

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

OLD COMPANIONS.

CHARLES WILTON.

Old companions! old companions,
Still remember him that's gone;
He will not forget the lessons
You have based his future on.

You have taught him man is noble,
Earth is full of gentle themes—
Only those with minds perverted
Paint it blacker than it seems.

Yours the hope that hopes forever,
Finding good in every ill;
Working forward, bravely, boldly,
Trusting all to heart and will.

Fain would I again be with you,
Tread again the trodden way,
But that fate has closed the portal,
And there dawns another day.

Life has many paths between us—
Yours may be removed from mine;
But, whatever change may follow,
Friendly thoughts we'll not resign.

Merry laughs and words of kindness
Wander through my memory now;
Lighting up a passed effulgence
On the future's sombre brow.

These are time-defying voices,
Speaking down the slope of years;
Urging on to hopeful courage,
Waving back unworthy fears.

Some there are I miss among you—
Gone where we at last must go:
Gone, between a night and morning—
Strangely mingling ebb and flow.

Green the grass be where they slumber!
Flowers of peace above them wave!
Faults, if faults they had, forgotten—
Buried with them in the grave.

Be their deaths a link the stronger,
Binding those who mourn their fall;
Softening every harsh remembrance,
Breathing thoughts of love to all!

Old companions! old companions!
Life is but a passing day;
Years are only falling landmarks
Set to note the onward way.

On, then, hand and hand together,
Bravely breast the storms of time;
Truth your shield, and love your banner,
Steadfast hope a sword sublime.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A POLICE OFFICER.

THE PURSUIT.

THE reader need scarcely be told that albeit it policemen, like other men, chiefly delight to recount their successful exploits, they do, nevertheless, experience numerous and vexatious failures and disappointments. One especially I remember, of which the irritating recollection did not pass away for many weeks. I had been for some time in pursuit of a rather eminent rascal, though one young in years, and by marriage respectably connected, who, by an infamous abuse of the trust reposed in him, had contrived to possess himself of a large sum of money, with which, or at least with the portion of it falling to his share—for we discovered that he had been for some time connected with a gang of first-rate swindlers—he hoped to escape to America. The chase was hot after him; and spite of all his doublings and turnings, and the false scents adroitly thrown out by his confederates with the view to favor his escape, I at last fairly ran him to earth at Plymouth, though in what precise spot of it he burrowed I could not for the moment ascertain. Neither was I well acquainted with his features; but in the description of his person furnished me there were certain indelible marks enumerated, which, upon strict examination, could not fail to determine his identity. He purposed, I ascertained, to attempt leaving England in a barque bound for New York, which was to sail from Plymouth on the day after I arrived there. Of this I was fully satisfied, and I determined to capture him on board. Accordingly, about half an hour before the ship was to sail, and after all the passengers had embarked, two of the local officers and I got into a boat which I had some time previously engaged to be in readiness, and put off to the vessel. The wind was decidedly fair for the emigrant ship; and so stiffly did it blow from the north-east, that four hands, I was informed, were required, not indeed to convey us swiftly out, but to pull the boat back again against the wind, and the strong tide which would be running outside the breakwater. The sea dashed smartly at times over the boat, and the men pulled their sou' wester caps well over their eyes, to shield themselves from the blinding spray. We were speedily on board; and the captain, although much annoyed at the delay, paraded his motley passengers as well as crew before us; but to my extreme surprise our bird was not among them! Every possible and impossible hiding-place was thoroughly but vainly searched; and we were at length compelled to a reluctant admission

that the gentleman we were in quest of had not yet honored the captain of the *Columbia* with his patronage.

We sallienly returned into the boat; and the instant we did so, the anchor, already afloat, was brought home; the ship's bows fell rapidly off; her crowded canvas dilated and swelled in the spanking breeze, and she sprang swiftly off upon her course. It was a pretty and somewhat exciting spectacle; and I and my companions continued to watch the smartly-handled vessel with much interest till a point in the land hid her from our view. We then turned our faces towards Plymouth, from which, I was surprised to find, we were apparently as distant as ever. The tide, let alone the wind, is dead against us! growled the master of the boat, who was now pulling the near oar, in reply to a remark from one of the Plymouth officers. This man steered on going out. A quick suspicion flashed across me.

Where is the other boatman who came out with us? I sharply demanded. The old seaman, instead of replying, turned himself half round to the weather-bow oar, exclaiming, 'Easy, Billy, easy; let her nose lay a little closer to the wind.' This, I readily saw, was done to conceal a momentary confusion, arising from the suddenness of my question—a very slight one by-the-by, for the fellow was an old man of war's man, with a face hardened by service, weather, grog and tobacco smoke. The veteran first deliberately squirted a mouthful of tobacco juice over the side, and then with an expression of his cast-iron phiz, which it is impossible by words to convey a distinct idea of, so compounded was it of diabolical slyness, lamb-like simplicity, and impudent cunning, replied, 'That wor a passenger to Yankee land—a goin' there, I'm purty suspicious, for the benefit of his health.' I looked at the Plymouth officers, and they at me. The impudent ingenuity of the trick that had been played us, seemed scarcely credible. 'He—he—ho—ho!' rumbled out of the tobacco-stifed throat of the old rogue. 'If he wor somebody you wanted, it wor uncommon well done. Didn't you observe him jump into the main chains of the barkey just as you wor leavin' on her, and east us off a minute afterwards? He prelarred stoppin' with us while you wor rummaging the hooker—he—he—ho—ho!'

It was useless bandying words with the fellow; and though I felt desperately savage, I had sense enough to hold my tongue. 'Pull smartly,' replied one of the Plymouth officers; 'a shot will bring her too yet.'

Why, ay, rejoined the imperturbable seaman; 'it mout, if you could get speech of the admiral in time; but I'm thinkin' we will be a good while pullin' in against this choppin' wind and head sea.'

And sure enough they were! More than another hour, by some boat-man craft unexplainable by me, for the sailors apparently rowed with all their might, were we in reaching the landing-place; and by that time all chance of compelling the return of the *Columbia* was long past.

It would be, I knew, impossible to prove complicity on the part of the owner of the boat, with the escaped felon, and I preferred to digest the venom of my spleen in silence, rather than by a useless display of it to add to the chuckling delight of the old rascal of a boatman.

We had passed some distance along the quay when one of the local officers, addressing a youngish sailor, who, with folded arms and a short pipe in his mouth, was standing in philosophical contemplation of the sea and weather, said, 'I suppose there is no chance of the emigrant ship that sailed awhile ago putting in at any other port along the coast?'

The man took the pipe from his mouth, regarded the questioner for a few moments with an expression of contemptuous curiosity anything but flattering to its object, and bawled out, addressing himself to a weather-beaten seaman a few yards off, 'I say, Tom Davis, here's a Blue Bottle as wants to know the name and bearings of the port off the Land's End which the barkey that sailed awhile ago for Ameriker with a north-easter kickin' her endways is likely to bring up in: I'm not acquainted with it myself or else I'd tell the gentleman.'

The laugh from two or three bystanders which followed this sally greatly irritated the officer, and he would have indulged in an angry reply had not his more prudent comrade taken him by the arm and urged him away.

'Ay, ay,' said the veteran addressed as Tom Davis, as we were passing him. 'Jim there has always got plenty of jawin' tackle aboard; but, Lord love ye, he's a poor dumb cretur at understanding the signs of the weather. He's talkin' about north-easter's, and don't see that the wind's beginning to chop about like a bum-boat woman with a dozen customers round her. It's my opinion, and Tom Davis ought by this time to be summot of a judge, that, instead of a north-easter, it's a precious sight more likely to be blowing a sou'-wester before two hours are past, and a sneezer too; and then the *Columbia*, if she ha'n't made a good offin', which she is not likely to have done, will be back again in a brace of shakes.'

'Do you think it probable,' I eagerly asked, 'that the *Columbia* will be obliged to put back into Plymouth?'

'I don't know about probable. It's not so sure as death or quarter-day, but it's upon the cards for all that.'

'Will it be early in the night, think you, that she will run in, if at all?'

'Ah, there now you wants to know too much,' said the old seaman turning on his heel. 'All I can say is, that if you find in an hour or so's time that the wind has chopped

round to the sou'-west, or within a pint or two, and that it's blowin' the buttons off your coat one after another, the *Columbia*, if she's lucky, won't be far off.'

The half-bantering prediction of the old seaman was confirmed by others whom we consulted, and measures for preventing our quarry from landing, and again giving us the slip, were at once discussed and resolved upon. We then separated, and I proceeded to the tavern at which I put up to get some dinner. I had not gone far when my eye fell upon two persons whose presence there surprised as well as somewhat grieved me. One was the young wife of the criminal on board the *Columbia*. I had seen her once in London, and I knew, as before intimated, that she was of respectable parentage. She had no doubt followed or accompanied her husband to Plymouth, for the purpose of furthering his escape, and now feared that the capricious elements would render all the ingenuity and boldness that had been brought into play vain and profitless. She was a mild-looking, pretty woman—very much so, I doubt not, till trouble fell upon her, and wonderfully resembled the female in the 'Momentous Question'; so remarkably indeed, that when, years afterwards, I first saw that print, I felt an instantaneous conviction that I had somewhere met with the original of the portrait; and after much puzzlement of brain remembered when and where. The resemblance was doubtless purely accidental; but it was not the less extraordinary and complete. She was accompanied by a gray-haired man of grave, respectable exterior, whom I at once concluded to be her father. As I passed close by them, he appeared about to address me, and I half-paused to hear what he had to say; but his partly-formed purpose was not persisted in, and I proceeded on my way.

After dining, I returned to the quay. The wind, as foretold, had increased to a tempest. The wild sea was dashing with terrific violence against the breakwater, discernible only in the fast-darkening night by a line of white tumultuous foam and spray, which leaped and hissed against it.

'A dirty night coming on,' said a subaltern officer of the port, whom I had previously spoken with; 'the *Columbia* will, I think, be pretty sure to run in with the tide.'

'When do you say is the earliest time she may be expected?'

'Well, in my opinion, judging from where she was when I was on the look out a quarter of an hour ago, not under three hours. Let me see. It's now just upon the stroke of five: about eight o'clock, I should say, she will be here; certainly not before, perhaps much later; and if the captain is very obstinate, and prefers incurting a rather serious risk to returning, it may be of course not at all.'

I thanked him, and as remaining on the bleak quay till eight o'clock or thereabout was as useless as unpleasant, I retraced my steps towards the Royal George Tavern; calling in my way on the Plymouth officers, and arranging that one of them should relieve me at ten o'clock; it having been previously agreed that we should keep an alternate watch during the night, of two hours each. I afterwards remembered that this arrangement was repeated in a tone of voice incautiously loud, at the bar of a public-house, where they insisted upon my taking a glass of porter. There were, I should say, more than a dozen persons present at the time.

The fire was blazing brightly in the parlour of the Royal George when I entered, and I had not been seated near it many minutes before I became exceedingly drowsy; and no wonder, for I had not been in bed the previous night, and the blowing of the wind in my eyes for a couple of hours had of course added greatly to their heavy weariness. Habit had long enabled me to awake at any moment I had previously determined on, so that I felt no anxiety as to oversleeping myself; and having pulled out my watch, noticed that it was barely half-past five, wound it up, and placed it before me on the table, I settled myself comfortably in an arm-chair, and was soon sound asleep.

I awoke with a confused impression, not only that I had quite slept the time I had allotted myself, but that strangers were in the room, and standing about me. I was mistaken in both particulars. There was no one in the parlour but myself, and on glancing at the watch I saw that it was but a quarter-past six. I rose from the chair, stirred the fire, took two or three turns round the room, listened for a few minutes to the howling wind and driving rain which shook and beat against the casement, sat down again, and took up a newspaper which was lying on the table.

I had read for some time when the parlour door opened, and who should walk in but the young wife and elderly gentleman whom I had seen in the street. I at once concluded that they had sought me with reference to the fugitive on board the *Columbia*; and the venerable old man's rather elaborate apologies for intrusion over, and both of them seated on the side of the fireplace opposite to me, I waited with grave curiosity to hear what they might have to say.

An awkward silence ensued. The young woman's eyes, swollen with weeping, were bent upon the floor, and her entire aspect and demeanour exhibited extreme sorrow and dejection. I pitied her, so sad and gentle did she look, from my very soul. The old man appeared anxious and careworn, and for some time remained abstractedly gazing at the fire without speaking. I had a mind to avoid a painful, and, I was satisfied, fruitless interview, by abruptly retiring; and was just rising for the purpose when a fiercer tempest-blast than before, accompanied by the patter-

ing of heavy rain drops against the window-panes caused me to hesitate at exposing myself unnecessarily to the rigour of such a night; and at the same moment the gray-haired man suddenly raised his eyes and regarded me with a fixed and grave scrutiny.

'This war of the elements,' he at last said; 'this wild uproar of physical nature, is but a type, Mr Waters, and a faint one, of the convulsions, the antagonisms, the hurtful conflicts ever raging in the moral world.'

I bowed dubious assent to a proposition not apparently very pertinent to the question, which I supposed chiefly occupied his mind, and he proceeded.

'It is difficult for dim eyed beings such as we are always to trace the guiding hand of the ever watchful Power which conducts the complex events of this changing, many-colored life to wise and foreseen issues. The conflicts of faith with actual experience are hard for poor humanity to bear, and still keep unimpaired the jewel beyond price of unwavering faith in Him to whom the secrets of all hearts are known. Ah, sir! guilt, flaunting its vanities in high places—innocence in danger of fetters—are perplexing things to dwell upon!'

I was somewhat puzzled by this strange talk, but, hopeful that a meaning would presently appear, I again silently intimated partial concurrence in his general views.

'There is no longer much doubt, Mr Waters, I believe, he after a few moments added, in a much more business-like and sensible tone, 'that the *Columbia* will be forced back again, and that the husband of this unhappy girl will consequently fall into the hands of the blind, unreasoning law. . . . You appear surprised. . . . My name, I should have mentioned, is Thompson; and be assured, Mr Waters, that when the real facts of this most unfortunate affair are brought to your knowledge, no one will more bitterly regret than yourself that this tempest and sudden change of wind should have flung back the prey both you and I believed had escaped, upon these fatal shores.'

'From your name, I believe you to be the father of this young woman, and—'

'Yes,' he interrupted; 'and the father-in-law of the innocent man you have hunted down with such untiring activity and zeal. But I blame you not, he added, checking himself—I blame you not. You have only done what you held to be your duty. But the ways of Providence are indeed inscrutable!'

A passionate burst of grief from the pale, weeping wife testified that, whatever might be the fugitive husband's offences or crimes against society, he at least retained her affection and esteem.

'It is very unpleasant,' I observed, 'to discuss such a subject in the presence of relatives of the inculpated person, especially as I as yet perceive no useful result likely to arise from it; still, since you as it were force me to speak, you must permit me to say, that it appears to me you are either grossly deceived yourself, or attempting for some purpose to impose upon my credulity.'

'Neither sir—neither,' replied Mr Thompson with warmth. 'Certainly am not deceived myself, and I should hope that my character, which I doubt not is well known to you, will shield me from any suspicion of a desire to cheat others.'

'I am quite aware, Mr Thompson of your personal respectability; still, you may be unwittingly led astray. I very much regret to say, that the evidence against your daughter's husband is overwhelming, and I fear unanswerable.'

'The best, kindest of husbands,' broke in the sobbing wife; 'the most injured, the most persecuted of men!'

'It is useless,' said I, rising and seizing my hat, 'to prolong this conversation. If he be innocent he will no doubt be acquitted; but as it is now close upon half past seven o'clock, I must beg to take my leave.'

'On moment sir,' said Mr Thompson hastily. 'To be frank with you, it was entirely for the purpose of asking your advice as an experienced person that we are here. You have probably heard of this young man's father?'

'Joel Masters?—Yes. A gambler, and otherwise disreputable person, and one of the most specious rascals, I am told, under the sun.'

'You have quite correctly described him. You are not perhaps acquainted with his handwriting?'

'Yes, I am partially so at least. I have a note in my pocket—here it is—addressed to me by the artful old scoundrel, for the purpose of luring me from the right track after his son.'

'Then, Mr Waters, please to read this letter from him, dated at Liverpool, where, it appears, he was yesterday to embark for America.'

The letter Mr Thompson placed in my hands startled me not a little. It was a circumstantial confession addressed by Mr Joel Masters to his son, setting forth that he, the father, was alone guilty of the offence with which his unfortunate son was charged, and authorising him to make a full disclosure should he fail in making his escape from the country. This was, I thought, an exceedingly cheap kind of generosity on the part of honest Joel, now that he had secured himself by flight from the penalties of justice. The letter went on to say where a large amount of bank notes and acceptances, which the writer had been unable to change or discount, would be found.

'This letter,' said I, 'is a very important one; but where is the envelop?'

Mr Thompson searched his pocket-book; it was not there. 'I must have dropped it,' he exclaimed, 'at my lodgings. Pray wait