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SAMUEL WRIGHT, Editor and Proprietor.

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Poetry.

The Closing Scene.

BY T. BUCHANAN READ.

Within the sober realm of leafless trees,
The rusted year inhaled the dreary air;
Like some tanned reaper in his hour of ease,
When all the fields are lying brown and bare.

The gray barns looking from their hazy hills,
O'er the dun waters, widening in the vales,
Sent down the air a greeting to the mills,
On the dull thunder of alternate falls.

All sights were mellowed, and all sounds subdued,
The hills seemed farther, and the streams sang low;
As in a dream, the distant woodman hewed
His winter log with many a muffled blow.

The embattled forests, crevices, armed in gold,
Their banners bright with every martial hue,
Now silent, like some sad, beaten host of old,
Withdrawn afar in times remotest blue.

On slumber's wings the vulture tried his flight;
The dove scarce heard his singing mate's complaint,
And like a star, slow dawning in the light,
The village church spire seemed to pale and faint.

The sentinel creak upon the hill-side crew—
Crews heroic, and all was stiller than before—
Silent till some ruyling rascal blew
His alien horn, and then was heard no more.

Where erst the jay winging the elm's tall crest
Made gurgle-traffic round her undelighted young;
And where the oriole hung her swaying nest,
By every light wind like a censer swung;

Where sang the noisy martens of the eaves,
The busy swallows circling ever near;
Foreboding, as the rustic mind believes,
An early harvest and a plenteous year—

Where every bird which charmed the vernal feast,
Shook the sweet slumber from its wings at morn,
To warn the reapers of the rosy east—
All now was songless, empty and forlorn.

Alone, from out the stubble, piped the quail,
And croaked the crow through all the dreary gloom;
Alone the pheasant, drumming in the vale,
Made echo to the distant cottage loom.

There was no bird, no bloom upon the bowers;
The spiders wove their thin shrouds night by night;
The whistle-down, the only ghost of flowers,
Sailed slowly by—passed noiseless out of sight.

Amid all this—in this most cheerless air,
And where the woodlark sated upon the porch
His crimson leaves, as if the shed stood there,
Firing the floor with his inverted torch;

Amid all this, the centre of the scene,
The white-haired matron, with immoderate zeal,
Pled the swift-cock and with her joyous men,
That like a fate, and watched the flying wheel.

She had known sorrow. He had walked with her,
On sunset, and looked with her at the dawn;
And in the dead leaves still she heard his stir,
Of his black mantle trailing in the dust.

While yet her cheek was bright with summer bloom,
Her country summoned, and the grave her all,
And twice was lowered to her simple plume—
Re-gave the towels to rust upon the wall.

Re-gave the sword—but not the hand that drew
And struck for liberty the dying blow;
Nor him, who to his sire and country true,
Felt 'mid the ranks of the invading foe.

Long, but not loud, the droning wheel went on;
Like the low murmur of the hive at noon;
Long, but not loud, the memory of the gone
Beathed through her lips, a sad and tremulous tone.

At last the thread was snapped—her head was bowed,
Life dropped the distaff through her hands serene;
And loving neighbors smoothed her careful shroud,
While Death and Winter closed the autumn scene.

Too Late.

"Douglas, Douglas, tend and true"—Old Ballad.
Could ye come back to me, Douglas, Douglas,
In the old likeness that I knew,
I would be so faithful, so loving, Douglas,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true!

Never a scornful word should pain ye
I'd smile as sweet as the angels do;
Sweet as your smile on me should ever,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true!

Oh! to call back the days that are not!
My eyes were blinded, your words were few;
Do you know the truth now in Heaven?
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true!

I was not half worthy of you, Douglas,
Nor half worthy the like of you,
Now all men breathe as I do like shadows,
I love you, Douglas, tender and true!

Stretch out your hand to me, Douglas, Douglas,
Drop forgiveness from Heaven like dew;
As I lay my head on your dear breast, Douglas,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true!

Selections.

Turkey Tracks.

Don't open your eyes, Polder! You think I am going to tell you about some of my Minnesota experiences; how I used to scamper over the prairies on my Indian pony, and lie in wait for wild turkeys on the edge of an oak opening. That is pretty sport, too, to creep under an oak with low-hanging boughs, and in the silence of a glowing autumn day linger by the hour together in a trance of warm stillness, watching the light tracery of shadow and sun on that smooth sward, only now and then roused by the fleet rush of the deer through the wood, or the brisk chatter of a plume-tailed squirrel, till one hears a distant, sharp, clucking chuckle, and in an instant more pulls every bronzed feather glittering in the sunshine, and now splashed with scarlet blood, the delicate under-wing ground into down as he rolls and flutters; for the first shot rarely kills at once with an amateur; there is too much excitement. Splendid sport, that! but I'm not going into it second-hand. I promised to tell you a story, now the skipper's fast, and the night is too warm to think of sleep down in that wretched bunk;—what another torture Dante might have lavished on his Inferno, if he'd ever slept in a fishing-smack! No. The moonlight makes me sentimental! Did I ever tell you about a mouth I spent up in Centerville, the year I came home from Germany? That was turkey-hunting with a vengeance!

You see, my pretty cousin Peggy married Peter Smith, who owns paper-mills in Centerville, and has exiled herself into deep country for life; a circumstance I disapprove,

because I like Peggy, and manufacturers always bore me, though Peter is a clever fellow enough; but madam was an old flame of mine, and I have a lingering tenderness for her yet. I wish she were near town. Just that year Peggy had been very ill indeed; and Kate, her sister, had gone up to nurse her. When I came home Peggy was getting better, and sent for me to come up and make a visitation there in June. I hadn't seen Kate for seven years,—not since she was thirteen; our education intervened. She had gone through that grading process and come out. By Jupiter! when she met me at the door of Smith's pretty, English-looking cottage, I took my hat off, she was so like that little Brazilian princess we used to see in the *carriage* of the court at Paris. What was her name? Never mind that! Kate had just such large, expressive eyes, just such masses of shining black hair, just such a little nose,—turned up undeniably, but all the more piquant. And her teeth! good gracious! she smiled like a flash of lightning,—dark and sallow as she was. But she was cross, or stiff, or something, to me for a long time. Peggy only appeared after dinner, looking pale and lovely enough to make Peter act excessively like—a young married man, and to make me wish myself at an invisible distance, doing something beside picking up Kate's things, that she always dropped when the sword. Peggy saw I was bored, so she requested me to walk down to the poultry-yard and ask about her chickens; she pretended a great deal of anxiety, and Peter had sprained his ankle.

"Kate will go with you," said she. "No she won't!" ejaculated that young woman. "Thank you," said I, making a minuet bow, and off I went to the farm-house. Such a pretty walk it was, too! through a thicket of birches, down a little hill-side into a hollow full of honny chestnut-trees, across a bubbling, dancing brook, and you came out upon the tiniest orchard in the world, a one-story sweet-briar bush thereby; while up the hill-side behind stretched a high picket fence, enclosing huge trees, part of the same brook I had crossed here dammed into a pond, and a chicken-house of pretentious height and aspect,—one of those model institutions that are the ruin of gentlemen-farmers and the delight of women. I had to go into the farm-kitchen for the poultry-yard key, and the farmer's daughter, Melinda Tucker, moulding bread there in a ponderous tray, her deep red hair,—yes, it was red and comely! of the deepest bay, full of gilded reflections, and accompanied by the fair rose-flushed skin, blue eyes, and scarlet lips that belong to such hair,—which, as I began to say, was puckered into a thousand curves trying to curl, and knotted strictly against a pretty head, while her calico frock-seconds were pinned back to the shoulders, baring such a dimpled pair of arms,—how they did fly up and down in the tray! I stood still contemplating the picture, and presently seeing her begin to strip the dough from her pink fingers and mould it into a mass, I ventured to knock. If you had seen her start and blush, Polder! But when she saw me, she grew as cool as you please, and called her mother. Down came Mrs. Tucker, a talking Yankee. You don't know what that is. Listen then.

"Well, good day sir! I expect it's Mister Greene, Miss Smith's cousin. Well, you be! Don't favor her much though; she's kinder dark complected. See ha'n't got round yet, has she? Dew tell! She's dre'ful delicate. I do'n't as ever I see a woman so sickly's she looks to be since that er fever. She's real spry when she's so's to be crawlin'—I expect too spry to be 'hulsome. Well, he tells me you've been 'cross the water 'Ta'n't just like this over there, I guess. Pretty sightly places they be though, a'n't they?—I've seen pictures in Melindy's jography, and looks as if 'twan't so woodey over there as 'tis in these parts' specially out West. He's got folks out to Indiana, an' we set out for to go n-cousinin', five year back, an' we got out there inter the dre'fullest woodey region er ye see, when 'twan't trees, it was 'sketers; husband he could'n't see none out of his eyes for a hull day, and I thought I should caterpillar every time I heard one of em too; they certainly was the beater-er!"

"The key if you please!" I meekly interposed. Mrs. Tucker was fast stunning me! "Law yis! Melindy, you git that 'ere key; it's a hangin' up 'side o' the lookin' glass in the back shed, under that bunch o' onions father strung up yesterday. Got the bread set to rise, he'y? well, git your bonnet an' go out to the coop with Mr. Greene, 'n' show him the turkeys an' the chickens, 'n' tell what dre'ful luck he her hed. I never did see sich luck! the crows they kept a comin' an' snippin' up the little orters just as soon's they're hatched; an' the old turkey hen 'n' ot under the grapevine she got two hen's eggs under her, 'n' they come out fust, so she quit—"

Here I bolted out of the door, (a storm at sea did not deafen one like that!) Melindy following in silence such as our blessed New England poet has immortalized,—silence that—
—like a polioe comes,
To heal the blows of sound."

Indeed I did not discover that Melindy could talk that day; she was very silent, very incommunicative. I inspected the fowls, and tried to look wise, but I saw a strangled laugh twisting Melindy's face when I innocently inquired if she found catnip of much benefit to the little chickens; a natural question enough, for the yard was full of it, and I had seen Hannah give it to the baby.—(Hannah is my sister.) I could see only two little turkeys,—both on the floor of the second-story parlor in the chicken-house, both flat on their backs and gasping. Melindy did not know what ailed them; so I picked them up, slung them in my pocket-handkerchief, and took them home for Peggy to manipulate. I heard Melindy chuckle as I walked off, swinging them; and to be sure, when I brought the creatures in to Peggy, one of them kicked and lay still, and the other gasped worse than ever.

"What can we do?" asked Peggy, in the most plaintive voice, as the feeble 'week' week' of the little turkey was gasped out, more feebly every time. "Give it some whiskey-punch!" growled Peter, whose strict temperance principles were shocked by the remedies prescribed for Peggy's ailment. "So I would," said Kate, demurely. "Now if Peggy had one trait more striking than another, it was her perfect, simple faith in what people said; irony was a mystery to her; lying, a myth,—something on a par with murder. She thought Kate meant so; and reaching out for the pretty wicker-flask that contained her daily ration of old Scotch whiskey, she dropped a little into a spoon; diluted it with water, and was going to give it to the turkey in all seriousness, when Kate exclaimed,—

"Peggy! when will you learn common sense? Who ever heard of giving whiskey to a turkey?" "Why, you told me to Kate!" "Oh, give it to the thing!" growled Peter; "it will die, of course!" "I shall give it," said Peggy, resolutely; "it does me good, and I will try." So I held the little creature up, while Peggy tipped the dose down its throat.—How it choked, kicked and began again with 'week' week' when it meant 'strong!' but it revived. Peggy held it in the Sun till it grew warm, gave it a drop more, fed it with bread crumbs from her own plate, and laid it on the south window-sill. There it lay when we went to tea; when we came back, it lay on the floor, dead; either it was tipsy, or had tried its new strength too soon, and rolling off, had broken its neck! Poor Peggy!

There were six more hatched next day though, and I held many consultations with Melindy about their welfare. Truth to tell, Kate continued so cool to me, Peter's sprained ankle lasted so long, Peggy could so well spare me from the little matrimonial *tele-actes* that I interrupted, (I believe they did not mind Kate!) that I took wonderfully to the chickens. Mrs. Tucker gave me rye-bread and milk of the best; father instructed me in the mysteries of entle driving; and Melindy, and Joe, and I, used to go straw-berrying, or after 'posies,' almost every day. Melindy was a very pretty girl, and it was very good fun to see her blue eyes open and her red lips laugh over my European experiences. Really, I began to be of some importance at the farm-house, and to take airs upon myself, I suppose; but I was not conscious of the fact at the time.

After a week or two, Melindy and I began to have bad luck with the turkeys. I found two drenched and shivering, after a hail-and-thunder storm, and setting them in a basket on the cooking-stove hearth, went to help Melindy 'dress her boy-pot,' as she called arranging a vase of flowers, and when I came back the little turkeys were single; they died a few hours after. Two more were trodden on by a great Shanghai rooster, who was so tall he could not see where he set his feet down; and of the remaining pair one disappeared mysteriously,—supposed to be rats; and one falling into the duck-pond, Melindy began to dry it in her apron, and I went to help her. I thought as I was 'rubbing the thing down with the apron, while she held it, that I had found one of her soft dimpled hands, and I gave the luckless turkey such a tender pressure that it uttered a miserable squeak, and departed this life. Melindy all but cried.—I laughed irresistibly. So there were no more turkeys. Peggy began to wonder what they should do for the proper Thanksgiving dinner, and Peter turned restlessly on his sofa, quite convinced that everything was going to rack and ruin because he had a sprained ankle.

"Can't we buy some young turkeys?" timidly suggested Peggy. "Of course; if one know who had them to sell," retorted Peter. "I know," said I. "Mrs. Amzi Peters, up on the hill over Taunton, has got some." "Who told you about Mrs. Peters' turkeys, Cousin Sam?" said Peggy, wondering. "Melindy," said I, quite innocently. Peter whistled, Peggy laughed, Kate darted a keen glance at me under her long lashes.

"I know the way there," said Mademoiselle, in a suspiciously bland tone. "Can't you drive there with me, Cousin Sam, and get some more?" "Oh, I'll ketch 'em easy!" "But how will you catch them?" "Oh, I'll ketch 'em easy!" She went into the house and reappeared presently with a pan of Indian meal and water, called the chickens, and in a moment,

they were all crowding in and over the unexpected supper. "Now you jest take a bit o' string and tie that 'ere turkey's legs together; 'twon't stir, I'll ensure it!" Strange to say, the innocent creature stood still and eat, while I tied it up; all unconscious till it tumbled neck and heels into the pan, producing a start and a scatter of brief duration. Kate had left the wagon, and was shaking with laughter over this extraordinary goodness on the turkey's part; and before long our basket was full of struggling kicking, squeaking things, 'werry promiscuous' in Mr. Weller's phrase. Mrs. Demont was paid, and while she was giving me the change,—

"Oh!" said she, "you're goin' right to Miss Tucker's a'n't ye—got to drop the turkeys;—won't you tell Miss Tucker 't George is comin' home to-morrow, an' he's ben to California. She know'd us allers, and Melindy 'n' George used to be dre'ful thick before he went off, a good spell back, when they was night about children; so I guess you had better tell 'em." "Confound these turkeys!" muttered I, as I jumped over the basket. "Why?" said Kate, "I suspect they are confounded enough already!" "They make such a noise, Kate!"

And so they did; 'week! week! week!' all the way, like a colony from some spring-waked pool. "These some might be compared to the croaking of frogs in a pond!" The drive was lovelier than before. The road crept and curved down the hill, now covered from side to side with the interlacing boughs of grand old chestnuts; now barriered on the edge of a ravine with broken fragments and boulders of granite, gnarled by heavy vines; now skirting orchards full of promise; and all the way accompanied by a tiny brook, veiled deeply in alder and hazel thickets, and making in its shadowy channel perpetual muffled music, like a child singing in the twilight to reassure its half-fearful heart. Kate's face was softened and full of rich expression; her pink ribbons threw a delicate tinge of bloom upon the rounded cheek and pensive eyelid; the air was pure calm, and a cool breath from the receding showers of the distant thunder storm just freshened the odors of wood and field. I began to feel suspiciously sentimental, but through it all came that persevering 'week! week! week!' from the basket at my feet. Did I make a fine remark about the beauties of nature, 'week!' echoed the turkeys. Did Kate praise some of their slant or slant by the way, 'week! week!' was the response. Did we get deep in poetry, romance, or metaphysics, through the most brilliant quotation, the sublimest climax, the most acute distinction, came in 'week! week! week!' I began to feel as if the old story of transmigration were true, and the souls of half a dozen quaint and ancient satirists had got into the turkeys. I could not endure it! Was I to be squawked out of all my wisdom, and knowledge, and devices, of this fashion? Never! I began, too, to discover a dawning smile on Kate's face; she turned her head away, and I placed the turkey basket on my knees, hoping a change of position might quiet its contents. Never was man more at fault! they were no way stilled by my magnetism; on the contrary, they threw their sarcastic utterings into my teeth, as it were, and slammed me to my very face. I forgot entirely to go round by Mrs. Peters's. I took a cross-road directly homeward.—A pause—a lull—took place among the turkeys.

"How sweet and mystical this hour is!" said I to Kate, in a high-flown manner; 'it is indeed

"An hour when lips deep to speak, Oppressed with silence deep and pure; When passion pauses—"

"Week! week! week!" chimed in those confounded turkeys. Kate burst into a helpless fit of laughter. What could I do? I had to laugh myself, since I must not choke the turkeys.

"Excuse me, Cousin Sam," said Kate, in a laughter-wearied tone, "I could not help it; turkeys and sentimentality do not agree—always!" adding the last word maliciously, as I sprang out to open the farm-house gate, and disclosed Melindy, framed in the buttry window; skimming milk; a picture worthy of Wilkie. I delivered over my captives to Joe, and stalked into the kitchen to give Mrs. Demont's message. Melindy came out; but as soon as I began to tell her mother where I got that message, Miss Melindy, with the *sang froid* of a duchess, turned back to her skimming—or appeared to. I gained nothing by that move.

Peggy and Peter received us benignly; so universal a solvent is success, even in turkey-hunting! I meant to have gone down to the farm-house after tea, and inquired about the safety of my prizes, but Kate wanted to play chess. Peter couldn't, and Peggy wouldn't; I had to, of course, and we played late. Kate had such pretty hands; long, taper fingers, rounded to the tiniest, firm; no dimples, but full muscles, firm and exquisitely moulded; and the dainty way in which she handled her men, was half the game to me;—I lost it; I played wretchedly. The next day Kate went with me to see the turkeys; so she did the day after. We were forgetting Melindy, I am afraid, for it was a week before I remembered I had promised her a new Magazine. I recollected myself; then with a sort of shame, rolled up the number and went off to the farm-house. It seems Kate was there, busy in the garret, unpacking a bureau that had been stored there

with some of Peggy's foreign purchases, for summer wear, in the drawers. I did not know that. I found Melindy spreading yeast-cakes to dry on a table, just by the north end of the hearth, a hop-vine in full blossom made a sort of porch-roof over the window by which she stood.

"I've brought your look, Melindy," said I. "Thank you, sir," returned she crisply. "How pretty you look to-day!" condescendingly remarked I. "I don't thank you for that, sir;—"

"Why, Melindy! what makes you so cross?" inquired I, in a tone meant to be tenderly reproachful,—in the meantime attempting to possess myself of her hand; for, to be honest, Polder, I had been a little sweet to the girl before Kate drove her out of my head. The hand was snatched away. I tried indifference.

"How are the turkeys to-day, Melindy?" Here Joe, an *enfant terrible*, came upon the scene suddenly. "Them turkeys eats a lot, Mister Greene, Melindy says there's one on 'em struts jes' like you, 'n' makes as much gobble!" "Gobble! gobble! gobble!" echoed an old turkey from somewhere; I thought it was overheard, but I saw nothing. Melindy threw her apron over her head and laughed till her arms grew red. I picked up my hat and walked off. For three days I kept out of that part of the Smith domain, I assure you! Kate began to grow mocking and derisive; she teased me from morning till night and the more she teased me, the more I adored her. I was getting desperate, when one Sunday night Kate asked me to walk down to the farm house with her after tea, as Mrs. Tucker was sick, and she had something to take to her. We found the old woman sitting up in the kitchen, and as full of talk as ever, though an unlucky rheumatism kept her otherwise quiet.

"How do the turkeys come on, Mrs. Tucker?" said I, by way of conversation. "Well, I declare, you ha'n't heard about them turkeys, he'y? You see they was doin' fine, and father he went off to salt for a spell, so's to see,—I wouldn't stop a complaint he's got,—I do'n't but it's a spine in the back,—makes him kinder faint by spells, so's he loses his conscientiousness all to once; so he left the chickens 'n' things for Melindy to boss, 'n' she got somethin' else into her head, 'n' she left the door open one night, and them turkeys they up 'n' run away. I expect they took to the woods, 'fore Melindy brought to mind how 't she hadn't shut the door. She's sot out for to hunt 'em. I shouldn't wonder if she was out now, seein' it's arter sundown.

"She ain't nuther!" roared the terrible Joe from behind the door, where he had retreated at my coming. "She's settin' on a flour barrel down by the well, an' George Bemont's a huggin' on her."

Good gracious, what a slap Mrs. Tucker fetched that unlucky child, with a long brown towel that hung at hand, and how he howled! while Kate exploded with laughter, in spite of her struggles to keep quiet. "He is the dre'fullest boy!" whined Mrs. Tucker. "Melindy tells how he sassed you 't'other day, Mr. Greene. I shall hev to tewter that boy; he's got to hev the rod, I guess!"

I bade Mrs. Tucker good night, for Kate was already out of the door, and, before I knew what she was about, had taken a by-path in sight of the well; and there, to be sure, sat Melindy, on a prostrate flour-barrel that was rolled to the foot of the big apple-tree, twirling her fingers in pretty embarrassment, and held on her insecure perch by the stout arm of George Bemont, a handsome brown fellow, evidently very well content just now.

"Pretty,—isn't it?" said Kate. "Very,—quite pastoral," sniffed I. "We were sitting round the open door an hour after, listening to a whistling willow, and watching the slow moon rise over a hilly range just east of Centerville, when that elvish little 'week, week! week!' piped out of the wood that lay behind the house. "That is hopeful," said Kate; "I think Melindy and George must have tracked the turkeys to their haunt, and scared them homeward." "George—who?" said Peggy. "George Demont; it seems he is—what is your Connecticut phrase?—sparkin' Melindy."

"I'm very glad; he is a clever fellow," said Peter. "And she is such a very pretty girl," continued Peggy, "so intelligent and graceful; don't you think so, Sam?" "Aw, yes, well enough for a rustic," said I languidly. "I never could endure red hair, though!"

Kate stopped on the door sill; she had risen to go up stairs. "Gobble! gobble! gobble!" mocked she. "I had heard that once before! Peter and Peggy roared;—they knew it all;—I was sold!" "Curse me of Kate Stevens?" of course it did. I never saw her again without wanting to fight shy, I was so sure of an allusion to turkeys. No, I took the first down train. There are more pretty girls in New York, twice over, than there are in Centerville, I console myself, but, by George! Polder, Kate Stevens was charming!—Look out there; don't meddle with the skipper's coils of rope; can't you sleep on deck without a pillow?