

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

BROTHER LANDS.

BY ERNEST JONES.

The Englishman to the American.

No hostile stranger-nation we,
To war with impious hands;
One land around a common sea,
One people in two lands.

In vain our kindred shores to part
Are waves between us thrown;
The tide that warms a British heart
Is that which fills your own.

No beacon ranged on either beach
But like an angel stands,
To call new hopes from each to each,
And link our loving lands.

No ships that sail from either shore,
While to and fro it plies,
But weaves the thread of friendship o'er
The gulf that twixt us lies.

No pilgrims from our harbors part,
Or come with eager oars,
But give you more of England's heart,
And more to us of yours.

No song that soothes our children's rest
But unto yours is dear;
No lay that stirred our soldiers' breast
But yours have glowed to hear.

No flame that flashed on Britain's brow,
But gleams on yours alike;
Then, if ye can, abjure us now,
Forget it all—and strike!

From Chamber's Edinburgh Journal.

SPECULATION.

It was past midnight, and London was in its glory. The crowd of carriages and pedestrians was swollen by the contributions of the theatres, which now gave forth their audience in dense volumes; and talking, laughing, and sometimes singing, denizens of the metropolis passed proudly along their illumined streets in all the security of noonday. It was impossible to observe the aspect of the night, for the lamps of the sky—never at any time so bright to that multitude as the gas lights of London—were invisible; and when a sudden shower descended it took every body by surprise. Almost immediately the great bulk of the pedestrians vanished, you could not tell how or where, absorbed as it might seem by the ducts at their side; and in the same mysterious fashion, the vehicles were instantly doubled and trebled in number, and their gliding pace and rattling wheels became a rush and a roar.

In one of the more aristocratic quarters of the town, a lady and gentleman, after endeavouring in vain to find a hackney-carriage were fain to run up the steps of a house they were passing, and take shelter in the doorway. The gentleman was a man about middle age, well dressed and well mannered; and the lady, who was much younger, had something nearly approaching fashion in her frank, self-possessed London air.

'Well, this is provoking!' said she; 'but I am rightly served for putting on my best bonnet to go to the pit.'

'Hang the bonnet!' replied the gentleman. 'Look how these carriages are rattling past us—what lucky fellows they contain! Why should you and I be trudging home after midnight, through the sloppy streets and the plashing rain?'

'Tush! there you are harping at that again! We might have had a cab, if we had thought of it; and we can afford one on the rare occasions when we go to the theatre. And it is not a great many years, you know since I could say that much; but a man with a gentlemanly employment in a public office, and a snug salary of £250 a year has no reason to be dissatisfied.'

'Every man has reason to be dissatisfied when he sees fortune before him, and yet is allowed no opportunity to grasp it. If I had not been such a fool as to allow you to over-persuade me to refuse Jones's offer of a share in his speculation, we might at this moment have been so far on the way to wealth.'

'I would not have interfered, John—I declare I would not, if I had thought you would merely have lost your £100; but I know you too well, and I suppose you are not different from other people. If the speculation had failed, you would have tried to bolster up with more money; you would have got into debt; you would have lost your appetite and spirits; you would have been a miserable man, perhaps for the rest of your life.'

'All that is nonsense—the speculation was perfectly safe.'

'All speculations are safe—till they fail. But what has Jones gained by it?'

'Only a cool hundred: cent. per cent.—that's all.'

'I deny it, John—I see nothing like a cool of a warm hundred about him. His apartments

are not half so handsome as ours; I miss in them a hundred things that you and I reckon indispensable for comfort; and instead of being a happier man, he looks every day more anxious and care-worn. You may depend upon it both his hundreds are now in jeopardy, and perhaps something more besides—and speculations don't always succeed.'

'Hush, hush! there is a carriage stopped two doors off. I wonder who it is that is coming out. A man about my own age.'

'And neither better looking or better dressed,' whispered the wife smiling.

'See, he turns towards us to pay the cab.'

'And gives, I dare be sworn, neither more or less than the fare.'

'And now he mounts the steps, with his man servant waiting, bareheaded, to receive him; and now he goes to his house of luxury and splendor and the door shuts out the vulgar world behind him!'

'Why, John, it is not for nothing you have been to the theatre to-night! What is so interesting to you in that man?'

'Oh, nothing. He merely comes in, in the midst of my reflections, like an impersonation of my thought. I wish I were in that man's position! Here a wider splash of rain came down; and a person they had seen emerge from a neighbouring area without his hat, sprang up the steps beside them, to keep his bare poll from the blast.'

'Pray, sir, said the new comer, 'was it at the second door off the carriage stopped just now?'

'It was.'

'And set down a gentleman?'

'Yes.'

'I thought so. That was my master.'

'Pray, is your master' asked the lady, smiling archly to her husband, 'a very rich man?'

'A very rich man? Oh, no doubt; everybody thinks so.'

'But have you no evidence of it yourself? Does he keep a great establishment? Does he give fine entertainments?'

'Nothing of the sort: he's a very quiet gentleman, my master is.'

'Does he spend money on his dinner and wine?'

'He usually dines at his club—I suppose for about half-a-crown; and although he has plenty of good wine in his cellars, he never takes more himself than a glass or two of sherry.'

'Then how does he show that he is a man of fortune? Does he game?'

'Oh, bless you, no—nothing of the kind.'

'Has he an extravagant wife?'

'No wife at all.'

'Then how does he amuse himself?'

'He has two or three horses down in the country, and follows the hounds, on some occasions when he happens to have time. But he is much taken up with business; when at home he does nothing but pore over papers and accounts. And that reminds me that he is at home now. Good night, ma'am: and taking advantage of a pause in the rain, the communicative domestic ran off to his master's house, and let himself in with a latch key.'

'Now you see, John,' said the young wife, hardly able to smother a laugh—'now you see what the object of your envy is. Why, you enjoy life more yourself! You entertain some friends; sometimes you are by no means satisfied with a couple of glasses of sherry; you ride after the hounds more than once in the year, without the trouble of keeping horses; you never think of business without the walls of Somerset House; and besides all that, John, you have the advantage of a little wife to laugh when you are merry, comfort or rally you when you are sad, and keep you in order when you are naughty.'

'That is all very well,' said the husband, walking thoughtfully along, for it was now fair; but I wish I was in that man's wordly position!'

The little wife was at home, looking wonderfully well in a low dress, although it had long been her last party, and fidgeting about the room in expectation of her husband coming in to dinner. It was long past his hour; and as the Somerset House gentlemen usually introduce their official methodism at home, she was more surprised than the occasion would have seemed to require. By-and-by, she became a little nervous; and as his well-known knock at length shook the door, she thought to herself that the sound was not so authoritative as usual. No wonder, for when he came in he was pale and haggard-looking, and sat down without tendering a word of explanation, or even seeming to know that he was later than usual. The wife made no remark; but getting a glass of wine from the cupboard, made him drink it, with one of those pretty gestures of command that never fails with right minded husbands.

'That has done me good,' said he; 'I wanted it, and you could not guess why in a month.'

'Is it anything about Jones?'

'Jones? No—what put that in your head—it is about somebody you saw more lately than Jones.'

'I am curious to know who it is, and what it is; but wait till after dinner; you are not looking so well as usual.'

'Let me tell you now, while dinner is coming up; I shall eat all the better for getting it off my mind. You must know, I have been looking in at a coroner's inquest.'

'A coroner's inquest—are you sure it is not about Jones?'

'Don't be silly, or I won't say another word. Am I always to have Jones flung at my head in this way?'

'I am sure I never mentioned his name before since the night we were at the theatre. You must have been thinking of him yourself—that's it.'

'I tell you, I looked in at the coroner's inquest; but I kept staring so much at the witness who was giving evidence when I went in, that I lost a good deal of what he said first. I was sure I knew the man; his face, his gestures, the tone of his voice, all were familiar to me; but I could not call to mind where I had seen or known him. He described the appearance and manner of the gentleman who had died under the circumstance that were to be inquested, and from what he said, nothing could be more unlikely than that the unfortunate man had died by his own act. What he told, however of the way of living of the deceased, called up a strange suspicion in my mind. I could not learn from these around me, who had come in late like myself, the name of the street talked of; and I waited with an impatience I can hardly describe, throughout the whole proceedings, till it was painfully clear to everybody present that it was actually one of the most deliberate cases of suicide on record. The jury however, came to no decision; some other evidence was wanted, and they adjourned to a future day. The moment the court broke up I flew to look at the dead body.'

'Well, John,' cried the wife, 'you knew the unhappy man? He was one of our acquaintances? Speak?'

'He was no acquaintance of ours; we never saw him but once in our lives; and yet I am sure you cannot help being shocked when you hear that the corpse I saw lying in the dead-house, stiff and stark, was that of the man we saw alight from a carriage on our way home from the theatre, and in whose worldly position I so earnestly wished myself to be! The young wife trembled visibly, and the color left her cheeks.'

'Well, John,' said she, 'and his worldly position—what had that to do with it?'

'Nothing, of course—nothing that any body knows. There were surmises in the court, whispers, rumors; but that is always the case. Nothing more is known than that the gentleman left his home late at night—or rather early in the morning—with the implements of destruction in his pocket, and that he was never seen again alive.'

'But his worldly position—the business he was constantly brooding over, according to his servant's account—surely he did not abandon that in his prosperity to rush into an accursed grave?'

'How can I tell? I know nothing about his business, but that it was great, heavy, and multifarious. That however, is nothing to the purpose: men commit suicide from other causes than business.'

'Such was not the case here, John,' said the little wife decisively. 'I remember his look, and it had nothing in it of love, hate, or jealousy, or revenge. That man had more than £100 at stake—more than was his own to lose—more than he could lose and live! Was Jones there?'

The husband muttered something terribly like an oath.

'He was there, but a distance away from me.'

'How did he look?'

'Just like everybody else—flushed with excitement.'

'Did you not go together to the dead-house?'

'No, what business had he in the dead-house? He never saw the man, living, and had no curiosity about him when dead. This was not likely, for he was not fool enough to spend his money in the theatre, and trudge home through the rain and mire; and so, as soon as the court broke up, he set out full speed for home. I saw him at a distance, still rushing along, and then he vanished.'

'I can understand his haste—there was somebody after him.'

'The corpse in the dead-house!'

'I declare you will make me angry. Jones is not the fool you take him for: he is a very clever, and a very thriving man. In a few days he is to get the use of a considerable sum of money, and it will work, I have no doubt, like his first hundred.'

'That is, it will run off to some region of hope, and another considerable sum of money with it.'

'You don't understand business, my dear,' said the husband contemptuously; 'you would have a man sit down all his life with his hands across, without making any attempt to elevate his position.'

'On the contrary, I would have a man make the most strenuous attempts to elevate his position, but not by placing himself in circumstances of constant worry and temptation. When you placed a number of pounds in that Hamburg lottery—I made no opposition, because I

saw you were bent upon it—and, in fact, I had a banking myself after the folly; although I knew very well it was hundreds or thousand to one against us. But what then? The money was spent, and there was an end. I had to do without a new dress for a while, that was the very worst of it; and in the meantime we enjoyed a waking dream, now and then, and after it a laugh, about the fairy fortune that was coming to us. That was a mere folly, but a comparatively harmless one, because we knew the cost, and by a trifling sacrifice, could afford it. But such speculations as Jones's!

'I tell you Jones will ride in his carriage while we are still tramping through the mire. But enough of this. I cannot get the dead-house and its still tenant out of my head; or that last midnight ramble, alone but for the haunting shadows that pursued, surrounded, and marshaled him the way that he was going; or the white dead face, with the fixed open eyes that were found looking up to God in the morning. Get me another glass of wine—there's a good girl.'

'No, dear,' said the little wife; 'I will get you a glass of brandy and water, and make it, as they say, 'screaming hot'; and we will talk no more to-night about the dead man or our friend Jones.'

Some time after this, the husband and wife were passing the evening sociably together after tea—the gentleman reading aloud, and then joining the lady in a song at the piano. They were very comfortable, and it is to be hoped they knew it. The fire was bright, but not glaring; the curtains were drawn so closely as to keep out even the idea of the dark gusty night; and the little woman was in excellent voice—yet she stopped in the middle of a duet and said to her husband suddenly:

'Why were you not at the adjourned inquest to-day?'

'Because,' he replied, 'I had heard about nothing else ever since the morning. There are terrible rumors about—of crimes that take away one's breath by their magnitude; and, in short, I was sick of the whole affair, and determined to wait for the morning paper, which will tell us all about it. But hark!—a double knock—I wonder whether it is for us.'

'It is Jones's knock—with a little additional flourish, but I could swear to the substance; and presently the room door opened, and the servant announced Mr Jones.'

Jones was a smart fellow, some years younger than our friend; he had a look of business in his face, as if he knew what he was about; but on the present occasion, this seemed to be mantled over with an air of satisfaction, which surprised the lady very much. She had expected to find him pale, haggard, anxious-looking; and the horrid little woman could not help feeling disappointed.

'And so, Mr Jones,' said she, when the greetings were over, and they were all three seated round the fire, 'I am told you have become quite a prosperous man.'

'That is true,' replied he.

'And therefore, no doubt, a tranquil, happy, satisfied, easy-minded man?'

'All true.'

'Then you have, of course, heard of your last venture?'

'Yes; it is all gone, money and gains—every shilling.'

'And the large sum you were to have got the use of, put in the husband, 'all that is settled?'

'Quite settled: I have refused to take it. In short, I am just a hundred pounds worse than I was eight months ago—that is, in money.'

'And in what else are you worse? I hope you have no bills out, or other obligations?'

'No; I alluded to the want of comfort at home, to the want of regular sleep, to the want of quiet thoughts; all these I have been minus for eight months. But the worst time I have had was between the inquests; for the opportunity that was before me of making an attempt to retrieve my loss, and on a scale so large as to offer the chance of enormous gain, was a temptation I could hardly stand, and it shook my mind till it tottered.'

'What had the inquest to do with it?' said the husband, looking down, for he could hardly bear the keen look of Jones's eyes, although he felt impelled to ask the question.

'Come, come,' replied his friend, almost sternly, 'have done with affectation. You know what the inquest had to do with it. The time was when the wretched man was as comfortable as yourself; and he might have remained so if he had only been satisfied with the risk of losses he could bear.'

'If all men were so satisfied,' said the husband, doggedly, 'what would become of the commercial greatness of England?'

The commercial greatness of England would be far more secure than it is, if founded on reality instead of illusion. I tell you there is not a business failure in this country, however inconsiderable, which does not so far effect our prosperity; and it does so, because nearly all business failures, however honest the immediate bankrupts may be, are traceable in their ultimate causes to that of integrity which speculates at the expense of other people, pocketing the gains, if any, and throwing elsewhere—anywhere—the loss. Overtrading, as that