

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, for July
AN OLD WOMAN'S TALE.

It is an old tale, the experience of age striving in vain to temper the enthusiasm of youth. I am a mother now, and a sedate matron may well sigh to remember how she loved to think her old friends splenetic through infirmity, dearly as she loved them, rather than abate one atom of the fairy visions which danced around her. And when the arch enchanter, Love, waved his wand, and bathed earth, and sea, and sky, in hues of purple and gold, how cruel seemed the hand, though stretched in tenderest watchfulness, that would fain have brought her back to the sober hues of reality. In the arrogance of youth, of beauty, we forget that our kind monitor has felt as we feel—the same fond trust, the same extatic hope, and can say—“I too, shepherd, in Arcadia dwelt.” I have never known the blessed care of a mother, but her venerable parent was permitted to watch over our orphaned childhood. I can now understand her earnest and prayerful anxiety, as we grew up to womanhood, and the time for our settling in life drew near. I can feel with her now, though in my inexperience I could not then, for I, too, have fair girls to guard, whose happiness here and hereafter, is entwined with my heart-strings. I remember the day on which my father told our grandmother of my engagement to your father. I was then, my Margaret, young and light-hearted as yourself, and dear grandmama laid her withered hand on the curls which clustered in golden luxuriance, and tears dropped slowly down her venerable cheeks.

“Do not grieve, dear grandmama, I shall not leave you for a long time yet; and,” I added, pressing her hand in both mine, “I shall see you very often.”

Here my own tears began to flow, for, in the engrossment of my new feelings, I had scarcely dwelt on the severing of old ties, which my new engagement would involve.

“It is no selfish grief that thus afflicts me,” said my beloved monitor. “I would not cloud your young spirit, nor dim the hopes which are sent to bless the morning of life, and fit us for the burden and heat of the day; but you, my Grace, remind me of my cherished daughter Agnes—whose early death you have often heard me lament. I will now tell you something of her life; and if it make you rejoice with trembling, amid your present happiness, that happiness will be more likely to endure. From her infancy I had watched over Agnes with a more fearful tenderness than any other of my children. Hers was a character strangely made up of quick and joyous impulse, and deep unsuspected feeling. She seemed altogether without that cowardice so often attributed to woman as a reproach, but which, in a world of dangers, often serves her as well as the cautiousness of wisdom. Meanness and cunning she scorned, and the petty artifice so common in both sexes was never found in her. Her spirits were high and amiable—sometimes to wildness; but if unkindly or harshly rebuked, none so utterly subdued. Can you wonder, then, that I watched over her as if she were some precious vessel, sent out on a sea full of rocks, quicksands, and whirlpools? I used to pray that, be her lot in life what it might, she might ever feel the balm of loving looks and kind words.”

“And what was her lot in life, dear grandmama? Was she happy? Do tell me all about her. Was she pretty?”

“She was not so fair as her sister Grace,” continued grandmama, “but there was a variety in the play of her features, and a playfulness of manner, which made her generally admired. At the age of eighteen, her hand was asked in marriage by a young merchant, Arthur Walworth; and before I was aware of her danger, her heart was his. I say danger, because she was too young to encounter the cares of married life, and the uncertainties of trade press heavily on the wife of a merchant. She suffers from the variation of her husband's spirits; and she is a highly favoured woman if his temper too do not suffer—and my Agnes's tender, yet high spirit, was I knew ill fitted for such trials. Arthur was an intelligent young man, of high character, and most honorable in all his dealings. It was, however, his misfortune to have for a mother a weak and irritable woman, whom prosperity had not improved. She was surrounded with blessings, but was constantly complaining; and as her education had not strengthened her mind, nor a watchful self-denial improved her heart, she was likely to impress upon her son's mind a very low opinion of all women. I, my dear Grace, was honored by my husband with his entire confidence, and I tried to return his trust, by being indeed, a helpmeet for him. If a woman does not know the state of her husband's affairs, she is defrauded of what is justly due her—the privilege of advising with him, and of uniting with him, in his efforts to do justly to all men. About a year after Agnes's marriage, the crisis occurred which laid so many lofty houses low. I often surprised Agnes in tears, but she said nothing to me; and I have always made it a principle not to enquire into family secrets, I have seen so much evil from the well-meaning but ill-judging reluctance which many a mother feels to give up to her daughter's husband, in good faith and sincerity, the secrets of that daughter's heart. I was very anxious about my child; but I could only commend her to a tender Providence, and watch for the result. But one day my Agnes came to my house, and rushed up stairs to my bedroom. I followed her and secured the door; and I was then grieved to hear her sobbing bitterly, and in an agony of sorrow.

“Can I give you any comfort or advice my darling? Confide in your mother, and perhaps I may be able to console you.”

“Oh! my husband, my husband, he has used me cruelly; he has not been open with me, he might have told me the state of his affairs; I am not a child; I could bear poverty—I could live anywhere, and labor for him, as many are obliged to do, but this cruel reserve—oh! it will kill me.”

“Agnes, my sweet child,” I answered, “now is your time of trial, you know where to look for strength; and, oh beware of a rebellious spirit! strive to be patient and tell me all your fear.”

“Our head clerk has just been, mamma, and he tells me that his master is gone to London; and his return is uncertain, and he has left a request to me that I will come and stay with you, until his affairs are arranged one way or other. I am more hurt by his allowing me to learn all this from a stranger than shocked at his ruin, for we are both young and may hope for better times. But oh! mother, there are many things which I might have done without; and now, the people will suspect me of having known our circumstances all along—and I shall have the disgrace of being suspected of dishonesty.”

“Alas! Agnes,” I said, “yours is a common case. To a woman of integrity it is indeed a sore trial to be thought capable of wronging any tradesman; but do not injure your health by this violent grief. You are, whatever happens, our dearly beloved daughter, and now, for Grace's sake, and for your father's and for mine, try to compose yourself. I knew that this appeal to her family affection would have a strong effect on her generous nature; for Agnes, in becoming a wife, had not ceased to be a dutiful daughter, and her love for her sister, your dear mother, my Grace, was beautiful to behold. She was delicate even then and required the tenderest care—too gentle and unselfish for this world. She was even then more like a heavenly than an earthly being. When she saw Agnes come down with the marks of tears on her face, she strove by every gentle attention to soothe and cheer her, and I sighed to see their gentle offices lavished in vain.

“Our dear Agnes was wounded to the quick by her husband's want of confidence, and we could not cheer her. In a short time, however, Arthur's affairs were wound up—all claims were satisfied—and he resumed his business with a good prospect of success, but he had lost one possession more valuable than gold—the confidence of his wife was gone for ever. There was a restlessness and anxiety about Agnes, which never left her. She refused ever again to take the most trifling thing on credit, and once, when he jestingly alluded to her prudence, as he termed it, she replied, ‘I have been treated like a child, Arthur you must remember a burnt child dreads the fire. If I am not to be trusted I will avoid being duped.’”

“She died at the age of six and twenty, after a short illness, but I shall always think that her indignation and anguish of mind had paved the way for her early death.”

My grandmother ceased, and seemed lost in thought, then she added—

“You too, Grace are about to marry a merchant, and I have told you this sad story in order to impress upon your mind that the romantic feeling of first love is not sufficient to happiness in the married life. There must be mutual confidence or the yoke will press heavily indeed upon the helpless women. Before you marry, make it a condition that no deception of any kind or degree is to be permitted between you. Unless a man confides in his wife, he does both her and himself irreparable wrong.”

I took my dear grandmother's advice, and, as far as this varied scene admits of happiness, happiness has been mine.

From the London Monthly Magazine.
VENICE.

When I came to Venice, I intended to stay a few days. Three weeks have now elapsed; and if I had no engagements to call me away, and no friends at home I wished to see, I really believe I should never leave it, is the only city I ever saw which I love,—not for the sake of pictures and statues, or monuments of antiquity and historical associations, but simply for itself and for its own sake. Most truly did Byron call it a “fairy city of the heart.” It indeed seems the chosen spot and dwelling of romance, something more akin to the imaginings of the poet than the common-place realities of actual life: a city rising out of the sea—without streets, without noise of carriages, dust or other annoyances and disturbances of other towns—a city without dry land. There is something in the very idea which charms and delights the imagination. And such a city—such magnificent palaces, churches and convents—such spacious quays and flights of marble steps—such glittering Oriental splendour—such beautiful and affecting picturesque decay! The dark water flowing between and around, flashing and sparkling, and reflecting all objects as in a mirror, binds Venice with beauty.

Those who have lived in large cities know the sinking of the heart, the dismal feeling of stepping from one's door into the wide noisy, bustling street—the sense of loneliness among the crowd—the unpleasantness of having the broad glaring eye of the world upon you wherever you go—the irksome feeling that you are not a free agent, that your personal independence is gone—that you must move with the crowd. Such are a few of the evils of the crowded cities; but in Venice there is

nothing of the sort. You go down a back stair to the water's edge, and step into your gondola. Few see you—nobody cares when or where you go, you float along the Grand Canal, or move along through the labyrinth of water streets, to see some church or palace or picture; or over to some of the hundred isles and all the while sit in the open air, to enjoy the fresh sea-breeze and the fairy scene, or creep into your little black den, and stretch yourself on the luxurious cushions.

Indeed one great charm of Venice to me is, that living here is so like being at sea, without the drawbacks and discomforts of an actual voyage.

The canals are narrow, not exceeding the width of a narrow street, except the Grand Canal, which winds like a great river through the centre of the town, and it is spanned by only one bridge, the Rialto. The Rialto is a wide and noble arch of marble, with a row of small shops on either side, where once the Shylocks and Antonios and wealthy merchants of Venice were wont to resort to transact business. From one end to another, for more than two miles, this Grand Canal is lined with palaces—palaces like those we see in Claude or Canaletti's pictures, one surpassing the other in magnificence, and rising proudly out of the water, with row above row, of marble columns and richly carved windows and balconies and long projecting cornices.

Outside the lagoons, and like a bar to shut out the ocean swell from Venice, is the Lido, a long narrow island, or rather sand-bank, stretching for six or seven miles from the fort at one end, to the little fishing village of Malamocco, at the other. All between is a heap of sand hills, with here and there a tree, and on the side next Venice a few gardens and vineyards. On the outside towards the Adriatic, is a beautiful beach of firm dry sand strewn with sparkling shells and pebbles, which it is a real delight to walk on. Here we have the ocean swell, and the fresh sea-breeze, and the Adriatic, so beautifully blue and transparent. The sand-hills above the beach command lovely views of Venice, and the distant mountains, and all round the wide horizon. I choose some spot among sandhills where I can see around me, and watch the fishing boats and distant sails, and read or think away the hours. Here I have a view around me which the world can scarcely equal. Far as the eye can reach along the northern horizon, lie the giant Tyrol Alps, with their snow streaked sides and white peaks, slumbering quietly among the summer clouds—to the east, stretches the blue expanse of the Adriatic—to the west and south the lagoons, with their hundred isles, and Venice rising with her spires, and domes, and towers, like an enchanted city from the bosom of the water. Sometimes when the sun is shining bright and not a cloud to be seen in the sky, the air has all the dazzling clearness which we see in Canaletti's pictures, every mast in the harbor, and almost every tile on the house-tops of Venice, are distinctly visible, while the still surface of the lagoon, untroubled by the faintest wandering breath, reflects every object as distinctly as a mirror. After such days the evenings seem heavenly. If the scene was beautiful before, what is it now? When the shadows lengthen and the sun goes down in the west like a mass of molten gold, and the gentleness and glow of evening sink softly over land and sea, we take leave of earth and earthly beauty, and seem transported into a vision of paradise or scene of fairy land. A twilight closes in, the mountains, which lay all day melting and lost in airy distance, come out in clear outline and deep shade against the golden sky—still however, more like a barrier of clouds raised to a wall in a happy valley, than real mountains—so wild so jagged, and fantastic does their outline appear. The sky glows and burns from the zenith down to the gorgeous west, and the flood is paved with its image—and the city huddled together in gloom, while every town and steeple comes in strong and black relief, and the masts and rigging of the ships are traced in delicate lines against the rich light. Every low island lies like a line of darkest purple; sleeping in its shadow. Then I take my gondola and glide slowly across the lagoon, enjoying the delicious coolness of the evening, and listening to the chiming of bells, and voice of music coming faintly over the water from the distant city. As the shades of night deepen, and the last streaks of sunset sink into the sea, I watch the stars come out one by one in the sky above, and the lights in the city below, each casting a trembling line of light upon the dark waters.

Venice is the place for pageants. I saw two fetes—one a procession at St. Mark's Palace; the other a festival given by a parish, in honour of its pastor who had completed his fiftieth year of residence. The pomp and brilliancy of the first—with noble palaces, the bright sunshine, the crowds of gaily-dressed people, and the long procession in embroidered robes, far exceeded any such ceremonies seen elsewhere. Respecting the other, the city seemed to be converted for the occasion into a vast theatre. Every house seemed turned inside out; the shop keepers hung their gayest silks and piled their richest goods in front of their shops; private people hung out their plate and mirrors and pictures, the windows were illuminated, banners waved from balconies, and rich festoons of silk and crimson cloth hung across the narrow streets and canals; orchestras were erected, and bands were playing, and Venice crowded to see and hear, while overhead, the moon poured down a flood of mellow radiance to the gay and brilliant scene.

What a contrast is it to this splendour and revelry to row through the canals in the day time, and see palaces among the most magni-

ficient in the world, tenantless and crumbling to decay—to wind for hours through the watery streets of Venice, amidst the vestiges of ancient wealth and splendour and meet nothing but a solitary gondola—to pass for miles between houses which would seem deserted, but for a stray tree here and there looking down from some projecting balcony, or a boatman's jacket hung out to dry from some high arched window, which once lighted the banquet hall of princes. Such is the picture which Venice presents, except in the neighborhood of St. Mark's Place and on the quays and Grand Canal.

The hour of departure came, and although I begin to long for home, I felt my heart sick within me as I bade adieu, perhaps for the last time, to Venice. Never I thought, did she look more beautiful than now, when leaning from the window of the gondola, I looked back on her palaces and churches, standing in clear relief against the red light of sunrise. For a full hour I kept my eyes fixed on them while the gondola was gliding over the calm lagoon to Fusina, and when at last we touched land, and I looked round, the contrast between the chill gray morning sky and the marshy land before me, and the glow of sunrise, the wide ocean, and the fair city I was leaving behind, made me feel as if I was awakening from a pleasant dream to the rude realities of actual life. And a pleasant dream it was the time I spent at Venice. Even now when the Lido and the sunset, and St. Mark's place, and the moonlight canals flash across my memory, I can hardly bring myself to believe that such things really exist, and that I really lived among them. The whole scene appears too bright and beautiful for aught but dreams of fairyland.

From the Christian Treasury.
GARDEN MEDITATIONS.

UPON AN OLD YET FRUITFUL TREE.

When I saw and old tree which promised little, yet was richly laden, and had not only more fruit than those which were younger, and made a greater show, but the fruit was better also, it exceeded not only in quantity but also in quality, the other trees—this observation made me think such a tree resembled much an aged Christian, an old disciple, as we read, Acts xxi. 16. Of such it may be noticed, that they usually bear more and better fruit than younger professors, their judgment being ripened and mellowed by experience, and themselves usually not so censorious and self-willed as the others are, who are apt to condemn all that are not just of their judgment, even though they may exhibit as much of Christ and a gospel conversation as themselves. This consideration brought to my mind what the Psalmist says of such.—“The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.” (Ps. xcii. 12-14.) Those that draw sap from Christ and are grafted into him, must needs bud and bloom, and bring forth fruit, these are the trees planted by the rivers of water, which bring forth their fruit in their seasons (Pl. i. 3); for as aged men, so especially aged Christians, have their judgment ripened by experience, and mellowed by time; and their zeal is not a hot and furious zeal, without knowledge—a zeal, like that of the apostles James and John who, who would have called for fire from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans, as they said Elijah did. (Luke ix. 54.) Young professors, as I said, are prone to be censorious, apt to condemn those who cannot see with their eyes, or who differ from them, though, it be in circumstantialities and things of small concern, yea, perhaps will disparage their graces, as if their own hearts, like Jehu's where the touchstone of sincerity, and their own judgment the touchstone of truth. But aged Christians have learned Christ better, and studied their own hearts more, and will yield a grain of allowance to others, as knowing they need it themselves; and where they see the vitals of religion preserved, they will reach out the right hand of fellowship, though it be to men of contrary persuasion, in lesser matters: yea they will love them better and value them more, than they do those of their own persuasion, in whom they cannot see such evident signs of grace. There is honourable mention made of an old disciple (Acts xxi. 16): a grey-headed experienced Christian, a father (1 John ii. 13). “Ye are they” said Christ, “which have continued with me; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.” (Luke xxi. 28, 29.) God will especially reward those that are aged servants. “Days should speak,” says Elihu. “and multitude of years teach wisdom.” (Job xxxii. 7.) It was a duty commanded by God, and yet is incumbent upon us, to “rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man” [Lev. xix. 32], but then much more an old Christian. “The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.” [Prov. xvi. 31.]

O my soul, own Christ wherever thou seekest him, and make not thine own judgment the test to try all other men's, nor with Jehu, thine own heart the touchstone to try others. Judge the tree by the fruit, not by the leaves, and professors not by their words, but by their works. Grow in grace as thou growest in years, so mayest thou be an old disciple.

O my God, make me fruitful, and let my fruit be pleasant to thy taste, and let the last be better than the first.—Bury.

From the Christian Treasury.
NEVER TELL A LIE.
How simply and beautifully has Abdo-J-Ka-