whom we may already claim a slight acquaintance.

"I am the man—good boy—your hand. My name is Bluff—rich enough. Few good young men. Saw you at hotel—hon't face—inquired you out—store, boarding house—all right—like you, go into business, ten thousand—trifle. Come, lawyers, draw up papers—good boy," and seizing the arm of the wondering Arthur, drew him out of the store followed by Mr. Emerson.

Within the gloomy walls of a prison, alone in his narrow cell sits the wretched youth whose brief career of folly and crime we have attempted to portray.

To-morrow is the day of trial. Hope there is none, mercy there is none—not from earthly Judges; and with his guilty lips, shall he now dare address the Holy One whom he has profaned and disregarded? Unhappy, wretched George! Heavy drops of anguish roll down his sunken cheeks; his eyes with stony gaze are fixed upon the door through which he hopes soon will come, like a ministering angel, the only being that now clings to him in his misery.

Time wears on. She comes not. Oh the agony of those solitary hours.

"Has she, then too, forsaken me?" he at length exclaimed with anguish in his tones. "Am I left without one drop to sweeten the bitter cup my own hands have drugged? Well better it should be so. Poor unhappy girl, would for your sake we had never met! And Arthur, the friend of my boyhood, he too shuns me. Oh that I had listened to him, that I had followed his noble example. Hark, was not that a step? Yes, she comes," and springing to the door, as the jailor slowly opened it, he received in his arms the fainting form of Fanny.

"Poor thing," said the jailor, assisting to revive the unconscious girl; "poor thing! Ah it's the men that has the cruel hearts to bring trouble upon such innocent creatures. Ah many a heart has been broken within these old walls; but see, she is coming to, poor dear!" and Fanny now slowly opening her eyes, fixed them upon George, while a ray of joy lit up her pale face as she cried:

"Oh George, dear George, you are saved—saved. We shall be happy yet!"