

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From the London Working Man's Friend.

WHAT IS NOBLE?

BY CHARLES SWAIN.

What is noble? To inherit
Wealth, estate, and proud degree?
There must be some other merit,
Higher yet than these for me!
Something greater far must enter
Into life's majestic span;
Fitted to create and centre
True nobility in man!

What is noble? 'Tis the finer
Portion of our mind and heart;
Link'd to something still diviner
Than mere language can impart.
Ever prompting—ever seeing
Some improvement yet to plan;
To uplift our fellow-being,
And like man, to feel for man!

What is noble? Is the sabre
Nobler than the humble spade?
There is a dignity in labour,
Truer than e'er pomp array'd!
He who seeks the Mind's improvement,
Aids the world in aiding Mind!
Every great, commanding movement
Serves not one, but all mankind.

O'er the Forge's heat and ashes—
O'er the Engine's iron head—
Where the rapid shuttle flashes,
And the spindle whirls its thread—
There is Labour, lowly tending
Each requirement of the hour;
There is Genius, still extending
Science and its world of power!

'Mid the dust, the speed, and clamour
Of the loom-shed and the mill;
Midst the clink of wheel and hammer,
Great results are growing still!
Though too oft, by Fashion's creatures,
Work and workers may be blamed,
Commerce need not hide its features!
Industry is not ashamed!

What is noble? That which places
Truth in its enfranchised will!
Leaving steps, like angel traces,
That mankind may follow still!
E'en though Scorn's malignant glances
Prove him poorest of his clan,
He's the Noble who advances
Freedom and the cause of Man.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

THE TWO SISTERS.

You sometimes find in the same family, children of the same parents, who in all respects present the most striking contrast. They not only seem to be of different parentage, but of different races; unlike in physical conformation, in complexion, in features, in temperament, and in moral and intellectual qualities. They are sometimes to be found diametrically opposed to each other in tastes, pursuits, habits, and sympathies, though brought up under the same parental eye, subject to the same circumstances and conditions, and educated by the same teachers. Indeed, education does comparatively little toward the formation of character—that is to say, in the determination of the individuality of character. It merely brings out, or educates that character, the germs of which are born in us, and only want proper sunning, and warmth, and geniality, to bring them to maturity.

You could scarcely have imagined that Elizabeth and Jane Byfield were in any way related to each other. They had not a feature in common. The one was a brilliant beauty, the other was plain in the extreme. Elizabeth had a dazzling complexion; bright, sparkling eyes, an oval face, finely turned nose and chin, a mouth as pouting as if a bee had stung it newly; she was tall and lithe; taper, yet rounded—in short, she was a regular beauty, the belle of her neighbourhood, pursued by admirers, besonnetted by poetasters, serenaded by musical amateurs, toasted by spirit-loving old foggy bachelors, and last, but not least, she was the subject of many a tit-bit piece of scandal among her young lady rivals in the country town of Barlistone.

As for her sister Jane, with her demure, old-maidish air, her little dumpty, thick-set figure, her reticulate nose, and dingy features, nobody bestowed a thought upon her. She had no rival, she was no one's competitor, she offended nobody's sense of individual prowess in grace or charms, by her assumption. Not at all. That horrid little fright Jane Byfield, as some of her stylish acquaintances would speak of her, behind her back, stood in no young lady's way. She was very much of a house bird, was Jane. In the evening, while her sister was dashing off some brilliant bravura in the drawing room, Jane would be setting in a corner, talking to some one older than herself—or, perhaps you might find her in the little back parlour, knitting or mending stockings. Not that she was without a spice of fun in her; for, among children, she romped like one of themselves; indeed, she was a general favorite with those who were much younger as well as much older than herself. Yet among those of her own age, she never excited any admiration, except for her dutifulness—though that, you know, is a very dull sort of

thing. Certainly, she never excited any young lady's envy, or attracted any young gentleman's homage, like her more highly favored sister. Indeed, by a kind of general consent, she was set down for 'a regular old maid.'

I wish I could have told my readers that Jane got married after all, and disappointed the prophetic utterance of her friends. I am sure that, notwithstanding her plainness, she would have made a thrifty manager and a thorough good housewife. But, as I am relating a true history, I can not thus indulge my readers. Jane remained single; but her temper remained unruffled. As she did not expect, so she was not disappointed. She preserved her cheerfulness continued to be useful, kept her heart warm and her head well stored—for she was a great reader—another of her 'old maidish' habits, though, fortunately, the practice of reading good books by young women is now ceasing to be 'singular;' readers are now of the plural number, and every day adds to the list.

But what of Elizabeth—the beauty? Oh, she got married—of course she did. The beautiful are always sought after, often when they have nothing but their beauty to recommend them. And, after all, we cannot wonder at this. Nature has so ordered it, that beauty of person must command admirers; and where beauty of heart and beauty of intellect are joined together in the person of a beautiful woman, really nothing in nature can be more charming. And so Elizabeth got married; and a 'good match' she made, as the saying is, with a gentleman in extensive business, rather stylish, but prosperous—likely to get on in the world, and to accumulate a fortune. But the fortune was to make, and the business was speculative. Those in business well know that it is not all gold that glitters.

The married life of the 'happy pair' commenced. First one, and then another 'toddl'ing wee thing' presented itself in the young mother's household and the mother's cares and responsibilities multiplied. But, to tell the truth, Elizabeth, though a beauty, was not a very good manager. She could sit at the head of her husband's table, and do the honors of the house to perfection. But look into her wardrobe, into her drawers, into her kitchen, and you would say at once, there was the want of the managing head, and the ready hand. A good housewife, like a good poet, is 'born, not made'—*nascitur non fit*. It's true. There are some women whom no measure of drilling can convert into good housewives. They may lay down systems, cultivate domesticity, study tidying, spending, house-drilling, as an art, and yet they can not acquire it. To others it comes without effort, without consciousness, as a kind of second nature.

They are 'to the manner born.' They don't know how it is themselves. Yet their hand seems to shed abroad order, regularity, and peace, in the household. Under their eye, and without any seeming effort on their part, every thing falls into its proper place and every thing is done in its proper time. Elizabeth did not know how it was; yet, somehow, she could not get servants like any body else (how often imperfect management is set down to account of 'bad servants!'); she could not get things to go smoothly; there was always something 'getting across'; the house got out of order; dinners were not ready at the right time, and then the husband grew querulous; somehow, the rooms could not be kept very tidy, for the mistress of the household having her hands full of children, of course she 'could not attend to every thing'; and, in short, poor Elizabeth's household was fast getting into a state of mud-dle.

Now, husbands don't like this state of things and so, the result of it was, that Elizabeth's husband, though not a bad-natured man, sometimes grew cross and complaining, and the beautiful wife found that her husband had 'a temper'—as who has not? And about the same time, the husband found that his wife was 'no manager,' notwithstanding her good looks. Though his wife studied economy, yet he discovered that, somehow, she got through a deal of money, and yet there was little comfort got in exchange for it. Things were evidently in a bad way, and going wrong entirely. What might have been the end, who knows? But, happily, at this juncture, aunt Jane, the children's pet, the 'little droll old maid,' appeared on the stage; and though sisters are not supposed to be of good omen in other sisters' houses, certainly it must be admitted that, in this case, the 'old maid' at once worked a wonderful charm.

The quiet creature in a few weeks, put quite a new feature on the face of affairs. Under her eye, things seemed at once to fall into their proper places—without the slightest 'ordering,' or bustling, or noise, or palavar. Elizabeth could not make out how it was, but sure enough Jane 'had such a way with her,' and always had. The positions of the sisters seemed now to be reversed. Jane was looked up to by her sister, who no longer assumed those airs of superiority, which, in the pride of her beauty and attractiveness, had come so natural to her. Elizabeth had ceased to be competed for by rival admirers; and she now discovered that the fleeting charms of her once beautiful person could not atone for the want of those more solid qualities which are indispensable in the house and the home. What made Jane's presence more valuable at this juncture was, that illness had come into the household, and worst of all, it had seized upon the head of the family. This is always a serious calamity in any case; but in this case the consequences threatened to be more serious than usual. An extensive business was interrupted; large transactions which only

the head of the concern himself, could adequately attend to, produced embarrassments, the anxiety connected with which impeded a cure. All the resources of medicine were applied; all the comfort, warmth, silence, and attention that careful nursing could administer were tried; and tried in vain. The husband of Elizabeth died, and her children were fatherless; but the fatherless are not forsaken—they are the care of God.

Now it was that the noble nature of Aunt Jane came gradually into view. Her sister was stricken down—swallowed up in grief. Life for her had lost its charm. The world was as if left without its sun. She was utterly overwhelmed. Even the faces of her children served only to awaken her to a quicker sense of misery. But aunt Jane's energies were only awakened to renewed life and vigor. To these orphans she was now both father and mother in one. What woman can interfere in business matters without risk of censure? But Jane interfered: she exerted herself to wind up the affairs of the deceased; and she did so; she succeeded. There was but little left; only enough to live upon, and that meanly. Every thing was sold off—the grand house was broken up—and the family subsided into the ranks of the genteel poor. Elizabeth could not bear up under such a succession of shocks. She was not querulous but her sorrows were too much for her, and she fell upon them—she petted them, and they became her masters. A few years passed, and the broken down woman was laid in the same grave with her husband.

But Jane's courage never flagged. The gentle, dear, dear, good creature, now advancing into years, looked all manner of difficulties courageously in the face; and she overcame them. They fled before her resolution. Alone she bore the burden of that family of sons and daughters not her own, but as dear to her now as if they were. What scheming and thought she daily exercised to make the ends meet—to give to each of them alike such an amount of school education as would enable them 'to make their way in the world,' as she used to say—can not be described. It would take a long chapter to detail the patient industry, the frugal care, the motherly help, and the watchful up-bringing with which she tended the helpless orphans. But her arduous labors were all more than repaid in the end.

It was a privilege to know this noble woman. I used occasionally to join the little family circle in an evening, round their crackling fire, and contribute my quota of wonderful stories to the listening group. Aunt Jane herself, was a capital story-teller; and it was her wont thus, of an evening, to entertain the youngsters after the chief part of the day's work was done. She would tell the boys—John and Edward—of those self-helping and perseverant great man who had climbed the difficult steep of the world, and elevated themselves to the loftiest stations by their own energy, industry, and self denial. The great and the good were her heroes, and she labored to form those young minds about her after the best and noblest models which biographic annals could furnish. 'Without goodness,' she would say—and her bright, speaking looks (plain though her features were), with her animated and glowing expression, on such occasions, made the lessons root themselves firmly in their young minds and hearts—'Without goodness, my dear children, greatness is naught—mere gilding and lacker; goodness is the real jewel in the casket; so never forget to make that your end and aim.'

I, too, used to contribute my share toward those delightful evenings' entertainments, and aunt Jane would draw me on to tell the group of the adventures and life of our royal Alfred—of his struggles, his valor, his goodness, and his greatness; of the old contests of the Danes and the Saxons; of Harold, the last of the Saxon kings; of William the Norman, and the troublous times which followed the Conquest; and of the valorous life of our forefathers, out of which the living English character, habits, and institutions had at length been formed. And oftentimes the shadow would flit across those young faces, by the fire's light, when they were told of the perilous adventures on the lone sea; of shipwrecked and cast-away sailors; of the escape of Drake, and the adventures of Cook, and of that never-ending source of wonderment and interest—the life and wanderings of Robinson Crusoe. And there was merriment and fun, too, mixed with the marvelous and the imaginative—stories of giants, and fairies, and Sleeping Beauties—at which their eyes would glance brightly in the beams of the glowing fire. Then, first one little face, and then another, would grow heavy and listless, and their little heads begin to nod; at which the aunt would hear, one by one, their little petitions to their 'Father which art in Heaven,' and with a soft kiss and murmured blessing, would then lay them in their little cribs, draw the curtains, and leave them to sleep.

But as for the good aunt, bless you, nearly half of her work was yet to do! There she would sit, far on into the night, till her eyes were red and her cheeks feverish, with her weary white seam in her hand; or, at another time, she would be mending, patching, and eking out the clothes of the children just put to bed—for their wardrobe was scanty, and often very far gone. Yes, poor thing, she was ready to work her fingers to the bone for these dear, fatherless young ones, breathing so softly in the next room, and whose muttered dreams would now and then disturb the deep silence of the night; when she would listen, utter a heartfelt blessing, and then go on with her work again. The presence of those children seemed only to remind her of the need of more toil for their sakes. For

them did aunt Jane work by day and work by night; for them did she ply the brilliant needle, which, save in those gloaming hours by the fireside, was scarcely ever out of her hand.

Sorrowful needle! What eyes have followed thee, strained themselves at thee, wept over thee! And what sorrow yet hangs about the glittering, polished, silver-eyed needle! What lives hang upon it! What toil and night watching, what laughter and tears, what gossip and misery, what racking pains and weary moanings has it not witnessed! And would you know the poetry it has inspired—then read poor Hood's terrible wail of 'The Song of the Shirt!' The friend of the needy, the tool of the industrious, the helper of the starving, the companion of the desolate; such is that weakest of human instruments—the needle! It was all these to our aunt Jane.

I can not tell you the life-long endurance and courage of that woman; how she devoted herself to the cherishment and domestic training of the girls, and the intellectual and industrial education of the boys, and the correct moral culture of all the members of her 'little family,' as she styled them.

Efforts such as hers are never without their reward, even in this world; and of her better and higher reward, surely aunt Jane might well feel assured. Her children did credit to her. Years passed, one by one they grew up toward maturity. The character of the aunt proved the best recommendation for the youths. The boys got placed out to business—one in a lawyer's office, the other in a warehouse. I do not specify further particulars; for the boys are now men, well-known in the world; respected, admired, and prosperous. One of them is a barrister of the highest distinction in his profession, and it has been said of him, that he has the heart of a woman and the courage of a lion. The other is a well-known merchant, and he is cited as a model of integrity among his class. The girls have grown into women, and are all married. With one of these aunt Jane now enjoys, in quiet, and ease, the well-earned comforts and independence of a green old age. About her knees now clamber a new generation—the children of her 'boys and girls.'

Need I tell you how that dear old woman is revered! how her patient toils are remembered and honored! how her nephews attribute all their successes in life to her, to her noble example, to her tender care, to her patient and long-suffering exertions on their behalf. Never was aunt so honoured—so beloved! She declares they 'spoil her'—a thing she is not used to; and she often beseeches them, to have done with their acknowledgements of gratitude. But she is never wearied of hearing them recall to memory those happy hours, by the evening's fire-light, in the humble cottage in which I was so often a sharer; and then her eye glistens, and a large tear of thankfulness drops upon the lower lid, which she wipes off as of old, and the same heartfelt benison of 'Bless them,' mutters on her quivering lips.

I should like, some day, to indulge myself in telling a long story about dear aunt Jane's experiences; but I am growing old, and a little maudlin myself, and, after all, her life and its results are best told in the character and the history of the children she has so faithfully nurtured and educated.

New Works.

THE DOOMED LAND.

We passed *Edfoo* and its temples at night, and the next morning were aroused by a rattling of musketry, which would have done honor to a small battalion. Our worthy dragoon was saluting with all his might the little town of *Assoran* or *Syene*, to which we are fast approaching; amid a scenery too, the wildest we have ever witnessed; high jutting rocks of Syenite granite lined each side of the channel, immense columns of black basalt, which reminded one of the Giant's causeway, and these mountain rocks here interlined and girt about with sand of a deep mustard yellow, and over the whole the rising sun was throwing such a soft and mellow glow, as only an eastern atmosphere can produce; and before us lay the town, full of naked children and men, donkeys and dogs, and women whose only covering was a rag about the loins. I wish I could give you a perfect picture of the desolation of this place and region, but the attempt I fear would be futile. There are scarcely any noble ruins of palaces or temples; hardly anything which would denote this as the once grand frontier city and fortification of ancient Egypt; whose mart was stored with the rich products of Ethiopia and the East and whose inhabitants stood high for valor and wisdom in the ancient world. A part of the old quay still remains, covered with hieroglyphics, from some of which are resolved the name of *Psammiticus*—a portal to the temple of the Pharaohs. A horribly mutilated statue of *Osiris*, and this is all if we may except a thick stratum of pottery and half-buried granite remains which covers the ground more or less around. Fearfully wild and jagged as is the natural scenery, the black basalt which every where abounds, ramparted with the sterile yellow desert sands, gives to the whole country a most cursed appearance, for this is the very expression that formed itself in my mind, as I first gazed upon it from a lofty summit, and then turned to my Bible and read how the pride of the 'Tower of Syene' should be laid low, and this border of Ethiopia desolate." How often have we wished that we had some sceptical companion, that we might see the effect of all this upon his mind! that he might accompany us through-