

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Godey's Lady's Book, for May:

"AT REST."

BY MRS. BRADLEY.

"I knew he was dead but I could not bear to give up my darling; and I held him closely to my bosom, until my husband came to me and said that he seemed to rest more easy."—From a letter.

Through the long night of bitter pain,
My little one upon my breast,
In weary suffering, had lain,
Tossing with feverish unrest,
I could not give him any ease,
For all my mother love and grief;
I could not soothe his agonies,
Or bring a moment's small relief.

I could but press soft kisses on
The little quivering upturned face;
I could but rain my wild tears down,
Holding him in my close embrace:
Knowing my yearning love all vain,
Knowing my darling by and by,
Freed from this spasm of wild pain,
Folded in Jesus' arms would lie.

So, by and by, the child grew still;
His agony had passed away,
And in my arms, all white and chill,
A silent, moveless weight he lay.
I held him mutely to my breast,
And one who loved me gently said:
"He seems more easily to rest."
Ah me, I knew that he was DEAD!

At rest, indeed, from mortal wo,
At ease from human agony;
Oh, baby, it is better so,
That I should bear all these for thee!
I will press down my mother grief,
I will thank God, and give him praise
That thy probation was so brief,
So few and sinless were thy days.

And nights of weary sleeplessness,
When I lie, sick with yearnings vain,
Longing my little one to press
Close to my aching heart again:
I will be still in patient prayer,
Knowing how bright a lot is thine,
Blessing my God thou hast no share
In any pain reserved for mine!

From Hogg's Edinburgh Instructor.

CHRISTMAS CHANGES.

HE was a little old man between sixty and seventy, and over his thin hair he wore a black velvet skull cap, and a pair of blue goggles concealed his fast dimming eyes. His sharply hooked nose, and thin compressed lips bespoke notwithstanding the general dulling of his senses, the keen, cool, calculating, worldly-wise, not to say, hard man. Sitting after dinner in his favourite easy-chair, beside his handsome dining-room table, with his modicum of French brandy in a tumbler before him, to be filled up with three fourths of hot water from the little china jug beside it, the little old man, such as we describe him, crossed one small leg over the other, and peered through his blue goggles at his pale wife, sitting opposite, for a reply to his last remark.

She, her gentle eyes cast down, and an anxious pucker wrinkling her white forehead, appeared to wish to decline a reply; but at length constrained thereto by the piercing look from behind the blue goggles ventured to say,

"It must be as you please, Mr Curling; but your own brother—you cannot allow it—people expected something."

"What is it to me what people expect? replied the old man, in his harsh, grating voice.—At the time of the late unfortunate occurrence, I said to him, 'Now Thomas, I have once more freed you from the consequences of your imprudence. I have set you, as the phrase goes, on your legs again. If you do not now make money, it is not my fault, and I will have nothing further to do with it; so, remember never to apply to me again.' He muttered something about want of capital to keep the concern going. The extravagant fool! he should have saved it out of his living, as I did, when I began life with two-and-six-pence."

At this point of the conversation, the manservant entered, with letters on a waiter. Delivering them to his master he advanced towards his mistress; and while Mr Curling was deliberately cutting the paper round the seals, the domestic said, in a low voice, 'if you please ma'am, Miss Curling wishes to speak to you immediately. She is in her own room.'

Mrs Curling rose, and as Joseph retired, his master inquired, suspiciously, 'Hey! what's that?'

'Only Charlotte, my dear, she wishes to speak to me.'

'Why send for you? Why cannot she come here?'

'My dear, perhaps she is not well,' said Mrs Curling, gently. 'Is there a letter for her?'

'No,' replied her husband, peering at the directions through his blue goggles. 'I am sur-

prised that there is not one by this mail from India,' he continued. 'I trust the boy is not ill.'

'Ah! dear fellow,' said Mrs Curling, and the anxious pucker re-appeared on her forehead.—Leaving the room, she ascended the stairs to the chamber of her daughter, the only one of her children residing beneath the parental roof.

It was a pleasant apartment, of considerable size, furnished with every luxury, and gay with flower and rare birds. Its occupant ran to meet her parent as she entered; and twined a pair of emaciated arms about her neck.

'Mamma! dear mamma! such a letter from poor Annie. Oh! mamma, do you think he will relent! do you think he will forgive?'

She was a poor dwarfed creature, this little Charlotte, and far from strong or well. A cruel accident in her babyhood had warped her slender spine, leaving it but a weak and gnarled support for a fine and classical head, and a face lovely with the reflex of the meek, benevolent spirit within. This face, however, was now all wo-begone, and tear swollen; and a fresh burst of tears added to its agonised expression, as Charlotte hid her grief on the bosom of her affectionate mother.

'Charlotte, my darling,' said the habitually composed lady, suppressing two sympathetic drops that tried hard to fall from her white eyelids, and remained entangled in their jetty lashes—'my dearest child, recover yourself, and tell me what of our poor Annie.'

'Oh mamma, mamma, such a letter, all about her husband leaving her and—Oh! papa will say that he is always right about people.—But he cannot allow her to starve, can he, mamma?'

'I trust not, my love.' Yet Mrs. Curling looked dubious. 'Some men do not believe.—But show me the letter.'

Annie was not Mrs. Curling's own daughter; yet the gentle stepmother found it hard to maintain her composure, as she perused the blotted lines handed to her by Charlotte:—

'My darling Charlotte,—my own loving little sister, your poor Annie is so wretched, so very wretched! What shall I do? He is gone—gone for ever! still loved, though latterly so cruel, and I have not a penny in the house.—But I don't think much of that. We have been very badly off lately, often. We have wanted for food a day at a time. I did not dare to write to my father; you know what he is Charlotte, he is so determined when he takes against a person, especially one who dares him, like Edward. Dear Charlotte, I want to come home to you and my mother; I want your society, your friendship; I want your affection to bind up this poor broken heart. The whole world is full of gloom. Do you think my father would let me come? Plead for me; ask dear mamma to do her best. I will be quiet and submissive, and please him in everything; only he must not be too severe upon poor Edward; I could not bear that. My poor husband, he suffered so, and men cannot endure like women, and I dare say he thought I would be no worse off without him. I scarcely know what to write; but dear Charlotte, let me have a few lines soon, to say what is to be done.'

ANNIE.

Mrs. Curling remained a while in deep thought, then saying, 'I will go and see what can be done with your father, Charlotte,' she gave her one kiss, and left the room.

Meanwhile the little old man sat in angry cogitation over one of the letters that he had received. Poor Annie's request came at an unfortunate moment.

'Well what now?' he testily enquired, as his wife re-entered the room; what nonsense is in the wind now? Do not let it be anything to vex me, Mrs. Curling; I have quite enough here to do that, ma'am. And quite transported out of his usual manner, Mr Curling tossed the offending letter across the table to his wife.

It was from a tenant of one of Mr Curling's small houses, in Denton Street, whose rent was over-due; and who knowing by report the character of his landlord, wrote to beseech his forbearance for a few weeks. The poor man candidly explained his position; told Mr Curling how his wife lay dying of a fever, that had likewise stricken down two of his children, and how he himself had been cheated by a plausible friend. Mrs Curling read the letter, and returned it, saying timidly, 'You will give him time, Mr Curling?'

'Time! yes to take himself off, and his sick family to the hospital, before the sale commences. Do you suppose I do not see through his humbug? I shall certainly send a man in to take possession to-morrow, Mrs Curling, whatever you may think of me,' added the little man, observing that his wife looked pained. 'I have had enough of arrears of rent.'

Poor Mrs Curling! it was not a very good opportunity for disclosing her errand. But there must be no delay, Annie might be starving! So she steeled her voice, which was sadly wavering and trembling, like her own frame, and acquainted Mr Curling, that when he was at liberty to attend to her, she had a letter to read to him. He re-seated himself, for in his seat about the insolent tenant, he had been walking hurriedly to and fro, and fixing the blue goggles full on his wife's countenance, awaited her next words in severe silence.

Softening down what she knew her husband would regard as exaggeration, amounting to untruthfulness, she began,

'My dearest Charlotte—'

But of course we are not going to inflict the whole letter upon our readers over again.—Pursuing the same system of reducing the stronger expressions of the epistle and omitting the writer's true, though by no means flattering, opinion of her father's disposition, the laded, without opposition from the critical goggles on the other side of the table.

Five minutes elapsed, and Mr Curling had uttered no word; only, he crossed one leg peevishly over the other, and, giving a jerking turn in his chair, conveyed the blue goggles so far away that his wife could only see the extreme outward rim of the one that concealed his left eye. Another five minutes passed in the suspense, determined Mrs Curling upon speaking. But, just as the words hovered upon her subdued lips, she was prevented. Her husband had jerked himself round again, and was taking his purse—an old-fashioned leather one, with a steel clasp—out of his pocket. He opened it and his mouth simultaneously.

'There,' he said, depositing a bank-note on the table before Mrs Curling, but slowly and with a peculiar manipulation, as if it stuck to his finger—and bank-notes do stick to the fingers of men like Mr Curling—there send that to the disobedient ingrate, and tell her she must do as better woman have done, go out into the world and work for her living thanking God she is rid of a villain. No more, he continued stopping Mrs Curling as she was about to speak, perhaps to plead with him; 'no more.—Write exactly as I tell you.'

His wife left the room, and hastened to her daughter, who was anxiously awaiting the result of the conference. Mingling their regrets together, the two women comforted each other, and then wrote to poor Annie, though not in the terms commanded by Mr Curling. The bank note was one for five pounds.

It is the day after that on which our tale opens. In a small confined bedroom, on the first floor of a tall narrow house, in an unwholesome street about three miles distant from Mr Curling's fine suburban residence, a woman lies struggling, with the scant breath of life that that yet lingers in her attenuated frame. Her mother-in-law bends over her in tears, and prays that the agony may pass away, and that the Saviour in whom she has trusted may take her to himself. While thus praying, a man, elderly, thin, and with a look of intense distress upon his haggard countenance, enters the apartment, and beckons to his mother, who goes behind the curtain of the bed to speak to him.

'Is the doctor come?' she inquires. 'I thought I heard his voice.'

'No replies the man, in a hollow whisper.—'It is—is—is—the bailiffs. I could not keep them out; they came upon me unawares.'

'And Elizabeth lying there! The Lord forgive him; he is a cruel man; and after your letter, too! Well thank God, she is nearly out of his reach.'

'You don't mean, mother—not so soon!'

'Jemmy poor son you must part with Elizabeth to-day. She is drawing away fast.—Thank God! her poor soul knows where to lean for support. Weep not for her, my son, it is we who are to be pitied. She is going where the tears are wiped from every eye.'

'I wish we were going with her, mother.—The world is gloomy enough, and what will it be without her?'

'James, submit your will to His. You have great cause for thankfulness, my poor son; Mary and Jemmy are so much better. The doctor said last night that they will be about in a few days.'

'Ay, with nourishing food; and how are we to get it! But it is sinful to despair: God will provide for that. Yet, oh! mother, my Elizabeth! my dear, dear wife!'

It seemed as if the stifled cry of love's agony reached the dull ear of the dying woman.—There was a slight stir in the bed, and James's mother hastened to her post. Elizabeth's eyes were wide open, and, as her husband likewise drew near, they fell upon him, and a faint, sweet smile passed over her countenance. He knelt beside her, and took her wan hand in his.

'James,' she whispered, so low that he had to place his ear close to her lips to catch the words; 'my children—bring them—I am going—Jesus—Saviour.'

The fluttering whisper ceased, and the soul was with its God. The mother and her son dealt in prayer, for the bereaved husband was to much awestricken even to weep. Meanwhile, the rich landlord's bailiffs kept their grim watch below.

The scene changes. A woman is sitting all alone in a gloomy parlour, where no sound is heard, save the buzzing of a solitary fly that has survived the autumnal frosts, and the tinkle of the dying embers of a very poor, little fire—she shivers, for it is a bitter cold day, and the room is cold, and her own heart is cold, and she feels as if nothing would ever warm it again.—Yes, one thing might, perhaps, and that is denied her.

'Cruel father! he could send me that paltry bank-note, and tell me to battle with the world, when I would rather lay me down and die. Oh! if I could but spend one week, only one week, with my dear mother and sister, I think it would

strengthen me to do his bidding. Oh, my home! my home!'

Poor Annie! poor deserted one! she was still young, and might have been pretty, but that her cheek was so so low, and her eye so dull and dim, and her hair so neglected. Not in picturesque dishevelment, but all matted and forlorn, it lay in ragged masses upon cheek and neck; and the shabby, faded shawl, and the thin elevated shoulders and crouching form, as she gathered herself together to keep out the cold, contributed to the general ungracefulness of her appearance. Talk as the poets will of beauty in distress, we are not loveable when soul and condition are alike wretched, save to those who love us very truly.

But what mattered it to the deserted wife!—The eye that she alone sought to please, cruel and cold as it had often been, when rendered desperate by circumstances, flashing and furious when maddened by strong drink, had vanished from her presence for ever. It even bestowed its fitful and undesirable love upon another.—But Annie did not know that. Happy for her if the word happy may be even comparatively applied in such a position—for a last drop in the cup of her bitterness might have turned her poor wrecked brain, and sent the disobedient daughter unprepared to her last account.

Oh! Almighty Father, may she yet atone if not by her weary punishment, yet by acts of duty rendered where they had long been due! but her father's hard heart, that must be vanquished, to afford her the opportunity. Alas! how the spirit of mercy is needed in this earth of ours! Yet it is fitting, and a part of the wise designs of the Creator, that the sinner should likewise be the sufferer, even in this world.

Again we shift our scene. This time we convey our reader to a neighbouring town, and we beg him to observe, in a neat room behind a Linen-draper's shop, the shutters of which last are closed, a husband and wife who sit opposite each other in mournful silence. At length the husband speaks.

'One poor two hundred pounds would have got me out of my present difficulties, and preserved my credit until I could reduce the business, or commence another and a safer one—and he refuses! He who has thousands lying at his banker's! Why my failure itself is entirely his fault.'

'I have heard you say so before my love,' remarked the wife. 'I know, and can bear testimony, at any rate, that it is no want of industry on your part, or of economy on mine, that has caused you to come to a stand-still. But explain to me exactly how it is your brother's fault, as you say. I believe he set you up with the kindest intentions.'

'So he did, Emily; at least we will give him credit for assisting me for my own sake, and not merely because I belonged to the family.—But this is how it is. A kindness half done had better be left undone. When Ralph saddled me with this concern, he gave me no capital to carry it on with, though he well knew I had little or nothing left of my own. Without capital, how was I to buy in the stock-in-trade? When customers inquired for this thing or the other, it was frequently wanting. Of course they soon got tired, and went where they were sure of procuring what they wanted.'

'And that, Thomas, you consider the sole cause of your failure?'

'Of course, Emily. The shop is in an excellent situation; the business an old established one. I spared no effort to keep it together, and with a thousand, or even five hundred pounds, to turn over in the course of the year, I know I could have made it more than answer.'

'Well,' said his wife, 'there is nothing for it but submission. When do the creditors meet?'

'Mamma! mamma! are we not to go to school any more?' interrupted a rosy little boy and girl, bursting breathlessly in. 'Aunt Mary says so.'

'It is too true, my dears,' replied their fond mother, gazing sorrowfully upon them.

'Why do you say, "too true," mamma, and with that mournful voice, too?' inquired the little Emily. 'We are glad are we not, Ralph?'

'Oh, yes, yes!' answered the little boy dancing about the room for joy.

'My darlings, come hither,' said their mother, and her grave tone this time made some impression upon them. 'I must make you understand how it is that you are not to go to school any longer, and then you will not be so very glad.'

So they came about her chair, and she lifted little Ralph on to her knee, and making Emily sit at her feet, she told them how their father had become very poor; and that, carefully as they had lived, they were now obliged to be much more careful.

'Then will my father keep a shop?' asked Emily, who had always been very proud of the decked-out windows, and thought a shop-keeper rather a grand personage.

'No love, we are going to remove from this house and shop. We shall live in a very tiny house; and your father will go as an assistant in to another man's shop.'

'O dear, dear,' said Emily, 'I am very sorry.'

'But I am glad,' persisted little Ralph, be-