

## Literature. &amp;c.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

## A DAY AGO.

BY CHARLES SWAIN.

A day ago is but a spark sublime,  
Of all the circling East unfolds;  
Yet who that lives can measure time—  
Who span the worth a moment holds?—  
Who tell how full of human tears—  
How dark with weariness and woe  
An hour may prove? Some speak of years;  
I speak but of a day ago!

A day!—a thing but few regard—  
A drop upon the stream of life—  
A flower upon the summer sward,  
Where thousand other flowers are rife!  
Yet o'er the dial of our fate  
There is a finger moving slow;—  
How long 'twill move what tongue can state:  
What's death was life a day ago?

Ah! solemn task, to teach the soul  
The value of a moment's space;  
Our thoughts and wishes to control,  
And look on Truth with fearless face!—  
To strip from Hope its rainbow drest,  
Its false, false glitter, and its show:  
All life—to Man—is littleness!—  
All time—to God—a day ago!

Use time—and use it wisely, then;  
Esteem it at its proper worth;  
Ner say, were years to come again,  
We would act differently on earth:  
Be grateful for the bounties sent,  
And patient when they cease to flow;  
Soon—soon—we learn how much is meant  
By those brief words—A day ago!

From Titan.

## SOMETHING THAT WAS TO OUR ADVANTAGE.

BEHIND the tall gentleman had come out another little bald man, who from the circumstance of his being without a hat, and having a pen in his hand, we judged, and rightly too, to be Mr Burrows. He knew who we were, for the clerk had taken in our card, and he addressed us at once very courteously indeed, and invited us to come into his own room, which we did. Had we a fortnight before had the gift of second sight to see what was likely to happen, I am sure neither of us would or could have believed we would be in London, and sitting in a solicitor's office, too, with such a weighty business to look into; and when this all passed through my mind, I felt so strangely excited, that it was very well for us both Sister Anne was so calm and so deliberate. This I thought for a moment, but the next Mr Burrows was speaking, and I felt that even with Anne there it was my duty to try and understand what was said. So I was very attentive while Mr Burrows explained that the gentleman from India was gone down to Coombe Haldon to collect information, and would not be back for two days more; but we might call on the third, and we should have all particulars.—'There might be, he said, about thirty thousand pounds, when all the expenses had been paid; 'quite enough,' he laughed, rubbing his hands, 'to come to London for Miss Hooper.' And then he asked about the Bible, if we had brought it up with us, as indeed we had, for Sister Anne had tied it carefully in brown paper, and brought it in her arms this very morning, for fear, she said, any robber might break into the Golden Sheaf while we were out. All this time I wondered she never spoke, never answered Mr Burrows one word. I would greatly have liked to ask some questions, but knew how improper it would be for me to open a conversation with any gentleman before my sister led the way, so I sat silent also. Perhaps Mr Burrows wondered we did not say anything. I am sure he must, for he tried a new subject, to bring about some conversation, I dare say; for he left off speaking to Anne and turned to me.

'You know the gentleman who just now went out, your cousin?'  
I said 'No;' but Anne said, in a hoarse, strange voice, 'Yes, I do, I do; I did five-and-twenty years ago—Cousin Mark Layton. O! how changed, but so changed that I would not know him among a thousand—Cousin Mark!'

When I looked at her, she was shaking from head to foot. I suppose Mr Burrows thought it was her usual way of speaking, for he went on quite unconcerned. 'He too is a claimant.'

'I thought him dead; I thought him dead!' said Anne, more strangely even than she had spoken before.

Still I wondered, and still Anne looked as rigid as if she had forgotten all we had come for; and I began to fear she was losing sight of all the important points we had written down that morning before we left our hotel, that we wanted information upon; but, as she had now spoken, there was no reason why I should not. So I took the parcel containing the Bible from her arms, and as she did not resist, or so much as look at me to forbear, I took courage and went on. I untied the string, and took out

various family documents that we had slipped in at the fly-leaf, in case they would be of any use, and Mr Burrows and I looked them over.

After some close examination he then said, 'Had the late Mr Eaglesthorpe, your grandfather, any family by his second marriage?'

'He had, I answered; 'our mother was one.'

He looked very grave, and said, 'I fear I have brought you up to London on a false expectation, but until Mr Demfall returns I cannot precisely say; it is only since he left town I came to know Mr Eaglesthorpe had been twice married, and I fear the will says something of the children of John Eaglesthorpe and Rebecca his wife, in which case you are excluded. But do not be quite discouraged, for I am not certain of the words of the will. There is a Mr Thornberry to appear on behalf of his mother. You know them?'

I said, 'Mr Thornberry's father had been a cotton-spinner, and my father had never liked it, so we knew nothing of them.—But that Mrs Thornberry was of the first family; I knew.'

We had a good deal of talk after this, and still Sister Anne never spoke, but sat sometimes trembling from head to foot, and then relapsing into that rigid state. In all my life I had never felt so puzzled how to act, I was afraid to talk much to Mr Burrows, for I feared the reprimand Anne would be sure to give me afterwards for being forward in talking with gentlemen; and still my sister's strange behaviour seemed to throw the necessity on me. Had she been merely stiff, I would have thought she was dignified, but that trembling baffled me completely. When Mr Burrows made an apology, and said he had an appointment at the Temple, and he hoped we would excuse him, I saw our visit was at an end; indeed I had waited a long time for Anne to move. To talk so much was quite bad enough, breach enough—to make the first move was a liberty too great to be even dreamed of; but Mr Burrows rose and took his hat, and somehow, though to this day I never know how, we reached the street; perhaps in my confusion I rose up; I cannot say; but as Anne never mentioned the subject, I hope I did nothing wrong.

By the time we reached the Golden Sheaf, our dinner was ready, and we had no conversation until the waiter left the room, and then Anne left her seat at the table, and took one at the fire. Half-an-hour passed, and then I said something about the child, little Fanchette whom we had seen that day. Something in what I said (I never could remember what it was) seemed to unlock the doors of Sister Anne's heart, for all at once she rose from her chair, sat down on the hearth-rug, and bowing her head on my knee, wept very bitterly, for what seemed to me a long time. It was such a new sight, and I was so grieved to see Anne suffer, and I knew so badly what to do or say, that I cried too, not so bitterly, but very heartily, and now and then I stroked her thin, grey-streaked hair, and said, 'Dear Anne!' as soothingly as I could.

After a time her voice got clearer, and lifting her head she said, 'Dear Margery, it is so long ago, and yet when I saw him to-day, it seemed like yesterday.'

I began to understand it a little now. It was Cousin Mark, the man we had seen come out of Mr Burrows' room. And then by slow degrees, by little and little, she went on to tell me how long ago, very long ago, when I was a child, she and Cousin Mark had loved each other. She used to go every summer while our grandfather lived to Coombe Haldon, and there one time she met Mark Layton, the orphan son of my mother's sister; and there through successive years they met, though no one thought she was more interested in him than in any one else there. It was all very happy for a time, but at last people began to say how unworthy they had found Mark Layton to be. I was when she flushed angry, and took his part so violently in his absence that our grandfather suspected how it was, and wrote for my father to come down. They laid before her every proof of his wickedness, every species of sin, and every breach of the law; they told her how for his dead mother's sake they had borne so long, and tried him so often, but that it must be no longer; to Coombe Haldon he must never come again. Still she was unmoved, and believed in him through it all. She would ever trust him, so she told them, and so she told him, and he promised to deserve her if he lived for a few years more, and he would come back to win her before all the world. And she had believed him, in all the boundlessness of a woman's faith; and when he came not back again, she believed him dead; and until to-day had thought him so; and now, after twenty-five years, he had come to life again, to crush dead forever the life of love she had nurtured for him in that strong warm heart all these years. Since the death of our grandfather she had never been to Coombe Haldon, for having no son, the Eaglesthorpe property passed to a distant relative who had taken the family name.—How all through this time she had never breathed these things to me, I marvelled; but I thought, if she had let me share her love all these years, as I did her grief now, it would not be so hard to soothe her. But I was thankful that she at last saw for herself how false he had

been. His dark vindictive countenance and heavy hanging brows rose before me, and made me speculate as to the truth of physiognomy.

Two days passed slowly by; we were both tired of London, and longing for the home-feel of our own house gave, and the routine of employment we could follow there, which I hoped would be better help towards my sister's healing, than the inert hours we filled as we best could in this dreary hotel. It was the evening of the third day, pretty late in it too, and we had been wondering when, and wishing to each other that, this visit would be over, when the waiter brought up to us a gentleman's card who he said was waiting below. He hoped we would excuse the lateness of the hour, but his business was urgent. It was Mr Burrows and he was shown up. He reiterated the apology the waiter had brought, and then, after a moment's hesitation, said, 'I am come ladies to ask your sympathies, and, indeed, assistance.'

He paused; and we, not knowing what was coming, sat silent.

'Your cousin, Mr Layton—' he went on.

Anne fixed her eyes on the carpet, and neither moved nor spoke.

'What of him?' I asked.

'Do you not know?' he said. 'He is very ill, very ill, in this house.'

'In this house?' I cried; 'how came he here?'

'As you did, waiting the decision of this property.'

'We did not know he was under the same roof with us,' I murmured scarcely knowing what to say.

'Is he dead?' spoke Anne, so abruptly that I started.

'No, ma'am, but he soon will be, or the doctors, as well as I, are mistaken.'

'Is it so bad? What is it?' I asked.

'His habits were, I fear not good; I fear he was given to intemperance; but inflammation has attacked his brain; he cannot survive the night.' No one spoke. 'Can you guess what I come to you for? I know no other relatives he has in London; indeed, until a week or so ago, I know nothing of him. He is dying, that is plain; but then there is the child; she is lying on the bed beside him: I cannot move her, and she must be taken away. Will you do this for to-night, until I can see further? Though they are no concern of mine, personally, I cannot see the child suffer as she is doing.'

I rose from my chair. 'Mr Burrows, I am ready.'

'No,' said Sister Anne, 'I will go for her myself.'

I followed her, as led by Mr Burrows; we traversed long passages, and went up several flights of stairs. At the door of a bedroom we stopped. Sister Anne shrunk back; until that moment it had not occurred to her how Cousin Mark would look at her intrusion. As we stood, we could hear his voice, screaming, shouting, cursing, swearing, each expression being more blasphemous than the preceding one.

Mr Burrows understood her hesitation. 'He is quite delirious,' he said, and knows no one; do not be afraid of him either. I will stand with you until the child comes.

As we stood, silence suddenly fell within the room. Mr Burrows stepped forward and went into the room, leaving us standing there. Sister Anne leaned against the door-post; I watched her with such an anxious heart. Presently Mr Burrows came out. 'He is in a heavy sleep; it is a good time.'

We went in, and for a minute Anne looked at the sleeping man, and I also. To see that dark, coarse face, with its wicked, fierce expression, heightened by the matted, tangled hair that hung about it, made my blood stand still and a sorrowful heart for my poor sister's delusion, that had worshipped such an image all those years, made me fear that I, her only sister, might grow to hate one she had loved so well. Fanchette lay on the outside of the clothes, with her head upon the pillow, beside her father, her bright eyes passing from one to the other, as if she knew what our object was in coming there. All our efforts failed to move her; she resisted them all, and at last we had reluctantly to abandon the attempt. We went outside the door to consult with Mr Burrows, what was best to be done. He was obliged to leave, and he feared the sick-nurse would not be care-taker enough to quiet my sister's fear; for we agreed to wait until the child fell asleep, and then remove her carefully and tenderly. I was not prepared, after Anne's nervousness during the past three days, to see her so calm and strong, but she told Mr Burrows she would wait with the nurse, and he need not have any fears for her; she had none for herself. So Mr Burrows thanked us, said 'Good-night,' and we turned back into the room.

At the end of half-an-hour we were all there still. The fire had burned low, down to a heap of glowing cinders without any blaze; the nurse dozed in an arm-chair, and the little child still lay with waking eyes, watching us all, but gradually seeming more and more drowsy. I laid a plaid over her to keep her warm, and then sat down on a low stool by the bed, where I could see the sick man's face, and my poor sister's too, who sat in the same rigid way I had so often lately seen her do, with her eyes also

fixed on the wreck that lay before us. The wind whistled in the chimney, and the rain beat against the window panes without, a dreary accompaniment to the heavy breathing of the sleeper within. The man (I cannot bring myself to call him 'cousin,' as Anne did, for such he never was to me, though it looks unkind to my dear sister to disown him thus) was sleeping so soundly, I began to ponder whether I could not induce Sister Anne to go to bed, and wishing more than ever the child would sleep, when we were all aroused by the figure in the bed springing up suddenly and screaming for help. Anne and I shrunk back out of his sight; the nurse, startled from her doze, flew over to the bed. He tried to say something for some minutes, but could not; at last he screamed, 'I am dying—I am dying!' and when no answer came, 'and you know it.' With glaring eyes, he strove and struggled for speech again; it seemed a long time, but it might have been a few seconds; at last he gasped out, 'A small carpet-bag—bring it, I say, woman.' She searched the room, it seemed fruitless, for still he screamed. At last I recollected having seen a small bag hanging at the back of the door. I looked; it was there still; and keeping out of sight, I handed it to the nurse. 'Open it,' he yelled; 'empty it out.' She did so, and a number of letters and loose papers fell on the floor. 'Put them in the fire, all of them.' She hesitated. 'Burn them!'

He was growing hoarse with the effort he was making. There was nothing else for it; the nurse heaped them on the red coals, they caught quickly and blazed instantaneously; the draught of the chimney sucked them up, and one by one each black and red glowing mass, floating up, and out into the night air, passed away. I longed to save them, even a few; as regarded the child they might be of value; but it could remain but a wish under such circumstances. While they burned, their owner sat up in bed, watching with frightful eagerness their consumption, and when the fierce flame, had caught them all, he gave one triumphant yell and fell back insensible.

His loud voice had startled the child from the sleep she had half fallen into, and sitting up, she cried in a frightened voice, 'O papa! O papa!' almost blinded by her pretty hair falling over her face and by her tears.

I saw how soon now all would be over, and I longed to get Sister Anne away, but how I knew not, and move the child seemed utterly hopeless. The nurse appeared to understand what I wanted, and made signs the little girl was so frightened she would be glad to come.—So I stole up to Anne and said, softly, 'Sister, you and I must take away the child now.—She looked at me, as if she hardly understood me, but when I lifted the little one she rose also and followed me. We sat down in our own room, the little one clinging to me, still sobbing in a low voice. Sister Anne neither moved nor spoke. Presently my little charge fell asleep, and I carried her softly in my own room, and put her in bed, and when I came back Anne was quietly crying by our own fire. I sat down too, and waited, and after a time of her own accord she spoke: 'Cousin Mark—Cousin Mark, is this the end!' It was said so bitterly, and I tried to say something soothing, but words would not come, so we had another long silence. And then we talked a little now and then till daybreak, when I got Anne to go to bed, and she fell asleep.

After breakfast came Mr Burrows. I saw him and we talked about the funeral. It was no use to think about sending for relatives; he had no near ones. Mr Thornberry and ourselves were equally near. Together Mr Burrows and I looked over Mark's trunks; but, whether it was that all trace had been destroyed by the burning of the papers, or what, I know not, we could discover no trace of where he had lived, or how, those twenty-five years; but from what he had himself told Mr Burrows, we feared nothing good or creditable could be made known.

In his coat-pocket we found two or three bank-notes, enough to defray all the expenses incurred; and in a pocket-book, in which they were, we found the copy of his marriage register, at New Orleans, to a Frances de Saïelle; also of little Fanchette's baptism at Paris, and some bills dated about three weeks back, of the funeral of his wife at Boulogne.

Now it was come to his own funeral, and Mr Burrows promised to communicate with Mr Thornberry, in case he would choose to give directions about the interment of his deceased relative. But that day it had been discovered that Mr Thornberry, in right of his mother, and no other, was entitled to the thirty thousand pounds! and he seemed to think it very odd Mr Burrows should annoy him at such a time with such communications. Certainly, unfortunate Mark could not have deserved worse epithets than his cousin bestowed upon him. He should have dealt gently with the dead, although he had long known, and had experienced often, Mark's want of probity. There was nothing else for it, so sister Anne and I bought mourning, and followed little Fanchette's father to the grave. Poor little soul, she was an orphan, and a most friendless one: and, when Anne and I talked the matter over, we wished very much to take her back to