Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

HARVEST HYMN FOR 1857.

BY MARTIN F. TUPIER.

O Father merciful and good!
O Giver ever kind,
Who feedest us with daily food
For body, soul and mind;
We worship Thee! we bless Thee!
We praise Thee evermore;
And heartily confess Thee,
The God whom we adore!

How thick with corn between the hills,
The laughing valleys stand!
How plenteously Thy mercy fills
The garners of our land!
And therefore will we raise Thee
Our humble anthem thus;
And, sinful children praise Thee
For all thy love to us!

As year by year in ceaseless love
Thy bounty never fails;
But still the blessing from above,
O'erflow our hills and dales,—
So truly we adore Thee,
Thou Giver of all good!
And offer now, before Thee,
Thy people's gratitude.

From the London Family Herald.

THE SOLDIER'S SON,

OR THE TRIUMPH OF VIRTUE.

Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days.

'Shall I take your baggage, sir?' said an intelligent-looking boy to a traveller, who had just arrived at one of the principal hotels at B——,

'My servant takes charge of it,' replied the gentleman.

Struck with the peculiar expression of his countenance, as the boy retired, the gentleman flung him a piece of money. The boy looked at it with hesitation, and his pale cheek reddened to crimson. Picking it up, he approached the traveller with an air of embarrassment, 'Excuse me, sir,' he said, 'I sought employment not alms.'

'True, my little son,' replied the gentleman, laughing; 'but you will not return so small a trifle on my hands.'

The boy stood for a moment in silence; his young spirit evidently recoiled from the idea of appropriating the humiliating gift. He remained twirling it in his fingers. There was an expression of mingled haughtiness and gratitude in his manly features, and his slender form assumed all the regular attitudes of indecision. At this moment a beggar approached, and his countenance brightened. 'Permit me,' said he, bowing gracefully to the traveller—'permit me to transfer your bounty,' presenting the coin to the humble mendicant, he instantly disappeared.

This little incident made a strong impression on the mind of the stranger. Two days afterwards he distinguished the elastic figure of the boy amongst a group of labourers. Pleased at again seeing him, he immediately approached him. 'May I ask your name my young acquaintance?' he inquired, in a tone of kindness.

'Wilder Lee,' replied the boy; and he still continued to ply the instrument of labour with increasing dilligence.

Our traveller, whose name was Wilton, looked at him with increased interest. The extreme beauty of his countenance, its marked expression of high and noble feeling, strongly contrasted with the coarseness of his dress and the rudeness of his employment.

'Have you no parents?' inquired Mr Wilton.

'I have a father,' replied the boy.

'And what is his vocation?' further interrogated Mr Wilton.

'He is a worn out soldier, sir,' replied the boy, and he applied himself to his task with an intensity that seemed intended to prevent any further interrogation.

The tenacious stranger, however, was not to be shaken off. 'Do you live with your father?' he inquired.

'Certainly sir,' replied the boy.

'And where?' pursued Mr Wilton.

The boy pointed in silence to a decayed and miserable-looking dwelling. Mr Wilton sighed. A keen November blast, which at the moment whistled around him, told him the inadequacy of such a shelter. 'A soldier,' he mentally exclaimed; 'and perhaps his blood has been shed to secure the rights of those who now revel in luxury.'

A few hours afterwards, he knocked at the door of the shattered habitation. If an interest in the father had been already awakened by the son, it was at once confirmed by the appearance of the old man now before him. He raised his head slowly from his staff, on which he was leaning, at the entrance of the stranger, and discovered a countenance on which the lines of sorrow and suffering were distinctly traced. Still, there was something in his high though furrowed brow, that told his affinity with the proud Wilder; and the ravages of infirmity had not altogether robbed his wasted form of the dignity of the soldier.

'Will you pardon the intrusion of a stranger?' said Mr Wilton. 'I have been led hither merely to chat a little with an old veteran.'

'He who comes to cheer the solitude of darkness must be welcome,' said the old man.

Mr Wilton now perceived that he was entirely blind. The events of his life, however, afforded an easy clue to conversation, and they chatted without effort.

'I would,' said Mr Wilton, 'that all who have assisted in our glorious struggles might individually share the prosperity they have confirmed to our nation. I fear, however, that there are many whose blood cemented the proud fabric, that are themselves left in want and obscurity.'

'True,' said the old man; the decayed soldier, whose strength was wasted in the conflict has but little for himself at home. But I trust his posterity will reap the harvest he has sown.'

'You have a son worthy of such a harvest,' said Mr Wilton. 'Is the youth called Wilder your only one?'

'The last that survives of a large family,' said the veteran. 'He alone, the child of my old age, has been spared to save me from utter dependence.'

'Have you been long deprived of sight?' asked Mr Wilton.

'Only two years,' replied the veteran.

'And during that period you have had no resource but the labour of your son?'

'None,' he replied. 'But the wants of a soldier are few, and the filial piety of my boy renders him cheerful under every privation that affects only himself. He labours incessantly, and I have no regret but that of seeing him thus fettered to servitude.'

'I would,' said Mr Wilton, with enthusiasm, 'I would I could place him in a sphere more suited to his worth! With the advantages of education he would become an ornament to society. But this, under your peculiar circumstances, he cannot have, even in an ordinary degree.'

'But for his taste for learning,' said the old soldier, 'he must have been utterly destitute.—There were hours, however, when he could not labour, and as these were always devoted to study, he has gradually acquired its common principles.'

The entrance of Wilder himself interrupted the conversation. He had brought some little delicacies for his father, the profits of his day's labour.

'I have just been thinking,' said Mr Wilton, 'of making some arrangements, with the approbation of your father, for your future establishment. I grieve to see a boy of promise thus losing the spring time of life.'

'You forget sir,' said Wilder, respectfully bowing, 'that I can accept no proposal, however advantageous, that would seperate me from my father.'

'Certainly not, in his present situation,' said Mr Wilton; 'but I have friends here who will readily assist me in making a suitable provision for his support: and you may then be put to a business that will secure you a future competence.'

'Impossible, sir,' replied Wilder. 'My father can have no claims like those on his son. 'Tis but a short time since my weakness required his support; and shall I now transfer the duties of filial gratitude to the hand of charity?' Mr Wilton knew not what to reply. 'Do not think me ungrateful for your proffered kindness,' continued the boy, while his dark eyes swam in tears, and every trace of pride suddenly gave place to the liveliest expression of gratitude. 'I feel most deeply your solicitude for my interest; but indeed, sir, I am perfectly happy in my present condition. My father, too, is satisfied with the slender provision which my labour affords; and, should it hereafter be insufficient, I will no scruple to ask the aid of benevolence.'

Mr Wilton was affected. The soldier again leaned his head on his staff, and was probably invoking blessings on the head of his son. A storm had commenced, and the sleet was even then dripping through the broken roof. Mr Wilton rose to depart. 'Must I then go,' he exclaimed, 'without rendering you any service? Will you not even accept—' putting his hand into his pocket. But Wilder drew back with an expression that answered the unfinished sentence.

'Accept my thanks, sir,' said the old man, giving him his hand with an air of benignity, 'and suffer me to enquire the name of him who has thus sought the dwelling of poverty?'

The stranger gave him his name and address, and, receiving a promise that they would seek him in future need, reluctantly left them.

Mr Wilton was a man of feeling, but he was also a man of pleasure; and, with the votaries of dissipation, the soft and holy whisperings of benevolence are too often lost in more seductive strains. The scene he had now witnessed, had, however, awakened all his better principles.—The dignified submission of the father, the proud humility of the son, prefering the most servile labour to the shadow of independence; his deep, but quiet tenderness for his unfortunate parent, and his perfect exemption from selfish feeling, all were vividly impressed on the visitor. If intercourse with the good influences even cold and torpid hearts, that influence must be strong indeed on the soul of feeling.

For a little time the pageantry of the world lost its power on the gay Wilton, and all the haunts of pleasure were forgotten. He shuddered as he contrasted the elegancies that surrounded him with the destitution he had witnessed. The straw pallet of age and infirmity, the picture that memory drew, seemed even yet more vivid than the reality. The following day Mr Wilton had left B——; but an envelope inclosing a fifty pound note had been placed by an unknown hand in that of the old soldier.

Years passed away, and the glow of unearthly pleasure that the traveller then experienced was gradually forgotten. The blandishments of pleasure resumed their wonted influence, her glittering wave hurried him onward without the power of reflection; and, if a momentary wish would have led him to inquire the further fate of Wilder Lee, the bright phantoms that surrounded him diverted his purpose. Death had deprived him of an amiable wife, whose influence might have won him from the sphere of illusion, and his only child, early accustomed to the rounds of fashionable pursuits, thought not of opposing them.

The exalted sentiments, however, which even in childhood, she had imbibed from her mother, preserved her from that contaminating influence; and, amid the blights of a gay world, the purity of her character remained stainless as the snows of the unapproachable cliff. Gentle as the reed of summer she yielded to the impulses of those with whom her lot was cast; but her mind, supported by high and frequent communion with the memory of her sainted mother, escaped the thraldom which habit might otherwise have secured. At the age of fifteen she accompanied an invalid friend to the medical springs of H——. It was a place of fashionable resort, and, to a mind like that of Isabel Wilton, afforded themes of limitless reflection. The buoyancy of health was here contrasted with the langour of disease; the hectic of death with the laugh of revelry; palpable images of mortality mingled with the votaries of pleasure; the listless who strove to annihilate time, and the dying who eagerly sought to add yet a few more days to these they had now to number.

Soon after the arrival of Isabel, she was one day struck, on entering the common sitting-room of the hotel, by an old man, who sat alone, and apparently unnoticed. His sightless eyes, his palsied limbs, and the white locks that were thinly scattered over his pallid features, all at once rivetted her attention. Her heart throbbed with pity, but reverence mingled with compassion, as the marked the settled and placid expression of his countenance. At no great distance a group of ladies were indulging in bursts of merriment, which, at this moment, struck discordantly on her heart. She felt that the presence of unfortunate age should at least inspire respect, and involuntarily approaching the unheeded old man, she was half resolved to address him. Her natural timidity, however, withheld her, until she was at length called by one of the gay groups to partake of some strawberries. The irresolute expression of her countenance at once changed to that of pleasure.

'I will beg some,' she said, unhesitatingly presenting her work-basket, 'for this old gentleman.' And she then approached him without embarrassment. 'Will you accept some strawberries, sir.'

The voice of Isabel was like the low, sighing tones of an instrument; it touched every chord of the soul. The old man received them with a smile that spoke a benediction; while an elegant though youthful stranger, who stood reading a newspaper with his back towards them, suddenly turned round and fixed his eyes on the blushing girl with mingled admiration and surprise. She instinctively retreated, and joined the group she had hitherto shunned, mingling in their trifling.

Soon after, the youth himself approached with her basket. Presenting it with a look of indescribable import, he said, 'Accept, miss, the thanks and blessings of age for your delicate attention.' He then disappeared. In a short time he returned, and addressed the old man in a tone of respect and tenderness; 'I have at length found more quiet lodgings, and will attend you whenever you feel able to walk.' The old man rose, and leaning on the arm of the youth they left the apartment.

'They are to be temporary sojourners at this place,' thought Isabel; and a sensation of pleasure, of which she was perhaps unconscious, arose from the idea of again meeting them.

They met the next morning at the spring, and again and again met.

Who shall describe the mingling of kindred spirits? Who shall trace the intricate and delicate sources of that mysterious passion which sweeps like a torrent over the human soul?—Scarcely a word had passed between the youthful strangers; they knew nothing of each other beyond the limits of a few short days; yet the years that preceded had become to them as a tedious dream; their present was their all of existence, and resembled the renovated life of the chrysalis, when it 'sails on new wings through summer air.'

As yet, however, unconscious of the dangerous source of this new sense of enjoyment, they met without embarrassment. The blush that dyed the cheek of Isabel in the presence of the stranger was that of abstract pleasure; and the light which flashed upon his eye at her approach was brilliant as the rays of heaven. The failing health of the blind old man, whom he daily attended to the spring, afforded their only clue even to a passing remark. The deep interest which his appearance excited in the bosom of Isabel conquered the scruples of vestal reserve, and she frequently ventured a timid inquiry respecting the aged invalid.

There are a thousand nameless attentions, too trifling for description, that come with a cheering influence over a feeling heart, like the imperceptible breeze that stirs the delecate leaf. Such were the attentions which misfortune invariably elicited from the hand of Isabel, no matter how narrow her sphere of action. Her voice, her step, were already known to the discriminating ear of the old man; and if his cane was dropped, or a seat brought, he knew the ready hand that presented them. He was, however, evidently and rapidly failing; and at length Isabel met the interesting stranger no longer.

Three days elapsed, and her attendance on her friend became a penance. A walk was proposed, and, weary of herself, she gladly became one of the party. As they passed within view of the cemetery her attention was arrested by a funeral procession. Their duties were finished, and they were returning; but there was one who yet lingered, and with folded arms leaned over the new-made grave. Could it be?—Yes, it was the young stranger, and Isabel comprehended the melancholy scene. The party proceeded, and ere their return the surrounding landscape was flooded with the silver light of the full moon.

The feelings of Isabel were rendered yet more intense by the softening influence of the hour, and almost unable to proceed, she leaned on the arm of her friend, whose health was yet but imperfectly restored, and fell behind her gayer companions. Again her eye was turned towards the last asylum of humanity; the solitary mourner had left the spot, and with a faltering step, was slowly returning to his lodging. Their paths intersected, and he was already before her. He bowed, and both were some moments silent. He at length said, in a voice of suppressed emotion, 'The cause that brought me hither is now terminated in the grave. I leave this place to-morrow. Permit me, then, miss, even at this moment of sorrow, to thank you for the interest you have evinced in the sufferings of my departed father, and for the soothing attentions you have paid him. If the cup of affliction is ever yours, may some spirit, gentle as your own, temper its bitterness—some being, bright and lovely as yourself, hover around your pillow.'

Isabel could not reply. Her party had now halted, and she now rejoined them. The young stranger uttered a stifled farewell, and striking into another path, disappeared.

On her return, the subdued Isabel was pressed to the bosom of her father. If anything at that moment could have given her pleasure, it was his arrival, as she was anxious to leave a spot that was now utterly devoid of interest. The light adieus of ceremony were easily concluded and early the following morning she was equipped for departure.

As her father handed her into the carriage, he stopped to speak to an acquaintance, while a young man, who was passing at the moment, suddenly paused, and clasping his hands, exclaimed, 'Mr Wilton, my benefactor!'

'I do not understand you, sir,' said the astonished Wilton. 'I know of no one who can give me so flatteriug a title.'

'Ah,' said the young man, whose countenance and voice were but too familiar to the trembling Isabel; 'am I then so changed? I am Wilder Lee, the soldier's son, whom seven years ago you rescued from poverty.'

'You mean I would have rescued but for his intolerable pride,' said Mr Wilton, pressing his hand with emotion.

'Ah sir, evasion is unnecessary,' said Wilder. 'We could not mistake the hand that relieved us. Have you then no interest in hearing—will you not suffer me to tell you what has been the effect of your bounty.'

'I shall gladly listen to anything which concerns you,' replied Mr Wilton.

'Two days after you left us,' said Wilder.—'my father was removed to a more comfortable dwelling, and I entered a public school. I could yet attend to the personal wants of my father; and incited to exertion by every claim of gratitude and duty, I could but progress in my studies. I was soon a ready penman and accountant; and a year afterwards, was received into a wealthy mercantile house as a clerk. My salary enabled me to make immediate provision for my father, and it was yearly augmented; and now,' he added, in a subdued tone, 'since he is called to receive far higher wealth than that of earth, my first exertion will be to discharge the pecuniary part of my obligation, which has so greatly influenced my present destiny.'

'The obligation you speak of does not exist,'