

## Literature. &amp;c.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Dickens's Household Words.

## TWO COLLEGE FRIENDS.

How the interview went off on the Monday was never known. Benford was not a man of observation, and took no notice of the peculiar manner of his reception, the long gaze with which Lord Warleigh seemed to study his countenance, and the pauses which occurred in his conversation. He was invited to return on Tuesday; on Wednesday; and when the fourth visit within a week was announced to Mrs Benford, there was no end of the visita of wealth and dignity she foresaw from the friendship of so powerful a patron.

And he asked me to bring the children, too. His lordship says he is very fond of children.

What a good man he is! exclaimed the wife. They'll be so delighted to see the fine things in the house.

The girl is about three years old, the boy one. I don't think they'll see much difference between his lordship's house and this. I won't take the baby.

What? Not the baby? the beautiful little angle! Lord Warleigh will never forgive you for keeping him away.

But Benford was positive, and taking his little girl by the hand he walked to the castle and entered the library. His lordship was not within, and Benford drew a chair near the table and opened a book of prints for the amusement of his daughter. While they were thus engaged a side door noiselessly opened, and Lord Warleigh stepped in. He stood still at the threshold, and looked at the group before him. He seemed transfixed with fear. He held out his hand and said: 'You—you there, so soon—at this time of the day? And she—who is she?'

'My lord,' said Benford, 'I came at the hour you fixed. This is my little daughter. You asked me to bring her to see you. I hope you are not offended.'

'Ah! now I remember,' said his lordship, and held out his hand. 'I see visitors so rarely, Mr Benford—and ladies—' he added, looking with a smile at the terrified little girl who stood between her father's knees and gazed with mute wonder on the old man's face—'ladies so seldom present themselves here, that I was surprised—but now most happy—'

He sat down and talked with the greatest kindness. He drew the little girl nearer and nearer to himself; and at last he got a volume from the shelf, of the most gorgeously coloured engravings, and took her on his knee. He showed her the beautiful birds represented in the book; told her where they lived, and some of their habits; and, pleased with the child's intelligence, and more in the confidence she felt in his good nature—he said:—'And now, little lady, you shall give me a kiss, and tell me your pretty little name.'

The child said: 'My name is Dulcibel Benford,' and held up her little mouth to give the kiss.

But Lord Warleigh grew suddenly cold and harsh. He put her from his knee in silence; and the child, perceiving the change, went tremblingly to her father.

'A strange name to give your child, Mr Benford,' said his lordship.

'I am very sorry, indeed, my lord,' began Mr Benford, but perceived, in the midst of the profoundest respect for the peerage, how absurd it would be to apologise for a christain name.

'You have a son, I think; what name have you given him?'

'His name is Winnington, my lord—an uncommon—'

'What?' cried Lord Warleigh, starting up. 'You come hither to insult me in my own room. You creep into my house, you worm yourself into my confidence, and then, when you think I am unprepared—for you—'

'As I hope to be saved, my lord—I give you my word, my lord I never meant to insult you, my lord,' said Benford; 'But since I have had the misfortune to insult your lordship, I will withdraw. Come, Lucy Mainfield, she has three names, my lord, Dulcibel Lucy Mainfield. I'm sorry she didn't tell you so before.'

'No—don't go,' said Lord Warleigh, sinking into his chair; 'it was nothing; it was a sudden pain, which often puts me out of temper. Is the little girl's name Lucy Mainfield? You won't come back to me again, will you? Lucy?'

'Oh! yes, my lord—Lucy, go to his Lordship—he will show you the pictures again.' Benford pushed her towards Lord Warleigh. But the girl blushed and trembled, and wouldn't go. She clung to her father's hand.

'Don't force her,' said the old man in a mournful tone. 'I knew she wouldn't. But you won't go in anger, Lucy? Benford, you'll forgive me?'

'Oh, my lord,' said the curate, immensely gratified, and sat down again.

'Are these family names, Benford?' inquired

ed his lordship carelessly; but still looking sadly into Dulcibel's glowing face.

'Yes, my lord. Dulcibel was my mother's name, and her brother's name, Winnington Harvey. You have heard, perhaps of his melancholy fate? He was murdered.'

'You are Winnington Harvey's nephew?' said Lord Warleigh.

'Yes, my lord, and they used to say I was very like him.'

'Who?—who used to say so? your mother, perhaps. Is she alive?'

'Both father and mother died when I was three years old. My grandfather in Yorkshire brought me up. It was dear old cousin Lucy who died when I was twelve—Lucy Mainfield.'

'She dead—is she?'

'Oh, yes my lord, and left me all the little money she had. She used to say I was very like my uncle.'

'And did she tell you any particulars of his end?'

'No, my lord. She spoke very little of the past. She had been very unhappy in her youth—a disappointment in love, we thought; and some people said she had been fond of Uncle Winnington; but I don't know—his fate was very horrible. He had been down in Devonshire, reading with a friend, and was killed on his way home.'

'And you never heard the friend's name?'

'No. Cousin Lucy never mentioned it; and there was no one else who knew.'

'And how do you know his fate?'

'It was in the coroner's verdict. And do you know, my lord, he is buried not far from this.'

'Who told you that?' said Warleigh, starting up, as if about to break forth in another paroxysm of rage. 'Who knows anything about that?'

'Cousin Lucy told me, when I was very young, that if ever I went into the West, I should try to find out his grave.'

'And for that purpose you are here; it was to discover this you came to Warleigh?' His lordship's eyes flashed with anger.

'Oh, no, my lord; it is only a coincidence, that's all; but the place is not far off. In fact, I believe it is nearer than cousin Lucy thought.'

'Go on—go on,' cried Lord Warleigh, restraining himself from the display of his unhappy temper. 'What reason have you to think so?'

'The map of the country, my lord. Oakfield does not seem more than twenty miles off.'

'And your uncle is buried there?'

'Yes, my lord. I think of going over to see the grave next week.'

'I wish you good morning, Mr Benford,' said Warleigh, suddenly, but very kindly. 'You have told me a strange piece of family history. Good morning, too, my little dear. What! you won't take the old man's hand? You look frightened, Lucy. Will you come and see me again, Lucy Mainfield?' He dwelt upon the name as if it pleased him.

'No, never,' said the little girl, and pushed Benford towards the door. 'I don't like you, and will never come again.'

Benford broke out into apologies, and a cold perspiration! 'She's a naughty little child, my lord. Dulcibel, how can you behave so? Children, my lord, are so very foolish—'

'That they speak truth when it is disagreeable; but I expect it and am not surprised. Good-day.'

Soon after this a series of miracles occurred to Mr Benford, which filled him with surprise. The manager of the bank at Warleigh called on him one day, and in the most respectful manner requested that he would continue to keep his account, as heretofore, with the firm. Now, the account of Mr Benford was not such as would seem to justify such a request, seeing it consisted at that moment of a balance of eighteen pounds seven and fourpence. However, he bowed with the politeness which a curate always displays to a banker, and expressed his gracious intention of continuing his patronage to Messrs. Bulk & Looby, and the latter gentleman after another courteous bow, retired leaving the pass book in the hands of the gratified clergyman. He opened it; and the first line that met his view was a credit to the Rev. Henry Benford, of the sum of twelve thousand six hundred pounds! On presenting the amazing document to the notice of his wife, that lady at first was indignant at those vulgar trades people, Bulk & Looby, venturing to play such a hoax on a friend of Lord Warleigh. This was now the designation by which her husband was most respectable in the eyes of his helpmate; and somewhat inclined to resent the supposed insult, Benford walked down to the bank and came to an explanation with both the partners, in the private room. There could be no doubt of the fact. The money was paid in to his name, in London, and transmitted, in the ordinary course, to his country bankers. In fear and trembling and merely to put his good luck to the test—he drew a check for one hundred and twenty pounds, which was immediately honored; and with these tangible witnesses to the truth of his banker's statement, he returned to the parsonage and poured the guineas in glittering array upon the drawing-room table.

All attempts to discover the source of his riches were unavailing. Messrs. Bulk & Looby had no knowledge on the subject, and their correspondents in town were equally unable to say.

Then, in a week after this astonishing event, a new miracle happened, for Mr Looby again presented himself at the rectory, and requested to know in whose names the money which had arrived that morning was to be held.

'More money!' said Mr Benford; 'Oh! put it up with the other; but really,' added the ingenious youth, 'I don't think I require any more—'

'It isn't for you, sir, this time,' said Mr Looby.

'I'm very glad to hear it,' said Mr Benford, and with perfect truth.

'It's for the children; and if you will have two trustees, the funds will be conveyed to them at once.'

Benford named two friends; and then, quite in a careless, uninterested manner, said, 'How much is it?'

'Twenty thousand pounds,' replied Mr Looby, 'in the five per cents, which are now at a hundred and two—say, twenty thousand four hundred pounds, if we sell at once. Our broker is Bocus of Crutched Friars.'

Miss Dulcibel was an heiress, and Master Winnington an heir. The funds were to accumulate till they were eighteen and twenty-one respectively, with two hundred a year for the maintenance and education of each.

Then, in a fortnight more, came a gentleman whom Benford had never seen before—a little, fat, redfaced man, so choked up with a white neckcloth that it was evident he was determined to look like a clergyman or perish in the attempt. He introduced himself in a gracious manner, and said he was a clerical agent.

'More money?' inquired Benford, who now seldom saw any stranger without suspecting that he had just returned from paying large sums to his name at the bank.

'No, sir, not money,' replied the agent.

'Oh! that's odd,' said Benford; 'then may I ask what your business is with me?'

'It is, perhaps, better than money,' replied the little fat man, with a cough which was intended to represent a smile. 'Sir Hildo Swilks of Somerset has heard of your great eloquence, Sir Benford.'

'Sir Hildo is very good,' said Mr Benford, modestly; 'plain common sense is what I aim at—'

'The truest eloquence,' rejoined the clerical agent: 'the rest is naught but "lather and umbrellas" as Pope says. He has also heard of your kindness to the poor, your charity and many other good qualities, and he has done himself the honour to present you to the valuable living of Swilksstone Magna; it is a clear income of eight hundred a year, with a good parsonage house, and two packs of hounds within—but perhaps you don't hunt, Mr Benford—ah! very right; it is very unclerical—the bishops ought to interfere. 'Poor is the triumph o'er the timid hare,' as Thomson says or fox, as I say.'

'You have proof, I suppose?' said Benford thinking it just possible that the plethoric gentleman before him might be an imposter about to end with asking the loan of a pound.

'Here is the presentation, sir, already signed and sealed; you have nothing to do but to go to Wells—his lordship will institute you any day you like.'

The only other remarkable thing connected with this incident is, that about this time Sir Hildo Swilks paid off a mortgage of eight or nine thousand pounds, as if fortune had smiled on his benevolent action in favour of Mr Benford.

But, in the meantime, all intercourse between the curate and the noble had ceased. The business of the parish was transacted by letter as before; and it was only when the rector of Swilksstone Magna thought it his duty to announce his approaching departure, that he determined to go up to the Castle, and wait on Lord Warleigh in person. Lord Warleigh was ill—he could see nobody—he kept his room; and the confidential gentleman, who dressed in plain black, and spoke in whispers, couldn't name any day when his lordship would be likely to admit Mr Benford.

'Is he very unwell?' said the rector; 'for if his lordship will not receive my visit as a neighbor, perhaps he will not object to seeing me in my professional character as a visitor of the sick.'

'We dare not tell his lordship he is ill, sir; your presence would alarm him too much; as it is, he is terribly out of spirits, and says curious things—he never was fond of clergymen.'

'Mention my request to him if you have the opportunity. I don't wish to go without taking leave.'

The man promised, though evidently with no expectation of being able to comply with the request, and Benford returned to communicate to his wife that the animosity of the great man continued.

And all because poor little Dulcibella said she didn't like him. It was certainly very foolish in her to say so to a lord; but she knows no better.'

'He can't bear malice from a mere infant's

observations,' said Benford. 'But I have some strange suspicions about his lordship which I would not divulge for the world except to you. I fear his lordship drinks.' He almost shuddered as he said the horrid word.

'Drinks!—a nobleman!'—exclaimed Mrs Benford; 'impossible!'

'I don't know,' replied the rector of Swilksstone. 'He looked very odd and talked in a queer way, and fell into passions about nothing. I am not sorry, I assure you, to be going away. I told you from the first I did not like him. His hand felt as cold as a sword.'

'I never felt his hand,' said Mrs Benford, in so sad a voice that it was pretty clear she regretted the circumstance very deeply. 'But we shall probably be more intimate with that excellent man Sir Hildo. He is only a baronet, to be sure, but his title is older than Lord Warleigh's. How good in him to give you the living merely from the good reports he heard of your character;'

It was how autumn. The middle of October was past, and an early winter was now beginning to be felt. The preparations for removal were completed, and on the following day the parsonage was to be deserted, and the possession of the new living entered upon. It was nine o'clock; the night was dark and windy; a feeble moon glimmered at intervals through the sky, and added to the gloom she could not disperse. Mrs Benford retired to her room, as they had to rise early in the morning. Benford was sitting with his feet on the fender, looking into the fire, when he heard a knock at the front door. It was opened by the maid, and soon he perceived steps in the passage; a tap came to the door of the parlor.

'A gentleman to see you, sir,' and a figure entered the room. Benford looked round amazed. The stranger stood near the door, and fixed his eyes on Benford's. Wrapt up from the cold, but with the cloak now drooping on his shoulders, with his hat still on his head, and his hands still resting on a long staff, stood Lord Warleigh, pale, ghastly, with lips distended, and uttering not a word.

'Your lordship!' exclaimed Benford, springing up. 'What in heaven's name has brought your lordship here, on this dreadful night, so ill as you are?'

'Speak low,' said Lord Warleigh. 'I've come to you—to see you again: to compare your features with—help! set me down my head grows giddy.'

Benford helped him into a chair, drew it near the fire, and chafed his hands between his palms.

'Can you touch it without a shudder?' said Lord Warleigh. 'Don't you feel that it is not like other people's hands?'

Conscience kept Benford silent; he ceased to rub the hand, and let it fall.

'There? again he interferes!' said the old man in a broken voice. 'I see him lifting your hand away.'

'Who?' said Benford. 'There is no one here.'

'There is. There is some one here who has never left my side for fifty years. Nothing will soothe him, nothing will drive him away. At feasts he sits on my right hand; alone, he sits opposite and stares into my face. Now he smiles—how like you are.'

'Your lordship is very ill. Have you sent for Dr Jones?'

'No—don't talk of doctors. I tell you they can do no good. I've come to you to night. I couldn't bear the room I sat in—there were voices in it, and people all around me. He was there and spoke to me of Aladdin's palace and his salary as physician. Haven't I paid his fees to his relations? But that's not sufficient. Well, more—I will pay more. He shakes his head—and perhaps it is enough—'

'I do not know what your lordship alludes to, but I beg you to be composed.'

'Listen!' said old lord Warleigh. 'It was not his body—it was a stranger; and the thought came into my head to call the sufferer him. It lulled suspicion. I saw his sister, his mother, his cousin. They all seemed to have found me out. When I touched their hands, they drew them away. I was a pariah—a leper. No one looked kindly on me—When I said that when I had three thousand a year I would claim her promise, she said to me, "Arthur, if you had millions in your purse, I would not wed you now." I saw Ellen. I told her of his fate. She was silent and looked into my eyes. I knew she saw my soul as it lay trembling, struggling, trying to hide itself under the shadow of that great fact. She pined and pined, and her father's heart broke; and I was rich—I was Sir Arthur Hayning—I was Lord Warleigh, and what am I now?'

'But you won't ask me to go back to the Broombank—it was there I built the castle. The library is above the very spot where the plant grew with the metal in its roots. I won't go there, for to-night—to-night is the anniversary of the time. The lantern shone upon the heath; the pickaxe was plying in the hole; there was a heap of earth thrown out, and six, eight, ten feet down, the busy laborer was at work; the spade was on the heaped-up soil—I saw it flash in the light of the lantern as it flew into the air; its edge went down—I saw it fall. There was silence then and for ever in the pit.'