

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Harper's Monthly Magazine.

THE MIDNIGHT MASS.

AN EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF TERROR.

ABOUT eight o'clock on the night of the 22d of January, 1793, while the Reign of Terror was still at its height in Paris, an old woman descended the rapid eminence in that city, which terminates before the Church of St. Laurent. The snow had fallen so heavily during the whole day, that the sound of footsteps was scarcely audible. The streets were deserted; and the fear that silence naturally inspires, was increased by the general terror which then assailed France. The old woman passed on her way, without perceiving a living soul in the streets; her feeble sight preventing her from observing in the distance, by the lamp-light, several foot passengers, who flitted like shadows over the vast of the Faubourg, through which she was proceeding. She walked on courageously through the solitude, as if her age were a talisman which could shield her from every calamity. No sooner, however, had she passed the Rue des Eorts, than she thought she heard the firm and heavy footsteps of a man walking behind her. It struck her that she had not heard this sound for the first time. Trembling at the idea of being followed, she quickened her pace, in order to confirm her suspicions by the rays of light which proceeded from an adjacent shop. As soon as she had reached it, she abruptly turned her head, and perceived, through the fog, the outline of a human form. This indistinct vision was enough; she shuddered violently the moment she saw it—doubting not that the stranger had followed her from the moment she had quitted home. But the desire to escape from a spy soon renewed her courage, and she quickened her pace, vainly thinking that, by such means, she could escape from a man necessarily much more active than herself.

After running for some minutes, she arrived at a pastry-cook's shop—entered—and sank, rather than sat down, on a chair which stood before the counter. The moment she raised the latch of the door, a woman in the shop looked quickly through the windows toward the street; and, observing the old lady, immediately opened a drawer in the counter, as if to take out something which she had to deliver to her. Not only did the gesture and expression of the young woman show her desire to be quickly relieved of the new-comer, as of a person whom it was not safe to welcome; but she also let slip a few words of impatience at finding the drawer empty. Regardless of the old lady's presence, she unceremoniously quitted the counter, retired to an inner apartment, and called her husband, who at once obeyed the summons.

'Where have you placed the—?' inquired she with a mysterious air, glancing toward the visitor, instead of finishing the sentence.—Although the pastry-cook could only perceive the large hood of black silk, ornamented with bows of violet-colored ribbon, which formed the old lady's head-dress, he at once cast a significant look at his wife, as much as to say, 'Could you think me careless enough to leave what you ask for, in such a place as the shop?' and then hurriedly disappeared.

Surprised at the silence and immobility of the stranger lady, the young woman approached her; and, on beholding her face, experienced a feeling of compassion—perhaps, we may add, a feeling of curiosity as well.

Although the complexion of the old lady was naturally colorless, like that of one long accustomed to secret austerities, it was easy to see that a recent emotion had cast over it an additional paleness. Her head-dress was so disposed as completely to hide her hair; and thereby to give her face an appearance of religious severity. At the time of which we write, the manners and habits of people of quality were so different from those of the lower classes, that it was easy to identify a person of distinction from outward appearance alone. Accordingly the pastry-cook's wife at once discovered that the strange visitor was an ex-aristocrat—or, as we should now express it, 'a born lady.'

'Madame!' she exclaimed, respectfully, forgetting, at the moment, that this, like all other titles, was now proscribed under the Republic.

The old lady made no answer, but fixed her eyes steadfastly on the shop windows, as if they disclosed some object that terrified her.

'What is the matter with you citizen?' asked the pastry-cook, who made his appearance at this moment, and disturbed her reverie by handing her a small pasteboard box, wrapped up in blue paper.

'Nothing, nothing, my good friends,' she replied, softly. While speaking, she looked gratefully at the pastry-cook; then, observing on his head the revolutionary red cap, she abruptly exclaimed: 'You are a Republican! you have betrayed me!'

The pastry-cook and his wife indignantly disclaimed the imputation by a gesture. The old lady blushed as she noticed it—perhaps with shame, at having suspected them—perhaps with pleasure, at finding them trustworthy.

'Pardon me,' said she, with child-like gentleness, drawing from her pocket a louis d'or. 'There,' she continued, 'there is the stipulated price.'

There is a poverty which the poor alone can discover. The pastry-cook and his wife felt the same conviction as they looked on each other—it was perhaps the last louis d'or which the old lady possessed. When she offered the coin her hand trembled: she had gazed upon it with some sorrow, but with no avarice; and yet, in giving it, she seemed to be fully aware that she was making a sacrifice. The shop-keeper, equally moved by pity and interest, began by comforting their consciences by civil words.

'You seem rather poorly, citizen,' said the pastry cook.

'Would you like to take any refreshment, madame?' interrupted his wife.

'We have some excellent soup,' continued the husband.

'The cold has perhaps affected you, madame,' resumed the young woman; 'pray step in, and sit and warm yourself by our fire.'

'We may be Republicans,' observed the pastry cook, 'but the devil is not always so black as he is painted.'

Encouraged by the kind words addressed to her by the shop-keeper, the old lady confessed that she had been followed by a strange man and that she was afraid to return home by herself.

'Is that all?' replied the valiant pastry cook. 'I'll be ready to go home with you in a minute, citizen.'

He gave the louis d'or to his wife, and then—animated by that sort of gratitude which all tradesmen feel at receiving a large price for an article of little value—hastened to put on his National Guard's uniform, and soon appeared in complete military array. In the mean while, however, his wife had found time to reflect; and in her case, as in many others, reflection closed the open hand of charity. Apprehensive that her husband might be mixed up in some misadventure, she tried hard to detain him; but strong in his benevolent impulse, the honest fellow persisted in offering himself as the old lady's escort.

'Do you imagine madame,' that the man you are so much afraid of, is still waiting outside the shop?' asked the young woman.

'I feel certain of it,' replied the lady.

'Suppose he should be a spy! Suppose the whole affair should be a conspiracy! Don't go. Get back the box we gave her.' These words whispered to the pastry cook by his wife, had the effect of cooling his courage with extraordinary rapidity.

'I'll just say two words to that mysterious personage outside, and relieve you of all annoyance immediately,' said he, hastily quitting the shop.

The old lady, passive as a child, and half bewildered, reseated herself.

The pastry cook was not long before he returned. His face which was naturally ruddy, was now quite pale, he was so panic stricken, that his legs trembled under him, and his eyes rolled like the eyes of a drunk man.

'Are you trying to get our throats cut for us, you rascally aristocrat?' cried he furiously. 'Do you think you can make me the tool of a conspiracy? Quick, show us your heels, and never let us see your face again!'

So saying, he endeavoured to snatch away the box which the old lady had placed in her pocket. No sooner, however, had his hands touched her dress, than, preferring any peril in the street to losing the treasure for which she had just paid so large a price, she darted with the activity of youth toward the door, opened it violently, and disappeared in a moment from the eyes of the bewildered shop-keepers.

Upon gaining the street again, she walked at her utmost speed; but her strength soon failed, when she heard the spy who had so remorselessly followed her, crunching the snow under his heavy tread. She involuntarily stopped short; the man stopped short too. At first her terror prevented her from speaking, or looking round at him; but it is in the nature of us all—even of the most infirm—to relapse into comparative calm immediately after violent agitation; for, though our feelings may be unbounded, the organs which express them have their limits. Accordingly, the old lady finding that she experienced no particular annoyance from her imaginary persecutor, willingly tried to convince herself that he might be a secret friend, resolved at all hazards to protect her. She reconsidered the circumstances which had attended the stranger's appearance, and soon contrived to persuade herself that his object in following her was much more likely to be a good than an evil one.

Forgetful, therefore, of the fear with which he had inspired the pastry cook, she now went on her way with greater confidence. After a walk of half an hour, she arrived at a house situated at the corner of a street leading to the Barriere Pantin—even at the present day the most deserted locality in all Paris. A cold north-easterly wind whistled sharply across the few houses, or rather tenements, scattered about this almost uninhabited region. The place seemed, from its utter desolation, the natural asylum of penury and despair.

The stranger who still resolutely dogged the poor old lady's steps, seemed struck with the scene on which his eyes now rested. He stopped—erect, thoughtful and hesitating—his figure feebly lighted by a lamp, the uncertain rays of which scarcely penetrated the fog. Fear had quickened the old lady's eyes. She now thought she perceived something sinister in the features of the stranger. All her former terrors returned, and she took advantage of the man's temporary indecision, to steal away in the darkness towards the door

of a solitary house. She pressed a spring under the latch, and disappeared with the rapidity of a phantom.

The stranger, still standing motionless, contemplated the house, which bore the same appearance of misery as the rest of the Faubourg. Built of irregular stones, and stuccoed with yellowish plaster, it seemed, from the wide cracks in the walls, as if a strong gust of wind would bring the crazie building to the ground. The roof, formed of brown tiles, long since covered with moss, was so sunk in several places that it threatened to give way under the weight of snow which now lay upon it. Each story had three windows, the frames of which, rotted with damp and dis-jointed by the heat of the sun, showed how bitterly this cold must penetrate into the apartments. The comfortless, isolated, dwelling resembled some old tower which Time had forgotten to destroy. One faint light glimmered from the windows of the gable in; which the top of the building terminated the remainder of the house was plunged in the deepest obscurity.

Meanwhile, the old woman ascended with some difficulty a rude and dilapidated flight of stairs, assisting herself by a rope, which supplied the place of bannisters. She knocked mysteriously at the door of one of the rooms situated on the garret-floor, was quickly let in by an old man, and then sank down feebly into a chair which he presented to her.

'Hide yourself! Hide yourself!' she exclaimed. 'Seldom as we venture out, our steps have been traced; our proceedings are known!'

'What is the matter?' asked another old woman, seated near the fire.

'The man whom we have seen loitering about the house since yesterday, has followed me this evening,' she replied.

At these words, the three inmates of the miserable abode looked on each other in silent terror. The old man was the least agitated—perhaps for the very reason that his danger was really the greatest. When tried by heavy affliction, or threatened by bitter persecution, the first principle of a courageous man is, at all times, to contemplate calmly the sacrifice of himself for the safety of others. The expression in the faces of his two companions showed plainly, as they looked on the old man, that he was the sole object of their most vigilant solicitude.

'Let us not distrust the goodness of God, my sisters,' said he, in grave, reassuring tones. 'We sang his praises even in the midst of the slaughter that raged round our Convent. If it was His good-will that I should be saved from the fearful butchery committed in that holy place by the Republicans, it was no doubt to reserve me for another destiny, which I must accept without a murmur. God watches over His chosen, and disposes of them as seems best to His good-will. Think of yourselves, my sisters—think not of me!'

'Impossible!' said one of the women. 'What are our lives—the lives of two poor nuns—in comparison with yours; in comparison with the life of a priest!'

'Here, father,' said the old nun, who had just returned; 'here are the consecrated waters of which you sent me in search. She handed him the box which she had received from the pastry-cook.'

'Hark!' cried the other nun; 'I hear footsteps coming up-stairs.'

They all listened intently. The noise of footsteps ceased.

'Do not alarm yourselves,' said the priest. 'Whatever happens, I have already engaged a person, on whose fidelity we can depend, to escort you in safety over the frontier; to rescue you from the martyrdom which the ferocious will of Robespierre and his coadjutors of the Reign of Terror would decree against every servant of the church.'

'Do you not mean to accompany us?' asked the two nuns, affrightedly.

'My place, sisters, is with the martyrs—not with the saved,' said the old priest calmly.

'Hark! the steps on the staircase!—the heavy steps we heard before!' cried the women.

This time it was easy to distinguish, in the midst of the silence of night, the echoing sound of footsteps on the stone stairs. The nuns, as they heard it approach nearer and nearer, forced the priest into a recess at one end of the room, closed the door, and hurriedly heaped some old clothes against it. The moment after, they were startled by three distinct knocks at the outer door.

(To be Continued.)

From the Commercial Register.
COMPETITION IN TRADE

NOT THE LIFE OF BUSINESS.

Competition in trade is considered the life of business. We do not pretend to set up our opinions in opposition to the established and acknowledged proverbs of our fathers, but we do differ, in some particulars, with the spirit of the adage quoted above. It might be qualified and amended. Honorable competition is a means of creating trade, and develops the capacity of man. But that competition that seeks every means in its power to monopolize trade, by reducing prices, is far from the life of business, but is, in fact, its very death. Fair, upright, honorable dealing, will always be sure to meet its reward—although the returns may not be immediate, and it is better to compete fairly and openly, than secretly and covertly.

We live in excitement, and life is a constant battle. In this country, where competition does not exist to the extent that it prevails in Europe, we have but a faint conception of its injurious tendency, when carried to excess,

and know little of the schemes, resorted to there, to secure trade. In the great battle of existence, as seen in the old world, men resort to every species of trick to secure success in business, and every device is used to obtain custom. This spirit is, unfortunately, on the increase in this country, and men undersell each other oftentimes, to the injury of themselves, as well as to those whose trade they seek to destroy. We are of those who hold the sentiment, 'Live, and let live'; and we consider it a golden rule. It is at variance with that motive which prompts a man to undersell his neighbour, for the purpose of obtaining his customers, and deserves to be practised more than it is. There is no selfishness in it; but, on the contrary, a spirit of liberality and Christianity, worthy of our attention and adoption. If business men were to study their true interest, their would be less competition among us than there is at present, and there would be fewer complaints about dull times, and not so many failures as now. The spirit of competition when carried to excess tends to degrade men, and make them heartless, selfish, and even cruel; and if not checked, leads to distrust, enmity, and uncharitableness. A disposition to fair dealing does much to destroy it and makes our situation less irksome than if we engage in it with full determination to advance our own interest, to the injury of others. There is a living, and more, for all of us, without endeavouring to deprive each other of the means of livelihood, and if we throw aside that spirit of selfishness that prompts to excuse competition, we will benefit ourselves as well as others, and do unto others as we would they should do unto us.'

From Hogg's Edinburgh Instructor.

MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN.

'I remember when I was a child.' This was the reply of a kind hearted teacher, when asked how he could endure so patiently the trials to which he was daily subjected, and it was a grateful reply. Those who forget they have been children, are not fit to have the care of the young. Men are perplexed themselves with the cares of business and are often a source of trials to others. Are they who have judgments to avoid straits, and to overcome excited feelings, to be exonerated on account of the peculiar besetments that lie in their way, while their children, who are miniature men, with miniature trials and miniature judgments to overcome them, enacting the same scenes in miniature, are to be blamed and punished? I have often thought, and I think wisely too, as the sages of our generation were inflicting penance upon the young for the elevations of childish gaiety, or the little misdeeds of what is called 'natural depravity,' that, if these champions of the rod and rule should be subjected to a wise and wholesome discipline, they would be able to set an example that would itself be effectual and happy in moulding the disposition of children and pupils.

Love is the ruling principle in all matters of discipline, and the only one that will secure perfect obedience. If we are loved, we are feared, if not, we are hated and despised, and neither old nor young will be ruled by us, except so far as we have the advantage of physical force. Would we respect or love, or obey a government that for all our little deviations, poured upon us a tide of invective, or in the punishment of crime sought only to harass us in revenge by physical torture? If not, how can we expect children, who, according to their capacities, are equally sensitive with us, to repay the kicks and cuffs, the sour looks and angry words with which they are so often greeted, with affectionate and implicit obedience? It is not in humanity to do it. They may at times avoid evil, for fear of the punishment that will certainly follow exposure, but oftener will it lead them to plot their mischief in conclave, and to steal upon their little crimes with the cunning and skill of an adroit offender.

From a long experience with children, and a somewhat intimate acquaintance with childish habits and dispositions, I am convinced that the use of the rod and other vexatious or mortifying punishments are, to say the least, a necessary evil, brought upon us by the neglect of early discipline. The child at birth becomes a pupil in the school of human nature, and it does not graduate till the day of its death. From the first hour of its existence, it becomes a learner, and remains a learner through its infancy, its childhood, its manhood. It cannot at first solve a problem, nor understand a precept, but it is, nevertheless, a complete imitator of example. It cannot comprehend the motives, but it does read and treasure up for future good or evil, the actions and dispositions of its attendants; and the power gained over it in this early stage of existence must be the rule of discipline in all future life. It is early susceptible of emotion. It appreciates a kindness, and will as soon repulse a frown. It forms early attachments for those who pet it, and has the same capacity for revenge in its little spirit upon those who treat it with neglect and abuse. Infancy is justly termed 'the age of impressions.' These impressions are immortal. Think of it as you will, and censure nature as you please for the moral defects of your child, its little heart is a mirror that faithfully images your own character and disposition. If you are rebellious, cruel, revengeful, these traits will make fearful havoc with the dispositions of your child. If you are kind, dutiful, affectionate, these will be the impressions it will receive and reflect by your constant intercourse with it. I have seen children that have been scolded and whipped till their sensibilities were brutalised