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LITERATURE.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Harper's Monthly Magazine, for November.

HISTORY AND INCIDENTS OF THE PLAGUE IN NEW ORLEANS.

There are few incidents in history which afford more striking illustrations of the good and bad qualities of humanity—which contain more of the 'romance of real life'—and present more impressive and startling pictures of virtue and vice, of sorrow and suffering, of generosity and selfishness, of true courage and cowardice, of charity and meanness, than the visitation of a destructive pestilence, like that which has clothed one of our largest cities in sackcloth and ashes—and has filled the land with sorrow, wailing, and pity.

Amid the awful scenes of this plague, the writer, snatching a few moments from labors and cares, of the most urgent and confining character, and from those calls of duty and charity which have been so incessant and imperative upon all of the acclimated who have remained in the city during the reign of the epidemic, imposed upon himself the additional task of entering into a memorandum of all the striking and interesting incidents which came under his observation or that of his friend, in the progress of the pestilence. These notes do not aspire to the dignity of scientific or historical authenticity, but are necessarily disjointed and desultory, having but little other merit than that of truth.

Never did a business season, in a great commercial city, close in a more satisfactory manner than did that of 1852 in New Orleans. The winter had been unusually prosperous, gay, and healthy. Every branch of trade had flourished. Money was abundant. The disposal of one hundred and thirty millions of produce, which had been landed upon our levees from the teeming Valley of the Mississippi, had diffused a large sum among all classes of tradesmen and laborers. The warehouses were emptied and the wharves and levees cleared at an earlier period than usual. Thus our merchants were able to close their accounts, and round off the season in time to make a trip to the North, to Europe, or to the West, leaving their clerks and warehousemen in charge of their stores. Hence the general flight which marked the approach of the summer of 1853 among those of our people who could afford to travel.

Besides these evidences of general prosperity in New Orleans, property and stock had advanced enormously—and capital which a few months before had avoided the city, began to pour into it, seeking safe and profitable investments. Much of this life and activity were due to the Railroad spirit which had been newly awakened in the city, and was engaged in the successful and energetic prosecution of some of the grandest railroad projects that had ever been started in the United States.

Such were the circumstances of New Orleans in the spring of 1853. As the summer began slowly to creep upon a winter and spring of usual mildness, hundreds of our citizens dropped off daily—hurry by the various channels of travel northward, westward, and seaward. The spring was remarkably dry. The rainy season, which usually commences in May, had not manifested its presence until the last of June. Then it began to rain daily. The atmosphere was cool, clear, and apparently pure. There had been some sickness during the winter and spring, but it was chiefly of remittent fevers, which, formerly quite rare in this locality, had greatly increased of late.—This was ascribed by some to the extensive clearings and partial drainage of the swamps in the rear of the city.

No one feared or even thought of the Yellow Fever revisiting its old arena, after so long an absence. There had been no epidemic since 1847. Epidemic cases had indeed occurred in the Charity Hospital every summer; but the disease did not spread, and the assurance became general that this dreadful disease had abandoned New Orleans at last, as it had done Philadelphia and New York in 1822.—Such was the feeling with which thousands of our citizens started on their tours, and which reconciled those who were compelled to remain to the prospect of spending the summer here.

About the middle of June it began to be noised about that there was some sickness among the shipping in the upper part of the city. The report was hushed up or treated as a mere ebullition of some timid panic-makers, or idle gossipers, who had no lots to sell, or any business

that might suffer from an apprehension that the city was unhealthy. The general cry was—'hush up. Don't alarm the people. You will frighten them into a fever. It is all humbug. A slight sickness among sailors and poor laborers, who eat bad food, &c.' And so it was determined to ignore and discredit the existence of the fever.

But the formidable and insidious maldy would not thus consent to be ignored. All the while it was furtively and gradually disseminating its poison—sowing the seeds of a rich harvest of death, filling up the wards of the Charity Hospital, and thinning the crowds of laborers on the levee. The very small number of our citizens who ever took the trouble to examine statistics of mortality, began to be alarmed; but they were frowned down as panic-makers, and the disease, the existence of which was admitted, was pronounced to be ship-fever, which threatened only sailors and stevedores. But what did the mortuary statistics show? In the books of the Charity Hospital the following cases were found entered.

These were the first six cases which terminated fatally. But these were ordinary occurrences, by no means justifying any apprehension of an epidemic. Only six deaths from Yellow Fever in the Charity Hospital in twelve or fourteen days.

The first of July arrived. There has been but one death from yellow fever. There was, however, a good deal of other sickness; yet the month of June showed only 625 deaths in the whole city—being an average of 156 per week. But July was less satisfactory. The first week exhibited a result which created alarm. The deaths from yellow fever had doubled. Yet there were only 59 deaths out of a population of 80,000. 'Let us hold on a little longer before we permit ourselves to be frightened,' was the cry. The 10th of July arrives—204 deaths by yellow fever in one week.—That is serious, certainly.—'No the fever exists among the shipping and the very poorest classes. It will not extend to the more respectable portion of our people.' The Council was not alarmed, the Mayor was not at all discomposed. Even the newspapers curbed their natural tendency for panics, stirring incidents, and startling events; and lightly treated these rather serious figures. But at the same time they betrayed their real sentiments by inveighing against the Council for not cleaning the streets, creating a Board of Health, or doing something to prevent the introduction or origination of an epidemic. Alas! they knew well enough that the epidemic was already near the city; but the fatal effects of alarm were urged in justification of the pious *suppressio veri*.

About the middle of June there was one portentous announcement, which was well understood by the old residents. It was the publication of the Programme of the Howard Association—an association composed of thirty gentlemen, who, under a charter from the Legislature, have been long organized to aid the poor sick 'during an epidemic.' This publication was loudly censured. It was equivalent to a declaration that there was an epidemic in the city. The doctors disputed this point. The disease was confined to a particular class and a special locality: an epidemic includes all classes. The Council joined issue with the Association. Meeting on the 27th July, the Assistant Alderman passed the following resolutions:

Whereas, There now exists a very general apprehension among the good citizens of this city that the yellow fever, which is by many believed to be sporadic and confined almost exclusively to certain crowded localities, may spread and become epidemic.

And whereas, It is highly important that all and every possible and proper means be at once taken to prevent both the spreading of the disease and to allay all unnecessary excitement touching its mortality, by truthful official reports of its progress or decline.

These resolutions were written by a physician, and adopted by a body presided over by a physician. 'May spread and become epidemic!' The people were then dying at the rate of a hundred a day in every part of the city. Fifteen hundred had already died of a disease 'which is by many believed to be sporadic, and confined exclusively to certain crowded localities.' Fifteen hundred in a few weeks cut down sporadically—just one half the total number of the victims of the epidemic of 1847—which was considered the severest that ever visited the city.

The Council next created the Board of Health, placed \$10,000 at its disposal, and then adjourned, many of its members flying the city, and others remaining to perform their duties like men and philanthropists.

ries in various parts of the city, and performed such other duties as were now within the scope of human power. But it was too late to discuss preventive measures. It was not even considered necessary to repair the error of the Council, and declare there was an epidemic in the city. It spoke for itself. It was figured up in the reports of the daily interments. It was proclaimed in a thousand forms of gloom, sorrow, desolation, and death.—Funeral processions crowded every street. No vehicles could be seen except doctors' cabs and coaches, passing to and from the cemeteries, and hearses, often solitary, taking their way towards those gloomy destinations. The hum of trade was hushed. The levee was a desert. The streets, wont to shine, with fashion and beauty, were silent. The tombs—the home of the dead—were the only places where there was life—where crowds assembled—where the incessant rumbling of carriages, the tramping of feet, the murmur of voices, and all the signs of active, stirring life could be heard and seen.

Spread over a large area, and badly built up, New Orleans did not, however, bring so distinctly before the eye and mind of the observer the full extent of the ravages of the disease as other cities would have done under a like visitation. To realise the full horror and virulence of the pestilence, you must go into the crowded localities of the laboring classes, into those miserable shanties which are the disgrace of the city, where the poor immigrant class cluster together in fith, sleeping a half dozen in one room, without ventilation, and having access to filthy, wet yards, which have never been filled up, and when it rains are converted into green puddles—fit abodes for frogs and sources of poisonous malaria. Here you will find scenes of woe, misery and death which will haunt your memory in all time to come. Here you will see the dead and the dying, the sick and the convalescent, in one and the same bed.—Here you will see the living babe sucking death from the yellow breast of its dead mother. Here father, mother and child, die in one another's arms. Here you will find whole families swept off in a few hours, so that none are left to mourn or to procure the rites of burial. Offensive odours frequently drew neighbours to such awful spectacles. Corpses would thus proclaim their existence, and enforce the observances due them. What a terrible disease! Terrible in its insidious character, in its treachery, in the quiet, serpent-like manner, in which it gradually winds its folds around its victims, beguiles him by its deceptive wiles; cheats his judgment and senses, and then consigns him to grim death.

Not like the plague, with its red spot, its maddening fever, its wild delirium and stupor—not like the cholera, in violent spasms and prostrating pains, is the approach of the vomit. It assumes the guise of the most ordinary disease which flesh is heir to—a cold, a slight chill, a headache, a slight fever, and, after a while, pains in the back. Surely there is nothing in these! 'I won't lay by for them,' says the misguided victim; the poor laborer cannot afford to do so. Instead of going to bed, sending for a nurse and doctor, taking a mustard-bath and a cathartic, he remains at his post until it is too late. He has reached the crisis of the disease before he is aware of its existence. The chances are thus against him. The fever mounts up rapidly, and the poison pervades his whole system. He tosses and rolls on his bed and raves in agony. Thus he continues for thirty-six hours. Then the fever breaks, gradually it passes off—joy and hope begin to dawn upon him. He is through now. 'Am I not better Doctor?' 'You are doing well but must be very quiet.' 'Doing well!' How does the learned gentleman know? Can he see into his stomach, and perceive their collecting the bark-brown liquid which marks the dissolution that is going on? The fever suddenly turns, and now the paroxysm is more brief. Again the patient is quite, but not so hopeful as before. He is weak, prostrate, and bloodless, but he has no fever; his pulse is regular, soand, and healthy, and his skin moist. 'He will get well,' says the casual observer. The doctor shakes his head ominously. After a while drops of blood are seen collecting about his lips. Blood comes from his gums—that is a bad sign but such cases frequently occur. Soon he has a hicough. That is worse than the bleeding at the gums: then follows the ejection of a bark-brown liquid which he throws up in large quantities; and this in nine hundred and ninety nine cases out of a thousand is the signal that the doctor's function is at an end, and the undertaker's function is to commence. In a few hours the coffin will receive its tenant and mother earth her customary tribute.

This is the description of the great majority of cases. But it does not fall within the compass of this article to enlarge upon this branch of our subject. So we must hurry back to our facts, and dispose of them as briefly as possible, in order to give room for incidents which will possess more interest to the general reader, and perhaps serve better to illustrate the character and history of this pestilence than any formal narrative.

(To be continued.)

From Graham's Monthly Magazine for November.

FACTS AND FANCIES OF A WINTER NIGHT.

BY RICHARD VAUX.

A winter wind is blowing,
Howling round my home;
The chilly air is freezing,
Iceing night's dreary dome;
The cat the while is mousing
With shadows on the wall;
The storm holds wild carousing
As each blast the echoes call.

The wood-fire's brightly blazing,
Burning with cheery glow,
The dog's intently gazing
At flames the faggots throw;
The cat the while is mousing
With shadows on the wall;
The storm holds wild carousing
As each blast the echoes call.

Children together grouping,
Joound in harmless glee;
While every sound's attuning
A cadence like the sea:
The misty eve's enfolding
Daylight in humid shroud,
As when ocean gales uprolling
Wave spray with watery cloud.

The night-hours are creeping,
With muffled steps a way;
The household all are sleeping,
In dreams their thoughts astray;
In solitude I'm musing
Musings without form,
Alone with self communing
And the wail of the winter storm.

My memory is struggling
With visions of the past,
And sentiment is softening
Till tears flow warm and fast;
My first grief is renewing
The freshness of its youth;
For sorrow ne'er is fleeing
When sorrow is a truth.

In solitude I'm seeming
To live in Spirit-land—
As though awake, I'm dreaming
Of spectres wan and grand;
Methinks, at ease reposing
In gloom of waning night,
Sepulchral forms disclosing
Their figures to my sight.

Great skeletons are resting
In motionless array,
Adown the vista lessening
Proportionless away.
These skeletons are beaming
With phosphorescent hue,
Through the dark dampness gleaming
Like demons to my view.

To me it was th' unweiling
Ghosts of each mispent hour,
Doomed, endlessly bewailing
Th' loss of redeeming power;
Each had been 'mong the living,
Unheeded then 't is true
Now in Eternity they're giving
This revelation now.

My senses wrapt and wondering
Before these visions start;
Sounds like volcanic thundering
Panic struck my heart.
As one entranced exerting
A thraldom spell to break,
My consciousness reverting,
And sensations all awake.

The wood-fire in twain is burning,
Rolling on the floor.
Sparks hither, thither turning,
While smoke conceals the door:
Awake quite from my musings,
In other thoughts I'm led,
So without choice or choosing
I'm forced to go to bed.

From Dickens's Household Words.

WISDOM IN WORDS.

The history, the manners, and even the morals of a nation are impressed upon its words. In this country, for example, the history of relation between the Saxon, and the Normans is defined in words distinctly. Prince, Duke, Marquis, and all titles of rank, excepting earl, (whose wife, however, as a countess, follows the prevailing rule,) are Norman word. But boor, and hind, and churl, are Saxon, for the Normans were the rulers. Also they were the invaders, we discover, for they retained the old supreme authority with the old Saxon title, king; and although the 'palaces' and 'castles' of the land were Norman things with Norman names, the 'house,' the 'home,' the 'hearth,' were Saxon. Nature in its simplicities, the sun, the earth, the fields, and all the familiar relations of life, father, mother, brother, are expressed in Saxon syllables; and so we find the luxurious Norman superstructure to have been erected upon Saxon ground. All the animals—ox or cow, calf, deer, swine, sheep, preserve old Saxon names. But

since the Norman conquerors reduced the Saxon boors to poverty, and made them to be keepers of the herds and fatteners thereof for Norman appetites, we have the animals, while living, Saxon enough; but they become, when they have been killed and cooked, all Norman perquisites such as beef, veal, venison, pork, mutton. One meat, only, the Saxon claimed—namely bacon. Manners in words may be illustrated, out of the familiar syllables husband and wife. The House Band—the binder of the Household by his labour and his government of love—will always be the man; the wife remains at home on household cares intent to 'weave' said our forefathers, for wife and woof are of the same origin. Our word 'club,' which has no analogue, in any other European language, speaks a volume about the manners of this country. Seen from another point of view, the word 'mob,' an abbreviation of mobile (moveable)—characteristic perfectly the manners of the multitude, whether we look at them bodily as they stand in a dense crowd, shifting to and fro; or mentally, as their opinions are stirred and swayed at will by foolish misleaders. For the morality of words, it is a good thing that in England generally, though by no means always, we give to bad things bad names. Robbers in Hungary are called 'the poor people,' and the phrase of pity shows that they are forced to robbery. A blackleg is called in France *chevalier d'industrie*, and the phrase shows that in France vice is too lightly regarded. Those whom we in England call 'unfortunate,' the French call 'daughters of joy'; we distinguish loves and liking, and adapt to a peculiar use the French word *amour*. The French have but one word for love, and feel discretion in applying it alike to wives and sweetmeats. We might point a moral from these things. There is a homely moral, again, in our word, when we call the avaricious man a miser—miserable.

Sometimes the using of a bad word for a bad thing springs out of a defiance of morality. A French word often used in England, *roue*, for a profligate, arose in this way. The Duke of Orleans, Regent of France after the death of Louis XIV., gloried in evil company. He willingly chose for his companions men whose wickedness had made them worthy of the severest punishment the law inflicted—breaking on the wheel. Hence he gloried in calling them his *roues*; *roue* being a verb derived from the French word for wheel, and indicating the distinction for which his associates were qualified. We tread over unaccounted wonders when we walk, wherever upon the world's surface we may be. A myriad of marvels are at work within the compass of our body while we live. Beneath the primary expressions of our thoughts and wants, the stream of our own history, inner and outer, runs wonderfully blended with the texture of the words we use. Dive into what subject we may, we never touch the bottom. The simplest prattle of a child is but the light surface of a deep dark sea containing many treasures.

CURIOSITIES.

A skull from the skeleton of a 'dis' course.
A few teeth and a lock of hair from the head of a nail.
A note from a flute.
A buckle from Orion's belt.
A splinter from the beam of an eye.
A few grains from a scruple of conscience.
The borrowed umbrella that was returned.
The impress left upon character by the first step in crime.
A piece of a marriage halter.
A piece of silk from the canopy of Heaven.
Some of the dust thrown in old folks eyes.
A few bricks from the foundation of a report.
Two feet from a line of poetry.
A few hairs from the brow of a hill.
A state from the map of life.
The man who saw the very long tapeworm Dr. Warren took from the stomach of a girl at the hospital.
A wick from the lamp of life.
The anger used by the man that first became a bore.
Some wool from a sheepish look.
The straw which shew which way the wind blew.
A cackle from a hen pecked husband.
Rain from a shower of abuse.

Judge Jeffries when on the bench, told an old man with a long beard that he supposed he had a conscience as long as his beard. 'Does your lordship,' replied the old man, 'measure conscience by beards? If so, your lordship has none at all.'