

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

EXPERIENCES OF A BARRISTER.

ESTHER MASON.

About forty years ago, Jabez Woodford, a foreman of shipwrights in the Plymouth dock yard, while carelessly crossing one of the transverse beams of a seventy-four gun-ship, building in that arsenal, missed his footing, fell to the bottom of the hold of the huge vessel, and was killed on the spot. He left a widow and one child—a boy seven years of age, of placid, endearing disposition, but weak intellect—almost in a state of destitution. He had been a coarse tempered, improvident man; and like too many of his class, in those days at least, dissipated the whole of his large earnings in present sensuous indulgence, utterly careless or unmindful of the future. Esther Woodford, who, at the time of her husband's death, scarcely numbered five and twenty years, was still a remarkably comely, as well as interesting, gentle-mannered person, and moreover had, for her station in life, received a tolerable education. Her rash, ill-assorted marriage with Woodford had been hastily contracted when she was barely seventeen years of age, in consequence of a jealous pique which she, for some silly reason or other, had conceived regarding Henry Mason, an intelligent young seafaring man, with fair prospects in life, and frank disposition, with whom she had for some time previously, as the west country phrase has it, 'kept company,' and who was moreover, tenderly attached to her. Esther's married life was a long repentance of the rash act; and the severance of a tie which bound her to an ungenial mate—after the subsidence of the natural horror and compassion excited by the sudden and frightful nature of the catastrophe—must have been felt as a most blessed relief. A few years afterwards, she accepted an asylum with her brother-in-law Davies, a market gardener in the vicinity of Plymouth, where, by persevering industry with her needle, and thrifty helpfulness in her sister's household duties, she endeavored to compensate her kind-hearted relatives for the support of herself and helpless, half-witted child. Mason she had never seen since the day of her marriage; but she knew he was prospering in the busy world, and that some time before her husband's death, he had been appointed chief mate in a first class merchant ship trading in the Pacific. He had sailed about a fortnight previous to that event; and now, ten lazy months having floated slowly past, the lover of her youth, with whom, in that last sunny day of her young life,—how distant did it seem, viewed through the long intervening vista of days and nights of grief and tears!—she had danced so joyously beneath the flowering chestnut trees, was once more near her; and it was—oh happiness!—no longer a sin to think of him—no longer a crime to recall and dwell upon the numberless proofs of the deep affection, the strong love he had once felt for her. Once felt! Perhaps even now!—How swiftly had the intelligence communicated by her sympathising sister tinted with bright hues the dark curtain of the future.

'And yet,' murmured poor Esther, the flush of hope fading as suddenly as it had arisen, as with meek sad eyes she glanced at the reflection of her features in the small oval glass suspended above the mantelpiece—'I almost doubt, Susy dear, if he would recognise me, even if old feelings and old times have not long since faded from his memory!'

'Stuff and trumpery, about fading away,' broke in Mrs. Davies. 'Henry is the same true-hearted man he was eight years ago; as a proof that he is, just read this letter which I promised him to give you. There, don't go falling into a frustration; don't now, Esther, and to-morrow market day and all! Don't cry, Esther, she added vehemently, but at the same time sobbing furiously herself, and throwing her arms round her sister's neck: 'but perhaps—perhaps it will do us good, both of us.'

It may be necessary to state that I owe the foregoing particulars to the interest felt by my wife—herself a native of beautiful Devon—in the fortunes of this humble household. Esther was her foster sister; and it happened that just at this period, it being vacation time, we were paying a visit to a family in the neighborhood. A few hours after the receipt of the welcome letter, my wife chanced to call on Esther relative to some fancy needle-work; and on her return I was of course favored with very full and florid details of this little bit of cottage romance: the which I, from regard to the reader, have carefully noted down, and as briefly as possible expressed.

We met Henry Mason with his recovered treasure on the following evening; and certainly a more favorable specimen of the vigorous, active, bold featured, frank spoken British seaman I never met with. To his comparatively excellent education—for which, I understood, he was indebted to his mother, a superior woman, who, having fallen from one of the little heights of society, had kept a school at Plymouth—in addition to his correct and temperate habits, he was indebted for the rapid advance—he was but a few months older than Esther—he had obtained in the merchant service. The happiness which beamed upon Esther's face did not appear to be of the exuberant, buoyant character, that kindled the ruddy cheek and ran over at the bright, honest eyes of the hardy sailor:

there seemed to mingle with it a half-doubting, trembling apprehensiveness: albeit it was not difficult to perceive that, sorrowfully as had passed her noon of prime, an 'Indian summer' of the soul was rising upon her brightened existence, and already with its first faint flushes lighting up her neck, doubting eyes, and pale, changing countenance. Willy, her feeble minded child frisked and gambolled by their side; and altogether, a happier group than they, would, I fancy, have been difficult to find in all broad England.

The next week they were married; and one of the partners in the firm by which Mason was employed happening to dine with us on the day of the wedding, the conversation turned for a few minutes on the bridegroom's character and prospects.

'He has the ring of true metal in him,' I remarked; 'and is, I suppose, a capital seaman.'

'A first rate one,' replied Mr. Roberts. 'Indeed, so high is my father's opinion of him, that he intends to confer upon him the command of a fine brig now building for us in the Thames, and intended for the West India trade. He possesses also singular courage and daring. Twice, under very hazardous circumstances, he has successfully risked his life to save men who had fallen overboard. He is altogether a skilful, gallant seaman.'

'Such a man,' observed another of the company, 'might surely have aspired higher than to the hand of Esther Woodford, dove-eyed and interesting as she may be?'

'Perhaps so,' returned Mr. Roberts, a little curtly; 'though he, it seems, could not have thought so. Indeed it is chiefly of simple-hearted, chivalrous-minded men like Mason that it can be with general truth observed—'

'On revient toujours a ses premiers amours.'

The subject then dropped, and it was a considerable time afterwards, and under altogether altered circumstances, when the newly-married couple once more crossed my path in life.

It was about eight months after his marriage—though he had been profitably enough employed in the interim—that Henry Mason, in consequence of the welcome announcement that the new brig was at last ready for her captain and cargo, arrived in London to enter upon his new appointment.

'These lodgings, Esther,' said he, as he was preparing to go out soon after breakfast, on the morning after his arrival, 'are scarcely the thing, and as I, like you, am a stranger in Cockney-land, I had better consult some of the firm upon the subject before we decide upon permanent ones. In the meantime, you and Willy must mind and keep in-doors when I am not with you, or I shall have one or other of you lost in this great wilderness of a city. I shall return in two or three hours. I will order something for dinner as I go along: I have your purse. Good by: God bless you both.'

Inquiring his way every two or three minutes, Mason presently found himself in the vicinity of Tower Stairs. A scuffle in front of a public house attracted his attention; and his ready sympathies were in an instant enlisted in behalf of a young sailor, vainly struggling in the grasp of several athletic men, and crying lustily on the gaping bystanders for help. Mason sprang forward, caught one of the assailants by the collar, and hurled him with some violence against the wall. A fierce outcry greeted this audacious interference with gentlemen who, in those good old times, were but executing the law in a remarkably good old manner. Lieutenant Donnagham, a somewhat celebrated snapper up of loose mariners, emerged upon the scene; and in a few minutes was enabled to exult in the secure possession of an additional prize, in the unfortunate Henry Mason, who, too late, discovered that he had embroiled himself with a pressgang. Desperate, frenzied were the efforts he made to extricate himself from the peril in which he had rashly involved himself. In vain! His protestations that he was a mate, a captain in the merchant service, were unheeded or mocked at.

To all his remonstrances he only got the professional answer, 'His Majesty wants you, and that is enough; so come along, and no more about it.'

Bruised, exhausted, almost mad, he was borne off in triumph to a boat, into which he was thrust with several others, and swiftly rowed off to a receiving ship in the river. Even there his assertions and protestations were of no avail. Nothing but an admiralty order, the officer in command candidly told him, could effect his release. His Majesty was in need of seamen; and he was evidently too smart a one to be deprived of the glory of serving his country. 'You must therefore,' concluded the officer, as he turned laughingly upon his heel, 'do as thousands of other fine fellows have been compelled to do, "grin and bear it." In about three weeks from the date of his imprisonment, Mason found himself serving in the Mediterranean, on board the Active frigate, Captain Alexander Gordon, without having been permitted one opportunity of communicating with the shore. This was certainly very sharp, but it was not the less very common practice in those great days of triumphant battles by land and sea.

Very dearly passed the time with the bereaved wife. Her husband had promised to send home something for dinner, and various groceries; yet hour after hour went past and nothing arrived. Morning flushed into noon, day faded to twilight, and still the well known and always eager step sounded not upon the stairs. What could have detained him from

his wife, shut up, imprisoned, as it were, in that hot, hurrying, stifling city? She feared to listen to the suggestions of her boding heart; and with feverish restlessness ran out upon the landing, and peered over the stairs every time a knock or ring was heard at the street door. This strange behaviour, was, it seems, noticed by the landlady of the lodging-house and injuriously interpreted. A knock came to the door, and that person entered to know at what time Mrs. ———, she had forgotten the young woman's name, expected the dinner. She, the landlady, had undertaken to cook.

Esther timidly replied that her husband had promised to return in two or three hours at latest; and that she did not comprehend his continued absence—was indeed quite alarmed about it.

'Your husband,' said the woman, glancing insolently at Esther's figure. 'Are you sure he is your husband?'

The hot blood suffused the temples of the indignant wife, as she said, 'This apartment, madame, I believe is mine?'

'Oh, certainly, as long as you can pay for it; and rudely slamming the door, the landlady departed.

The long wretched night at last over, Esther rose with the light; and after giving her son his breakfast from the remains of that of the day before, set off with him to the place of business of the Messrs. Roberts. It was early, and one clerk only had as yet arrived at the office. He informed her that Mr. Henry Mason had not been seen, and that the partners were greatly annoyed about it, as his immediate presence was absolutely necessary.

Stunned, terrified, bewildered, by the frightful calamity which she believed had befallen her, she felt convinced that her husband had been entrapped and murdered for the sake of the money he had about him: the wretched woman tottered back to her lodgings, and threw herself on the bed in wild despair. What was to be done for food even for her boy? Her husband had not only his pocket-book with him, containing his larger money, but had taken her purse! She was alone and penniless in a strange city! The hungry wailings of her witless child towards evening at length aroused her from the stupor of despair into which she had fallen. The miserable resource of pawning occurred to her: she could at least, by pledging a part of her wardrobe, procure sustenance for her child till she could hear from her sister, and with trembling hands she began arranging a bundle of such things as she could best spare, when the landlady abruptly entered the room, with a peremptory demand—as her husband was not returned, and did not appear likely to do so—for a month's rent in advance, that being the term the apartments were engaged for. The tears, entreaties, expostulations of the miserable wife were of no avail. Not one article, the woman declared, should leave her house till her claim was settled. She affected to doubt, perhaps really did so, that Esther was married; and hinted coarsely at an enforcement of the laws against persons who had no visible means of subsistence. In a paroxysm of despair, the unhappy woman rushed out of the house; and accompanied by her hungry child, again sought the counting-house of the Messrs. Roberts. She was now as much too late as she had been too early in the morning: the partners and clerks had gone, and she appears to have been treated with some rudeness by the porter, who was closing the premises when she arrived. Possibly the wildness of her looks, and the incoherence of her speech and manner, produced an impression unfavorable to her. Retreating her steps—penniless, hungry, sick at heart—she thought, as she afterwards declared, that she recognised my wife in one of the numerous ladies seated before the counters of a fashionable shop in one of the busiest thoroughfares. She entered, and not till she approached close to the lady discovered her mistake. She turned despairingly away, when a piece of rich lace, apparently unheeded on the counter, met her eye, and a dreadful suggestion crossed her fevered brain: here at least was the means of procuring food for her wailing child. She glanced hastily and fearfully round. No eye, she thought observed her; and, horror of horrors! a moment afterwards she had concealed the lace beneath her shawl, and with tottering feet was hastily leaving the shop. She had not taken half a dozen steps when a heavy hand was placed upon her shoulder, and a voice as of a serpent hissing in her ear, commanded her to restore the lace she had stolen. Transfixed with shame and terror, she stood rooted to the spot, and the lace fell on the floor.

'Fetch an officer,' said a harsh voice, addressing one of the shopmen.

'No—no—no,' screamed the wretched woman, falling on her knees in wild supplication. 'For my child's sake—in mercy of the innocent babe as yet unborn—pity and forgive me!'

The harsh order was reiterated; and Esther Mason, fainting with shame and agony, was conveyed to the prison in Giltspur street. The next day she was fully committed to Newgate on the capital charge of privately stealing in a shop to the value of five pounds. A few hours after her incarceration within those terrible walls, she was prematurely delivered of a female child.

I have no moral doubt, whatever, I never have had, that at the time of the committing of the felonious act, the intellect of Esther Mason was disordered. Any other supposition is inconsistent with the whole tenor of her previous life and character. 'Lead us not into temptation' is indeed the holiest, because the humblest prayer.

[To be Concluded.]

From Levinge's Travels in the East.

TURKISH CEMETERIES.

Lord Byron calls them the 'loveliest spots on earth,' in which opinion few that have seen them will fail to coincide. The people of each faith in Constantinople have distinct quarters allotted to them in death as well as in life. The dark groves of cypresses, with their turbaned stones of white marble, belong exclusively to the Moslems, and many are the generations interred there.

A cypress is invariably planted at each Mussulman's grave. The Turks reserve that funeral tree for themselves, and it is prohibited being planted in other cemeteries. As no grave is ever opened a second time, these burial grounds have become vast forests extending for miles around the city and its suburbs. The cypresses here, from the nature of the soil, or the uses to which they are applied, have grown to a size seen nowhere else, and they form a shade which even an Oriental sun cannot penetrate.

The tombstones of the Turks are of white marble, supplied from the quarries of Marmara, or they are not unfrequently shaped from ancient columns or marbles. The turban surmounting the stones distinguishes the graves of males; those of females are simply ornamented with a rose branch. The form of the turban denotes the rank and condition of the deceased. Thus the grave of the pasha, the soldier, the dervish, the lawyer, the merchant, are easily recognised.

Nothing is more touching and expressive than to see beneath the shade of some dark cypress, solitary men absorbed in prayer, or groups of women sitting over the graves of departed friends, with whom, in deep affliction, they seem to hold communication, or supplying with water the flowers planted in cavities left expressly in each for them. Multitudes of turtle-doves frequent these gloomy cemeteries. They are at all times seen fluttering among the overhanging trees, and with bats and owls hold divided sway.

Burying within the city is strictly prohibited: a wise regulation among people whose graves are exceedingly shallow. The aromatic odour of the cypress is supposed to neutralize pestilential exhalations, and render the air salubrious.

The cemeteries of the Rayahs are shaded by the platanus, mulberry, and the terrebinth or turpentine tree. Of these burial grounds, that of the Armenians is pre-eminently beautiful. The tree they prefer is the terrebinth, which grows to a prodigious size. Numbers of them overhanging the Bosphorus contribute considerably to the picturesque appearance of that lovely strait. The Armenian tombs are inscribed with the name of the deceased, and devices rudely carved in relief represent the profession and manner of his death; thus, if he has been decapitated, he is represented with his head in his hand; if hanged the body appears suspended on a gallows; if strangled, the application of the bowstring is depicted. Ignominious as these deaths, they are considered as no disgrace among the Armenians. None of their community they assert is ever executed for a real crime: the true motive is the confiscation of their properties, and some plausible excuse is invented to conceal it.

From Hogg's Instructor.

HAPPINESS OF CHILDREN.

Never attempt to improve the happiness of children; depend upon it you won't succeed, try how you may. 'Pretty little dears,' said a good-looking gentleman one day, as he looked at a group of children at play, 'how I love the little innocents! Here, get a pen'orth of apples and share them amongst you.' He walked on, but yielding to a feeling of curiosity, we remained to watch the event. The apples were soon obtained—the game was stopped, of course. One having claimed rather a larger share than his companion, a fight ensued; his opponent getting the worst of it, retired in tears to the mother of the stronger one, who soon appeared on the scene, and, having cuffed him soundly, took him home for punishment. Another soon disappeared, like the black boy, with the stomach ache in his countenance; while another remained on the field, giving sorrow vent. The apples of discord had been effectually dropped into elysium—the whole appeared suddenly transformed from enlightened children into men of the world. Selfishness had appeared amongst them, and had not forgotten to bring his companion Misery, who, although he heartily despises, he seldom travels without. The happiness of a child is perhaps the only perfect earthly pleasure. Do not attempt to improve perfection, or you will certainly destroy it. If you see a child unhappy, you may readily interfere, perhaps with good effect; but when he is happy, in the name of humanity let him alone.

From the Trades' Advocate.

TAXES ON THE PEOPLE.

In the reign of Edward the Third, according to Froissart, a fleet of more than two hundred vessels might be seen at one time, in the single port of Bordeaux, laden with wine to be imported into England for English consumption. But there were only nominal customs in those days. We had not then, as now, a tax equal to 800, 1000, and 1200 per cent. on the original value of the wine. Every man brewed his own beer. There was no malt tax. Be it also noted that the hours of labor were short, and that on the festivals and saints' days of the Church men had a holiday: these were numerous in the course of the year. Indeed, leisure was abundant, and all had time to practise