

## Literature, &amp;c.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Chamber's Edinburgh Journal.

## THE STAR IN THE EAST.

A lurid star is burning in the East—  
Not o'er a cradle, but a sepulchre:  
It cleaves the heavens like that fiery sign  
Which set of yore our Highland hills a-flame  
When blood was 't the wind. Plague-spotted  
land,  
The leprosy of old were white to thine!  
In this new slaughter of the innocence,  
The Prince of Peace is crucified again.  
O women—martyred sisters! we could weep,  
But for the hot shame which burns up our  
tears,  
Our quivering lips are prayerless o'er your  
dust,  
We may not strew the desecrated sod  
Where fiends have trampled, with the flowers  
of heaven;  
But, fierce in the strong passion of the  
weak,  
Yet helpless as the babes upon your breast,  
We fold our white robes round us with a  
vow,  
Unto the God of battles!—Lisping babes!  
O world, O world! could not these mother-  
hands  
Pluck down the wrathful heavens on such  
deeds?  
The innocent lotus on the unstirred waves,  
The pale, pure crescent in the warless hea-  
vens,  
Smile in each other's faces: what is man  
That he should warp the beautiful to wrong,  
Turning God's gifts unto ignoble use?  
Were these the fitting symbols for a curse—  
The direst—most profound—the curse of  
war?—  
There was a time—methinks 'tis but a tale—  
When bread and salt, partaken brotherly,  
Did sign 'twixt fellest foes a bond and pledge,  
The freedom of the city of the heart!  
Yet these were of our house, our home, our  
hearth,  
Embosomed in our trust; before whose eyes  
Our weakness was paraded and unmasked.  
O Pariah of nations, hide thy head!  
Alien thou art, and alien shalt thou be,  
Thou and thy races, from all men whose  
pulse  
Beats to the music of a noble nature!  
Say, had ye wrongs?—Ye have undone your  
cause,  
By your own crimes self-branded, do ye fall;  
While we stand righted in your depths of  
shame.  
The seed accursed brings forth a millionfold;  
Behold the fruit! Why we, even we, who  
once  
Would snatch the snared bird from the fow-  
ler's clutch,  
Now point to you red star, and cry—'Go  
forth!  
White-headed fathers, stint not your gray  
hairs!  
Brothers! let not your might of manhood  
sleep.  
Lovers and husbands!—lo, the star is red  
With too much looking on red Indian plains,  
With too long burning o'er martyr-graves,  
With too deep blushing over woman-wrongs;  
Go forth! Till that foul stain be branded  
out,  
We look no more on you—but on the star.  
Our sickening eyes shall track it, till that day  
When ye shall stand amidst the ransomed  
souls  
Who cry to ye for succour; till again  
The sword shall know its place in the scorned  
sheath;  
Till horror's shriek is silenced, and once more,  
The fiery symbol shall be blotted out,  
And the red star stand white before its God!

## THE KING'S WITNESS.

A WRITER of fiction, and a disciple of the French school of criticism which has decided that it is nothing that a story should be true, but everything that it should be likely (*Que ce soit c'est; mais vraisemblable c'est tout.*) would think twice before giving such a narrative to the world as this which I have transcribed almost literally from the prosaic annals of the county of Cumberland, inasmuch that, although strictly true, it does not, especially in its chief and crowning incident, wear the aspect of reality and likelihood; and yet more notably will it appear unlikely when related to have occurred in an English County. We can readily enough believe strange, out-of-the-way deeds to have been perpetrated in strange and out-of-the-way countries, but scarcely in frank, honest, unimaginative England. It might perhaps be easily credited of some parts of Ireland; and indeed the late Sir Robert Peel, I remember, recited more than once, in his place in Parliament, in the course of discussions upon Irish outrage and disturbance, a precisely similar event which happened when he was secretary of state for that country. That was about forty years ago; and the right honourable baronet was apparently not aware that the official archives of Carlisle prove beyond dispute that the Irish incident with which he more than once illustrated a telling peroration was but a repetition of what had occurred some thirty years previously in an English county. Impulses to evil as to good are, it may not be doubted, cosmopolitan, not

national merely; and although doubtless generally modified by external circumstances, not unfrequently burst through all conventional restraints, and vindicate their common origin in the universal heart and mind of man. With this propitiatory prologue I venture to present the reader with a sketch—necessarily in bare and scanty outline only—of a strange drama, the chief scenes of which were enacted seventy years ago, in the vicinage, and within the walls of "Bonnie Carlisle."

The curtain rising upon the first act discloses a scene of rustic rejoicing—a fair or revel, the boisterous festivity of which was participated by three or four hundred persons of both sexes, chiefly agricultural labourers and servants, although here and there might be seen knots of mirth-loving men, and a few women of a somewhat higher grade. The weather was warm—it was the middle of July—the ale excellent, the assemblage thirsty, and the fun consequently becoming 'fast and furious.' There were various sports afoot; trials of strength, skill, and speed, in wrestling, leaping, running; and after a while quarrels, fighting, and other etcetera, which too frequently mark the winding up of such festivals. A powerful young man, a farmer in a middling way he was said to be, of the name of Armstrong, especially distinguished himself at the different games, and was by general consent pronounced entitled to the chief honours of the day.—What with the plaudits which greeted his successful displays, and the large quantity of ale he had imbibed, he became towards the close of the revel greatly excited, and was with difficulty restrained by the older and graver of the company from indulging in several mad and offensive freaks towards obnoxious and less turbulent spirits. At last the restless eye of George Armstrong fixed upon a man of about his own age quietly seated at the entrance of a booth, in the tranquil enjoyment of a pipe and mug of ale, and his quarrelsome humour could no longer be controlled. 'As sure as I'm alive,' he exclaimed, 'there's Dick Hayward! I'll have a turn up with that white-livered puppy, if the devil himself should say me nay!'

I do not profess, be it understood, to give the Cumberland dialect—of which, never, having resided in the county, I am entirely ignorant; and the papers which I quote and abbreviate are all written or printed in ordinary English.

The man whom Armstrong thus apostrophised was a square-built, demure-looking, sleek personage, who, but for the restless activity of his keen, deeply-sunk eyes would have appeared to be totally absorbed by his pipe and pot. His dress was of the shabby-genteel kind—the black suit and hat rusty, the linen neither so fine nor so clean as it might have been, and the high-low boots or shoes he wore patched and worn down at the heel. Master Richard Hayward, in fact, although born in the immediate neighbourhood of the revel, at this time kept a second-hand book-stall—shop he called it—in Carlisle, by which he barely contrived to eke out a staid and precarious existence. He noticed Armstrong's hasty approach, and, judging by the sudden paleness which overgrew his sallow features must at once have apprehended mischief. He and Armstrong had been, and indeed still were, rivals for the favour of Letty Osborne, the pretty bar-maid of the Huntsman, a road-side tavern close by, and albeit neither of them was, nor indeed likely to be, a successful wooer, a strong and bitter feeling of mutual irritation and dislike had for some time secretly existed between them. The liquor Armstrong had swallowed swept away the thin mask he had hitherto impatiently worn, and he determined to give his jealous enemy full swing and license. Letty Osborne had not made her appearance during the day to witness and applaud his prowess, and this circumstance, which he foolishly imputed to Hayward's presence there, greatly increased his vindictive animosity, and inflamed his naturally reckless and fiery temper.

There is no mistaking the meaning which glares in the eyes of an angry and determined man; and several persons standing at the moment in front of Hayward drew quickly back, out of Armstrong's way and eagerly observed the encounter of the two men, from which they felt assured no mere sport for child's play would result. Hayward rose up as his fierce antagonist drew near, put down his pipe, and instinctively clenched his fists. There was brief parleying between them.

'What are ye skulking here after?' exclaimed Armstrong, as he closed with his opponent and struck him over the face with the back of his outspread hand. 'Answer, ye white-faced hound, will ye?'

The answer, as might be expected—for Hayward was by no means deficient in either animal or moral courage—was a blow, which the assailant parried, and returned by another that felled Hayward to the ground. The brutal cry of 'A ring—a ring!' was instantly set up, and the revellers gathered eagerly round to witness the fight, and bound on the combatants. Hayward had not a chance from the beginning, and was only picked up and placed upon his legs by his partisans to be instantly knocked down again; and he was at length borne off, bruised, bleeding, and insensible, to the Huntsman inn. The remedies applied soon restored

him to consciousness, and towards dusk he was conveyed in a spring-cart to his home in Carlisle. A week or so afterwards he had apparently quite recovered, as far as his person went, from the effects of the savage assault committed upon him. As regarded Armstrong, the brutal victory he had achieved over a man less skillful and powerful than himself was esteemed an additional feather in his cap, and he departed homewards at a late hour in a state of immense, and but for Letty Osborne's continued perverseness, unalloyed jubilation.

The truth was, Letty cared for neither of the fighting competitors for her good graces, and had for some time set her cap at quite a different person—one Robert Gordon, head game-keeper, although a very young man, to Sir Gerald Mowbray, and standing very high in his master's good opinion. Gordon was by no means insensible to the charms of the fair damsel, and although prudence whispered the risk, not to say folly, of too early marriages, the cold suggestions of that wise counsellor quickly evaporated before Letty's bright eyes and genial smiles, and both happening to entirely agree with the wisdom of the distich which proclaims that

Happy is the wooing  
That is not long a doing,

the banns between Letty Osborne, spinster, and Robert Gordon, bachelor, were published, for the first time of asking, in the rural church of the parish were they both resided on the next Sunday but one after the revel. George Armstrong did not himself hear the publication made; he had seldom of late entered the church; but the gossips of the neighbourhood took, of course, especial care he should not remain long in ignorance of tidings so pleasant and interesting. In the evening of the same day, Armstrong, frenzied with rage and drink, strode over to the lodge in Sir Gerald's park, where Gordon resided, knocked fiercely, and on the door being opened by the young man himself, struck him a ferocious blow in the face, and challenged him with wild imprecations to fight. Fortunately two other keepers were present at the lodge, and with their help Armstrong was speedily secured, spite of his great strength and desperate resistance, and securely lodged in a lock-up-house. The next morning he was discharged, after having made a sullen apology for the assault, and received from the magistrate an earnest warning to bridle his fierce temper for the future, lest a far worse thing should befall him. The day following the third publication of the marriage-banns, the union of the contracted spinster and bachelor was duly solemnized, and the young couple took up their abode at the park-lodge with every prospect of a cheerful, if humble, future.

Richard Hayward who had scarcely been heard of since the disgraceful scene at the revel, appeared to devote himself more closely than ever to the management of his book-stall, a poor starving trade, people concluded, who chanced to remark the pale, pinched, sharpened features, and the fierce gloomy discontent which gleamed from beneath the pent and massive brow of the book-vender. They were partially mistaken. It was not entirely the coarse and scanty fare, the shabby, thread-bare clothing which his meagrely-furnished stall afforded, that fretted the spirit and wore away the health and vigour of the needy tradesman. He brooded moodily over not so much the physical hurts he had received at the hands of George Armstrong, as the public insult—the humiliation—the contumely, the shameful chastisement to which he had been subjected, and in Letty Osborne's observation too! Then came the marriage with Gordon, adding another to the list of vengeance to be thereafter taken, should the confused misshapen dreams—scarcely hopes as yet—which dimly haunted him, ever assume form and action. In the meantime he must wait with patient readiness for chances as time might bring.

George Armstrong rapidly progressed from bad to worse. His father had left him the lease and possession of not very well-cultivated and poorish farm, held under Sir Gerald Mowbray, and his wild, rollicking, idle, drinking habits growing rapidly upon him, degenerating in fact in downright drunken recklessness, the inevitable result followed. Distraints were levied upon the farm for rent, taxes and rates: the lease was forfeited, and the broken man cast forth a homeless vagabond upon the world.—How he afterwards contrived to live, and still at times indulge himself as freely as ever, was a mystery to the whole neighbourhood, until his conviction for night-poaching on the evidence of Robert Gordon, and condemnation to a twelvemonths' imprisonment in Carlisle jail.

Armstrong appeared to have no living relative, or at least none who recognized him as a kinsman and he would have been utterly abandoned by the careless, outer world, but for the extraordinary solicitude manifested towards him in his captivity by Richard Hayward. The fallen condition of his enemy appeared to have entirely obliterated all memory of offence from the mind of the man whom Armstrong had so shamefully insulted and beaten; who now endeavoured in a variety of ways to manifest his entire forgiveness of what had occurred, and to mitigate the hard, if merited, lot of his old antagonist and rival to the utmost extent of his limited means. He visited the prisoner on all

occasions that he was allowed to do so, and risked incurring legal punishment himself, by secretly supplying small quantities of spirits and other luxuries forbidden by the prison rules.—This singularly amiable conduct on the part of one whom he had so grossly ill-used greatly affected Armstrong's rough, but not at bottom unkindly nature, the more especially as he knew how miserably inadequate Hayward's means were to his own decent and comfortable maintenance.

The term of imprisonment over, Hayward afforded the liberated but houseless, shelterless outcast, the covert of his own poor home till such time as he could provide himself with a better. And that which pleased Armstrong best of all, in his then sullen and desperate mood, was that his friend not only did not strive to check his determination to avenge himself upon Sir Gerald Mowbray by plundering his preserves to as great an extent as possible, in retaliation of the incarceration inflicted at his instance, but effectually aided in that purpose by procuring him a gun, powder and shot, and various implements necessary in right-poaching. Armstrong's success in his renewed pursuit was scant and trifling, the covers being more vigilantly watched than ever; but Hayward, so far from abating in kindness and cordiality for this, appeared rather to rejoice in such mishaps, as the more enabling him, it seemed to Armstrong, to show how entirely unselfish were the motives by which he was actuated. Conduct so generous and so ill deserved excited, it may easily be believed, Armstrong's fervent gratitude; and his confidence in Hayward's friendship and sincerity was illimitable.

One night, a dark tempestuous one in December, Richard Hayward was sitting alone in a small back room in the rear of his shop before a handful of fire in seemingly deep rumination. After a while he rose, muttered unintelligibly to himself, stirred the few coals in the grate, then reseated himself, and drew out of his pocket an old much soiled newspaper. He could not have seen to read the print, for he had no candle, and the fire, as I have stated, was low and faint. He however appeared to do so, as, with his fierce eyes fixed upon the journal, he muttered: 'One hundred guineas reward to any accomplice except he who actually'—that means, of course, with his own hand—'committed the deed.' Humph! A large reward, a great prize, and the man was not killed either—only dangerously wounded! What would it have been, I wonder, had the keeper died of his hurts? Double, I dare say—double at least; two hundred pounds—no, guineas—it is always guineas—always—Ha!—'

Hayward sprang quickly to his feet, scared by the sudden appearance of Armstrong, who had entered the room unobserved, and now unexpectedly confronted him.

'Is tha-a-t you?' stammered Hayward, thrusting as he spoke, the newspaper into his pocket—'how—how long have you been standing there?'

There was no answer; and after a few moments' observation Hayward recovered his usual equanimity and composure. Armstrong had seated himself, or rather dropped into a chair, and there sat bolt upright, rigid and motionless, both hands clasping the barrel of his gun, the butt resting on the floor. His hat had fallen off, and his long, wet, black hair hung down in matted disorder over a face as white as the lime-washed walls of the room, whilst the restless glances of his eyes, and the nervous twitching of his ashy lips, betokened the fierceness of the internal struggle by which he was racked and shaken.

'You, I see,' he after a time murmured—'you, I see, are reading that old newspaper again: what can there be in it, I wonder?'

There was no purpose, Hayward felt, in this question. The utterance of the words was purely mechanical, and the speaker's thoughts, it was evident, were elsewhere.

'What has happened?' whispered Hayward, in an eager, palpitating tone. 'What has happened?'

'Eh?' rejoined Armstrong, the fiery glare of his eyes turning for a moment recognisably upon the questioner. 'Eh?—Dost ask what has happened?'

'Yes—yes—what has happened? What have you done—what seen?'

'Seen him?' replied Armstrong, hoarsely. 'Seen him—Gordon?'

'Ah! an' you—; but go on—go on.'

'Seen Gordon?' said Armstrong, relapsing into the same abstracted gaze as before: seen Gordon, I tell you, Richard Hayward—seen him, he continued, slowly raising his gun to his shoulder, 'within three yards of the muzzle of the gun—right in a line with the barrel—covered, do you hear, covered! No soul was within hearing; my finger touched the trigger, and—'

'You drew the trigger!' hissed out Hayward, 'and Robert Gordon is—'

'Alive!' shrieked Armstrong, leaping up from his seat in a paroxysm of excitement, and again instantly falling back upon it. 'Alive! thanks—thanks be to God for it, and that his blood is not at this moment upon my head!'

'Your courage failed you, then, when it came to the pinch?' said Hayward, after a minutes' silence.