

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

BOTHWELL.

A Poem by W. Edmondstone Aytoun.

We take the following extracts:—

DESPAIR.

"Ascension morn! I hear the bells
Ring from the village far away;
How solemnly that music tells
The mystic story of the day!
Fainter and fainter come the chimes,
As though they melted into air,
Like voices of the ancient times,
Like whispers of ascending prayer!
So sweet and gentle sound they yet,
That I, who never bend the knee,
Can listen on, and half forget
That heaven's bright door is shut for me.
Yes, universal as the dew
Which falls alike on field and fen,
Comes the wide summons to the true,
The false, the best, the worst of men.
Ring on, ye bells! Let others throng
Before the blessed rood to pray;
Let them have comfort in the song
That celebrates this holy day.
Ring on for them! I hear you well,
But cannot lift my thoughts on high;
The dreary mists that rise from hell
Come thick between me and the sky."

BOTHWELL IN HIS DUNGEON.

"Cold—cold! The wind howls fierce with-
out;
It drives the sleet and snow;
With thundering hurl, the angry sea
Smite on the crags below.
Each wave that leaps against the rock
Makes this old prison reel—
God! cast it down upon my head,
And let me cease to feel!
Cold—cold! The brands are burning out,
The dying embers wane;
The drops fall plashing from the roof
Like slow and sullen rain.
Cold—cold! And yet the villain kernes
Who keep me fettered here,
Are feasting in the hall above,
And holding Christmas cheer.
When the wind pauses for its breath,
I hear their idiot bray,
The laugh, the shout, the stamping feet,
The song and roundelay.
They pass the jest, they quaff the cup,
The Yule-log sparkles brave,
They riot o'er my dungeon-vault
As though it were my grave.
Ay, howl again, thou bitter wind,
Roar louder yet, thou sea!
And drown the gusts of brutal mirth
That mock and madden me!
Ho, ho! the Eagle of the North
Has stopped upon the main!
Scream on, O Eagle, in thy flight,
Through blast and hurricane—
And, when thou meetest on thy way
The black and plunging bark,
Where those who pilot by the stars
Stand quaking in the dark,
Down with the pinion on the mast,
Scream louder in the air,
And stifle in the wallowing sea
The shrieks of their despair!
Be my avenger on this night,
When all, save I, am free:
Why should I care for mortal man,
When men care nought for me?
Care nought? They loathe me, one and all,
Else why should I be here—
I, starving in a foreign cell,
A Scottish prince and peer?"

From Godey's Lady's Book for November.

AUNT SOPHIE'S VISITS.

BY LUCY N. GODFREY.

Weeks passed. The fever wore away without my seeming to make any progress towards recovery. At length, the doctor said I had the consumption; and I received his opinion as a death-knell. It was hereditary in our family; and I had no thought to escape it. Very solemn are the hours when one feels that death is near, but not necessarily sad. The memory of that time has always been pleasant to me, for it was so heavy a trial that it called forth a depth of trust in our Father, such as had never before blessed me. Charles was miserable. Even then he looked to me for support; and I strove to give it. He sent for mother.—She came, and with her good old Doctor Williams, whom I had known from childhood.—Very grave he looked when he entered my sick room; but he never looked grave long. He asked me multitudes of questions, and then went out and catechized my husband, the nurse, the cook, and even little Willie. Then he came back and examined my lungs; and he was himself completely. "Well my little Soph," he exclaimed, "you have not got the consumption yet; but remember you will die of it within the year if you don't do just as I tell you. You have heard of people who will go as long as they can stand. Well, you have been doing that, and more too, since you tumbled on to bed. I know you never got here any other way. You have been taking care of the whole household. Now, there must be a stop put to this kind of work. I will guarantee that Master Willie shall have a clean apron on occasionally without your troubling your head about

it; and, if Charles should sometimes find his mutton baked when he should like it boiled, you are not to know of it. Now, remember, perfect rest, and that for a long time, is what you need. Your lungs are very weak; but they are sound. You have too much nervous energy for your constitution; and you have come pretty near killing yourself; but we will have you up again if you will do as you are bid."

"The doctor's hearty tones carried conviction with them. I thought of nothing but rest. Yes, indeed, I needed it; and I sank back on my pillows in utter exhaustion. I knew little for a fortnight. It was all rest to me. I seemed in a dream. Charles would come, kiss me, and sit down, holding my hand; and I would sleep. Willie would come, pat my face, saying: 'Poor, dear mamma!' And mother would lift him quietly upon the bed, that he might nestle in my arms, so that I could clasp him closely; and we would sleep. Such gentle caresses, though scarce realized and rarely acknowledged, were part of my pleasant rest. For three or four days, Doctor Williams would come in quietly, look at me, count my pulse, listen to my breathing, and, giving a low chuckle, vanish among the shadows of my dreamland. It was a fortnight of sleep. I was never fully myself, and yet all the time quietly happy, constantly resting."

"I waked when mother left, taking Willie with her. There was no longer the same quiet, soothing care; but I was better, though still very weak, and totally unfit for any exertion. I knew quiet was absolutely necessary for my life; and I was very anxious to live, even more so for my child's sake than for my husband's or my own. For four weeks more, I gained slowly; I troubled myself about nothing; I recognized no duty but that of patience; and, when I occasionally heard Charles complaining that he never could find anything when he wanted it, or the maid fretting because Mr Laselle threw everything down where he took it off, and always left his drawers half open and wholly disarranged, I thought of how much he must miss me now, and how glad he would be when I should be well."

Then came a time when quiet was not enough. I wanted amusement. The day was very long; and I sadly missed my little Willie. I would lie through the long forenoons waiting for dinner-time, and longing to see Charles. How many questions I always had ready to ask him! but, alas, he was unusually busy! He always seemed in haste to get away, and sometimes, worse still, he would not find time to come to me at all. Such were sad disappointments to me; and strive as I would to control my feelings, I was always worse after them. Bitterly I thought of my first day's illness after marriage; then I was not much sick; but Charles sat by my bedside till I proposed his leaving, and offered to stay by me all day if I thought I should feel any better for it. Now, if he would give me but a half hour a day of such unrequested kindness, or if he would come and let me see him read his paper, I should be very happy. By little and little, the fancy that he no longer loved me gained a place in my mind. When once I had received the idea, every circumstance confirmed my fears. His care for me was very different from what I felt I should have bestowed upon him in sickness. I knew no one stood between me and his love, for I was still his wife; and his sense of honor would lead him to try to love me as such. I imagined him struggling between duty and indifference, I was sure he was trying earnestly to retain his lessening love; and I wept bitterly as I fancied that I even owed the few caresses and words of endearment, which I received of late, to his sense of right. But I need not dwell on those miserable fancies.—Then they were dreadful realities, for there was but too much of thoughtless neglect to build them upon. I have been called to watch the departure of many near and dear friends to the spirit land; but I remember no other so bitter sorrow as that I experienced when I thought my husband's love lost to me.

"Willie came home. How like a sunbeam he seemed in my sick-room! He had his nap in my arms, and then went out and played upon the green in front of my window awhile.—I delighted to watch him at his play. He was very happy, though he seemed to be only aimlessly, like the shadows which fall just there on the carpet from those light boughs waving in the wind."

"When Charlie came to tea, he was delighted to see Willie at home, and equally so to find me looking better than I done for weeks. After tea, they came again; and it seemed quite like the old times. I am sure you can easily imagine how such an evening ended.—When Willie was taken for the night, and Charles asked me if I thought it would tire me too much if he should stay a little while longer, my emotions overpowered me; and, bursting into tears, I assured him that a little of his society would do me much more good than medicine. Before he left me, I told him all my late sufferings. He soothed me very gently, though of course, he thought all my doubts of his love were foolish, morbid fancies, which never could have occurred to me had I

been well. I was very happy to think so too. He promised that, now he knew it would so increase my happiness, he would come and see me three times each day, and would never neglect to come to bid me good night. He was sure I needed some one to take care of me, whose conversation I might enjoy; and he urged me to suggest some one, since I had so strenuously objected to Aunt Susie. I had only preferred Nurse Briggs because she never noticed anything; and I had been able to conceal my frequent crying-spells from her. I had feared Aunt Susie's sharp eye and ready tongue; but now I should not cry again; and I should be glad to have her."

"Aunt Susie came. Charming care she took of me; and, in less than a week, I could take dinners with them. But Charles was more thoughtless than ever, it seemed. Where the housemaid had fretted in his absence, Aunt Susie scolded in his presence; and when he repeatedly forgot some little articles for me, she sent him back after them, very much as she would have done a truant boy. Sometimes I laughed, and sometimes I was vexed. At first, it usually seemed droll to find that now, when Charles was more thoughtfully attentive to my wishes than he had been for years, he was so often berated for neglecting me. But matters grew worse. From scolding of him, she proceeded to scolding of him to me. Day after day, I made excuses for him; day after day, I argued myself weary, trying to convince her that he was very kind.—As I grew stronger, my mind recovered its tone; and, since I could not avoid seeing that something was wrong in our family affairs, I sought its cause. I was not long in finding that I had been in fault. It was not a pleasant discovery. Conscience was fully awake; and it was no trifling error she laid to my charge. Naught but blind selfishness on my part could have so alienated my husband. I did not try to palliate my fault by blaming him; but I resolved to neglect no opportunity for undoing the evil I had done."

"That day, at dinner, Aunt Susie told Charles that I needed some change; and she had arranged for me to spend a few hours with one of my friends. Mrs. Blake was expecting me, that afternoon; and he must carry me there, and be sure to go for me as soon as five o'clock, for the night air would be poison to me. When we were ready to start, she repeated her injunctions, assuring him that, if I should not be at home at five, I should certainly take cold; and it would be the death of me."

"Unfortunately, an old classmate, whom he had not seen for years, called at his counting-room during the afternoon; and they chatted, without noticing the lapse of time, till Charles noticed that the boy had brought the horse, according to order. Mr Austin saw the horse too, and said: 'Ay, Charles! he is yours, is he? Suppose we try him awhile? I should like a ride.'

"Five minutes would have taken his wife home then; but, thinking a little while would make no particular difference, he acceded to his friend's proposition. Pleasant companionship makes the minutes fly; and not till the sun was fast sinking below the horizon did they turn to go back. It was quite dark when I reached home. Aunt Susie was considerate, and helped me to bed without adding to my weariness by her talk. When I waked, the next morning, I found myself very hoarse. Charles had now returned to our room; so I hoped it would wear away before it should be necessary for me to see Aunt Susie. I sent word to her that I was a trifle over-wearied, and I wished not to be disturbed for an hour or two. My hoarseness did not leave me; and Aunt Susie's indignation was more violent than ever before. I tried in vain to excuse Charles; and as useless were my efforts to convince her that I had taken cold from a draught of air while at Mr. Blake's. It was always just so, she said. She had no patience with me. I was constantly encouraging him in his heedlessness. I interrupted her by telling her that I knew it had been so; and, even worse than that, I was wholly to blame for all his thoughtlessness. I told her that, for five years, I had been selfishly gratifying myself in waiting upon him; and now I feared it would take me quite as long to lead him to be as ready to wait upon himself and me as he was when we were married. I begged her not to find fault with him to me again, as it only added to my self-reproach. Her indignation was considerably mollified when she had led me to acknowledge that there was room for improvement in his habits."

"Soon after, I talked seriously and candidly with Charles upon the subject; and, though he blamed himself more than I did, we set earnestly to work to overcome his indolent carelessness. We found it up-hill work, compared with the former change; but we were both determined. Aunt Susie's tirades had opened his eyes to his delinquencies more than I could have done easily, I think; and she continued to favor him with 'pieces of her mind,' occasionally, during the few weeks she remained with us. When she left, I was rejoicing in newly recovered health. Very earnestly I strove to do every duty, but not, as heretofore, by assuming those which did not belong to me. During the infancy of my younger children, I

learned to prize the change which was gradually wrought in the character and habits of my husband. I think his happiness was even more increased than was mine. His character was ennobled and strengthened; and true growth of moral character always gives an increased capacity for happiness. But, Nellie, I need not point a moral for my story. Have I wearied you by its length?"

"Oh, no, indeed, dear aunt! I could wish you to tell me more of your experience. This trial has seemed very real to me; and I cannot be grateful enough that you have shown me the danger in my way."

"Of the remainder of Mrs. Laselle's visit, and many others which she has made at her nephew's, during the following years, I shall take no note. More than a dozen years had elapsed since the conversation I have recorded, when, a few weeks ago, Aunt Sophie was warmly welcomed to their home by Edward and Nellie. Very satisfactory were her reflections upon the changes in her friends since she saw them last, when she retired, after spending a quiet evening with them. She was pleased to think of the earnest life-purposes which were animating their hearts. She knew that none can over-estimate the blessed, lasting influence of a truly wise, Christian mother; and such she believed Nellie to be. Nor was she less pleased with Edward. He, too, was a true parent, ever seeking earnestly the welfare of his children, while he recognized the claims of society upon him as a man."

The next morning, when she descended to the breakfast-room, she was delighted with the family group which was gathered about Edward. She stood unnoticed, an instant, at the door, watching the six bright-eyed, rosy-faced happy children who were awaiting her appearance to take their place at the table.—The older ones were delighted to see her; and baby, now four months old, gave an extra crow as she patted his chubby face."

"You see we have an extension table, aunt," Edward remarked, as he placed baby in his high chair. "Thanks be to the man who invented it! for here is a little fellow who needs a deal of elbow room at table, and I should be very sorry to have him yielded to the servants, while we were enjoying ourselves here."

The week in which Aunt Sophie passed in this well-ordered family was a very pleasant one. She had many earnest conversations with her niece, who had great confidence in her aunt's judgment, while she distrusted her own ability to do her whole duty by her precious, immortal charges."

The evening before Mrs. Laselle was to leave, she sat with Edward while Nellie was busy putting the children in bed. He was carefully turning over the leaves of Wordsworth's poems, and he half unconsciously, it seemed, repeated the lines,

"A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command,
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light,"

adding: "Is not that Nellie?"

"Yes," said Aunt Sophie, "it is an expressive description of her character. One exceeding beauty of her quiet, powerful influence is its spirituality. One feels, though her mind and body are both strong and healthy, she has a soul stronger than both."

"I think I appreciate her," said Edward, "and yet none but God can estimate the influence for good which she exerts upon all about her. I certainly owe much that is good in me to her unobtrusive strivings to ennoble my character. My children have daily reason to bless God for her teachings; and I can really believe that her pure lessons may still be active when their children's children shall be gathered about the paternal knee. Besides this, our servants feel her influence; and very rarely do we have trouble with them."

"Yes, Edward; and casual visitors, like myself, may go to their homes with increased respect for human nature, and a feeling that goodness is more conducive to happiness, even in this life, than easy selfishness."

"Do you know, Aunt Sophie, that Nellie maintains that we owe to you much of our present happiness? She says that she commenced life without a proper appreciation of life's duties; and you opened her eyes to her responsibility."

"Ah, Charles, since my years have entitled me to give advice to young relatives, I have many times tried quiet as earnestly to influence for good without the slightest apparent result. Very little effect could my words have had if she had not been disposed to learn her duty, and to do it."

Nellie's entrance interrupted the conversation; and the last evening of the visit was spent, as the first, very quietly and very happily."

LEGAL.—Two weasels found an egg. "Let us not fight for it," said elder weasel, "but enter into partnership." "Very good," said weasel the younger. So taking the egg between them, each sucked the other end. "My children," said Redtapes, the attorney, "though you have but one client between you make the most of him."