

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A POLICE OFFICER.

MARY KINGSFORD.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1836, I was hurriedly despatched to Liverpool for the purpose of securing the person of one Charles James Marshall, a collecting clerk, who, it was suddenly discovered, had absconded with a considerable sum of money belonging to his employers. I was too late—Charles James Marshall having sailed in one of the American liners the day before my arrival in the northern commercial capital. This fact well ascertained, I immediately set out on my return to London. Winter had come upon us unusually early; the weather was bitterly cold; and a piercing wind caused the snow, which had fallen heavily for several hours, to gyrate in fierce, blinding eddies, and heaped it up here and there into large and dangerous drifts. The obstruction offered by the rapidly congealing snow greatly delayed our progress between Liverpool and Birmingham; and at a few miles only distant from the latter city, the leading engine ran off the line. Fortunately the rate at which we were travelling was a very slow one, and no accident of moment occurred. Having no luggage to care for, I walked on to Birmingham, where I found the Parliamentary train just on the point of starting, and with some hesitation, on account of the severity of the weather, I took my seat in one of the then very much exposed and uncomfortable carriages. We travelled steadily and safely, though slowly along, and reached Ryeby station in the afternoon, where we were to remain, the guard told us, till a fast down train had passed. All of us hurried as quickly as we could to the large room at this station, where blazing fires and other appliances soon thawed the half-frozen bodies, and loosened the tongues of the numerous and motley passengers. After recovering the use of my benumbed limbs and faculties, I had leisure to look around and survey the miscellaneous assemblage about me.

Two persons had travelled in the same compartment with me from Birmingham, whose exterior, as disclosed by the dim light of the railway carriage, created some surprise that such gaily-attired, fashionable gentlemen should stoop to journey by the plebeian penny-a-mile train. I could now observe them in a clearer light, and surprise at their apparent condescension vanished at once. To an eye less experienced than mine in the artifices and expedients familiar to a certain class of 'swells,' they might perhaps have passed muster for what they seemed to be, especially amid the varied crowd of a 'Parliamentary'; but their copper finery could not for a moment impose upon me. The watch-chains, I saw, were Mosiac; the watches, so frequently displayed, gilt; eye-glasses the same; the coats, fur-collared and cuffed, were ill-fitting and second-hand; ditto of the varnished boots and renovated velvet waistcoats; while the luxuriant moustaches and whiskers, and flowing wigs, were unmistakably mere *pieces d'occasion*—assumed and diversified at pleasure. They were both apparently about fifty years of age; one of them perhaps less than that. I watched them narrowly, the more so from their making themselves ostentatiously attentive to a young woman—girl rather she seemed—of a remarkably graceful figure, but whose face I had not yet obtained a glimpse of. They made boisterous way for her to the fire, and were profuse and noisy in their offers of refreshment—all of which, I observed, were peremptorily declined. She was dressed in deep, unexpensive mourning; and from her timid gestures and averted head, whenever either of the fellows addressed her, was, it was evident, terrified, as well as annoyed by their rude and insolent notice. I quietly drew near to the side of the fireplace at which she stood, and with some difficulty obtained a sight of her features. I was struck with extreme surprise—not so much at her singular beauty, as from an instantaneous conviction that she was known to me, or at least that I had seen her frequently before, but where or when I could not at all call to mind. Again I looked, and my first impression was confirmed. At this moment the elder of the two men I have partially described placed his hand with a rude familiarity, upon the girl's shoulder, proffering at the same time a glass of hot brandy and water for her acceptance, she turned sharply and indignantly away from the fellow; and looking round as if for protection, caught my eagerly-fixed gaze.

'Mr Water!' she impulsively ejaculated. 'Oh I am so glad.'

'Yes,' I answered, 'that is certainly my name; but I scarcely remember—Stand back, fellow!' I angrily continued, as her tormentor, emboldened by the spirits he had drunk, pressed with a jeering grin upon his face towards her, still tendering the brandy and water. 'Stand back.'

He replied by a curse and a threat. The next moment his flowing wig was whirling across the room, and he standing with his bullet-head bare but for a few locks of iron-gray, in an attitude of speechless rage and confusion, increased by the peals of laughter which greeted his ludicrous, unwigged aspect. He quickly put himself in a fighting attitude, and, backed, by his companion, challenged me to battle. This was quite out of the question, and I was somewhat at a

loss how to proceed, when the bell announced the instant departure of the train; my furious antagonist gathered up and adjusted his wig, and we all sallied forth to take our places—the young woman holding fast by my arm, and in a low, nervous voice, begged me not to leave her. I watched the two fellows take their seats, and then led her to the hindmost carriage, and then led her to ourselves as far as the next station.

'Are Mrs Waters and Emily quite well,' said the young woman, coloring, and lowering her eyes beneath my earnest gaze, which she seemed for a moment to misinterpret.

'Quite—entirely so,' I almost stammered. 'You know us, then?'

'Surely I do,' she replied, reassured by my manner. 'But you, it seems,' she presently added with a winning smile, 'have quite forgotten little Mary Kingsford.'

'Mary Kingsford!' I exclaimed almost with a shout. 'Why, so it is! But what a great transformation a few years have effected.'

'Do you think so? Not pretty Mary Kingsford now, I suppose?' she added with a pleasant laugh.

'You know what I mean, you vain puss you!' I rejoined quite gleefully; for I was overjoyed at meeting with the gentle, well-remembered playmate of my own eldest girl. We were old familiar friends—almost father and daughter—in an instant.

Little Mary Kingsford, I should state, was, when I left Yorkshire, one of the prettiest, most engaging children I had ever seen; and a petted favorite not only with us, but of every other family in the neighborhood. She was the only child of Philip and Mary Kingsford—a humble, worthy, and much-respected couple. The father was gardener to Sir Pyott Dalzell, and her mother eked out his wages to a respectable maintenance, by keeping a cheap children's school. The change which a few years had wrought in the beautiful child was quite sufficient to account for imperfect recognition of her, but the instant her name was mentioned, I at once recognised the rare comeliness which had charmed us all in her childhood. The soft brown eyes were the same, though now revealing profounder depths, and emitting a more pensive expression; the hair, though deepened in color, was still golden; her complexion, lit up as it now was by a sweet blush, was brilliant as ever; whilst her child-person had become matured and developed into womanly symmetry and grace. The brilliancy of color vanished from her cheek as I glanced meaningly at her mourning dress.

'Yes,' she murmured in a sad quivering voice—yes, father is gone! It will be six months come next Thursday that he died. Mother is well,' she continued more cheerfully after a pause, 'in health,' but poorly off; and I,' she added with a faint effort at a smile, 'I am going to London to seek my fortune.'

'To seek your fortune?'

'Yes; you know my cousin, Sophy Clark? In one of her letters she said she often saw you.'

I nodded without speaking. I knew little of Sophy Clark, except that she was the somewhat gay, coquettish shopwoman of a highly respectable confectioner in the Strand, whom I shall call by the name of Morris.

'I am to be Sophy's fellow shop-mate,' continued Mary Kingsford; 'not of course at first at such wages as she gets. So lucky for me, is it not, since I must go to service? And so kind, too, of Sophy to interest herself for me.'

'Well, it may be so. But surely I have heard—my wife at least has—that you and Richard Westlake were engaged?—Excuse me, Mary, I was not aware the subject was a painful or unpleasant one.'

'Richard's father,' she replied with some spirit, 'has higher views for his son. It is all off between us now,' she added; 'and perhaps it is for the best that it should be so.'

I could have rightly interpreted these words without the aid of the partially-expressed sigh which followed them. The perilous position of so attractive, so inexperienced, so guileless a young creature, amidst the temptations and vanities of London, so painfully oppressed and pre-occupied me, that I scarcely uttered another word until the rapidly diminishing speed of the train announced that we neared a station, after which it was probable we should have no further opportunity for private converse.

'Those men—those fellows at Rugby—where did you meet with them?' I enquired.

'About thirty or forty miles below Birmingham, where they entered the carriage in which I was seated. At Birmingham I managed to avoid them.'

Little more passed between us, till we reached London. Sophia Clark received her cousin at the Euston station, and was profuse of felicitations and compliments upon her arrival and personal appearance. After receiving a promise from Mary Kingsford to call and take tea with my wife and her old playmate on the following Sunday, I handed the two young women into a cab in waiting, and they drove off. I had not moved away from the spot when a voice a few paces behind me, which I thought I recognised, called out:

'Quick, coachee, or you will lose sight of them.'

As I turned quickly round, another cab drove smartly off, which I followed at a run. I found, on reaching Lower Seymour Street, that I was not mistaken as to the owner of the voice, nor of his purpose. The fellow I had unwigged at Rugby thrust his body half out of the cab window, and pointing to the vehicle which contained the two girls, called

out to the driver to 'mind and make no mistake.' The man nodded intelligence, and lashed his horse into a faster pace. Nothing that I might do could prevent the fellows from ascertaining Mary Kingsford's place of abode; and as that was all that, for the present at least, need be apprehended, I desisted from further pursuit and bent my steps homewards.

Mary Kingsford kept her appointment on the Sunday, and in reply to our questioning said she liked her situation very well. Mr and Mrs Morris were exceedingly kind to her; so was Sophia. 'Her cousin,' she added, in reply to a look which I could not repress, 'was perhaps a little gay and free of manner, but the best-hearted creature in the world.' The two fellows who had followed them had, I found, already twice visited the shop; but their attentions appeared now to be exclusively directed towards Sophia Clark, whose vanity they not a little gratified. The names they gave were Hartley and Simpson. So entirely guileless and unsophisticated was the gentle country maiden, that I saw she scarcely comprehended the hints and warnings which I threw out. At parting, however, she made me a serious promise that she would instantly apply to me should any difficulty overtake her.

I often called in at the confectioner's, and was gratified to find that Mary's modest propriety of behaviour, in a somewhat difficult position, had gained her the good will of her employers, who invariably spoke of her with kindness and respect. Nevertheless, the care and care of a London life, with its incessant employment and late hours, soon, I perceived, began to tell upon her health and spirits; and it was consequently with a strong emotion of pleasure I heard from my wife that she had seen a passage in a letter from Mary's mother to the effect that the elder Westlake was betraying symptoms of yielding to the angry and passionate expostulations of his only son, relative to the enforced breaking off of his engagement with Mary Kingsford. The blush with which she presented the letter was, I was told, very eloquent.

One evening on passing Morris's shop, I observed Hartley and Simpson there. They were swallowing custards and other confectionary with much gusto; and from their new and costly habiliments, seemed to be in surprisingly good case. They were smiling and smiling at the cousins with rude confidence; and Sophia Clark, I was grieved to see, repaid their insulting impertinence by her most elaborate smiles and graces. I passed on; and presently meeting with a brother detective, who, it struck me, might know something of the two gentlemen, I turned back with him and pointed them out. A glance sufficed him.

'Hartley and Simpson, you say?' he remarked, after he had walked away to some distance: 'those are only two of their numerous aliases. I cannot, however, say that I am as yet on very familiar terms with them; but as I am especially directed to cultivate their acquaintance, there is no doubt we shall be more intimate with each other before long. Gamblers, blacklegs swindlers, I already know them to be; and I would take odds they are not unfrequently something worse, especially when fortune and the bones run cross with them.'

'They appear to be in high feather just now,' I remarked.

'Yes; they are connected, I suspect, with the gang who cleaned out young Garstide last week in Jermyn Street. I'd lay a trifle,' added my friend, as I turned to leave him, 'that one or both of them will wear the Queen's livery, gray turned up with yellow, before many weeks are past.'

About a fortnight after this conversation, I and my wife paid a visit to Astley's, for the gratification of our youngsters, who had long been promised a sight of the equestrian marvels exhibited at that celebrated amphitheatre. It was the latter end of February; and when we came out of the theatre, we found the weather had changed to dark and sleety, with a sharp, nipping wind. I had to call at Scotland-yard; my wife and children consequently proceeded home in a cab without me; and after assisting to quell a slight disturbance originating in a gin palace close by, I went on my way over Westminster Bridge. The inclement weather had cleared the streets and thoroughfares in a surprisingly short time; so that, excepting myself, no foot passenger was visible on the bridge till I had about half crossed it, when a female figure, closely muffled up about the head, and sobbing bitterly, passed rapidly on by the opposite side. I turned and gazed after the retreating figure; it was a youthful symmetrical one; and after a few moments' hesitation, I determined to follow at a distance, and as unobtrusively as I could. On the woman sped, without pause or hesitation, till she reached Astley's, where I observed her stop suddenly, and toss her arms in the air with a gesture of desperation. I quickened my steps, which she observing, uttered a slight scream, and darted swiftly off again, moaning and sobbing as she ran. The slight momentary glimpse I obtained of her features beneath the gas-lamp opposite Astley's, suggested a frightful apprehension, and I followed at my utmost speed. She turned at the first cross street, and I should soon have overtaken her, but that in darting round the corner where she disappeared, I ran full butt against a stout, elderly gentleman, who was hurrying smartly along out of the weather. What with the suddenness of the shock and the slipperiness of the pavement, down we both reeled; and by the time we had regained our feet, and growled savagely at each other, the young woman, whoever she was, had disappeared, and

more than half an hour's search for her proved fruitless. At last I bethought me of hiding at one corner of Westminster Bridge. I had watched patiently for about twenty minutes, when I observed the object of my pursuit stealing timidly and furtively towards the bridge on the opposite side of the way. As she came nearly abreast of where I stood, I darted forward; she saw, without recognising me, and uttering an exclamation of terror, flew down towards the river, where a number of pieces of balk and other timber were fastened together, forming a kind of loose raft. I followed with desperate haste, for I saw that it was indeed Mary Kingsford, and loudly called to her by name to stop. She did not appear to hear me, and in a few minutes the unhappy girl had gained the end of the timber raft. One instant she paused with clasped hands upon the brink, and in another had thrown herself into the dark and moaning river.

[To be concluded.]

From Hogg's Instructor.

THE DESIGN OF OUR LIFE.

THE design of our life!—alas that it should be so little thought of! The very words seem to awaken a new idea, to open up a new vista, to surprise us in a manner by their unfamiliarity, contrasted with their manifest nearness to our interests, duty and destiny. They fall like a reproach upon our worldliness from an upper sphere, calling us back from the outward and the earthly, and reminding us that there is something better and worthier than these. It will be well if such shall be the practical result of our present meditation: such is its aim. We would disown for a time the accidental and the passing—the transient peculiarities which constitute the mere drapery of our being—that we may the more clearly and the more calmly contemplate the great and the universal, and that by thus looking at ourselves and our fellows in the light of those higher and wider relations which have their roots in the soul, and which pass into the infinite, we may take the likeliest course for reconciling ourselves to ourselves, to one another, and to the world without, while we shall, by the very fact of dwelling upon them, be strengthening and sustaining all that is most gloriously distinctive of humanity in man.

What is our life? says an inspired writer: "It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." And yet this vapour-life has for its trophies all that is great and imposing in the world—temples, and cities, and palaces, and kingdoms—all that is useful in science, all that is profound in philosophy, all that is soothing in literature, all that is great and beautiful in art; and all these have been fostered under its wing, and are the footprints which it has left on the sands of time. Nay, but this vapour-life is laden with eternity; this meteor flash, every time that it is kindled, lights an immortal spirit to heaven or hell: it fixes destiny, it determines a course of endless progression upwards among the stars, or of endless sinking and divergence into a deeper gloom than brooded over the primal chaos. So that the trial of Solomon was no solitary case.—Life holds the balance to every man; the good that is passing and perishable in the one scale, the wisdom which is all embracing and imperishable in the other, and death steps in only as the ratifier of the choice, while eternity is the endless unfolding of the fruit.

What shall we say then? Was the apostle in jest? Was he seeking to depreciate this great seed-time of our existence? Nay, verily, but rather he would rebuke the presumption and the folly which, by refusing to connect it with the eternity beyond, makes it the palace of the body indeed, but the prison of the soul, destined to open at a moment, they think, not into the far-sounding depths of ruin and despair.

Was it not something of a kindred feeling which urged the exclamation from the king— "Wherefore has Thou made all men in vain?" Vain, indeed, if money be his object and pleasure his reward. Vain would be the eye and the wing to the eagle if he were never to rise above the slimy things of the earth; and vain would be that eye of reason in man, and those wings of intelligence—imagination and faith—by which he can look "before and after," reconnoitre the universe, and sustain himself in the contemplation of the Infinite— if sense is to be his world, and matter his god, and the sepulchre his goal. That "the spirit of a man goeth upward," is written on its very constitution. But the world denies it: it grovels in the dust instead of soaring to the sun; and with his practical denial meeting him everywhere, can we wonder at the momentary scientificism of the holy seer— "Wherefore has Thou made all men in vain?"

Not less alien from the truth, and not less suggestive of the psalmist's question, are the doctrines of chance on the one hand, and the dreams of pantheism, ancient and modern, on the other. By the first, we are taught that man is the plaything of circumstances, tossed for a little hither and thither, now in sunshine, now in shade, on the current of events lawless as himself, and passing away we know not whither, even as he came we know not whence; while, by the second, we are compensated for the loss of individual importance, responsibility, and will, by the fantastic assumption of one Great Spirit underlying the universe, projecting into the region of the actual, the members of our race, who are again to be absorbed into the prent essence in process of time. There is thus the scepticism of a materialised spiritualism on the one side, and of an attenuated materialism