

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

OUR BETTER MOMENTS.

Uncalled, they come across the mind,
We know not why or how,
And with instinctive reverence,
Ignoble feelings how.
A power, strange, yet holy too,
Breathes through our every sense,
Each atom of our being feels
Its subtle influence:
High visions, noble thinking, flash
Like meteors through the brain:—
If Paradise was lost to us,
'Tis surely lent again!
Better moments! better moments! ye are
sunny angels' wings,
Sent to shed a holier radiance o'er this dimmer
vale of things!

Perchance we love to watch awhile,
In simple, child like mood,
The waving of the summer grass,
The ebbing of the flood;
And lean upon a mossy bank,
In some secluded shade,
When, suddenly, before our view
The grass—the waters fade!
And giving up the spirit-rein
To unknown guiding-hands,
We float, in noiseless confidence,
To voiceless spirit-lands!
Better moments! better moments! ye are
sunny angels' wings,
Sent to shed a holier radiance o'er this dimmer
vale of things!

Or, sitting in a leafy wood,
Some still and breathless hour,
The joyous twitter of a bird
Hath strange, unconscious power—
The power to send through every nerve
A thrill of soft delight;
A better moment—like the dawn,
Steals in with ambient light!
The soul expands, and lovingly
Takes in its pure embrace
All life!—all natures, high or mean,
Or colours, tongues or race.
Better moments! better moments! ye are
sunny angels' wings,
Sent to shed a holier radiance o'er this dimmer
vale of things!

A thousand various scenes and times
Awake the better thought,
By which our duller years of life,
Become inspired and taught.
In olden times their rudely came
Handwritings on the wall,
And prostrate souls fell horror-struck
At that wild spirit call,—
But now, God's momentary gleam
Is sent into the soul,
To guide uncertain wavering feet,
To Life's high solemn goal.
Better moments! better moments! ye are sun-
ny angels' wings,
Sent to shed a holier radiance o'er this dim-
mer vale of things!

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A POLICE
OFFICER.

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY.

The next morning the justice room was densely crowded to hear the examination of the prisoner. There was also a very numerous attendance of magistrates; the case, from the position in life of the prisoner, and the strange and mysterious circumstances of the affair altogether, having excited an extraordinary and extremely painful interest among all classes of the town and neighborhood. The demeanor of the accused gentleman was anxious certainly, but withal, calm and collected; and there was, I thought, a light of fortitude and conscious probity, in his clear, bold eyes, which guilt never yet successfully simulated.

After the hearing of some minor evidence, the fishmonger's boy was called, and asked if he could point out the person he had seen at Five Oaks on the day preceding the burglary. The lad looked fixedly at the prisoner for something more than a minute without speaking, and then said, "The gentleman was standing before the fire when I saw him, with his cap on; I should like to see this person with his cap on before I say anything." Mr Bristowe dashed on his foraging-cap, and the boy immediately exclaimed, "That is the man." Mr Cowan, a solicitor, retained by Mr Bagshawe, for his nephew, objected that this was, after all, only swearing to a cap, or at best to the ensemble of a dress, and ought not to be received. The chairman, however, de-
 cluded that it must be taken *quantum valeat*,

and in corroboration of other evidence. It was next deposed by several persons that the deceased Sarah King had told them that her master's nephew had positively arrived at Five Oaks. An objection to the reception of this evidence, as partaking of the nature of 'hearsay' was also made, and similarly over-ruled. Mr Bristowe begged to observe that Sarah King was not one of his uncle's old servants, and was entirely unknown to him: it was quite possible, therefore, that he was personally unknown to her. The bench observed that all these observations might be fitly urged before a jury, but, in the present stage of the proceedings was uselessly advanced to them, whose sole duty was to ascertain if a sufficiently strong case of suspicion had been made out against the prisoner to justify his committal for trial. A constable next proved finding a portion of the letter, which he produced, in one of the offices of Five Oaks; and then Mr Bagshawe was directed to be called in. The prisoner, upon hearing this order given, exhibited great emotion, and earnestly entreated that his uncle and himself might be spared the necessity of meeting with each other for the first time after a separation of several years under such circumstances.

"We can receive no evidence against you, Mr Bristowe, in his absence," replied the chairman in a compassionate tone of voice; "but your uncle's deposition will occupy but a few minutes. It is however, indispensable."

"At least, then Mr Cowan," said the agitated young man, "prevent my sister from accompanying her uncle. I could not bear that."

He was assured she would not be present; in fact, she had become seriously ill through anxiety and terror; and the crowded assemblage awaited in painful silence the approach of the reluctant prosecutor. He presently appeared—a venerable white haired man; seventy years old at least he seemed, his form bowed by age and grief, his eyes fixed upon the ground, and his whole manner indicative of sorrow and dejection. "Uncle," cried the prisoner springing towards him. The aged man looked up, seemed to read in the countenance of his nephew a full refutation of the suspicions entertained against him, tottered forward with outspread arms, and, in the words of the sacred text, "fell upon his neck and wept," exclaiming in choking accents, "Forgive me—forgive me, Robert, that I ever for a moment doubted you. Mary never did—never, Robert; not for an instant."

A profound silence prevailed during this outburst of feeling, and a considerable pause ensued before the usher of the court, at a gesture from the Chairman, touched Mr Bagshawe's arm, and begged his attention to the bench. "Certainly, certainly," said he, hastily wiping his eyes, and turning towards the Court. "My sister's child, gentlemen," he added appealingly, "who has lived with me from childhood: you will excuse me, I am sure."

"There needs no excuse Mr Bagshawe," said the chairman, kindly; "but it is necessary this unhappy business should be proceeded with. Hand the witness the portion of the letter found at Five Oaks. Now, is that your writing; and is it a portion of the letter you sent to your nephew, informing him of the large sum of money kept for a particular purpose at Five Oaks?"

"It is,"

"Now," said the clerk to the magistrates, addressing me, "please to produce the articles in your possession."

I laid the Spanish coin and the cross upon the table.

"Please to look at these two articles, Mr Bagshawe," said the chairman. "Now, sir, on your oath, are they a portion of the property of which you have been robbed?"

The aged gentleman stooped forward and examined them earnestly; then turned and looked with quivering eyes, if I may be allowed to use the expression, in his nephew's face; but returned no answer to the question.

"It is necessary you should reply, Yes or No, Mr Bagshawe," said the clerk.

"Answer uncle," said the prisoner, soothingly; "fear not for me. God and my innocence to aid, I shall yet break through this web of villainy in which I at present seem hopelessly involved."

"Bless you Robert—bless you! I am sure you will. Yes gentlemen, the cross and coin on the table are part of the property carried off."

A smothered groan, indicative of the sorrowing sympathy felt for the venerable gentleman, arose from the crowded court on hearing this declaration. I then deposed to finding them as previously stated. As soon as I concluded, the magistrates consulted together for a few moments; and then the chairman addressing the prisoner, said, "I have to inform you that the bench are agreed that sufficient evidence has been adduced against you to warrant them in fully committing you for trial. We are of course bound to hear anything you have to say; but such being our intention, your professional adviser will perhaps recommend you to reserve whatever defence you have to make for another tribunal: here it could not avail you."

Mr Cowan expressed his concurrence in the intimation of the magistrate; but the prisoner vehemently protested against sanctioning by his silence the accusation preferred against him.

"I have nothing to reserve," he exclaimed with passionate energy, "nothing to conceal. I will not owe my acquittal of this foul charge to any trick of lawyer craft. If I may not come out of this investigation with an untainted name, I desire not to escape at all. The

defence, or rather the suggestive facts I have to offer for the consideration of the bench are these:—On the evening of the day I received my uncle's letter I went to Drury Lane Theatre, remaining out very late. On my return to the hotel I found I had been robbed of my pocket book, which contained not only that letter, and a considerable sum in bank notes, but papers of great professional importance to me. It was too late to adopt any measures for its recovery that night; and the next morning, as I was dressing myself to go out, in order to apprise the police authorities of my loss, I was informed that a gentleman desired to see me instantly on important business. He was shewn up, and announced himself to be a detective police officer; a robbery I had sustained had been revealed by an accomplice, and it was necessary I should immediately accompany him. We left the hotel together; and after consuming the ere day in perambulating all sorts of bye roads, and calling at several suspicious places, my officious friend all at once discovered that the thieves had left town for the west of England, hoping, doubtless, to reach a large town and get gold for the notes before the news of their having been stopped should have reached it. He insisted upon immediate pursuit. I vowed to return to the hotel for a change of clothing, as I was but lightly clad, and night travelling required warmer apparel. This I would not hear of, as the night coach was on the point of starting. He, however, contrived to pry me from his own resources with a greatcoat—a sort of policeman's cap—and a rough travelling cap, which tied under the chin. In due time we arrived at Bristol, where was kept for several days loitering about; I, finally my guide decamped, and I returned to London. An hour after arriving there, gave information at Scotland Yard, of what had happened, and afterwards booked myself by the night coach for Kendal. This is all I have to say."

This strange story did not produce the slightest effect upon the bench, and very little upon the auditory, and yet I felt satisfied it was strictly true. It was not half ingenious enough for a made up story. Mr Bagshawe, I should have stated, had been led out of the justice hall immediately after his deposition.

"Then, Mr Bristowe," said the magistrate's clerk, "assuming this curious narrative to be correct, you will be easily able to prove an alibi?"

"I have thought over that, Mr Clerk," returned the prisoner mildly, "and must confess that remembering how I was dressed and wrapped up—that I saw but few persons, and those casually and briefly, I have strong misgivings of my power to do so."

"That is perhaps the less to be lamented," replied the county clerk, in a sneering tone, "inasmuch as the possession of those articles, pointing to the cross and coin on the table, would necessitate another equally probable though quite different story."

"This is a circumstance," replied the prisoner in the same calm tone as before, "which I cannot in the slightest manner account for."

No more was said; and the order for committal to the county jail at Appleby on the charge of wilful murder was given to the clerk. At this moment a hastily scrawled note from Barnes was placed in my hand, I had no sooner glanced over it than I applied to the magistrates for an adjournment till the morrow, on the ground that I could then produce an important witness, whose evidence at the trial it was necessary to assure. The application was as a matter of course, complied with; and the prisoner was remanded till the next day, and the court adjourned.

As I accompanied Mr Bristowe to the vehicle in waiting to reconvey him to jail, I could not forbear whispering, "Be of good heart, sir, we shall unravel this mystery yet, depend upon it." He looked keenly at me; and then, without other reply than a warm pressure of the hand, jumped into the carriage.

"Well Barnes," I exclaimed, as soon as we were in a room by ourselves, and the door closed, "what is it you have discovered?"

"That the murderers of Sarah King are yonder at the Talbot where you left me."

"Yes: so I gather from your note. But what evidence have you to support your assertion?"

"This! Trusting to my apparent drunken imbecility, they occasionally dropped words in my presence which convinced me not only that they were the guilty parties, but that they had come down here to carry off the plate, somewhere concealed in the neighborhood. This they mean to do to night."

"Anything more?"

"Yes. You know I am a ventriloquist in a small way, as well as a bit of a mimic: well, I took occasion when the youngest of the rascals—the one that sat beside Mr Bristowe, and got out on the top of the coach the second evening, because, freezing cold as it was, he said the inside was too hot and close."

"Oh I remember. Dolt that I was, not to recall it before. But go on."

"Well, he and I were alone together in the parlour about three hours ago—I dead tipsy as ever—when he suddenly heard the voice of Sarah King at his elbow, exclaiming, 'Who is that in the plate closet?' If you had seen the start of horror which he gave; the terror which shook his falling limbs as he glanced round the apartment, you would no longer have entertained a doubt on the matter."

"This is scarcely judicial proof, Barnes; but I daresay we shall be able to make something out of it. You return immediately; about

twilight I will rejoin you at my former dis-

ing. It was early in the evening when I entered the Talbot, and seated myself in the parlour. Our three friends were present, and so was Barnes.

"Is not that fellow sobbing?" I demanded of one of them.

"No. He has been lying about drinking and snoring ever since. He went to bed, I hear, this afternoon; but he appears to be little the better of it."

I had an opportunity soon afterwards of speaking to Barnes privately, and found that one of the fellows had brought a chaise cart and horse from Kendal, and that all three were to depart in about an hour, under pretence of reaching a town about fourteen miles distant, where they intended to sleep. My plan was immediately taken: I returned to the parlour, and watching my opportunity, whispered into the ear of the young gentleman whose nerves had been shaken by Barnes' ventriloquism, and who, by the way, was my old acquaintance—'Dick Staples, I want a word with you in the next room.' I spoke in my natural voice, and lifted, for his especial study and edification, the wig from my forehead. He was thunderstruck; and his teeth chattered with terror. His two companions were absorbed over a low game at cards, and did not observe us. 'Come,' I continued in the same whisper, 'there is not a moment to lose; if you would save yourself, follow me!' He did so, and I led him into an adjoining apartment, closed the door, and drawing a pistol from my coat pocket, said—'You perceive Staples that the game is up: you personated Mr Bristowe at his uncle's house at Five Oaks, dressed in a precisely similar suit of clothes to that which he wears. You murdered the servant—'

"No—no, not I," gasped the wretch, 'I did not strike her.'

'At all events you were present, and that, as far as the gallows is concerned, is the same thing. You also picked that gentleman's pocket during our journey from London, and placed one of the stolen Spanish pieces in his purse; you then went on the roof of the coach, and by some ingenious means or other contrived to secrete a cross set with brilliant in his portmanteau.'

'What shall I do? what shall I do?' screamed the fellow, half dead with fear, and slipping down on a chair; 'what shall I do to save my life?'

'First get up and listen. If you are not the actual murderer—'

'Pon my soul I'm not.'

'If you are not you will probably be admitted King's evidence; though mind, I make no promise. Now, what is the plan of operation for carrying off the booty?'

'They are going in the chaise-cart almost immediately to take it up; it is hidden in the copse yonder. I am to remain here, in order to give an alarm should any suspicion be excited, by showing two candles at our bedroom window; and if all keeps right I am to join them at the cross roads, about a quarter of a mile from hence.'

'All right. Now return to the parlour: I will follow you; and remember that on the slightest hint of treachery I will shoot you as I would a dog.'

About a quarter of an hour afterwards his two confederates set off in the chaise cart; I, Barnes and Staples, cautiously followed, the latter handcuffed, and superintended by the ostler of the inn, whom I for the nonce pressed into the king's service. The night was very dark, and the noise of the cart-wheels effectually drowned the sound of our footsteps. At length the cart stopped; the men got out, and were soon busily engaged in transferring the bundled plate to the cart. We cautiously approached, and were soon within a yard or two of them, still unperceived.

'Get into the cart,' said one of them to the other, 'and I will hand the things up to you.' His companion obeyed.

'Hollo,' cried the fellow, 'I thought I told you—'

'The you are nabbed at last!' I exclaimed, tripping him suddenly. Barnes, hold the horse's head. Now sir, attempt to budge an inch out of that cart and I'll send a bullet through your brains. The surprise was complete; and so terror stricken were they, that neither resistance nor escape was attempted. They were soon handcuffed and otherwise secured the remainder of the plate was placed in the cart; and we made the best of our way to Kendal jail, where I had the honor of lodging them about nine o'clock in the evening.

The news, late as it was, spread like wildfire, and innumerable were the congratulations which awaited me when I reached the inn where I lodged. But that which recom-

pened me a thousandfold for what I had done, was the fervent embrace in which the white haired uncle, risen from his bed to assure himself of the truth of the news, locked me as he called down blessing from heaven upon my head. There are blessed moments in the life of a police officer.

Mr Bristowe was of course liberated on the following morning; Staples was admitted King's evidence; and one of his accomplices—the actual murderer—was hanged, the other transported. A considerable portion of the property was also recovered. The gentleman, who gave time and opportunity for the perpetration of the burglary, suggested by the perusal of Mr Bagshawe's letter—indeed Mr Bristowe, to accompany him to Bristol, was soon afterwards transported for another offence.