

Literature, &c.

From the Forget-Me-Not, for 1836.

JULIANA;
OR, PROPHECIES COME TRUE.

"LET not the honorable gentleman prophecy," said — in the House one night — "it is a dangerous expenditure of mind."

But the relations of Juliana Albany had never heard — 's sarcastic warning — or, having heard it, perhaps they plumed themselves upon having mind enough for the regulation of their own concerns, and some besides for prophecy; perhaps, having heard it, they did not believe it, for certain it is that never was infant heralded into the world with more 'I wonders' and 'You'll sees' — never child more educated upon proverbs and prognostications — never young lady launched into life with more shakings of the head and whisperings in corners — than the heroine of my story — lively, laughing, careless, Juliana Albany!

Poor child! she began by disappointing the hopes of both parents in her sex. Seven girls already! — and Mr and Mrs Albany people of by no means East Indian wealth — it may be supposed how they hoped and prayed that the new comer should be a boy. The mother too, was still young and pretty (she had been married at the unripe age of sixteen) and looked with dismay at the lengthening line of daughters, each of which would have to be 'brought out' in her turn. She regarded the coming days of chaperonage with horror; fears of needy young men, and envious dowagers — and visions of matronly hats and card tables 'out of the way of the dancers' — cast their shadows before, and distressed her in her sleep. Had it been only one, or even two daughters, she could have armed herself with reason and philosophy — but eight! — it was too much! — 'Mr Albany, my dear,' she would say to her husband, as he nodded over his newspaper, 'what are we to do with our girls?' —

Advertise that the Albany stock is to be sold in eighth, to the best bidder. Come now, I must finish this debate — the girls can wait till it be done. Mrs Albany was ready to cry at her husband's impenetrability.

In another point of view my heroine was less welcome than any of her predecessors. All concerned about her cradle, and the very nurse who in general has pride in and partiality for all babies, declared that she was a 'poor puny little thing' — and three great-aunts, who never came a-visiting save on 'family occasions,' as they were called, passed her from 'what a little thing!' with sour looks and a sourer expression of countenance — that she would be horribly ugly — one of them even saw far enough into the future to foretell that she would be 'short of capacity.' Now, the Albany children had all of them hitherto been remarkable for personable beauty. 'Never mind, ma'am, said an old blunt servant, who had been domesticated in the house for many years, and, by some passing word let fall, caught that her mistress was dismayed at the idea of having the symmetry of her flock disturbed by one less fair than the rest — 'never mind, ma'am,' said this Christian comforter; 'I promise you she won't live long to trouble nobody.'

Juliana did, however, live on — 'a poor, puny thing,' as Nurse had called her, with a sallow complexion and huge black eyes — and a form so slender, even to fragility, that it was a certainty that she must be crooked if she grew up. As a baby, she had cried incessantly — Mr Albany was a humorist — a man of medical ear — to whom the screaming of children (even his own) was a nuisance not to be forgiven. 'Take that child away,' he would say — 'I cannot bear to hear her. What a temper she will have, poor little thing!' Mrs Albany had always been talked of as a foolishly indulgent mother — this time, however, she was resolved not to 'spare the rod and spoil the child.'

Two — three — four years passed away — and Juliana was yet alive — just alive and no more — 'Such an expence as the child is in medical attendance!' Mrs Albany would say to her neighbours — 'well, I am no Ceresus — and must save it in her education. She must learn what she can, and how she can; I cannot afford both medicine and masters' — and as she finished this charming motherly speech, she turned to a glass to arrange a bunch of fuchsias in her still rich hair, which had been brought her from Paris — 'a real bargain — no wearing English flowers — so horribly coarse!' —

Well — it is a happy and consoling superstition (if reason forbid us seriously to enroll it among the articles of our belief) to trust that a peculiar Providence watches over and cherishes those who are unnaturally neglected and cast out in their childhood. This it is which gives its charm to that sweetest of all sweet fairy tales — Cinderella. It is not the pumpkin coach nor the six cock-tailed mice, which drew her

to the ball, to the amazement of her envious sisters and the eclipsing of their carefully planned splendour — not the mysterious vanishing of her finery when the clock struck twelve — nor yet the delightful pertinacity of the little glass slipper in refusing to fit any foot save the right one — it is not these incidents in themselves, fascinating though they be, which make us feel such a loving faith in the tale — ay, a faith, even in these days of scorn and unbelief, — it is the idea that higher powers look down upon the 'desolate and oppressed' — that good angels are working to deliver those whom man refuses to aid — it is the pure and holy moral of the fable in which we delight — and which many a child, crouching over the fire, and perhaps tyrannized over and neglected, like poor Cinderella, has felt without knowing it!

But what have we to do with digressions into fairy land, when a tale is to be told? Let us return to it.

Four more years passed away. Juliana Albany was still puny — still plain — and so very short of her age, that her charitable grand-aunts told her, as constantly as she was sent to spend a long, dreary, dutiful day in their pattern house, (and this was often — Mrs Albany was 'so glad to get her out of the way') — that she was sure to be a dwarf. The child fully believed them — yet, though vague feelings of mortification did cross her mind, when she looked at the growing forms and bright complexions of her sisters (for some children come early to the power of drawing comparisons) and though, in particular she wept a whole day, seized with a sudden horror at having seen a caravan drawn past the avenue gates with the picture of a small old woman standing on a shelf, and the motto above painted in letters as large as the figure — 'Come! and look at the Dwarf!' — though these things, I say, troubled her with a passing and keen trouble, she was, on the whole, the happiest of all the Albany children — tossed about without regard or indulgence, and expecting none — gleaming up odd knowledge, no one knew how — with the sweetest of all sweet tempers — already proving that Mr Albany had been for once mistaken in his prophecy — 'she will be always a sight,' he now would say — 'but she is a happy little thing — and I hope that our aunts Mrs Albany, will leave her a legacy — as she is so much with them — she must look forward to perpetuating the line of Albany old maids.'

'Never mind, my love,' his philosophical wife would reply; 'we cannot expect the luck of getting them all married.'

Time went on — and the Misses Albany began to grow up, and to come out one by one, 'shy and lovely as the stars of a summer night' (so said a drawing room poet) while their poor mother, now past offering any assistance to her fate, was fain to exchange the estate in which she had loved to hear herself called 'that young-looking pretty woman,' for the cares and responsibilities of chaperonage — to attend balls in which she could not take an active part — to manage and manoeuvre conquests for others, and not herself. And she did plan, and manage, and manoeuvre her seven beauties in succession with consummate skill. Agatha, the eldest, who was foolish to the utmost degree of feebleness, was started on the strength of her dancing, and a peculiarly graceful twist of her ringlets; Kate, the second — 'lively kitty,' as her mother would call her, when any body was within hearing — was intended to charm by her high spirits; and her artless rattling gaiety was deemed particularly suitable to exhibit to very young officers and country squires, more burdened with acres than brains — to such men as 'had a confounded horror of blue women.' Phoebe drew wonderfully well — sketched from nature with amazing freedom of hand. It was true that a sarcastic neighbour had said on hearing this well-worn remark — 'Ay, free enough in all conscience; a few liberties are nothing in her way;' but Mrs Albany had not heard the *mot*, and cried up her sweet Phoebe's simple tastes, her aversion to society, far and near, and, in accepting an invitation for her, and smile and hesitate, and say — 'If we can tempt Phoebe.' She was laid out for the benefit of the studious Clara and Caroline, twins, were to make their way to matrimony by their music — 'just of a height — the nicest duet imaginable;' and much had the family endured to bring this to pass: — what practising by the hour together! — what music-chairs, with upright, uneasy backs, always in the way, especially of the very weary! — what torturing of tuneful voices! — Masters, however, had achieved wonders; and, 'it was told in triumph,' that they had sung with Mrs Salmon, and she had said it was a pleasure. Mrs Albany had not waited for the close of her remark, delivered *sotto voce* to the gentleman present — 'a pleasure to get the thing over.'

Martha, the sixth of this bevy of fair maidens — whose beauty, I should have said, was of that evanescent nature, which passes away with early youth — Martha was scientific, the mistress of more *ologies* than it would be either safe or amusing to enumerate. She was the delight and pain of all wandering lecturers, and her name was noised abroad as one who had a sincere thirst for knowledge, 'very remarkable in a lady so young and so richly endowed with beauty.' Mrs Albany had begun by being suspicious of this line; but ever after a certain Dr. Von Paffenhausen had brought a letter of introduction to Martha from some equally great man in London, and had looked over her collection of fossils, much to his own profit, (so he declared), even Mrs Albany began to think that learning was not 'better than houses and lands,' but that it might possibly be bartered for those useful commodities. *Jemima* — to conclude this weary catalogue and come to our heroine — was the beauty of the family *par excellence*, and did infinite credit to the hints she had received on the grace of certain attitudes, and how deep blue eyes were best brought into play. At home or abroad, in a church or in a ball-room, she was always sitting for a picture; now dreamily bending over a book on her knee, (she had a feeble propensity for poetry), now tossing up a child with the grace of a *Ballatrice*, now looking out of a window at that precise spot where the sunshine fell brightest on her sunny hair — but I have summed up her perfections — she was a beauty, and nothing more. Such were the seven Misses Albany; and what was startling, unintelligible, and most unpleasant, they were, strange to say, the seven Misses Albany still, at the time when the eighth, the forgotten Cinderella of the family, was beginning to shoot up, and when the time approached that she, too, should pass the Rubicon, so important to young ladies, and come out.

Left entirely to herself, to learn or to refrain from learning, just as she pleased; sent away for weeks at one time to that dull prison, the house of her grand-aunts, who were too grand to visit in so mixed a neighbourhood; then called home again, to be drudge and cipher among her sisters; our little maiden, it must be whispered, in spite of, or because of, all this unkindly training, was in heart and understanding worth the whole of them put together! She was gentle and affectionate for she had been taught the real value of kindness; observant, for she had been compelled to discover every thing for herself; cheerful, for she required no luxuries; modest and self-postponing she was sure to be, when from her youth upwards she had heard little save the language of command and reproach, and had been driven about with as little remorse as her prototype in the fairy-tale.

She was not very beautiful — if it be beauty's test.

To match a classic model when perfectly at rest.

Neither had she ever been allowed any of the advantages of dress, and had been merely permitted, as it were, to glean her dancing and music from her sisters' lessons; in short, she was 'poor Juliana!' But she was sincere and kind-hearted, and as for beauty — Time has sometimes cosmetics and elixirs, as well as corrosives! It must be confessed, however, that she, too, had her own peculiarities; she was exact, scrupulous, punctual to a fault; and whenever she was summoned by the skill of her fingers or wit, to repair some blunder of her sisters', caused by their opposite habits, they would cry with one accord, even while profiting by her assistance — 'O poor Juliana! you will be an old maid to a certainty!'

To be Continued.

From the London Magazine.

BETTER DAYS.

BETTER days are like Hebrew verbs, they have no present tense; they are of past or future only. "All that's bright must fade," says Tom Moore. Very likely; and so must all that's not bright. To hear some people talk you would imagine that there was no other month in the year except November, and that the leaves had nothing else to do but to fall off the trees. And to refer again to Tom Moore's song about the 'Stars that shine and fall,' one might suppose by this time all the stars in heaven had been blown out like so many farthing candles at a show-booth at Bartlemey-fair; and as for flowers and leaves, if they go away, it is only to make way for new ones. There are as many stars in heaven as ever there were in the memory of man, and as many flowers on the earth too; and perhaps more in England, for we are always making fresh importations. It is all very well now and then to have a bit of a grant or growl, or a lamentation; but the mendicant is worth ten find faults, all the world over. It is all right enough, when the barometer of

the purse is low — to say that things are not as they used to be; and I would not for the world deprive an honest man of the pleasure of grumbling; it is an Englishman's birth-right. But I don't like to see a matter of history and philosophical verity; let us have our growl and done with it. But some croakers remind one of the boy who said his grandmother went up stairs nineteen times a day and never came down again. Or, to seek for another resemblance, they may be likened to the Irish grave digger, who was seen one night looking about the church yard with a lantern in his hand. 'What have you lost, Pat?' 'Oh, I have lost my lantern!' 'You have your lantern in your hand.' 'Oh, but this is a lantern I have found, it is not the lantern I have lost.' Thus it is with men in general; they think more of the lantern they have lost than of the lantern they have found. It is true, indeed, that things are not what they were, with any of us. Great changes have taken place; and more are daily taken place; but there are greater changes in our feelings and apprehensions than there are in the external, or in the general frame of society. What a great change must have taken place between the time of the siege of Troy and the days of Homer; for the poet speaks of Ajax pelting the Greeks with stones of such a bigness that ten or a dozen men of the degenerate days in which Homer lived could not lift such a one. Ever since his time, things have been growing worse and worse, so that now, I dare say, the human race, compared to what it was during the siege of Troy, is not much more than a noble army of knats. Nothing as it was; the people grow worse and worse generation after generation, and the inhabitants of the earth become more attenuated, till at length there will be nothing left of them — they will become gradually invisible. The sun does not shine so brightly as it used to, and the seasons — every body says they are changed. There is a great deal of truth in this — there is no denying it. — The evidence of the mutation of the seasons from youth to manhood is so superabundant, that by proving too much it proves nothing.

But of all the regrets of the better days that are gone by, none are more pathetic than the lamentations for the loss of all our great men. What marvelously great men did live in the days that are past! This, of course, says the triumphant croaker must be admitted. There is no denying that Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Scott, Byron, Pitt, Fox, Canning, Sheridan, are all gone and have not left their likenesses behind. It is no easy matter to conceive any human being more proud and happy than a triumphant croaker. If you stop a man in the midst of his lamentations, and prove to him, as clear as light, that he has no good cause for complaint, you seem to inflict an injury upon him; but, if he can repel your arguments, and establish his own growing opinion beyond all question, he is happier than if he never had any cause of complaint. Is there, says he, a man now living who can write as Shakespeare wrote? Very likely there is not; and if there were, he would be quite a superfluity; we have as much Shakespeare as we want — and so of all the rest.

The cause of this style of reproaching the present by referring to the past, is to be found in the loud lamentations which mark the departure of great men from the sublunary scene. When a distinguished man dies the public feel a loss. Funeral elegy, monument, epitaph, biography, all make the talked about. We notice the great traces that are cut down, but we regard not the saplings that are springing up in their places. Thus we think that we live in sad, degenerate days, and thus we get into the habit of looking upon great men as good for nothing until they are dead. In the book of the Proverbs of Solomon, it is said that a living dog is better than a dead lion. Perhaps it may be; but we do not in general seem to hold this doctrine; indeed, we regard the living as dogs and the dead as lions.

I think another cause of our looking back on the past as on better days, may be found in the fact that we are all growing older. The world is not half so pretty and wonderful to us now as it was when we were young. To a boy a schoolmaster is often an awful and great personage; he is regarded with admiration, as a miracle of majesty, and a paragon of knowledge. Old Busby knew that, when he kept his hat on in the presence of royalty in his own school room. But what a different idea of schoolmasters we acquire, when we are grown up to man's estate! We measure all things by the standard of our own feelings; we have no other rule to go by; and if we feel ourselves growing old and wearying out, and our eyes grow dim, we think the sun shines more hoarily than he was wont to do; and if our feelings grow obtuse, we fancy there is nothing in the world worth caring for — and if we go to the graves of our boyish heroes, and if our boyish feelings do not return to us, we fancy that the