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LITERATURE.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Harper's Monthly Magazine for July.

HESTER.

“THERE'S a ha'penny, sir—any one you like;—on a ha'penny.”
“No!” said the gentleman, addressed, with great emphasis and decision, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but with inflexible determination straight before him.
“Oh, sir, please do!” the first little voice said again. “It was a very sweet, faint, childish, voice, and there was a very earnest, plaintive note in it as it made its simple entreaty. Perhaps the gentleman thought so; for with a sudden jerk of his head, he turned round, and fixed a pair of very bright eyes upon the little ragged creature who was struggling, not very successfully, to keep up with his rapid pace. He came to a stop as soon as he saw her, and blunted his walking-stick firmly in the ground.
“They're all different, sir,” the child said, eagerly but timidly presenting a little bird, formed of a flat piece of paste-board, covered with black velvet for the approval of the stranger.
“And what do you think I'm going to do with that?” the gentleman asked fiercely, as he gazed with unpeppable contempt upon the diminutive object that was being held up to him.
“I thought you'd buy it, sir,” the child said, in a frightened whisper, drawing in her hand again, and preparing to back out of sight.
“You thought I'd buy it, did you? And did you think I'd play with it too?” the gentleman said with increasing emphasis.
“I don't know, sir,” the child answered, with her eyes fixed on his. “A good many gentlemen do buy them for their children,” she added, after a moment's thought.
“For their children, do they? Well, I've got a child, so there's a ha'penny. Now give me one—a good one.”
“There's the biggest, sir,” the child said, with an instinctive feeling that the biggest was best suited to her customer.
“Thank you, sir,” and she was moving away.
“Stay still!” growled the gentleman.
“Yes, sir,” said the child, saying still accordingly.
“You must lead a very pleasant life, no work, no lessons, nothing to do all day but to play with these birds. Come, don't you?”
“I don't ever play, sir,” she said—not saying it as if it were any thing strange.
“Not play?” cried the gentleman quickly. “Why, what on earth do you do then?”
“Just go about with them all day, sir.”
“Go about with what?”
“With the birds, sir.”
“Oh, with the birds, do you? Well, there's nothing very hard in that.”
“No, sir,” said the child faintly, thinking he waited for an answer.
“And when you've sold the birds, what do you make of the money?”
“I take it home to my mother, sir.”
“Oh, you've got a mother! And she sells birds somewhere, do I suppose?”
“No, sir, she makes them.”
“And sits comfortably at home while she sends you out to sell them? Well, I like that!—And so she is making money, is she?”
“No, sir, these are the last.”
“The last? What, she makes any more?”
“We've used everything up, sir.”
“What—all the velvet?”
“Yes, sir, and the cardan all.”
“That's a bad job!”
“Yes, sir.”
“And when did it all come to an end?”
“A week ago, sir.”
“A week ago, did it? And what has your mother been doing since?”
“Starving, sir.”
“Starving?” the gentleman cried, in such a voice that the child involuntarily retreated; “starving and to-day doing anything to help her? Is there any starving too? Are you hungry?”
“Oh, yes, sir,” she answered in a tone as if not to be hungry was a thing she never imagined.
“Oh, God help her!” cried the stranger, suddenly to himself. “What are you always hungry? and he thought to himself again: “did you never have any?”
“I don't know, sir,” the child hesitated. “I don't remember.”
“It's a bad case—a shocking case,” said the gentleman, frowning at the child and shaking his head so vehemently, that she got more alarmed than ever, and began to retreat backward, but with a single step he was up to her again.

“Well, what do you expect I'm going to do?”
“Sir, I saw you in the police office floating through the air.”
“I saw that do you suppose I'm going to do?”
“Oh, please don't do any thing, because, please—” and she burst into tears, and looked round despairingly for some possibility of taking flight.
The gentleman looked confounded.
“Why, what do you think I want to do?” he asked, stamping his stick upon the stone pavement to give more emphasis to his word.
“I don't know, sir; but if you please, sir—if you'd let me go now, I wouldn't ever trouble you again,” the child murmured timidly, in very great childish distress.
“Let you go and starve—of course I will!—the very thing I'll do,” the stranger said, shaking his head more angrily than ever. “Come, what's your name?”
“Hester, sir.”
“Hester, is it? Well, Hester, and where do you live?”
“In Lionmouth-street, sir.”
“A bad place—a very bad place. Up or down?”
“Down,” said the child on a venture.
“Ah, said the gentleman, drawing a long breath between his teeth, “just the place to starve in. Well, Hester, I'll give you sixpence if you'll take me there.”
With sparkling eyes the child looked up at him: “Oh! will you, sir?” she cried.
“Will I? There it is for you. Why, Hester, you don't seem much used to sixpence?”
“Oh no, sir,” she said earnestly, as she tucked it over and over.
“Well, you can look at it another time; come away now. No, stop a moment. Don't move from this spot!” and the gentleman darted from her side, disappearing so suddenly that she looked round her in blank amazement. Before he had recovered, he was again back with a couple of buns in his hand, which he had caught his eye in a shop window.
Now, Hester, begin to eat,” he said firmly. “There, now, you'll never hold them both, and the birds, and the sixpence—give the birds to me; now eat quickly.”
“Well, is it good, well made, well baked?”
“Oh, yes, sir,” was the earnest answer. “I'm earnest in look than in words.”
“You hadn't had one such a time,” she ventured, for her fear was beginning to pass away beneath the rough kindness of her new friend.
“Not for such a time, haven't you, Hester? Well, but I suppose you look into the bakers' shops, and get half the pleasure of the things so, don't you?”
“Not lately, sir, since I've been very hungry,” she said gently.
“Oh, Hester, you've been hungrier than any of late, have you?” the stranger said, and the voice was almost soft, so that in amazement Hester looked up into his face, and saw that it too was very full of kindness.
“Oh, it's been much worse this last month or two, sir,” she said, in a touchingly hopeless, uncomplaining tone; “some days we haven't had any thing at all.”
“Nothing at all, Hester! And what have you done then?”
“There wasn't any thing to do, sir,” the child said.
The gentleman walked on very quickly indeed, so quickly that Hester, running, was just able to keep up with him, and could only every now and then give a bite to her great bun, for to most people it is difficult to run and eat together, but especially to those who are starving, and have little breath to spare at any time. It was a very feeble, slow, unsteady kind of running too, such as might be expected from a child who could never remember once in his life to have had enough to eat.
“It just turns off the street, sir; it's down here,” Hester said, quite breathless; but, with a great effort, catching the gentleman's coat tail as he was swiftly passing, on. It brought him to a standstill at once.
“Oh, it's down here, Hester, is it? Well, that's worse still! What! not got through the bun yet? The gentleman said with an alarming gesture. “Ah, it's very clear you're not used to eating. Come along—go on in front, and point out the place. Now, now, Hester, you needn't run, just walk as I do. Why, bless me, it's my belief you've been running all

this time! Now, is this the place, Hester?”
“Yes, sir. I think I'd better go in first.”
“I certainly think you had; but take care, child—take care! Oh, heaven help her—what practices she's had! Now Hester, take my hat, and put it down carefully, for I'm coming, and gently and cautiously he began the descent of the short, steep ladder.
“If you please, sir, I'll just take hold of your foot,” Hester said from below.
“What?” roared the gentleman, abruptly stopping in his descent, and clinging with both hands and both feet to the ladder, immovable.
“Just to help you, sir, in case you should miss the steps,” the child said.
“Ah, well, you may do that if you like, so that you don't throw me down. Yes, yes, I feel—now, that'll do. Give me my hat. Come where's your mother? Has she gone out?”
“Gone out!” the child echoed mournfully; “oh! sir, she couldn't. It's the next room, sir; this isn't ours, only we've got no door of our own.”
They passed through a low opening in the wall into an adjoining cellar, whose only light came through an aperture nearly at the top of the wall. It was not a window—had never been a window, but simply a square hole, through which a glimpse of the narrow, blackened street, could be caught. The only air that ever entered the room came through it, and rain, and wind, and snow came through it too, all unhindered, for there was nothing that would serve for even a temporary shutter. There was no fireplace in the room, no sign any where of fire. The walls and ceiling were black with age and dirt; the floor was blacker still, for it was made of clay, moist, and unclean, and cold as ice. Within the cellar there was no furniture at all, except in one corner the skeleton frame of a bedstead—four posts of old deal, polished by wear, with transverse poles connecting them at the head; but the thing was a mere mockery, for there was nothing to support the wretched, torn mattress, and it lay in the centre of the four posts upon the damp, cold ground. From this corner came a faint voice as they entered the room.
“Oh, thank God! I thought I should never see any one again; and then it went off into a low groan.
“Mother, mother, here's a good gentleman come; he's given me sixpence and two great buns. Look, mother dear—eat it.”
The woman raised a thin, wasted hand, and took the cake, looking at it with a hungry, starved look, and then she shook her head, and bursting into tears, murmured, “I can't do it now.”
“Oh, mammy!” the child said, sobbing too, but quite perplexed, not understanding why she couldn't eat.
“Good God! she's dying!” the stranger cried, with intense emotion; and in a moment he was on his knees on the bare ground. “My good woman, tell me what I can do? Is there no one living here to whom I can apply?—no doctor near? Try to rouse yourself! Oh, Hester, child, do what you can for your mother!”
The woman raised her eyes to his with a strange kind of amazement, with a look such as none but those who have no friend in the wide world can give; and then, after a moment, she said, “God bless you!” in a voice that trembled, and turned away her head.
“Hester, do you know where to find a doctor?” the gentleman said hastily.
“No, no, I don't want one,” the woman faintly whispered; “he couldn't do any thing—it's been coming on a long time.”
“Some wine?” the gentleman exclaimed; “that's the thing! Hester, there's money—go and get a bottle of wine at once. Quick, don't be a minute. Oh! God help us!—God forgive us!” he cried, pressing his hands together.
The dying woman's eyes were turned on him again.
“Hester didn't know it was so near,” she said; “I kept it from her, and I hoped that to-day, or some day soon, I should die when she was away. But I didn't know how hard it was—how horrible it was—to die alone; I didn't think that after all that's passed, the end could be so bad.”
There was something strangely lethargic in her voice, as if starvation had deadened every feeling, even now in the hour of death.
“It mayn't be too late yet, it mayn't be late,” the stranger said, eagerly, taking the woman's thin hand in his, as tenderly as if she had been some one whom he loved; “but lie still until Hester comes; hush! lie still!”
She was a delicate-looking woman, with regular features, and large dark grey eyes. The face was so worn and wasted with

care, and suffering, and hunger, that there was little of beauty left now, but she must have been handsome once. Hester was very like her, but hunger had robbed her of her beauty too, and pinched and sharpened the little face.
“Here you are, Hester; well, have you got it? Oh, child, don't cry so! Now my poor woman, raise your head; take care, can you swallow it? There, that'll do at first. Hester, lay her head right. No, wait a moment, wait a moment; and he tore off his outer coat; “here, put this under her. Oh! heaven help her, what is that pillow made of?”
“Oh, mammy dear! you're better now?” Hester whispered, trembling and full of fear, she scarcely knew for what. “Couldn't you eat a little bit now?—try it; oh, mammy, do try it!”
But the woman shook her head, and feebly put the food aside again; then suddenly, as her child still bent over her, she stretched out her arms, and passionately clasped her to her bosom, crying, “Hester, Hester, my little child!” with bitter tears.
“Oh, mammy dear!” was all the weeping child could say, as she clung to her.
How many a dying mother, clasping her little child for the last time to her, has not felt so great a bitter, passionate anguish, that half consciously in her heart she had bid defiance to death, and with a wild rising in her soul, has said that it shall not part her from her child? And when the paroxysm of despair has passed, and she gives it into a loving Father's arms, and with clasped hands and gentler tears, says to her heavenly Father that she is resigned, and will be content to die, do we not say that faith is strong in her?
Strong in her! then what could it need to be in those who, dying, leave their children fatherless and friendless, without a roof to cover them, without a crust of bread to eat, without one single thing in this wide world to call their own; surrounded with dangers, with snares, with temptations—vice and sin on their right hand and on their left, and before and behind them nothing but starvation and death—what would it need to be in them? And what must their agony be, as, without hope, and without faith, and in their terrible despair, almost striving to believe that death is an eternal sleep, they take their last passionate embrace of the thing they are being torn from forever?
Kneeling by her side, the stranger tried to soothe and comfort her; and as she still wildly wept and clasped her child, he prayed her to be calm; but at the word she turned upon him with such sudden energy that he shrank back involuntarily.
“Calm!” she cried; “who are you who dare to tell me to be calm? Do you think because I lie here starving to death—because sorrow, and suffering, and misery, have been pressing down on me for years, killing me by slow torture—because I have no food, no money, no friends, do you think I am to be treated as if I had not still a woman's heart. What can you know of my agony—you, well-fed, well-dressed, well-housed? I was all that once; I know how the rich feel for us!” and she laughed with bitter scorn. “Look here, look at this child, she is all I have in the world, the only thing I have had for years; I have lived, and struggled, and suffered for her; I have done everything but sin for her, and it was she alone who kept me from that, and now I am dying! I am dying, and what do you think will become of her? Oh, man! will you tell me to be calm again? I tell you, if you were to take my child—my child, the one solitary thing my heart yearns over—if you were to take her and kill her before my eyes, I could almost thank you. I have tried hard to do it; I have tried, but I could not! Do you shrink from me? You didn't think this was in me; why did you give your wine to rouse the devil in my heart? I had scarcely strength to speak, scarcely strength even to feel, when you came; it would all have been over now, but you have made me mad! Had not I suffered enough before that? could you not have let me die in peace? Oh, Hester, my child!” she suddenly cried, with a softened voice, stretching out her arms to her; “my child, my darling! come to me again. I say wild words, don't mind them; I am ill, oh! hold me close, close! Blessings on the dear arms, blessings on the dear lips!—my little child! my own little child!”
Again they clung to one another, and the woman's fierce face was full of love again, and her burning eyes gushing out with tears. There was silence in the wretched room, except for their sobs, they, too, becoming presently faint and low, for the woman's momentary strength was fading from her, and her soul was about to pass away.

Then, in the stillness, the stranger spoke, bending over her, and speaking slowly and solemnly, that she might hear his words.
“Listen to me, that you may die in peace. As I kneel now in God's sight, I promise that I will take your little daughter home with me to my house, to live with me, and to be to me as my own child. By God's blessing she shall never know hunger or poverty any more. Do you consent to this?”
She looked at him almost wildly, in an agony of half-believing half-doubting joy. With one last effort of strength she grasped his arm, and said, “You are not mocking me!” in such a tone of passionate eagerness.
“God forbid!” the stranger cried.
She fixed her eyes upon him for one moment longer, and then such a look broke over her face, as though a ray of heavenly light had pierced through the miserable room, and fallen upon her. Her joy and gratitude were unutterable; she could not speak them; but as she burst into new tears, she sobbed forth, “I think there is a God!” and hid her face, as if in shame and penitence.
“Yes, there is a God; a God who hears the prayers of the wretched and the sorrowful,” the stranger said in a low, firm, gentle voice; “oh, woman, believe in Him!”
There was a few moments' pause.
“I do believe,” she whispered, clasping her feeble hands; oh, God forgive me!”
“Mother!” Hester murmured, half-fearfully, laying her head down upon her bosom.
“Oh, my darling, pray for me, too!” the softened woman said. “I have sinned—I have sinned; God be merciful to me!”
Solemnly and gently, still stooping over her, the stranger spoke again.
“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”
And as the last words died away, with one low, deep sigh, a life was yielded up, and a weary, suffering spirit was realised from earth, and went away to find its long, deep rest.
(To be continued.)

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

NATURE OF THE HAIR.

An examination of the structure of the hair shews that the difference of colour is entirely owing to the tint of the fluid which fills the hollow tube in each hair. This tint or pigment shews through the cortical substance in the same manner that it does through epidermis of a negro. Hair is, in fact, but a modification of the skin. The same might be said of feathers, horns, and scales. Not improbably, the distinguished lady now honouring these pages with her attention, will be shocked at hearing that her satin-soft shoulder is almost chemically identical with the plated and roughened mail of the crocodile; and she will hardly, perhaps, believe as when we inform her, that her bird when he rights some erring feather with his beak, is acting with the same unemphatically-composed instrument upon the same chemically-composed material as a mademoiselle does when she disentangles with a comb her charming mistresses sofly flowing tresses. The road lover again, as he kisses some treasured lock, will doubtless be disgusted when we tell him, that, apart from the sentiment, he might as well impress his fervent lips upon a pig's petticoat, or even upon the famous knob Kerry, made out of the horn of a rhinoceros, carried by the king of hunters, Mr Roushley Gordon Cumming.—Quarterly Review.

STAYS.

STAYS were invented in the thirteenth century by a brutal butcher, as a punishment to his wife, who was very loquacious and finding nothing could cure her, he put a pair of stays on her in order to take away her breath, and so to prevent her as he thought, talking. This cruel punishment was inflicted by other husbands, till there was scarcely a wife in London who was not condemned to wear stays. So universal did the punishment become at last that the ladies, in their defence made a fashion of it, and so it continues to the present day.

THE CLIMAX OF PENURY.

Mr Watson, uncle to the late Marquis of Rockingham, a man of immense fortune finding himself on the point of death, desired a friend who was present to open him a drawer, in which was an old shirt, that he might put it on. Being asked why he wished to change his linen, and he so ill, he said, “Because I am told that the shirt I die in must be the nurse's perquisite, and that is good enough for her!”—This was