

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

WE KNEW THEM.

BY FRANCIS BROWNE.

We knew them but as the world's wayfarers
For whom it had neither hope nor hold
In life and in labour they were sharers,
But not in the faith of bought and sold.
They said it was wide enough without them—
That thought and fancy had fairer themes—
And thus when the years grew grey about them

We heard them speak of their "WAKING DREAMS!"

"Ye have been with us thro' toil and travel,
Companions pleasant this many a year,
That never for cause or creed would cavil,
And never altered for times or cheer.
The days were blithe that we spent together,
In moorland cottage, in crowded mart—
The wise may say it was folly's feather
That winged the hours: but we will not part.

"How much of life have you ransomed for us,
From hopeless labour, from bootless grief—
How oft did your rosy wings restore us
The fairy realms of our first belief
A land for whose changeless bloom and beauty,
No place in the wide world's chart was found;
The days are dreary with dust and duty;
Let us return to that goodly ground.

"What has the world in its stead to offer—
Her market morals—her lifeless lore—
Whose promise ends at the board and coffer,
The bribe of many, the blight of more.
We saw her winners amid their splendour,
The poor of heart the dull of brain;
And blessed our stars though the scrip was slender,
We have not gathered that heavy gain.

"The years that have weighed and found them wanting,
In whom the trust of our youth was strong—
The tares that were not of Nature's planting,
Yet choked the wheat of the soil so long—
The thought that rose above shrine and psalter,
To find the holy and seek the true—
They made us lonely by hearth and altar,
With friends and kindred, but not with you.

"The might of the fact went down before you,
Though homes were silent and graves were green,
Ye changed the times and ye turned the story
To all that was not, but should have been.
The far were nearest—the false were truest—
The dead returned with a deathless look—
And ever the old love proved the newest,
And memory opened a blotless book.

"Ye did not leave us for life's mischances,
Ye did not fail us for whitening hair,
But came with the same glad songs and glances
When the hearth was cold and the board was bare,
And told us we should be kings hereafter,
When life for a nobler goal would start—
Return with the mingled light and laughter
Of those good times and we will not part.

"'Tis blithe with the youth that never withers,
'Tis brave with the wealth that makes not wings;
And if in that realm our luckless brothers
Cast off the weight of time's heavier things,
We blame them not, they have taken part in
A joy unknown to our crafts and schemes:
The wish made wise and the hope made certain,
Are only found in the life of dreams."

From Chambers's Journal for February.

THE STORY OF AN ENGAGED YOUNG PERSON.

It seemed a very long journey that we poor parliamentary passengers were taking, in this early November weather, all the way from London to Liverpool. The stoppages were frequent enough, but of such short duration, that we had scarcely time to get ourselves warmed at the crowded grate before the inexorable bell rang for us to start again, and off we went with a shriek into the blinding fog. It was positively too dark to read with any comfort, even if one was so indifferent to the biting air as to lend one of his hands to hold the book up; we put both of them in our pockets instead, or more usually sat upon them, to keep them warm. It was only when the guard came from time to time to look at our tickets, and trod upon our feet, that we began to feel we had them, so dead they were with cold.

"Sir," observed a comical-looking tailor to this official, "your seats are so narrow to be sat upon after my cross-legged fashion, so please be careful; for although my toes are frozen, they will not bear."

This produced a laugh, and then arose a little talk, principally about how miserable we were, and then, as poor people use, we began to tell what our business was upon at Liverpool, were upon it seemed that half the carriageful at least were emigrants. Each had his say; and every tale, however roughly told, had more or less of interest, because it was real and human, so that we quite forgot our weariness and cold for a

little time. Then, since this had answered so well, the sprightly tailor proposed that one of the party should tell us a regular story, if his own life if he chose, but not only of his present circumstances, but of what had led to them—which was an idea we all received quite rapturously, expecting the tailor himself to begin. But he said no; we must draw lots for that. So producing some long slips of measuring-paper, he wrote a word on one, and shook them altogether in a hat, and sent it round. There was a great deal of giggling among the ladies, and a great deal of secret trepidation among the men, but for a long time nobody pulled out the fatal lot: at last a burst of laughter from those about one of the corner-seats announced that the victim had been selected, and that from among the ladies.

She was certainly the plainest of the female passengers. Her nose turned up, and her mouth had scarcely any turn at all; her hair was red, and so were the rims of her eyes; and her eyes themselves were far from being good ones; but there was a certain piquancy and sprightliness about her, too, as though she had been a French lady's maid rather than an English one. She looked as if she could put her hand and her well-rounded arm to anything, and had been very good-tempered and obliging throughout the journey. It was understood—it had been expressed, indeed, already rather triumphantly by the young lady herself—that she was an engaged young person, going out to Australia to be married; that there was a somebody waiting upon the other hemisphere with outstretched hands, yearning to receive her as his bride. She would be a capital wife for a settler without doubt, although perhaps in England we should have called her rather a settler for a wife. She seemed to know very well, indeed what we were all likely to think about this matter; but she didn't care.

If I had been better looking—she began her story with this—I might never have got a husband, or at least not the money to marry him upon, which is the same thing. The unsuitableness of my face to what I may be allowed to call a very tolerable figure, has been literally the means of bestowing happiness, as I hope, upon Joseph, and of putting £400 into my own pocket. And this was how it all came about: my late mistress, who was very kind to me, and had intended, poor thing—for she told me so—to leave me comfortably provided for, took me over with her, seven years ago, to Paris. She was a widow lady, fond of a gay life and brilliant amusements; and that place suited her so well, that she made it her home, and I, but little loath, remained there too. Joseph and I had kept company together before that time, but he was not so foolish as to wish me to give up my expectations for the sake of a hurried marriage; he said that he would wait patiently, dear fellow, although the great salt sea was to roll between us, and there could be no chance of his getting a letter more than once a day. He was a mason's assistant in London, and very hardy worked, it seemed, for he himself was not able to reply nearly so often; however, of course I was not a bird, that I could be in two places at once, so I made the best of it, and was as happy as a confidential lady's maid, under such circumstances, could hope to be.

One evening I had been preparing my mistress, who was a very splendid dresser, for the opera; my only fellow-servant was on leave of absence for some days; and except the porter in the courtyard, there was nobody, when the carriage had driven off that night, in the whole house save myself; therefore, having nothing better—or at least nicer—to do, and being in my mistress's bedroom among her beautiful robes and ornaments, it was hardly to be expected that I should resist such an opportunity of trying them on. The room, besides being charmingly hung with mirrors, had a delicious full-length swinging-glass, and before this I amused myself for a good long while. I beheld how Mademoiselle Elizabeth Martin—that is my present name, but dear Joseph's is Andrews—how she looked in bareges, in silks, in muslins, for the morning; and how lace and satin, and low sleeves, with pearls, became her for evening wear; finally, equipping myself in a particularly pleasant gait silk walking-dress, with a bonnet and falling veil fit for a bride, I could not help twisting round a little, to see as much of myself as possible, and contrasting the effect at the same time with that of madame—who was beautiful enough, but indifferently proportioned—I involuntarily remarked aloud; "Well, we may be plain in the face, but we are certainly unexceptionable behind." It was an absurd thing to say even to one's self, and I remember blushing like a beet, as though it were not quite out of the question that I could be overheard. There were several jewel-drawers—this ruby upon my middle finger, a ring belonging to my mistress's late husband, was in one of them—but I had no time for more than to set off a handsome necklace or two, and to very much regret that my ears had not been punched for the accommodation of an especial pair of diamond ear-rings, before I heard wheels in the courtyard, and my mistress came home. Everything had been put away very carefully, and I undressed her and saw her to bed as usual. She was more than commonly kind and gentle in her manner that night, as I have since thought at least; and when she wished

me her *bon soir*, she added: "I am sure we shall both be tired tomorrow, Bessie: so call me an hour later, and take an extra sleep yourself." I was never to hear my good mistress speak any more.

Did I dream that night that she had left me all her wardrobe, and that I was married in the glaze silk? Did I. Even in my sleep, build schemes of what I would do with the money that my dead mistress might enrich me with? No; as I hope for heaven, and to meet dear Joseph, with all my woman's vanity, I had my woman's heart too, beating true and warm, and I thought no shadow of evil. I told them so in court, when all looked black against me, and they believed me even there. But in that morning, late, when the sun was shining full upon the window, and the noise of the people going about their daily work was full and clear, I saw a frightful sight, a ghastly horror that the day but served to make more hideous and unnatural—my mistress murdered in her bed! No answer when I knocked; again no answer. The curtains at the bedside were close drawn, but through the open shutters a fiery flood of light fell red upon the carpet and the curtains—ay, and on the corner of the snow-white counterpane, red also. It was blood! I thought there had been a rain of blood; upon the handles of the drawers, upon the toilet-cover, on the dressing-case, upon the towels, in the basin—everywhere where the murderer's hands had been after their deadly work; and in the bed—I dared not look in the bed; but in that great swing-glass, where I decked myself but a few hours ago, I saw it all, and every mirror in the room was picturing the same sight—there lay the corpse, the murdered woman with her gaping throat. . . . They thought at first that I was murdered too, lying so stiff and cold in that death-chamber. I answered nothing to their questions, neither in the house nor in the prison. I knew nothing, nor could I have told them had I known, until Joseph came. It seemed to me then quite natural that he should be with me—nothing praiseworthy, nothing. (This dear little engaged young person's eyes began to get redder about the rims at this reminiscence, and her story to assume an incoherent as well as choky character.) I did not understand how much I owed him; how, not having heard from me for some time, and reading in the paper that an English lady's-maid had been taken up in Paris for a murder in the Rue St. Honore, but that she refused to speak, and even had perhaps in reality lost her senses, he started off at once, giving up his employ, and borrowing and begging what he could, and knowing no word of French but the name of that one street, he hurried to me: so that my mind came back again, and I could tell them what I knew. All he did, he said, was less than he ought to have done, because he had behaved ill to me of old (which, I am sure, dear Joseph never had, nor thought of doing). He stood by me in court—in the prisoners' place along with me he stood and shared my shame. I told about the jewels, and of my trying them on; how everything was safe, and the doors locked, and the Chamber-window too high to be climbed up to, though a man might have let himself down from it into the yard. And then I learned for the first time that all that afternoon and night the murderer had lain hidden under my mistress's bed; that he must have been there all that time—think of it?—that I was trying on the dresses and the ornaments; that there was murder waiting in that chamber all the while: it made me shudder even then, amidst that crowded court, with Joseph by me. They thought it very strange, they said, that since there was so much time before him between my mistress's departure and return, that he had murdered me instead. He had carried off all the jewels—those in the drawers as well as those which my poor mistress had worn that very evening; but from the moment he had dropped into the courtyard, the police could find no trace of him. A mere suspicion fell upon the brother of the gate-porter; but it was so vague that he was not put upon his trial. A great sum was offered in reward for the apprehension of the murderer, making up, with what was offered by my late mistress's family, nearly, £400. She died without a will, poor lady, and they were not disposed to give me anything beyond the wages due to me. After my acquittal, a collection for mine and Joseph's benefit was made by some good people; but the money only sufficed to bring us back to England. Joseph had to work out a heavy debt, incurred upon my account, and I went into service again at once, resolving to do my best to help him. At the end of two years, poor fellow, except that he had discharged his obligation, he was but little better off than at their beginning; and despairing of ever getting a living for us both in the old country, he sailed twelve months ago for Sydney. Whoever of us first got rich, it was arranged, should cross the seas after the other; and until very lately, it seemed that we might each stop where we were, engaged young persons, till we died.

I was nursery-maid in my new place, and was taking the youngest child across Hyde Park one afternoon, when I was followed by an impertinent man, I had my ugly on, for the sun was hot, so that my face might have been like Venus, for all he knew to the contrary;

and otherwise, I flatter myself I was not disagreeable looking. At all events, I attracted the wretch, who kept close behind me. He was an abominable person, with a foreign appearance—which I had reason enough for disliking—and eyes that looked different ways, but neither of them nice ways, so that I was glad enough to get in sight of the policemen about the marble arch. He saw that there was no time to be lost, if he meant to get a good look at me at all, so he passed me on a sudden very quickly, turned round, and looked up into my face. I gave him a very tolerable stare, too, because I knew it would disappoint him, after his great expectations; and it did so, and not only that, for it made him give a sort of villainous grin, which I hope I may never see again, and he broke out, as if he could not help it for the life of him, with, "Well, we may be plain in the face, but we are unexceptionable behind." I cried out, "Murder, and Police!" as loud as I could, and the man was secured at once. No human being except the one who had been under her bed, her murderer, could have known these words, which I had spoken alone before madame's toilet glass. He denied everything, of course, and said it was an unjust detention: but in little more than half an hour, a telegraphic message from the Paris authorities set his mind at ease in this respect, and demanded his presence in that city. He was the elder brother of the gate-porter, whom I had never before seen; and what I had to tell, in addition to the previous suspicions against him, procured his conviction. He was sent to the galleys for life. This ruby ring, which he wore upon his little finger, I identified as having been in the jewel-drawer that very night. It was bestowed upon me after the trial by the heir-at-law, and I obtained besides the £400 reward. If I had been pretty, you see, there would not have been any occasion for me to have remarked upon it that evening, and I might have remained, my whole life long, an engaged young person.

NEW WORKS.

From the Ocean Child; or Showers and Sunshine; a Tale of Girlhood. By Harriet Myrtle.

THE STORM.

It was dark night over the sea, and the waves broke on the beach with a sullen roar; but within Mrs. Howard's pretty cottage, on the beautiful Undercliffe of the Isle of Wight, all was bright, and warm, and cheerful. The drawing-room shutters were closed, the curtains drawn, the fire blazed merrily, the lamp was lighted, and Mrs. Howard herself sat at work at the table. She had such a kind, gentle face under her widow's cap, that it seemed to add to the comfort of the room to look at her. A little girl of six years old sat on a stool at her feet, looking up into the good-natured, sun-burnt face of a gentleman who occupied an arm-chair in the corner, and was telling her a story, to which she listened with the greatest attention and interest. This was little Chrissie, Mrs. Howard's only child, gentle, and sweet tempered, like her mamma, and the gentleman was Captain Howard, usually called by the name of "Uncle Harry." He was a sea-captain in the East-India service, and a very great favourite with all the boys and girls who had the good fortune to know him. He was an elder brother of Chrissie's papa, but so full of fun and play that she quite forgot his age; and only regarded him as a delightful companion. If only he could live with them instead of going to sea, Chrissie would have had nothing to wish for; but when he went she felt dull, and wished for a sister or brother to play with. It was true she had another uncle, who lived in a fine large house quite near, and he was married, and had a son and daughter; but then he was not at all like Uncle Harry. Uncle Howard seldom talked to her; and Aunt Howard looked very proud, and her silk dresses rustled, and Chrissie always felt shy when she came in; and Louisa was quite a young lady, for she was twelve, and did not care for play; and Charles went to school, and when he came home for the holidays, he somehow teased little girls, and laughed at them; so it never was so much pleasure to Chrissie to be with her cousins. But at the present moment she was perfectly contented, for here she was close to her mama, with the bright fire-light shining on her curly hair, and there was Uncle Harry, telling her a story; and she had a safe hour yet to enjoy, before the clock would strike eight, and nurse would come to take her off to bed.

Suddenly the story stopped; Mrs. Howard started to her feet, and Chrissie sprang into her arms, and clung round her neck. A peal of thunder, crashing like a discharge of artillery over their heads, followed by a blast of wind so violent as actually to make the cottage shiver, ebb among the rocks on the shore, and was lost in distant, hollow sound over the sea. There was something strange and awful in such a peal of thunder in winter; but it did not return—it was only one burst preceded by a vivid flash of lightning, which had not been seen in this warmly clo-