

Literature, &c.

THE BRITISH MAGAZINES.

From Hogg's Instructor.

MYSTERIES OF CITY LIFE.

THE BOOK OF LIFE.—THE GAMESTER.

The first page of the book of life opens with a view of a gambling house in New Orleans. There is a mixed assemblage of men, on whose distorted features could be read whole volumes of crime and passion. I counted thirty persons, besides those whose business it was to set the gambling machine in operation. The table was covered with money, upon which the excited wretches gazed with nervous earnestness, and as chance or fraud, or perhaps both, operated against them, the deep volcanoes of the soul burst out in wild exclamations, intermingled with oaths and curses. A true picture of hell is a gambling house!

One old man, whose grey hairs hung wildly about his neck, grasped dollar after dollar, as it turned up to his number, and the ghastly smile told how it soothed the anguish of his mind. He won; but these were those who lost; what a picture did their countenances betray of the passions that reigned within! Eyes distended, lips compressed, the nervous tremor, all showed that the spirit of gambling was doing its work. One young man there was, who more particularly attracted my attention, for in him I recognised a fellow boarder. He lost but his countenance gave no indications of it; he smiled, but the close observer might have discerned a sudden twitch of the lower lip, and nervous action of the arm, which plainly told that all was not calm within. The book of life opened for him dark, and the page was blotted with the tears of an absent parent.

PAGE II.—THE ROBBERY.

It was in a large boarding house; the view from the balcony was beautiful; it opened out upon the Mississippi, whose dark waters rolled along toward the ocean, in all the grandeur and glory of the 'father of waters.' Steamboats floated along, laden with the riches of the 'upper land,' and the huge ships freighted for Europe gave goodly evidence that this indeed was the 'emporium of the West.' This page of the book of life opened beautiful and bright, and as I gazed upon it, I wished in my heart that it might be eternally so.

While I stood gazing, my thoughts, carried off on the wings of imagination, were rioting in the anticipations of the future.

'What is thought?

Imagination's vast and shoreless sea,
Which shifting light and darkness play
athwart

In rapid change; inscrutable and free,
A mirror where we find forms of all things
that be!

A friend approached me, upon whose countenance a shadow of grief rested and hid the sunshine of his heart. So great a change struck me, and I inquired the cause.

'I have been robbed,' he replied; 'robbed of my watch and two hundred dollars in money.'

At that moment the young man of the gambling house came up; I caught his eye, it quailed beneath my glance—was it guilt?

'Robbed! did you say,' taking up the words of my friend; how very strange! I too have lost my watch—a valuable lever, the gift of my mother. We have a thief in the house.'

I gazed at him intently as he spoke, and calmly observed—

'Yes, and a gambler too!'

His face flushed, then grew pale as death, and he hastily left us.

'Look after that man, Stanford. He rooms with you, does he not?' I asked.

'Yes!'

'Mark me, Stanford—that man is the robber.'

'He a robber! Why, he is the son of a Virginia planter. But why do you suspect him?'

'Simply because I study the pages of the book of life.'

The first and second chapter of this eventful career are written and stereotyped on the eternal tablets.

PAGE III.—THE FORGERY.

It was in another city—a vast, populous, commercial city—that I found myself busily engaged, and for a while neglected the book of life. I read men as they appear in the great mass. The pages were with trade and traffic, and in the hurry and confusion of my vocation, I lost sight of individuality.

A circumstance, however, occurred which brought up immediately before me one of the actors on life's stage. Extensive forgeries had been committed, and so ingeniously too, that the rogue had already realised from the brokers upwards of forty thousand dollars. These drafts were purported to have been drawn by a large cotton house in New Orleans, on their agent in New York. When I first heard the circumstance, and the name of the firm in the Crescent City, I was struck with the curious coincidence that associated my gambling acquaintance with the forgery. The name by which he was known in that city was Morton, and the drafts, I ascertained, were made payable to Mortimer. True, the similarity in name was not in itself sufficiently striking, but what strengthened my suspicion was the fact, that the gentleman alluded to in the second page, was a clerk in the very

house by whom the drafts were said to be drawn. Satisfied in my own mind of the truth of my own surmises, I immediately started off to the broker to get a sight of one of the drafts. Just as I reached the corner of the street in which his office was located, who should I meet but the object of my suspicions. He was followed by a black man carrying a heavy trunk. As soon as he saw me he changed color, and passed rapidly on, with head averted purposely to avoid me. 'He is guilty,' I exclaimed, 'and has filled the third page of the book of life.'

PAGE IV.—THE MURDER.

It was in a wild part of the State of Pennsylvania, in the year 1837, where the huge mountains rise up almost perpendicular, and seem as if they were playing hide-and-seek with the clouds. I was there for the benefit of my health, as were also some thirty or forty others. We enjoyed our time most delightfully—hunting and fishing occupying two thirds of it. Then we made up parties for sailing; and when the moon poured down her silvery rays upon the water we sang to wild notes of music, which gave to the scene a romantic tone, and which found a corresponding chord to vibrate upon in every heart. I shall never forget my visit to the mountains of Pennsylvania. In a place so remote from the infectious vices of the city, it was to be expected that the people were virtuous and happy. Nor had there occurred ought to disturb the tranquility which prevailed there until the second week after our arrival.

One morning the body of a young girl was found on the bank, or rather the margin of a small stream, which washed the base of the mountain near the town. It was recognised as being the daughter of a poor woman who mangled for the boarders at the hotel. 'How did this fearful accident occur?' was in every mouth; 'ah, here are marks of violence, and evidence of foul play.' Suspicion soon rested upon a young man who had been seen lurking in the neighborhood, and whose sudden disappearance gave rise to the report that he must be the murderer. On her person was found a piece of paper with the words, evidently written in haste, 'Meet me at eight—at the usual place.' Signed M.

I saw the paper; the letter M. staggered me; there was something in its appearance that attracted my attention; it seems to speak. A mysterious feeling crept over me as I gazed, and mentally exclaimed, 'It is Morton!' I turned the piece of paper over, examined it closely; it was evidently written on the back of a letter. Ah! what do I see? On a portion of the address these letters were visible, 'timer;' part of the postmark was on it, and I could plainly decipher—'eans, La.'

It required no key, it was plain the letter was post-marked New Orleans, and directed to Mortimer. Strange! Murder completed the fourth page of the book of life.

PAGE V.—THE EXECUTION.

The fifth page presents a view of the gallows. The scenery around it differed from any that I had ever gazed upon before. On the right rolled the waters of the Susquehanna, on the left arose the blue mountains, covered with the mighty oaks, those old forest trees, whose ages could alone be reckoned by the wood ranger, for they bore the impress of centuries. An immense multitude had assembled to witness the execution of a hardened criminal, one convicted of a most horrible murder. It was a fearful sight to gaze upon. The scaffold was erected at point of the forest known as the Cross-roads; it was a rude constructed thing, but firm. The clouds were gathering in dark folds above us. But ever and anon the sun would dart forth his rays, and striking the dark shade of the trees, gave to that portion of the scene a supernatural appearance of brightness. Around and about the gallows stood the anxious spectators; there was a mingled look of pity and defiance to feeling on each countenance, which gave to the uplifted faces of the thousands an unearthly if not fiendish expression. At last the culprit ascended the ladder followed by the hangman; the rope was arranged, a solemn silence reigned among the vast crowd—not a sound was heard—respiration itself was suspended! The clouds had passed away, a sickly ray of light shone for a while upon the awful preparations. Again it ceased to shine, the clouds gathered in fearful blackness, the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed, and a breeze which swelled to a mighty wind swept down from the mountain. At that moment the unhappy man raised his head from his heaving breast, and gazed around with a wild and maniac stare—I started—the action attracted his attention, our eyes met, and the next moment he was launched into eternity!

It was Morton! The fifth page of the book of life is completed.

From Hogg's Instructor.

PASSING THOUGHTS.

THE GRAY-STONE.

By the late Charlotte Elizabeth.

'It is useless to puzzle yourself any longer over what is utterly illegible; the letters are worn past all hope of deciphering a single sentence. Come away!'

And thus ends the last effort of poor humanity to perpetuate its cherished sorrows, or to display its pompous boastings, in the sight of prosperity. That old, grey, mossy stone, with its half shadow of a cherub's face, peeping out from the broken outline of a pair of wings; its green and yellow patches of corroded surface, where the long inscription once appeared; and its slanting position,

bending forward while it sinks sideways into the soil, that is the sole surviving memento of—what? It is a memento, for it says 'Remember;' but who or what is to be remembered by it, all the wit of all earth's wise ones cannot discover. Nay, though, right under the cherub's chin, we may trace the course of the 'Hic jacet,' by knowing where it should stand, still no more is communicated than the bare existence of such a tablet in that place must make known. It is a grave—its inmate has long tenanted the silent dwelling; and here our information cases.

Is it, then, idle and vain to mark a spot, endeared, perhaps, to some fond breast far beyond all that the residue of the globe contains? No, it is comely and befitting our nature to do so; though I look on the practice not as a mere natural impulse, but as one among the multitude of unregarded evidences afforded of the doctrine of the resurrection, as having been revealed to man from the earliest period. We find the art, not only of sepulture, but of preserving the human body itself after death, carried to a pitch of perfection at which modern science can only gaze and wonder, when unrolling from its delicate wrappings the corpse of two or three thousand years' unchanged existence. It seems to bespeak a thorough conviction that the spirit would reanimate its earthly tenement, but with a total ignorance or distrust of the Power that could gather up the scattered dust and say,

'Lost in earth, in air, or main,
Kindred atoms meet again.'

Probably not to one in a thousand who puts a grave stone at the head of a departed friend does it occur that there is the remotest connection between his act and the recognition of a great and glorious truth; yet I cannot sever them. That the custom prevails, with extravagant additions, such as the periodically digging up and caressing of the dry bones, among some people lost in the lowest depths of barbarism, and destitute even of a ray of spiritual understanding, does not militate against the supposition. It is in such circumstances that we find the rites of propitiatory sacrifice observed with jealous care, and practised with unsparring cruelty. Yet who questions the divine origin of the sacrificial rite, or fails to recognise in it a testimony to the truth of holy writ, proving that the sons of Noah, of whom the whole earth was overspread, transmitted, each to his descendants, an obligatory knowledge of the act which they with their fathers first performed upon issuing from the ark, by offering on an altar the victims miraculously preserved for that purpose? I know it is a question with some, whether the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was held in the patriarchal church; but so clear to my apprehension is the language of Scripture on this point, that I never could contrive to perplex myself with a doubt. I believe it to have been as well understood by the earliest of the Old Testament saints as the nature and end of the sacrifices. I love to think so, and on an old illegible grave-stone I can find a lesson written, beyond the mere tale of how the fashion of this world passeth away.

The feeling to which I refer the origin of monuments erected on the spot where the dead moulder, is distinct from that which would record their names in historical tablets. In the former there would be something as humiliating as in the latter there is honorable distinction, were it not connected with a higher destiny. The old custom of burning the dead is far less harrowing to the mind than, on deliberate reflection, is the fearful process of gradual decomposition, and ultimate mingling with a cold damp soil. The ancients enclosed in an urn the calcined mass obtained from their funeral pyres, and stored it up; but to put a mark upon the spot where corruption and the worm are fulfilling their slow, noiseless task on the body of a beloved object, does really seem like a triumph of faith over sight, of hope over experience, worthy of those who have been taught concerning them that sleep in Jesus, that their scattered dust shall rise again. Then how sublime becomes the language of a grave-stone!

'Stop,' says the crumbling monument of bygone generations—'stop, passenger, and mark me. Here lies a brother of your race; I show you precisely where he was laid under the sod. Dig now, even to the centre, in quest of the frame so wonderfully made. Search, sift every handful of earth as you cast it forth, you shall not find a vestige of my charge. All is resolved into the parent element, beyond the power of your keenest investigation to separate or to discern the one from the other. Yet, read me again. Here lies that mortal; and hence he shall again come forth, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. What you toss around you is the corruptible that must put on corruption; the mortal that must put on immortality. Go, learn from my defaced surface a lesson of faith—'blessed are they who believe, yet see not.'

Summon me not, therefore, from gazing on this crumbling headstone. I may rove far, and look upon many an object, before I encounter a monitor at once so humble, so venerable, so faithful and so just.

NEW WORKS.

From the Tutor's Ward, a Novel.
THE PIOUS AND CHARITABLE
SOPHIA EGERTON

SOPHIA, decidedly plain, short, thick-set and able-bodied, having a worthy look, which was a spacious of moral livery to the peculiar line she had chosen; for this young lady

had discovered that her especial vocation was the improvement of mankind, and to this end she labored with a noisy zeal, no detail of which was ever allowed to pass unobserved by her numerous acquaintance.—She pursued her calling without the slightest reference to established principles or authorities; for, as she loved to say, when setting at defiance those before whose grey hairs she should have bowed in reverent silence, she had a thoroughly independent mind, and acted in all cases on theories of her own. Her conversation never was of the most lively description, for as she was fully convinced apparently that no one would be so much acquainted with her own merits as herself, she habitually undertook the task of doing herself justice, and discharged the duty with extraordinary fidelity. She was at all times to be heard quietly detailing her own meritorious acts, never dreaming that any merit they might have possessed was turned to veriest poison by such an open display, and in her daily descent on the village, armed with medicine and tracts, and stocked with severe overbearing admonitions, she gathered up material for such complacent haranguing at her father's luxurious table. And thus she took to herself without misgiving, the name of Charity;—that holy one, who with veiled face and noiseless steps glides unseen in the shadow of all who suffer; feating not, though snow-white are her garments, to steal into polluted haunts; appearing, as though warned by some tender instinct, wherever tears are falling, or aching hearts are wearying to rest; through long dark nights making a pillow of her gentle arm for the throbbing head, and over many a rough and distant path speeding with the angel words of pity or of comfort; but ever voiceless, silent, having no name, save in the prayers of the fatherless and widow. Very charitable Sophia was pronounced to be; very estimable she was by all considered, and of late she had established herself as an authoress, by the publication of certain articles on the aged ignorant, and one small volume, entitled 'Hints to Bishops,' which, as Rookcliffe was a pleasant house to visit in, obtained some little circulation in the neighborhood.

LITERARY LADIES.

The woman who writes is always in an anomalous position, however powerful the motive which compels her to authorship; she has quitted her own sphere, and has taken to herself a vocation for which she is neither fitted nor intended, for her reasoning powers are weak, her knowledge limited, and her judgment swayed by her feelings; when once she becomes an object of public comment, she loses all claim to the consideration and delicacy due to her very name; but she does not lose the modest timidity, the natural reserve, which causes her a bitter pang each time that she is dragged before the public gaze. She has gone beyond her own province, and therefore she must consent to belie her own nature. It would be a mockery to talk of shrinking from observation, when of her own will she has met the rude stare of strange eyes; absurd to say that she trembles to trust her own judgement or to guide her own faltering steps, when she who should have done the bidding of others has come forth to govern and influence the minds of many. She has quitted the stronghold of her womanly reserve and privileges, and henceforth she dare not turn, with all the revolting of heart she feels, from the personal remarks the fulsome flatterer, and the impertinent scrutiny, to which she has exposed herself; she has given herself as fair game to be hunted down for the public amusement, and she has no right to complain if the noise and turmoil of the chase fills her with terror, and with a weary longing for the unnoticed retirement which is her rightful sphere.

From Dickens's Household Words.

A ZOOLOGICAL PROBLEM.

On the 3rd day of October, 1851, and towards the hour of evening, one of the constrictors in the Zoological Gardens of the Regent's Park received a present of two live rabbits for his supper. As he has not had any food for some weeks, it is supposed that the rabbits will be a very acceptable present for his serene lengthiness. The cool air of autumn is tempered by a warming apparatus in his saloon, but, in case he should wish for a still greater degree of heat, a blanket is given him to creep under, or in the folds of which he may enrol himself at his pleasure. It is not a fine household blanket, but a thick, rough, railway blanket wrapper of the largest size. All his comforts being thus attended to, the keeper of the serpent house bows and takes his departure for the night. In the course of the night of 3rd October last past, the watchman, as usual, entered the serpent house. Walking round, and holding up his lantern to the different cases, he perceived that the boa constrictor's "supper" was hopping about the cage in a very unconcerned manner, but, on turning from the rabbits to their proprietor, what was his dismay at perceiving that the serpent had seized upon one corner of the thick rough blanket in preference, and was drawing it down his distended throat. Away ran the watchman to call up the head keeper. The head keeper, knowing it would be in vain to endeavor to get the blanket back after "matters had gone so far," hoped that the serpent would disgorge it of his own accord, if left to himself quietly, as soon as he found he had made a mistake in the food he had chosen. Both head keeper and watchman therefore went away. It is the opinion of Mr. Mitchell, the secretary of the Zoological Society, who is constantly stu-