Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Littell's Living Age.

THE OLD MAN AND THE CHILDREN.

BY JAMES PRITCHETT BIGG.

SPRING was busy in the woodlands,
Climbing up from peak to peak,
As an old man sat and brooded,
With a flush upon his cheek.

Many years press'd hard upon him,
And his living friends were few,
And from out the sombre future
Troubles drifted into view.

There is something moves one strangely
In old ruins grey with years ;
Yet there's something far more touching
In an old face wet with tears.

And he sat there, sadly sighing
O'er his feebleness and wrongs,
Though the birds outside his window
Talk'd of summer in their songs !

But, behold, a change comes o'er him :
Where are all his sorrows now ?
Could they leave his heart so quickly
As the gloom-clouds left his brow ?

Up the green slope of his garden,
Past the dial, he saw run
Three young girls, with bright eyes shining
Like their brown heads in the sun.

There was Fanny, famed for wisdom ;
And fair Alice, famed for pride ;
And one that could say, 'Uncle,'
And said little else beside.

And that vision startled memories,
That soon hid all scenes of strife,
Sending floods of hallow'd sunshine
Through the ragged rents of life.

Then they took him from his study,
Through long lanes and tangled bowers,
Out into the shaded valleys,
Richly tinted o'er with flowers.

And he bless'd their merry voices
Singing round him as he went,
For the sight of their wild gladness
Fill'd his own heart with content.

And, that night, there came about him
Far-off meadows pictured fair,
And old woods in which he wander'd,
Ere he knew the name of care ;
And he said, 'These angel-faces
Take the whiteness from one's hair !'

From the National Magazine.

A LOW MARRIAGE.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN," ETC.

The year grew and waned. Mrs Rochdale said to me, when near its closing, that it had been one of the happiest years she had ever known.

I believe it was. The more so as, like many a season of great happiness, it began with a conquered pang. But of this no one ever dared to hint ; and perhaps the mother now would hardly have acknowledged, even to herself, that it had temporarily existed.

They were to have been married at Christmas ; but early in December the long invalided Lady Childe died. This deferred the wedding. The young lover said, loudly and often, that it was 'very hard.' The bride elect said nothing at all. Consequently every lady's-maid and woman-servant at the manor-house, and every damsel down the village, talked over Miss Childe's hard-heartedness ; especially as, soon after, she went travelling with poor broken-hearted Sir John Childe, thereby parting with her betrothed for three whole months.

But I myself watched her about the manor-house the last few days before she went away O Lemuel Rochdale, what had you deserved. that heaven should bless you with the love of two such women—mother and bride.

Celendine went away. The manor-house was very dull after she was gone. Mrs Rochdale said she did not wonder that her son was absent a good deal—it was natural. But this she only said to me, To others she never took any notice of his absence at all.

These absences continued,—lengthened. In most young men they would have been unremarked ; but Lemuel was so fondly attached to his mother, that he rarely in his life had spent his evenings away from home and her. Now. in the wild March nights, in the soft April twilights, in the May moonlights, Mrs Rochdale sat alone in the great drawing-room, where they had sat so happily last year,—all three of them.

She sat, grave and quiet, over her book or her knitting, still saying—if she ever said anything —that it was quite 'natural' her son should amuse himself abroad.

Once I heard her ask him, 'where he had been to-night.

He hesitated ; then said 'up the village mother.'

'What again ? How fond you are of moonlight walks up the village !'

'Am I ?' whipping his boots with his cane.— 'Why, mother, moonlight is—very pretty, you know ; and the evenings here are so long.'

'True.' His mother half sighed. 'But soon you know, Celandine will be back.'

It might have been my mistake, but I thought the young man turned scarlet, as, whistling his dog, he hastily quitted the room.

'How sensitive these lovers are !' said Mrs Rochdale, smiling. 'He can hardly bear to hear her name. I do wish they were married.'

But that wish was still further deferred. Sir John Childe, fretful, ailing, begged another six months before he lost his niece. They were young : and he was old, and had not long to live. Besides, thus safely and happily betrothed, why should they not wait ? A year more or less was of little moment to those who were bound together firm and sure, in good and ill, for a lifetime. Nay, did she not, from the very day of betrothal, feel herself Lemuel's faithful wife.

Thus, Mrs Rochdale told me, did Celandine urge—out of the love which in its completeness hardly recognised such a thing as separation.— Her mother that was, reading the passage out of her letter, paused, silenced by starting tears.

The lover consented to this further delay.— He did not once say that it was 'very hard.'— Again Mrs Rochdale began to talk, but with a tone of fainter certainty, about their being married next Christmas.

Meanwhile the young squire appeared quite satisfied : shot, fished, lounged about his property as usual, and kept up his spirits amazingly.

He likewise took his moonlight walks up the village with creditable persistency. Once or twice I heard it whispered about that he did not take them alone.

But every one in the neighbourhood so liked the young squire, and so tenderly honored his mother, that it was some time before the faintest of these ill whispers reached the ear of Mrs Rochdale.

I never shall forget the day she heard it.

She had sent for me to help her in gathering her grapes : a thing she often liked to do herself, giving the choice bunches to her own friends, and to the sick poor of her neighbors. She was standing in the vinery when I came.— One moment's glance showed me something was amiss, but she stopped the question ere it was well out of my lips.

'No, nothing, Martha. This bunch—cut it while I hold.'

But her hand shook and the grapes fell and were crushed, dyeing purple the stone-floor. I picked them up,—she took no notice.

Suddenly she put her hand to her head.

'I am tired. We will do this another day.'

I followed her across the garden to the hall-door. Entering she gave orders to have the carriage ready immediately.

'I will take you home, Martha. I am going to the village.'

Now the village was about two miles distant from the manor-house,—a mere cluster of cottages ; among which were only three decent dwellings the butcher's, the baker's, and the schoolhouse. Mrs Rochdale rarely drove through Thrope,—still more rarely did she stop there.

She stopped now—it was some message at the schoolhouse. Then, addressing the coachman.

'Drive on to the baker's shop '

Old John started touched his hat hurriedly. I saw him and the footman whispering on the box. Well I could guess why !

'The baker's, Mrs Rochdale ? Cannot I call ? Indeed it is a pity that you should take that trouble.'

She looked me full in the face ; I felt my self turn crimson

'Thank you, Martha ; but I wish to go myself.'

I ceased. But I was now quite certain she knew. and guessed I knew also, that which all the vilage were now talking about. What could be her motive for acting thus ? Was it to show her own ignorance of the report ? No, that would have been to imply a falsehood ; and Mrs Rochdale was stanchly, absolutely true in deed as in word. Or was it to prove them all liars and scandal-mongers, that the lady of the manor drove up openly to the very door where--

Mrs Rochdale startled me from my thoughts with her sudden voice sharp and clear.

'He is a decent man, I believe,—Hine the baker ?'

'Yes, madam.'

'He has—a daughter who—waits in the shop ?'

'Yes, madam.'

She pulled the check-string with a quick jerk, and got out. Two small burning spots were on either cheek ; otherwise she looked herself—her tall, calm, stately self.

I wondered what Nancy thought of her— handsome Nancy Hine who was laughing in her free loud way behind the counter, but who. perceiving the manor-house carriage, stopped, startled.

I could see them quite plainly through the shop window—the baker's daughter and the mother of the young squire. I could see the very glitter in Mrs Rochdale's eyes, as, giving in her ordinary tone some domestic order, she took the opportunity of gazing steadily at the large, well-featured girl, who stood awkward and painfully abashed, nay, blushing scarlet ; though people did say that Nancy Hine was too clever a girl too have blushed since she was in her teens.

I think they belied her—I think many people belied her, both then and afterward. She was clever, much cleverer than most girls of her station ; she looked bold and determined enough, but neither unscrupulous nor insincere.

During the interview, which did not last two minutes, I thought it best to stay outside the door. Of course, when Mrs Rochdale re-entered the crrriage, I made no remark. Nor did she.

She gave me the cake for the school-children. From the wicket I watched her dvive off, just catching through the carriage window her profile, so proudly cut, so delicate and refined.

That a young man, born and reared of such a mother, with a lovely fair creature like Celandine for his own, very own, could ever lower his tastes, habits, perceptions, to court—people said even to win—unlawfully, a common village-girl, handsome indeed, but with the coarse blousy beauty which at thirty might be positive ugliness—surely surely it was impossible ! It could not be true, what they said about young Mr Rochdale and Nancy Hine.

I did not think his mother believed it either ; if she had, could she have driven away with that quiet smile on her mouth, left by her last kind words to the school-children and to me ?

The young squire had gone to Scotland the day before this incident occurred. He did not seem in any hurry to return ; not even when. by some whim of the old baronet's Sir John Childe and his niece suddenly returned to Ashen Dale.

Mrs Rochdale drove over there immediately, and brought Celandine back with her. The two ladies, elder and younger, were gladly seen by us all, going about together in their old happy ways. lingering in the greenhouse, driving and walking, laughing their well-known merry laugh when they fed the swans of an evening in the pool.

There might have been no such things in the world as tale-bearers, slanderers, or—baker's daughters.

Alas ! this was only for four bright days— the last days when I ever saw Mrs Rochdale looking happy and young or Celandine Childe light-hearted and bewitchingly fair.

On the fifth, Sir John Childe's coach drove up the manor-house, not lazily, as it generally did, but with ominously thundering wheels.— He and Mrs Rochdale were shut up in the library for two full hours. Then she came out, walking heavily, with a kind of mechanical strength, but never once drooping her head or her eyes and desired me to go and look for Miss Childe, who was reading in the summer-house. She waited at the hall-door till the young lady came in.

'Mamma !' Already she had begun, by Mrs Rochdale's wish, to give her that fond name. But it seemed to strike painfully now.

'Mamma, is anything the matter ?' and turning pale, the girl clung to her arm.

'Nothing to alarm you, my pet ; nothing that I care for—not I. I know it it is false— wholly false ; it could not but be.' Her tone, warm with excitement, had nevertheless more anger in it than fear. Celandine's color returned.

'If it be false, mamma, never mind it.' she said in her fondly way. 'But what is this news ?'

'Something that your uncle has heard.— Something he insists upon telling you. Let him. It cannot matter either to you or to me. Come, my child.

What passed in the library of course never transpired ; but in about an hour after I was sent for to Mrs Rochdale's dressing room.

She sat at her writing table. There was a firm, hard, almost fierce expression in her eyes, very painful to see. Yet when Celandine glided in. with that soft step and white face, Mrs Rochdale looked up with a quick smile.

'Has he read it ? Is he satisfied with it ?' and she took, with painfully assumed carelessness, a letter newly written, which Miss Childe brought to her.

The girl assented ; then, kneeling by the table pressed her cheek upon Mrs Rochdale's shoulder.

'Let me write, mamma, just one little line, to tell him that I —that I don't believe—'

'Hush !' and the trembling lips were shut with a kiss, tender as firm. 'No ; not a line, my little girl. I, his mother, may speak of such things to him. Not you.'

It did at the moment seem to me almost sickening that this pure fragile flower of a girl should ever have been told there existed such wickedness as that of which not only Sir John Childe, but the whole neighbourhood now accused her lover ; and which, as I afterwards learned, the baronet insisted should be at once openly and explicitly denied by Mr Rochdale, or the engagement must be dissolved.

This question his mother claimed her own sole right to put to her son ; and she had put it in the letter, which now, with a steady hand and a fixed smile—half contemptuous as it were— she was sealing and directing.

'Martha, put this into the post-bag yourself, and tell Miss Childe's maid her mistress will remain another week at the manor-house. Yes, my love, best so.'

Then, sitting down wearily in the large arm-chair, Mrs Rochdale drew Celandine to her ; and I saw her take the soft small figure on her lap like a child, and fold her up close, in the grave, comforting silence of inexpressible love.

It was a four days' post to and from the moors where Mr Rochdale was staying. Heavily the time must have passed with those two poor women, whose all was staked upon him— upon his one little 'yes' or 'no.'

Sunday intervened, when they both appeared at church—evening as well as morning. With this exception, they did not go out ; and were seen but rarely about the house, except at dinner-time. Then, with her companion on her arm, Mrs Rochdale would walk down, and take her seat at the foot of the long dreary dining-table, placing Miss Childe on her right hand.

The old butler said it made his heart ache to see how sometimes they both looked towards the head of the board—at the empty chair there.

The fifth day came and passed. No letters. The sixth likewise. In the evening, his mother ordered Mr Rochdale's chamber to be got ready, as it was 'not improbable' he might unexpectedly come home. But he did not come.

They sat up half that night, I believe, both Mrs Rochdale and Miss Childe.

Next morning they breakfasted together as usual in the dressing-room, As I crossed the plantation — for in my anxiety I made business at the manor-house every day now—I saw them both sitting at the window waiting for the post.

Waiting for the post ! many a one has known that heart-sickening intolerable time ; but few waitings have been like to theirs.

The stable-boy came lazily up, swinging the letter-bag to and fro in his hands. They saw it from the window.

The butler unlocked the bag as usual, and distributed the contents.

'Here's one from the young master. Lord bless us, what a big un !'

'Let me take it up-stairs, William.' For I saw it was addressed to Mis Childe.

Mechanically, as I went up stairs, my eye rested on the direction, in Mr Rochdale's large careless hand ; and on the seal, firm and clear, bearing not the sentimental devices he had once been fond of using, but his business-seal— his coat of arms. With a heavy weight on my heart, I knocked at the dressing-room door.

Miss Childe opened it. 'Ah mamma, for me, for me !' and with a sob of joy she caught and tore open the large envelope.

Out of it fell a heap of letters — her own pretty dainty letters, addressed 'Lemuel Rochdale, Esq.'

She stood looking down at them with a bewildered air ; then searched through the envelope. It was blank—quite blank.

'What does he mean, mamma ? I—don't —understand.'

But Mrs Rochdale did. 'Go away Martha,' she said hoarsely, shutting me out at the door.

And then I heard a smothered cry, and something falling to the floor like a stone.

(To be continued.)

NEW WORKS.

From Time and Faith, an Inquiry into the Data of Ecclesiastical History.

AURELIAN AND ZENOBIA.

The reign of Aurelian is chiefly remarkable for its military successes, and the influence at its commencement (A. D. 270) of female sovereigns. Victoria rules in the West, over Britain, Gaul, and Spain : and Zenobia in the East, over nearly the whole of Western Asia and Egypt. Victoria, called also 'Mother of the Camps,' would be independent of Rome, or mistress of it, but in Tetricus she has chosen a colleague without courage or honour ; one who betrays her cause to Aurelian, and procures, or is supposed to have procured, her death by poison. Tetricus, not daring to declare himself openly in favour of the Romans, so posts his troops at Chalons, in Champagne, that, on the advance of the forces of Aurelian, his own can easily be surrounded and cut to pieces. He then leaves them to their fate ; deserting to the enemy. Aurelian rewards the treachery of Tetricus with lucrative appointments ; and, finding himself now in command of an army inspired with enthusiasm by success, passes into Asia Minor, to wrest from Zenobia the empire of the East. Septimia Zenobia (Zeinab) is a woman of cultivated mind : great energy and decision of character ; tall, and of commanding person ; of attractive features, though of dark complexion ; as beautiful, it is said, as Cleopatra, but without her weaknesses ; chaste and temperate ; accustomed to the forms and magnificence of oriental state, but disdaining a life of ease and voluptuousness ; delighting in