

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Littell's Living Age.

THE SEA SHORE.

The wide sea stretches beneath the sky,
In the golden light of day,
And the wild waves come with their snowy
plumes,

That glitter, and glance, and play;
And on they come, and on they come,
With the lofty pomp of power,
To scatter their beauty on shiny weeds,
And die on the briny shore.

The wild waves glitter, and glance and play.
To break on the briny shore,
But each is bearing its tribute on,
To add to earth's bright store.

Some may bring us the little shell,
And some the store of gold,
And some the sailor's shipwrecked form,
All gaily, and stern, and cold.
And the wild waves murmur in sadness round,
Or thunder with martial roar,
And each rolls up with its given freight,
And dies on the briny shore.

There's a wide, wide sea, a changing sea,
The shadowy sea of life,
Where the lofty billows rise and fall,
In never ceasing strife.
And on, and on, and ever on,
Pressed by resistless power,
They bear their joy or their curse to earth,
And die on the sandy shore.

And on they come, and on they come,
Till night sweeps o'er the scene,
And the dun clouds float o'er the gloomy sky,
And the stars look out between—
Till far away in the orient
The sun comes forth in power,
And the secret burdens lie all revealed
Upon the briny shore.

From Titan.

HAPPY PEOPLE.

I suppose it is natural (that is, humanly natural) that opinions should be at once so diversified and so generally inconsistent on the subject of happiness; for happiness is a thing every one appears to judge of vicariously. How few, except children, experience it consciously, or recognize and acknowledge its presence with them. It seems to be an inevitable law with the majority of, that you can no more see the peculiar good of your own estate, than you can see your own profile shadowed on the wall. You twist and turn to look at it, and in the very effort to behold, it is lost. But other people's profiles you can see, judge, and criticize. Other people's happiness you know all about; you look at it—wonder at it—envy it, perhaps. How is it that men and women are so rarely able to see the sunshine that falls on themselves? It is a curious problem in psychology.

Perhaps we are all too selfish to be accredited appraisers of our personalities; and although as regards this particular one, our partiality takes the unusual direction of undervaluing what belongs to ourselves, the injustice is none the less. And the fatuousness of the judgment is as striking even as when you, my dear hard-featured friend, flatter yourself that the outline of your face is classical, and the turn of your head as noble as it is refined.

After all, it may be wiser to leave ourselves and our happiness alone. Egotism is the last thing that the human race needs teaching in these days. Therefore, without making so much ado about the bliss which falls to our own proper share, we might pursue our enquiries among our friends, our lovers, and acquaintances. Let us try to discover who are the happy, and wherein doth consist that intangible, impalpable mystery which constitutes their happiness.

Happiness! how often has our ideal changed within a little time! It varies, we find with every turn of our own fate, circumstance, or feeling. Is it not so with you also? Did not you, when you were laid up with that lingering illness last year, look with a sort of wondering sigh on the bright-faced, hearty lad, with ragged jacket, and bare, blue feet, who brought shrimps to sell every morning to the window of your seaside lodging? Did not you say in your heart, as you paid him his sixpence, and saw him march off with a step admirably firm and elastic, and a gait so untrammelled as it was quaintly grotesque.

'Ah, happy dog!' This from you, most fastidious of Sybarites, who send back to your first-rate tailor the waistcoats that are half-an-inch too long or too short—who dismissed your valet because his shoes creaked, and parted with your horse when two or three white hairs marred the perfect ebony of his glossy flanks! You who have waltzed with reigning bells at Almack's, and have flattered with *ravissante comtesses* and *marcheses charmante a distraction* at Paris, Rome and Vienna! You who have drained pleasure out of every civilized corner of the world! You who, by virtue of wealth, position, and connection, tread the great places of the

earth with imperial assurance and a kind of 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' air! You who have been on friendly terms with princes, potentates, artists—the great and grand in almost all phases of greatness—you too at last come down to envy—a shrimp lad! I marvel at you. When you get well again, you will no doubt marvel at yourself (if you ever think at all of the time of your convalescence, and your friend the shrimp merchant,) and you will retract, of course, before you go back again to the old whirl—the old wild hunt, which goes on incessantly, I am told, among persons of your class—hunting, not for happiness, certainly, even in name, but for amusement—excitement—something, or anything, that will stand in place of it. Do you know, I think you were a worthier individual when you envied Jack Baggs. Now you are returned to Mayfair, and the Ring, and Almack's, you never trouble yourself to wish for anything, except, perhaps for soda-water, and that you may be hanged if the opera doesn't get more of a 'haw' every season.

Probably you never stop to consider within yourself what it is you are living for. But you very often yawn during the morning hours, and listlessly tapping your immaculate boot with a wonderful jewelled cane, 'wonder how you shall get through the day.' You find it tiresome that you have been to every place, and seen everything that you care to visit or to see. You lament that there are 'no more worlds to'—travel about. Sometimes, even, you get as far as an aspiration, 'that there was something new to be done, that everything wasn't so worn out—so stale, flat, and unprofitable.' And if any one asked you if you are happy, you would reply, with emphatic candor—

'Confound it, no!'

How odd! for you possess a considerable proportion of that "raw material" which even the most romantic of us admit to be more or less adequate, if not necessary, or constitute happiness. Consider. You are young—in the very bloom of a man's youth, which need not and should not be rubbed off much before thirty. You are strong and vigorous, when you choose to lead a healthful life. You have an average share of abilities, and believe that you have more. You are tolerably well-looking and more than tolerably well satisfied with your looks. You have a loving mother and affectionate sisters down at the old house in the country, where you don't very often go. And in London you possess, O! what troops of admiring friends! Finally, you have three thousand a-year unincumbered property. How dare you not be happy!

Alas! you dare do all that should become a man, and discontent is as masculine an attribute as your hat, and I must say, becomes you well. Not that I intend to quarrel with it in this instance. I think you are like an oyster, and what is in itself a disease, is the one hopeful and valuable part of your being. If you were satisfied with your life, you would be in a still worse condition than you are. If you were 'happy,' you would be wretched indeed. But you have envied Jack Baggs, and there is a chance for you. After all, you may grow into something better than 'Mr Vavasour of the Albany.'

Now there is your friend Wentworth, he who was your chum at Oxford! although he was a hard-working student in one of the large colleges, while you, a gentleman commoner in aristocratic Christ Church, dawdled your time in boating, racing, fencing, cricketing, and other devices with which well-born, wealthy young men season, the sweats of knowledge, and add zest to the quiet attractions of Alma Mater. It is, however, a good trait in your character, that your friendship with Wentworth has hitherto been so steady and unbroken; seeing that he is as poor in worldly gifts as you are rich, and that you move in widely different circles of society. Moreover, that he never neglects his own pursuits to chime in with your lazy employments, and so far from flattering your vanity or courting your distinction, there is no one of your acquaintance who speaks to you with such candour, or behaves with such straightforward independence. Only the other day you remember, he informed you, half seriously, under the light laugh with which he spoke, that he wouldn't lead such a life as yours for—all the worlds one ever has to give, all the riches in Fortunatus' cap. 'Although,' he admitted, sighing, 'I don't undervalue wealth, as you are aware. A little more of it would make me very happy.'

You know he alluded to his long delayed marriage. He has been engaged for several years, and to one as poor and prospectless, as young men who have every morsel of their own bread to earn generally contrive to fall in love with. What do you think of this for a trouble, an anxiety to keep life's sunshine from being too enervating? To see one you love better than your life, one whom every fibre of your nature is drawn to, with the instinct to cherish most tenderly, to protect most jealously—to see her constrained to fill a dependent position, while you are toiling, toiling, in what sometimes appears a hopeless endeavor to make a union prudent.

To do you justice, you feel a great deal for your friend; you would fain render him service, if you could. But he is neither a soldier, to be lifted up by influence; nor a doctor, to be

brought forward by 'connection'; nor a barrister, to be helped to fame, or raised at once to independence, by a government appointment.—When he renounced the church, for which he was educated, he took to tutoring and authorship—two 'ships' alas! which rarely bring a wealthy freight to shore. He must make his own way, 'with difficulty and labor hard.' A rough way, a toilsome way, stones under foot, and oftentimes darkness over head. But he will reach the goal sooner or later; there is little to fear for him.

Meanwhile, spite of labor, difficulty, and trial, do you know a man with whom you would sooner change places, when you come to reflect seriously on the subject? Do you know a man, in the whole circle of your acquaintance, who so often or so nearly trenches on the domain of happiness? What a serene face is his, when, the labor of the day over, he unbends to the enjoyment of the simple pleasures that are such delights to him. He appears to have in perfection the art of doing morally what clever chemists perform materially when, from mean, and sometimes even noxious elements they distill essences most fragrant.—He is obliged to live near London, though all his sympathies, his dearest associations, his most cherished memories, are in and with the wild, beautiful, far away country, where his childhood was passed, where was always his home till of late years, and where he first knew Lucy. Yet he contrives to glean good even in his quiet suburban lodging. When he first went there, fields stretched away in front of his windows, and a green lane wound at the right towards emerald meadows and wooded slopes—a fair landscape—even though within a walk of Cheapside. How he exulted in it! What poetry he saw in the very fact that all this quiet beauty was so near the stir, and smoke, and turmoil of great London. But when builders came, and Prospect Place filled up one of the precious meadows, and blocked out the widest view, and Victoria Crescent shut up the side glimpse of wood and field, when the Albert Tavern arose, glittering with gilt letters, at the corner, and omnibuses, began to run from the turnpike, two minutes' walk from the door, then Mr Wentworth took comfort in three small elm trees that were still left in front of the house, and began to find that it is perhaps better to have such a simple suggestion of nature, than a more detailed manifestation of her presence, when you have a gas-lamp five doors off, and you hear the omnibus men shouting, 'Bank, Obun—Reg at Cire's! every half-hour. And the elm trees, he says, mark the seasons with a sweet graciousness to him—a beautiful loyalty to poor deposed nature—as though they were denizens of a forest where she still reigned supreme. In the spring, he can watch the tender life gathering, and growing, and perfecting into the summer leafage; then, in autumn, they glow into gold, and fade into brown—and fall, fall, fall, with the wailing October winds, till they are left bare and black—the branches traced finally against the cold winter sky—

'As I love to see them,' he says regularly every December.

Only three times within the last two years has he been with Lucy; but I think it is likely that many men in their whole span of life do not taste a greater amount of pure and beautiful happiness than these two, who love one another so perfectly, crowd into their brief festivals. Once it was at Brighton; he went down for a week, while the family with whom she lives was staying there. You would have thought it a very unmeet place for such a celebration—a crowded, fashionable, glittering watering-place, with shops, and grand houses, and grand people all about—to see the meeting of the twelve-months separated lovers. But when he came back he remembered nothing—he had evidently seen nothing of the many things that, to him especially, would have been most distasteful and annoying. Of the shore, and the cliffs, and the downs, he discoursed eloquently; of the bright weather, the endless variety of aspect under which he—they had watched their beloved sea. Ah! what a happy time it had been! And when other people sigh over the remembrance of past happiness, he is more apt to suddenly keep silence, while a light comes into his face—a visible thanksgiving, very beautiful to see.

Then his faith in the future is at least as vital and steady as his gratitude for the past. He knows—at least he trusts (which is better than knowing, he says)—that he and Lucy will be married some day; that one day they will be able to make their nest somewhere, like the birds, in some pleasant tree, with green branches all round, and the sky shining through.

Meanwhile, though he waits, he does not despond. He attains more than serenity in his quick sympathies with all human interests, his keen appreciation of beauty, his love of flowers and sunshine, music and pictures (moving pictures, as well as those fixed to canvas), his sensitive preception of the good and true of all that is before him—whether people in the streets, flowers in the fields, or clouds in the sky. In all this—his heritage from nature, of which his own true heart recognizes the value—Wentworth unconsciously finds, and ever will find, a happiness that you, poor Dudley Vavasour, vainly look for half over the world, with

three thousand a-year, 'position,' connection—all appliances and means to boot.

Truly we may well ask, who are the happy? One-twentieth part of these said appliances, which are all impotent to give ease or contentment to him who possesses so much, would, how often? remove the sharpest thorn from the path of those who tread their hard way unaided, only drawing gladness from the wealth of their own hearts. Thank God for the wealth of the heart! His justice and even-handed wisdom even our finite vision can perceive, some times.

Who are happy? Not they who, to our eyes, possess most means of happiness.

Not Mrs Courtly, who married for love, with the unusual appendage of plenty of money, and the thorough approbation of her friends, and who is cited by every one as an example of 'a fortunate woman indeed.' Fortunate she may be—happy she is not—as I have known her ever since I spent three days with her at her Richmond villa. She has so many pleasure, she has no time to be pleased. All those things that to most people are enjoyments, are to her only soporifics. It needs strong wine indeed to exhilarate her. She is clearly not a denizen of this terra incognita—this happy land.

Neither is pretty Laura Haverill—the belle of her circle—the idol of her family—the universally flattered and admired Corinne of half-a-hundred evening parties. How many good gifts have fallen to her share?—beauty, talent, affluence, and love—love as common to her as daylight, and, alas! as little thought of. Yet she is fretful, fastidious, blasé of the very blessings fate showers upon her. Her days seem to pass in an alternation of excitement and reaction. She is now in a whirl of gaiety—anon plunged in the stagnant, unprofitable slough of ennui. What is it she needs, to convert her materiel into that mysterious, impalpable thing whereof we speak? I am not prepared to say. I do not pretend to tell why it is that these people, who appear to possess most of the means, appear farthest from the end; why they who receive most blessings are oftentimes least blessed. I only declare; I do not profess to explain.

Very likely you would smile (yet I think it would be in a sad sort), if you knew the whole life history of the woman that always occurs to me as the truest example of happiness I have ever known. But you shall see her.

She was already middle-aged when I first knew her. I heard she was once eminently attractive in look and manner—as, indeed, such a sweet simple nature and clear intellect as she possessed would make any woman. But at the time I saw her, all this was seen through the cloud left by severe suffering, both of mind and body, such as she had known almost continuously during the past ten years. Hers was a nature that lavished its love as summer clouds the rain—it fell noiselessly, abundantly, in simple, unquestioning delights of giving. In her earliest womanhood, a younger sister was the recipient of all this wealth of tenderness and care. The sister married—went abroad—almost forgot her, or remembered her only in a way that perhaps bitter than oblivion. Then, Anna, loved, in the woman's great sense of loving, or who was to her the model of all malice, nobility, and greatness. Within a few weeks of the time that they last spent together, when he, by every eloquence of look and tone, had persuaded her of his love while winning hers, he married a rich woman, old, unloveable, and foolish. Anna lost not only her love, but her ideal. The beautiful fabric of her life's dearest dream was shivered into a million pieces, and the very fragments were of dross.

After that her health failed, and, all her relations being either far away, or indifferent to her fate, she went through the bitterness, worse than that of death, of a long illness in a hired home, attended by paid nurses; cared for at so much a week. When she recovered, one or two of her kinder-hearted friends took her to stay with them for a time. It was on one of these occasions that I first met her. I remember what an impression I received from the sight of her cheerful face, that kindled anew with every new pleasure. And how many pleasures she had, and how intensely she enjoyed them! I did not know her history then, and I thought to myself how fairly apportioned must be the blessings of life, since she, who was poor and still suffering, evidently possessed compensating good gifts sufficient to make her happiness. I was right; but I did not know all. The good gifts were hers indeed, but they were of another and less tangible kind than I thought.

She very seldom spoke of herself, as may be supposed. Nothing can be more incompatible with the sort of unconscious, praiseful thanksgiving which was her daily life, than the morbid self-analysis, the continuous, ever-flowing under current of egotism that seems to be one of the prevalent diseases of these days. But once or twice she became unwontedly retrospective, and fragments of her Past came out unawares. And the depth of feeling she involuntarily betrayed showed me very clearly that the peace she knew was not that of indifference, and that the joys which yet blossomed about her had their root in sorrows greater and sufferings keener, than most of those about her guessed.