LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

EXPERIENCES OF A BARRISTER.

THE MOTHER AND SON.

DINNER had been over about half an hour one Sunday afternoon—the only day on which for years I had been able to enjoy a dinner—and I was leisurely sipping a glass of wine, when a carriage drove rapidly up to the door, a loud rat tat followed, and my friend, Dr Curteis, to my great surprise, was announced.

'I have called,' said the doctor as we shook hands, 'to ask you to accompany me to Mount Place. I have just received a hurried note from Miss Armitage, stating that her mother, after a very brief illness, is rapidly sinking, and requesting my attendance, as well as that of a legal gentleman, immediately.'

'Mrs Armitage,' I exclaimed,' inexpressibly shocked. 'Why it is scarcely more than a fortnight ago that I met her at Rochford's in brilliant health and spirits.'

'Even so. But will you accompany me? I don't know where to find any one else for the moment; and time presses.'

'It is an attorney probably, rather than a barrister, that is needed, but under the circumstances, and knowing her as I do, I cannot hesitate.'

We were soon bowling along at a rapid pace, and in little more than an hour reached the dying lady's residence, situated in the county of Essex, and distant about ten miles from London. We entered together; and Dr Curteis, leaving me in the library proceeded at once to the sick chamber. About ten minutes afterwards, the housekeeper, a tall, foreign looking, and rather handsome woman, came into the room and announced that the doctor wished to see me. She was deadly pale, and I observed trembled like an aspen. I motioned her to precede me; and she, with unsteady steps, immediately led the way. So great was her agitation, that twice, in ascending the stairs, she only saved herself from falling by grasping the banister-rail. The presage I drew from the exhibition of such overpowering emotion, by a person whom I knew to have been long, not only in the service, but in the confidence of Mrs Armitage, was soon confirmed by Dr Curteis, whom we met coming out of the chamber of the expiring patient.

'Step this way,' said he, addressing me, and leading to an adjoining apartment. 'We do not require your attendance Mrs Bourdon,' said he, as soon as we reached it, to the housekeeper, who had swiftly followed us, and now stood, staring with eager eyes in the doctor's face, as if life and death hung on his lips. 'Have the goodness to leave us,' he added, tartly, perceiving she did not stir, but continued her fearful scrutinising glance. She started at his altered tone, flushed crimson, then paled to a chalky whiteness, and muttering,left the apartment.

'The danger of her mistress has bewildered her,' I remarked.

'Perhaps so,' remarked Dr Curteis. 'Be that as it may, Mrs Armitage is beyond all human help. In another hour she will be, as we say, no more.'

'I feared so. What is the nature of her disorder?'

'A rapid wasting away, as I am informed. The appearances presented are those of a person expiring of atrophy or extreme emaciation.'

'Indeed. And so sudden too!'

'Yes. I am glad you are come, although your professional services will not, it seems be required—a neighboring attorney having performed the necessary duty—something, I believe, relative to the will of the dying lady. We will speak further together by and by. 'In the meantime,' continued Dr Curteis, with a perceptible tremor in his voice, 'it will do neither of us any harm to witness the closing scene of the life of Mary Rawdon, whom you and I twenty years ago worshipped, as one of the gentlest and most beautiful of beings with which the creator ever graced his universe. It will be a peaceful parting. Come.'

Just as, with noiseless footsteps, we entered the silent death chamber, the last rays of the setting sun were falling upon the figure of Ellen Armitage—who knelt in speechless agony by the bedside of her expiring parent—and faintly lighting up the pale, emaciated, sunken features of the so lately brilliant, courted Mrs Armitage! But for the ineffaceable splendor of her deep blue eyes, I should scarcely have recognised her. Standing in the shadow, as thrown by the heavy bed drapery, we gazed and listened unperceived.

'Ellen,' murmured the dying lady, 'come nearer to me. Its growing dark and I cannot see you plainly. Now, then, read to me, beginning at the verse you finished with as good doctor Curteis entered. Ay,' she faintly whispered, it is thus. Ellen, with thy hand clasped in mine, and with the words of the holy book sounding from thy dear lips, that I would pass away.'

Ellen, interrupted only by her blinding tears, making sad stops, complied. Twilight stole on, and threw its shadow over the solemn scene, deepening its holiness of sorrow. Night came on with all her train; and the silver radiance kissed into ethereal beauty the pale face of the weeping girl, still pursuing her sad and sacred task. We hesitated to disturb, by the slightest movement, the repose of a death-bed over which belief and hope, those only potent ministers, shed light and calm! At length Dr Corteis advanced gently towards the bed, and taking the daughters hand, said in a low voice, 'Had you not better retire, my dear young lady, for a few moments?' She understood him, and rising from her knees, threw herself in an extacy of grief upon the corpse, from which the spirit had just passed away. Assistance was summoned, and the sobbing girl was borne from the chamber. I descended, full of emotion to the library, where Dr Curteis promised shortly to join me. Noiselessly entering the room, I came suddenly upon the housekeeper and a tall young man, standing with their back towards me in the recesses of one of the windows, and partly shrouded by the heavy cloth curtains. They were evidently in earnest conference, and several words, the significance of which did not at the moment strike me, reached my ears before they perceived my approach. The moment they did so, they turned hastily round, and eyed me with an expression of flurried alarm, which at the time surprised me not a little. 'All is over Mrs Bourdon,' said I, finding she did not speak; 'and your presence is probably needed by Miss Armitage.' A flash of intelligence, as I spoke passed between the pair, but whether indicative of grief or joy, so momentary was the glance, I should have been puzzled to determine. The housekeeper immediately left the room, keeping her eyes, as she passed fixed upon me with the same nervous apprehensive look which had before irritated Dr Curteis. The young man followed more slowly. He was a tall and rather handsome youth, apparently about one or two-and-twenty years of age. His hair was black as jet, and his dark eyes were of singular brilliancy; but the expression; I thought was scarcely a refined or highly intellectual one. His resemblance to Mrs Bourdon, whose son, indeed he was, was very striking. He bowed slightly, but courteously, as to an equal, as he closed the door, and I was left to the undisturbed enjoyment of my own reflections, which, ill defined and indistinct as they were, were anything but pleasant company. My reverie was at length interrupted by the entrance of the doctor, with the announcement that the carriage was in waiting to re-convey us to town.

We had journeyed several miles on our return home before a word was spoken by either of us.' My companion was apparently even more painfully pre-occupied than myself. He was, however, the first to break silence. 'The emaciated corpse we have just left little resembles the gay, beautiful girl, for whose smiles you and I were once disposed to shoot each other!' The doctor's voice trembled with emotion, and his face, I perceived, was pale as marble.

'Mary Rawdon,' I remarked, 'lives again in her daughter.'

'Yes: her very image. Do you know,' continued he,' speaking with rapid energy,—'I suspect Mary Rawdon—Mrs Armitage I would say—has been foully, treacherously dealt with.'

I started with amazement; and yet the announcement but embodied and gave form and color to my own ill-defined and shadowy suspicicions.

'Good Heavens! How? By whom?'

'Unless I am greatly mistaken, she has been poisoned by an adept in the use of such destructive agents.'

'Mrs Bourdon?'

'No; by her son. At least my suspicions point that way. She is probably cognizant of the crime. But in order that you should understand the grounds upon which my conjectures are principally founded, I must enter into a short explanation. Mrs Bourdon, a woman of Spanish extraction, and who formerly occupied a much higher position than she does now, has lived with Mrs Armitage from the period of her husband's death, now about sixteen years ago. Mrs Bourdon has a son, a tall, good looking fellow enough, whom you may have seen.'

'He was with his mother in the library as I entered it after leaving you.'

'Ah! Well, hem! This boy, in his mother's opinion—but that perhaps is somewhat excuseable—exhibited early indications of having been born a 'genius.' Mrs Armitage who had been first struck by the beauty of the child, gradually acquired the same notion; and the result was, that he was little invested—with at least her tacit approval—with the privileges supposed to be the lawful inheritance of such gifted spirits, namely, the right to be as idle as he pleased—geniuses, you know can, according to the popular notion, attain any conceiveable amount of knowledge at a bound—and to exalt himself in the stilts of his own conceit above the useful and honorable pursuits suited to the station in life in which Providence had cast his lot. The fruit of such training soon showed itself. Young Bourdon grew up a conceited and essentially-ignorant puppy, capable of nothing but bad verses, and thoroughly impressed with but one important fact, which was, that he, Alfred Bourdon, was the most gifted, and most ill used of all God's creatures. To genius, in any intelligible sense of the term he has in truth, no pretensions. He was endowed, however, with a kind of reflective talent, which is often mistaken by fools for *creative* power. The morbid fancy and melancholy scorn of a Byron, or instance, such gentry reflect back from their foggy imaginations in exaggerated and distorted feebleness of whining versicles, and so on with other lights celestial or infernal. This, however, by the way. The only rational pursuit he ever followed, and that only by fits and starts, to gratify his faculty of 'wonder,' I fancy was chemistry. A small laboratory was fitted up for him in the little summer house you may have obseved at the further corner of the lawn. This study of his, if study such desultory snatches at science may be called, led him, in his examination of vegetable bodies, to a smattering acquaintance with botany, a science of which Ellen Armitage is an enthusiastic student. They were foolishly permitted to *botanise* together, and the result was, that Alfred Bourdon, acting upon the principal that genius—whether sham or real—levels all merely mundane distinctions, had the impudence to aspire to the hand of Miss Armitage. His passion, sincere, or simulated, has never been I have reason to know, in the slightest degree reciprocated by its object; but so blind is vanity, that when about six weeks ago, an *eclaircissement* took place, and the fellow's dream was somewhat rudely dissipated, the untoward rejection of his preposterous suite was, there is every reason to believe, attributed by both mother and son to the repugnance of Mrs Armitage alone; and to this idiotic hallucination she has, I fear, fallen a sacrifice. Judging from the emaciated appearance of the body, and other phenomena communicated to me by her ordinary medical attendant—a blundering ignoramus, who ought to have called in assistance long before—she has been poisoned by *idione*, which, administered in certain quantities would produce precisely the same symptoms. Happily there is no mode of destroying human life which so surely leads to the detection of the murderer as the use of such agents; and of this truth the *post mortem* examination of the body which takes place to morrow morning, will, if I am not grossly mistaken, supply another vivid illustration. . . Legal assistance will no doubt be necessary, and I am sure I do not err in expecting that *you* will aid me in bringing to justice the murderer of Mary Rawdon?'

A pressure of my hand was his only answer. 'I shall call for you at ten o'clock,' said he, as he put me down at my own door. I bowed and the carriage drove off.

[To be Concluded.]

From Hogg's Instructor.

EARTHQUAKES;

THEIR CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES.

Concluded.

Lisbon was visited in 1756 with one of the most tremendous earthquakes that have occurred in Europe in modern times. On the 1st of November of that year, a sound like thunder was heard under-ground, and instantaneously a violent shock threw down the greater part of the city It is stated that in the course of six minutes sixty thousand persons perished. As in the case of the South American inundations, the sea first retired, and laid bare the bar at the harbour; it then returned with the most terrific violence, rising fully fifty feet above the ordinary level. Meanwhile the largest mountains in Portugal rocked and reeled to their very foundations; some of them opened at their summits, which were cleft and rent in a wonderful manner; and huge masses were thrown down into the valleys Electric flames played among the mountains, and clouds of dust arose like vast volumes of smoke. A new quay had shortly before been constructed at Lisbon of white marble, and at an enormous expense. Great numbers of people rushed to this spot, to be free of the falling houses, and here they deemed themselves safe. Suddenly the quay sunk down, with its entire load of human beings, and not one of the bodies ever rose to the surface. A great number of boats and vessels, all full of people, met the same fate: they were swallowed up in a moment, as in a whirlpool. Not a vestige of either quay, or vessels, or people was ever afterwards seen, and in the place where the former stood, Whitehurst found one hundred fathoms of water. This fact gives rise to some curious speculations. 'We must either suppose that a certain track sunk down into a subterranean hollow, which would cause a *fault* in the strata to the depth of six hundred feet, or we may infer, as some have done, from the entire disappearance of the substances engulphed, that a chasm opened and closed again. Yet in adopting this latter hypothesis, we must suppose that the upper part of the chasm, to the depth of one hundred fathoms, remained open after the shock' The observations made at Lisbon by Mr Sharpe, in 1837, bring out some curious and interesting results. The city stands partly on the tertiary, and partly on the secondary formations. The earthquake seems to have spent its force and fury on the newer strata; perhaps it had its focus here. The effects were most disastrous on the blue clay, on which the lower part of the city is built. It was found that not a single house erected on the secondary limestone or accompanying basalt had been thrown down, or even injured in the slightest degree. The Lisbon earthquake was felt over a vast area; but it was most violent in Spain, Portugal, and Northern Africa. The seaport of St. Ubes, twenty miles south of Lisbon, was engulphed. The agitation of the earth was most violent at Algiers and Fez in Africa. A large village, and its inhabitants, to the number of some thousands, at some distance from Morocco, were entirely swallowed up, and shortly afterwards the earth closed completely over them The movement was experienced nearly over the whole of Europe on the same day. In our own islands, the lakes, rivers, and springs were remarkably agitated. At Loch Lomond, the water, without any visible cause, rose first against the bank, and then subsided below its ordinary level The perpendicular height of the swell was about two feet four inches. At Kinsale, in Ireland, a wave rushed into the harbour, whirled round several vessels, and flooded the market place. It is said that the movement of this earthquake was undulatory. It travelled at the rate of twenty miles a minute—the velocity being reckoned between the time the first shock was felt at Lisbon and the time it occurred at other places.

What is known as the Calabrian earthquake is one of the most important, in various points of view, that have been put upon record This does not arise from the shock having been more intense and the consequences more disastrous than in the case of others, but it is owing to the fact that the phenomena preceding and accompanying it have been minutely described by competent observers. To the geologist, the account given of this convulsion—rather this series of convulsions—is of the highest importance. It opens up to him some of the mysteries of nature, and shows how quickly, and over what a vast area at once, certain physical changes may be effected. It would be interesting to trace the convulsion, in its various movements, somewhat minutely, and show the bearing of the phenomena upon the science of geology; but the plan of this paper will not permit of this digression. We must content ourselves with a very brief sketch of it. The shocks began in February, 1783, and continued, with more or less intensity, for nearly four years. The area convulsed included the southern part of Italy, and a part of Sicily—more especially the former, hence the name of the earthquake. The strata of Calabria Ultra belong to the more recent formations, and they were in a most marvellous manner affected by the shock. 'The first shock threw down,' says Lyell, 'in two minutes the greater part of the houses in all the cities, towns, and villages, from the western flanks of the Apennines in Calabria Ultra to Messina in Sicily, and convulsed the whole surface of the country.' The recent strata yielded and heaved like the billows of the ocean, and men were overcome with a sensation like sea-sickness. The trees, still growing, bent to the earth, and touched it with their tops; and the clouds became motionless in the heavens. This, of course, was a visual deception occasioned by the movement of the earth. During the shocks, the relative position of land and water remained very much the same. The quay at Messina is said to have subsided a few inches, and some patches of soil in the neighborhood, from being level, had become inclined towards the sea. In some some instances a portion of a building would be elevated and the remainder continue in its original position. Dolomieu saw a stone well, which had the appearance of being driven out of the soil eight or nine feet. 'Two obelisks, placed at the extremities of a magnificent facade in the convent of St Brune, were observed to have undergone a movement of a singular kind. The pedestal of each remained in its place, but the separate stones above were turned partially round, and removed sometimes nine inches from their position without falling. Numerous fissures and chasms, of all dimensions, were formed in all parts of the country. Some were found parallel to gorges of a more ancient date, others were in the form of crescents, and others radiated from a point, like cracks on a broken pane of glass.' Most of them closed again, and some so completely that their existence could scarcely be traced. Many human beings, and animals of various kinds, were engulphed in these openings, never to be seen more; but in some few instances, men who had been engulphed by one shock, were thrown up alive by another. There were numerous and extensive landslips, and in one instance a considerable hill was cleft in two. Vast masses of rock and soil were thrown down from the mountains and their steep acclivities, by which valleys were filled up, rivers stopped in their courses, and numerous lakes formed. But the most singular and curious of all the appearances was a sort of circular hollow produced in the soil. From a woodcut given by Lyell in his 'Principles of Geology,' it appears that this hollow generally presented the figure of an inverted cone, with a communication down deep into the bowels of the earth. Probably these may have been vents, by which gases, generated among the strata, or below them, found their escape. If so, they formed the safety valves by which the country was preserved during the continuance of the convulsions. Many of the fissures, and all of these circular hollows, were filled with water. The loss of life was very great, and it was much increased by epidemics that followed.

A very violent earthquake occurred in Cutch, in the delta of the Indus, in the year 1819. The principal town was levelled with the ground. The great mosque, erected by Sultan Ahmed, nearly 450 years before, was on this occasion thrown into one mass of ruins. The shocks continued till a volcano, some 30 miles from Bhooj, burst into activity, when they immediately ceased. Though the face of the country remained very much the same, yet there were in reality very important changes produced. The bed of the eastern branch of the Indus subsided in some places a number of feet. At Luckput, for example, the channel which at ebb was only about a foot, and at flood tide not more than six feet, was deepened eighteen feet at low water. This extraordinary subsidence contributed not a little to the prosperity of the country, as it opened the inland navigation which had been stopped for centuries A fort and village higher up the river were submerged, but so gently, that the tops of the houses and walls stood unmoved, and showed themselves a little above the water. Other parts were elevated. An extent of country, upwards of fifty miles by fifteen, was permanently raised. But this double process of elevation and depression went on in this instance so gently, that, but for the presence of water, it would probably have passed unnoticed. And many such changes may have taken place on the surface of the earth, without the