

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

THE NEW YEAR; OR, THE GUEST THAT CAME.

BY FRANCES BROWNE.

Old Ralph in the embers red and low
Was seeing his native dells,
Wide and green as he saw them last,
And the forty parting winters past,
Like a burden from his memory cast,
When the sound of distant bells
Came faint and far, like chimes astray
In the mighty sea of mist.
Which all that night on our city lay:
And, ere the good man wist,
A traveller, clad in a brave attire,
Sat there with him at his garret fire.

Old Ralph was a man of kindly mood,
Yet neither speech nor sign
Of cheer or welcome did he make;
Nor stir'd his fire for the stranger's sake,
Who thus in a wrathful whisper spake:
'For travellers of my line
Both Prince and priest have spread the feast,
When the world had blither times;
These days of thrift still spare a gift.
And the church-bells lend their chimes;
How is it, then, old man, with the
That thou hast not a word to say to me?'

'I have seen full seventy of thy kin,
Good traveller, come and part,
With change of time and change of cares,
The fret that wastes and the work that wears,
With many sorrows and many snares
And weariness of heart.
There's not a promise thou canst break
But was broken long ago;
There's nought of mine that thou canst take
But thy brethren have brought low.]
As theirs have been, thy days shall be:
Traveller! why should I welcome thee?'

Ralph's master, — whom he never saw,
Who did not know his man,
The owner of warehouse, mill and mine,
On the shores of Thames, and on the banks of
Tyne,

Was seeing shares in a Northern line,
When those far bells began;
There was no warning knock without,
No footstep on the stair,
O'er page and plan bent the busy man,
But the traveller, too, sat there,
With air as blythe, with speech as bold
As in Ralph's poor garret late and cold.

Fair and fine did that chamber shine
With the arts of East and West;
With broider'd curtain and pictured scene,
And busts that by ancient shrines had been,
But the self-same talk pass'd there between,
Ralph's master and his guest.
Of broken hopes and gathering fears
Spoke that man of goods and gain;
He reckon'd up his bygone years
In the toiler's cheerless strain,
And, with all his wealth around to see,
Said, 'Traveller! why should I welcome
thee?'

To hearths and homes in our million'd town,
The joyless and the bright,
That traveller came on his journey dim;
But in all its dwellings, gay and grim,
Know ye how many welcom'd him
With merrier cheer that night?
Yet blithe and kind he spake his mind—
'In my yet unmeasured days
There's hope for all and a world-wide call,
To better works and ways:
Than man, whatever thy fortunes be,
Arise from the past and welcome me.'

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

STEPHEN.

The sun shone brightly through the emblazoned windows, where ancient crests and arms of many quarterings—rich with gorgeous hues—danced their gay shadows on the floor, like a shattered rainbow, engraven as it fell, or as gems thrown in playful mood by fairy fingers; the same bright hues, quivering in the sunbeams, danced lightly among the grotesquely carved oak figures which formed the cornice of the general sitting-room of the old manor-house at B—. Mr Somerville, the owner of the place, was a kind-hearted, fine old gentleman, though somewhat testy; moreover, he had a particular aversion to having his evening nap disturbed by appeals to him as a magistrate, and yet at the same time, no one could be more tenacious of the power and dignity appertaining to the office; and while endeavouring to impress on the mind of the culprit a due respect for justice as the law, he seldom failed to instil a suitable regard for the justice as a man. Seated in a most luxurious chair, with one foot resting on the low ottoman, from which his daughter had just risen, where she had been reading to him the last article on the corn-law—the sweet evening breeze playing gently among the few gray locks which still shaded his temples—he had just fallen into a light slumber, when the door was opened, and a voice stratled him into wakefulness saying: 'Please, sir, Gracey Norton's little boy says you told him to come up to the house to-day.'

'To-day! to-day!—did I? But this is almost night—he must come again to-morrow; I cannot be so broken in upon during the few hours business leaves for repose; no, no—tell him he must—ah! well, stay, let him come in,

and a child of ten years old came forward into the room. His attenuated form and shrunken cheek betokened a sad want of nourishing food, and his scant yet clean clothing bespoke a long acquaintance with poverty; but his full, clear, intelligent eye, and firm, well-formed mouth, told of a spirit within capable of enduring the cares with which his young life had become familiar.

'Well, Stephen,' said Mr Somerville, leaning back in his chair, and bringing his other foot to bear upon the one already at rest—'well, what say the guardians? What will they allow your mother during her illness?' The boy hung down his head, and stooped to notice a beautiful little spaniel that stood by his side. 'Speak up, my boy; I don't hear you,' said the old gentleman, leaning forward.

'They won't give nothing, sir,' replied Stephen in a broken voice, but manfully checking the tears that were fast gathering in his eyes.

'Not allow anything? But I say they must, I say they—What reason did they give?'

'This little Carlo,' and the words burst forth in a sob.

'How?—what had Carlo to do with it?'

'They say,' returned the boy, now raising his eyes as if to ask for sympathy from the fair young girl who appeared to be gazing on him with some degree of interest—'they say they can't give nothing to mother, while we keep this; and again he stooped to meet the caresses of his little companion.

'Oh, the dog!—ay, certainly; very true; you must put away the dog. The parish cannot be expected to allow pay for the support of dogs.'

'He never eats nothing of mother's share,' said the child deprecatingly; 'tis only a bit of what her gives to me.'

'Ay, that's it, the dog eats what you ought to have, and what your mother can barely spare. Yes, yes—you must part with the dog, without a doubt; perhaps you could sell it, for it is a pretty little thing, and the money would then buy bread for your mother.' The poor boy now took the dog up in his arms, and pressed him fondly to his breast, but said not a word. 'Go to Martin,' continued Mr Somerville; 'perhaps he may be able to put you in the way of selling him; but get rid of him you must.'

Large tears now rolled down the pale cheeks of the poor child as he murmured: 'he has been like a little brother to me'; and he pressed him still closer in his arms. There was a pause; Mr Somerville coughed; and the boy continued; 'Squire Thompson gave him to father to drown when he was a little blind pup, but I begged him of father, and he has never been away from me since, night nor day; and indeed, indeed he never, almost never has had more than half of what mother gave me for breakfast.'

'Yes, yes—I see; he gets half your breakfast, and, I suppose, half your dinner and supper too.'

'I never have any dinner, nor any supper, only sometimes,' said the child meekly, but not murmuringly.

'No dinner, and scarcely ever any supper, and yet you give the dog half your breakfast! This must not be. I must speak to your mother; and she must see to the disposal of the dog, if only for your sake.'

The child's face became of an ashen hue; but he said firmly; 'Please, sir, what death is the easiest?'

'Death, child!' exclaimed Mr Somerville, fancying the boy was contemplating suicide—'why speak of death?'

'Because I would, I think—yes, I think—I'm sure I'd rather kill him. I know he'd never be happy with nobody; and if he was buried, nobody could beat him, anyhow.'

'True; but suppose I buy him myself?'

Poor Stephen stood for a moment as if paralysed, and then a happy thought seemed to arise for his pale cheek became tinged with faint colour, and his eye brightened, as he eagerly exclaimed; 'Would you please to buy me instead, sir?'

'Buy you, child! How so?'

'If you would buy me, sir, mother would have the money all the same, and I could work—I can work, sir, though I look but weakly—drawing himself up to his full height, and giving a firmer swell to his chest. 'I could weed, and run errands—I run very fast, sir—I could tend the cows, and do many things for the money; but Carlo couldn't do nothing, you know sir.'

'Very logically considered,' said Mr Somerville smiling; 'and as to your work, my boy, we will see if we can find employment for you by and by; but at present—there, put down the dog, and leave him with me; and here'—throwing a sovereign on the table—'is what will do your mother more service than fifty dogs.'

The boy stood pale and still as death, save only that he strained his little favourite closer and closer in his arms; while the poor little animal, as if conscious of impending evil, nestled his low head in the bosom of his master with a sickly wailing cry of distress.

'Come, take up that,' said Mr Somerville, pointing to the sovereign; 'and tell your mother that—'

'O not for that thing—not for that,' burst forth from the child, as he pushed the coin away far from him. 'Oh, mother, dear, dear mother! if it must be, let it be for food, for wine, for something to save the life of my mother, but not for that cold glittering thing!'

Big tears chased each other down his sunken cheeks while he spoke; but he soon brushed them hastily away, and then, as if gathering up all his strength for the inevitable sacrifice, he walked quickly across the room to where Miss Somerville was sitting, placed the dog, the sole treasure of his heart and life on her lap, and in a voice hoarse with emotion almost whispered; 'O comfort him, lady, when I am gone,' and rushed out of the room, leaving the price of his sacrifice behind him.

Food and wine were sent from the manor-house without delay, for the use of the sick woman; and faithfully and tenderly did the young boy keep watch over her fitful slumbers, and administer from time to time the restoratives he had so painfully obtained; but not a morsel of that food could he taste himself; it was the price of all that had given a charm to his simple life. Not a word, however, reached that mother's ear, not a sign met her eye, which could betray that he had parted with his all of possession for her sake, but as returning strength and power of observation began to dawn, she saw that the smile, the light of his heart, was gone. His time, his thought, his strength, were all devoted to her comfort, but where was the buoyant step, the gleesome laugh, the frolic wild, the warm bright hope, that even poverty's cold grasp could never chill? Ay, where? She wondered and grieved, but knew not that the companion of his wanderings, the promoter of his playfulness, the sharer of his bed and board—the only thing, save herself, he had to love, the only thing that loved him—was gone. Too weak, listless, and almost senseless to all around, she had not at first noticed the still loneliness of the pale spiritless boy at her side.

Day by day, the cheek of poor Stephen became pale and more pale, from his constant vigils by his mother's bedside, and the hunger that would not appease itself at so costly a price; when, one evening, just as the sky was deepening into the sober gray of twilight, the door, which had been left ajar, was suddenly pushed open, and Carlo with one bound was at his master's feet. The fond caresses and softened tones of Stephen soon restored the attached animal to all his former joyous gambols, but the boy's tears, so long restrained, now fell unchecked, till, as a shadow crossed the threshold, he turned and saw Miss Somerville standing in the doorway. Stephen gasped for breath. 'O indeed, indeed I did not coax him here, I didn't steal him. O I wish he was dead! Let him be dead.'

'No, no, Stephen,' returned Miss Somerville in a kindly tone, 'the dog is much better alive. I brought him here, because I thought you would like to see him. The truth is, the other dogs at the manor-house look upon him as an interloper, and I do not think he relishes the fare there half so well as when he shared your breakfast; he has often refused a part of my own.'

'Perhaps the crusts wasn't hard nor dry enough,' observed Stephen.

'Perhaps not,' replied Miss Somerville, smiling at the naive betrayal of his own hard fare, 'so I think I must get you to take charge of him for me, and I shall pay you for his board. When your mother is well enough to part with you, I want your help in my flower-garden; and then you can bring Carlo, as on a visit to me; but his home must be here.' Stephen drew a long breath, but did not attempt to speak, and Miss Somerville continued; 'My father says also, that when, by your work, you have fairly earned the value of the purchase-money, the dog is to be your own again.'

'My very own?' exclaimed Stephen inquiringly, while every drop of his blood seemed rushing to his brow. Oh, was she woman or angel? Stephen scarcely knew; but he felt as though he could kneel to her, and with the dog so firmly, fondly clasped in his arms, that no living thing unused to such treatment could have borne it; his tearful eyes told the grateful thanks his quivering lips vainly strove to utter. He soon, however, recovered his usual bearing, and his boyish form seemed to expand, his height increase, as he drew himself up, with the proud consciousness that he could make himself worthy of his hire. Need it be said that Mr Somerville's apparent purchase of the dog was merely a wish to ascertain whether, with his deep affection for the little creature, Stephen had sufficient strength of mind to sacrifice that which was so dear to him, on the principle of love and duty to his mother. How proud, how very proud was Stephen when he once more stood before Mr Somerville in the same room where he had endured the first great trial of his young life!—proud, yet grateful, as he counted out each bright shilling, to make up the repurchase of the little fond creature that had always been 'as a brother to him.'

'Well, Stephen,' said Mr Somerville, gathering up the silver, 'I see that you have fairly earned your recompense, the dog is yours again; but, knowing how anxiously you have desired this, I am somewhat surprised, as, by my own calculations, you might have made a much earlier claim.'

'I always gave mother half of every week's pay,' said the boy colouring, as if fearful of blame. 'I thought it would be wicked to take all for Carlo, and nothing for mother.'

'Very right, my boy. I see you are fond of half things, even to half a breakfast. Well, these shillings I shall keep; but you shall take this—holding out a sovereign—'to your mother, and tell her from me, my boy, that she is richer in having you for a son than I am with all the wealth you see around me.'

HANDSOMELY REWARDED.

As a specimen, a short extract may be given, illustrating how a finder of £5,000 may be rewarded.

I had just time to erect my collar and arrange my hair, when the servant re-entered the room. 'Please, Mr Lobb says, are you the man from Bulb's the florist's?' Was I the man?—the man? You might have knocked me down with a feather, with a hair, with nothing! To have found a pocket book containing a fortune; to have restored that fortune and redeemed a person from bankruptcy, beggary—the workhouse perhaps, and then to be called 'a man.' Oh, the terrible coldness, the crushing ingratitude of that word! I gasped for breath, and said sternly:—'Young woman, I am not the man from Bulb's the florist's. Tell your master that I am the gentleman who found his pocket-book.' To be called 'a man'—to be supposed capable, perhaps, of carrying roots in a basket, or of calling for a carriage! I looked at the royal misfits and drew a dagger—in the air. Presently the tide of my indignation was arrested by the rustle of a silk dress on the stairs. It was she! Emily! ha! coming herself to bid me welcome—perhaps—perhaps to embrace me. Just one glance at the glass, and I was ready to receive her. 'Where is he?' I heard her ask in the passage. What rich melodious tones! what sweet utterance! In another instant the door opened, and a female figure appeared in the entrance. I stood rooted to the spot, speechless, confounded. She advanced towards me, holding out her hand, and ere I could rush forward to meet her, she spoke:—'Oh, you are the poor man who found papa's pocket-book. Papa is very much obliged to you, and desires me to give you this.' I held out my hand mechanically and allowed something to be dropped into it; but the horrible obliquity of Miss Lobb's vision, the redness of her nose, and the fearful scragginess of her neck, kept me spell-bound. At last I looked in my hand, and found reposing in its palm half-a-crown! How I found my way to the door, how I gained the open air, I know not; but I found myself on the gravel walk, still holding the half-crown in my hand.—Awaking, as it were, from a dream, I looked to the drawing-room windows, blazing with light; and without a moment's thought, and in obedience to a sudden and irresistible impulse, I seized the half-crown between the finger and thumb of my right hand, and throwing all the humiliation, indignation and passion which struggled within me into my right arm, I pitched that half-crown right through the centre window. I heard a crash, a shout and a scream, and the next instant I was in the lane.—From the National Magazine.

THE GAUGER TRICKED.

The gauger accordingly prepared to take his plaid, and carry his threat into execution; but Jean sprang to her feet with a smile, exclaiming, 'A bonny ane ye are to seek, an' my big ginel there, that ye've forgotten; but honest folk are aye ready for a' comers.' So, unlocking the great kist, whose ponderous lid, she raised with some difficulty, she held up a burning spunk, and invited a nearer inspection of the contents. Now, Jean knew perfectly well that in a corner of this convenient receptacle there was a very small heap of malt, the remains of their old store, and that, except this and an old plaid, there was nothing else in the chest. Quick as thought, the supervisors eye caught sight of the malt, and he eagerly leaned over the ginel to be sure of the fact; but quicker still did the treacherous fair one execute a purpose cherished and matured in her thoughts ever since the gauger's appearance; for to warm and comfort him, and send him down the glen happy and cheery, was no part of the reception which she thought was merited at her hands by one of his culling. Jean was, as we have said, taller and stronger than most women; so, taking the opportunity of the gauger's attention being fixed on the malt, in much less time than it takes to tell, she caught him round the waist, deposited him at the bottom of the ginel with a thump, which took the breath out of his body, banged down the lid with such hearty good-will, that the spring lock closed; and Mr Wilson, swear and rage as he might, was as fairly caught as ever rat was in a trap. Setting her arms akimbo, Jean burst into such peals of laughter that the old walls rang again; the more the unlucky prisoner stamped and kicked, the heartier she laughed. 'Let me oot, let me oot, Jean, darling! I'll gie ye a pound note gin ye'll let me oot,' screamed he. 'Na, na, my bonnie wee mannie; see ye thocht to fleech an' daff wi' big Jean o' the glen, a' to get word against her auld father an' his friends frae her. Ye meesrable wee creatur, ye can breathe fine through the cracks o' my auld kist, an' there ye sail bide till yer ain twa lads come. Think o' them catchin' ye there, hidden awa in a lassie's ginel! Odsake, but I'm fit to burst wi' laughin', and Jean suited the action to the word by redoubled merriment. She laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks and between the joyous peals continued—'Wow, gauger lad! but ye think to see me in your tour; hae ye a bonnie muckle kistie for melike that ane? But I'm no willin' to hae your death on my hands, see I'll e'en leave the key on the tap o' ye for yer men when they come. Gin I were to let ye starve, you'd be an awsome ugly bogle to be coming' about the bothy!'—Jessie Cameron.

THE LOSS OF THE HOLIDAYS.

With all its gains of wealth and knowledge, and mechanical invention, our age is rapidly