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TOWANDA:

Saturday Morning, February 18, 1884.

Selected Poetry.

THE COTTAGE DOOR.

BY T. K. HARTZ, ESQ.

How sweet the rest that labor yields
The humble and the poor.
Where sits the patriarch of the fields
Before his cottage door:
The lark is singing in the sky,
The swallow in the eaves,
And love is beaming in each eye
Beneath the summer leaves!

The air amid the fragrant bowers
Supplies unpurchased health,
And hearts are bounding 'mid the flowers
More dear to him than wealth!
Peace, like the blessed sunlight, plays
Around his humble cot.
And happy nights and cheerful days
Divide his lowly lot.

And when the village Sabbath bell
Rings out upon the gale,
The father bows his head to tell
The music of its tale—
A fresh verdure seems to fill
The fair and dewy sod,
And every infant tongue is still,
To hear the word of God!

O, happy hearts!—to Him who stills
The ravens when they cry,
And makes the lily "neath the hills
So glorious to the eye—
The trusting patriarch prays, to bless
His labors with increase:
Such "ways are ways of pleasantness,"
And all such "paths are peace!"

Selected Tale.

THE TEACHER'S TRIAL AND REWARD.

BY MARY IRVING.

"Oh, it is a thankless task to teach!" exclaimed Mary, as she drew off her school bonnet, after a summer day's hard toil.

"What now, Mary?" asked her hostess, gently, looking up with an inquiring smile.

Mary tossed herself into the beckoning arms of the crimson-cushioned rocking-chair, and shook down her curls over her flushed cheeks.

"Nothing so very new nor strange to be sure. A teacher's trials are like—like these troublesome mosquitoes," she said, crushing, as she spoke, one whose melodious insect upon her hand, impatiently, they are sure to meet and conquer singly, but coming in swarms, and without cessation, they are one's nerves to distraction!"

She grew eloquent as she recovered breath, and went on:

"There is a fine drapery of romance thrown over the ideal of teaching, that will bear little of the rough handling of reality. It is delightful in perspective—this entrancing yourself on a pyramid of young hearts, whose upgushings are to wait you in the seventh heaven of self-complacency. It is delicious to fancy yourself the prime mover of an electrical battery, whose wires shall vibrate simultaneously in a hundred small breasts, at your light touch. But delusion is written on all those day-dreams! You seat yourself on that magic platform, and you are disenchanted into a servant attendant. The eyes which you pictured turning to you, as the sunflower to the sun, are wandering over desk and bench in search of paper balls, quill pens, or what nots of mischievous contrivance. The 'young affections' are bestowed upon jack-knives and long-tailed kites; and the 'youthful ardor' works itself out through heels and hands, instead of head. You hammer away upon your strings, with little enough impression upon pebbly souls before you! Don't shake your head so sadly, Aunt Hannah! I know my duty, and I will not shrink from it for these obstacles; but sometimes they do swell mountain high!"

"Aunt Hannah," as Mary called her by the relationship of affection, not of kindred blood, was a comely, cheerful spinster—yes, a veritable 'old maid' of fifty years or more. She was calm and Quaker-like in her manners and in her dress; but her apartments were furnished in a style of comfortable elegance, that made them peculiarly attractive to young eyes. Being a 'lone woman,' and a woman of fortune, she usually bound to her hearth some good, warm, young heart, and kept her own soul bathed in its fountain of fresh life. Her house was a home for the homeless; and who is so homeless as a young teacher in a strange city? So thought the kind old lady, at least when she took Mary to her heart and home as a daughter.

Mary was a sunny-spirited creature, not often shadowed by an eclipse of discouragement; but when the cloud came, the shower must follow. So, the suddenly dropped her face on her hands, at the last sentence of her little oration, and burst into tears, like a homesick child.

"Why? Did you ever teach, Aunt Hannah? I am sure there was no need of it; you were rich, and—"

She glanced around her, without finishing her sentence.

"And you think teaching a penance, which none but the penniless would go through," said the lady, laughing.

"Shall I give you a leaf of my own life's experience, May? You may distil some balsam from it."

"Oh! yes, aunt," answered Mary, with deep interest, bending over until her curls rested on the old lady's brown silk apron. "But first tell me how you came to teach? If it was from the love of teaching, you can never sympathize with me!"

"Aunt Hannah stroked Mary's soft hair, and looked steadily, almost sadly, into her hazel eyes for a few minutes, without speaking.

"I see a dream within these eyes, Mary," she said, at last in a low deep tone—"a dream that lies in your heart's core! No, do not drop the lashes; let me read, and recollect this dream that boded and grew in my heart, once—transplanted to heaven long ago!"

"I did not mean to pain you, aunt," whispered Mary, pressing her lips to the withered hand that rested on her aunt's lap. "Forgive my inquisitiveness."

"It does not pain me, Mary," she answered, cheerfully; "for why should the thought of that which is immortal pain? But I will not sadden you with what your young loving, and loved heart would call a sad story to-night. I will only say that at the age of nineteen I found myself, by one stroke, cut aloof from life's joys and hopes, and driven to life's duties for the support of an existence that was long like a withered rose leaf."

She drew herself up, took out her knitting and commenced her story with animation.

"I became, in short, Mary, a district school-ma'am, in a small country village, actually long choice. But it was in none of your romantic little country school houses that I found myself enclosed—no white, green blinded elm-shaded nook of science—nor even a neat corn field. No; a bare, bland, and weather-beaten establishment, unshaded by shrub, tree, or blind, in the exact triangle formed by three dusty roads, was my seat of empire."

"It was a summer-school—ladies at that day taught only in the melting season. My scholars were generally the 'lesser fry,' whose brothers and sisters were detained at home, meanwhile, to cultivate domestic science in the cheese-room or hay-field. Small as they were, however, they were large enough to embody the imps of mischief that always lurk about the walls of the school-house. But I pass them and their pranks long since remembered only to be smiled at. The two largest of my pupils shall be the heroes of my story. They were only sizable scions in my nursery of shooting ideas, and, as such, naturally assumed importance."

"One was the minister's son—a high-browed and high-souled boy of fifteen—pale and precocious, enthusiastic in his love of the beautiful, and his love of his books. He was a boy among a thousand. The snows of the 'Jungfrau,' whose legend you were last night reading, cannot be purer of contamination from the world beneath, than was his young soul of that world's debasing influences. But he was not cold-hearted paragon of perfection, carried in ice—my gentle, loving Eddie! His blue eyes—I can see it now, looking up at me from his brown pine desk, over which he was bending closely—alas! too closely! and always poured a brighter gleam from his inner fountain of light as it met mine. His faults—if they could be called faults—were all involuntary. If I felt constrained, by consistency, to reprove him for the work of some musing moment, my voice unconsciously took a softer tone, and my eye catching the reflection of his winning glance, contradicted the reprimand. Such was Eddie Carroll—my prodigy, my pride."

"A very different youngster was Master Walter Raleigh R—, a year the senior of Eddie, but scarcely towering above the tall, slender boy. Walter was the only child of the widow of a naval officer, who was passing the summer in the country air for the restoration of her health, and who wished to have her school-brother, but darling boy, cultivated the talents which he was disposed to squander. He had been reared among city influences, and indulged, as I then thought, to his ruin. I scarcely wondered at this, for his face was one stamped by Nature beautiful and noble, and his turbulent will was quite enough to bear down the judgment of a grief-bowed invalid like his mother. He had, as the saying is, 'seen a little of the world'—quite too much for his years—and fancied himself equal to all exigencies, superior to all authority. Yet, when his cloak of obituary was thrown off, he could be as generous and gallant as his namesake of old."

"Of course, 'Sir Walter' was not going to surrender, unconditionally, his citadel of pride and perverseness to a country school-mistress—one, too, upon whom he could literally 'look down.' He was a most provoking thistle in my carefully-tended garden, springing up everywhere to annoy and baffle me. Was a caricature chalked on the blackboard—I knew the hand at a glance. Was an unfortunate puppy tethered to my desk, or a sign of 'Blacksmithing' posted over the school-room door—each one witness to my own mind of the perpetrator, although he managed adroitly to elude proof. If a laugh went around the school-room, I could never turn my eyes so quickly to the corner where it commenced, as not to find Master Walter beav-

ing with most imperturbable gravity over his slate or book, buried in obtuse science. And when 'called up' for these or other offences, he would swagger imperiously, though not ungracefully, to my desk, and look me in the face with an air that said, as plainly as words, 'I am a lord of creation—who are you?' Reasoning and reproof fell on him like hail-stones on an Alpine glacier; they slid off, leaving the same unblemished smile upon his half-curved lips. With a cool nod he would toss back his dark curls; give a wink to the school, and stalk to his seat."

"He became a sort of omnipresent nuisance to my peace. I was ashamed to complain of him, and thus confess that I had failed in management; but he haunted my dreams at night, and my thoughts by day. I used, at last, fairly to tremble at his entrance, and almost fear to lift my eyes to him."

"At length he ventured upon a trick of more consequence. One morning after the 4th of July, when I walked into the school-room, I found the children clustered about a heap of fragments of fire-works, on the hearth. They had evidently been tossed down the low chimney, and had flown hither and thither, at no little risk, blackening the walls and desks in many places."

"Who did this?" I exclaimed, in dismay, tho' with little hope of any answer.

"It was Walter R—, ma'am," exclaimed two of the little boys together; "I saw him climb the roof, and fire down the spires and crackers," added one, "and he said, too, 'Who cares for that little Miss Willis?'"

"My womanly dignity and indignation were fully aroused. At the instant Walter entered, whistling 'Yankee Doodle' as he moved to his seat. I called the school to order and silence.

"The boy that caused this disorder will please remove the fragments," said I.

"Not a muscle stirred."

I turned deliberately to the offender, and, facing his daring look, said—

"Walter, you are convicted of this act, by the testimony of your school-mates. Have you any excuse to give?"

There was a moment's pause, in which Walter studied the expression of my fixed eye; then clear and calm as a bell, his voice rang out—

"No! ma'am!"

"Then your sense of honor will tell you what is expected of you, Walter! No one else is to remove this rubbish," I added, turning to the other scholars.

His lips pressed each other more firmly; but he turned with apparent indifference, to his books, with something now and then, between a smile and a sneer. I took note of all, but took no notice, by word of him or of his lessons. During the noon intermission I thought he might relent. But no; the hour of two brought us both to our places in the yet untidy school-room. I grew desperate. I felt that a crisis had come in my reign, and it must be met.

"Walter R— will please stop a moment after school," said I, as I disbanded my little army for the night.

He kept his seat, while the others walked away. Eddie was the last to leave, and, as he passed through the doorway, he sank back to me a look of mingled anxiety and sympathy, that soothed and strengthened my heart. My culprit came up, boldly, to my side and confronted me with his wild, black eyes.

"Walter," I began, quietly, "this is worthy of a hero! A mighty cavalier a boy of sixteen must be, who undertakes to dispute the authority of a young lady, shorter than himself, and mistress of some thirty little country children!"

"His assurance was rather taken aback by this unexpected tone, and the first shade of a blush marked a momentary confusion."

"I would be your friend, if I could, Walter. You see, very well, that in this room I must and shall be obeyed. If you choose to absent yourself from this room, very well. I have nothing to do with boys too old to be gentlemen!"

I saw his lips arch slightly, and added—

"If you really wish my assistance in your studies, Walter, should you not make me some return?"

"No answer. His hand played with the leaves of my Atlas."

"Do you not owe me the assistance of your example, in maintaining law and order among the younger ones? Would you think little of the obedience and the respect of your oldest scholar? I leave this to your conscience and to your honor!"

We parted without another word.

"I was not surprised, although I was greatly relieved, on entering my premises the next morning, to find the 'swept and garnished.' The scholars had assembled. I rang the bell immediately, to prevent all needless observations. Walter was soon in his seat, with a bright spot under each eye, and lips that seemed struggling to regain their usual expression of pride. I saw and smiled the conflict, especially when I took a sealed paper from my desk and read—

"I beg pardon, Miss Willis, for my offence against law and order. You shall find me a supporter of both."

"At the first moment of recess, the boys sprang tumultuously out. I stepped near the door to listen."

"Ha, ha! so you had to clear up, after all, sir!" cried the boy who had been my first informer.

"What's that to you, picaninny Pete?" retorted the sharp tone of Walter; "babies may mind their own business."

"And big boys better mind their own brag" drawled the other, with a hectoring chuckle.

"Harsh words followed fast, and blows were all ready on the way. I called suddenly from the stone step—

"Walter! will you bring me a sprig of that wild honey-suckle in the field? I want it for my pocket-book."

"Nothing restores self-respect and good humor to a culprit so effectually as the commission of an errand, be it ever so slight. Walter came back with a countenance almost cleared, bringing a quantity of the fragrant flowers. I opened my Botany, and willed him to stay, while I found the description of the plant, and explained the hard, dry terms that defined it. Then, as I laid it between papers to press, his wondering eyes followed every motion."

"I don't think I should like a herbarium," he said, bluntly, at last looking down at a fresh flower which he was yet twirling in his fingers.

"Why not?" said I. "The flower you are holding will fade—the flowers which you left on the stalk, will fade, will not fade, but will keep its form and remnant of its beauty."

"Well, I think I should like to study flowers, at any rate," he said, with interest.

"I will teach you as far as I can, with a great deal of pleasure," I said as I rang the bell.

When I passed him, in returning to my seat, I whispered, "Is it hard to keep good resolutions, Walter?" He started and blushed deeply, for the first time, but took his seat in silence.

"From that day I found little to trouble my peace in Walter. He redeemed his pledge most honorably; and still he kept aloof from me, as though ashamed of his former conduct, and yet afraid to show that shame. He did not go to my heart as did Eddie. But I mourned the day of his return to the distant city of snares and temptations, and sighed, as I said to myself, 'Would that noble boy might be saved!'"

Three years later found me in the sunny South, I was passing the winter in the uplands of Georgia, when I received a letter from Mr. Carroll, Eddie's father. He informed me that his poor boy had left college, apparently 'far gone in a consumption,' and that he had been ordered South, as a furrow hope.

"My heart bleeds that I cannot go with him," the letter ran, "and pillow his head on a father's breast, in the struggle which I fear is too near. But you know why that cannot be. It's a great consolation to feel that he will be in the neighborhood of one kind friend. I know how you have befriended my precious boy, and I am sure you will not withdraw your kind offices now, when they will be his only solace in a strange land."

A few weeks later I met the invalid himself. He sat propped up by soft cushions; with the lurid hectic on his cheeks, and that unnatural light in his eyes which seems to pierce the shadow of death. Was it my Eddie, indeed? that tall emaciated, spiritualized being? His voice was all that reminded me of the school-boy, as he started up with feverish animation, and, exclaiming, "Miss Willis!" sank back on his couch of cushions. I did not then ask him any questions; for evidently the sight of my face had awakened thoughts which distressed him. These he afterwards confided to me, in one of the more evenings that I spent in soothing his sufferings and restlessness.

"Oh, Miss Willis!" he exclaimed, seizing my hand, and pressing it against his burning forehead—"to die so young!"

"Words of comfort would have done no good, and I only pressed his thin hand, in token of sympathy."

"Do you remember?" and he smiled sadly as he looked up, "what an ambitious boy I was, when I used to sit upon that bench just before your desk, in that old school-house at home? You did not know half the dreams that dazzled me, half the plans I formed, and have since formed for life—and now my life is ended!"

"Did not your plan reach beyond life, Edward?" I whispered. A spasm shook his slight frame, as he again covered his face and was silent.

"Ambition had been the idol to which poor Eddie had given himself a living sacrifice. It was hard to say 'Thy will be done!'"

"But he did say it, as he lay in child-like helplessness, not many days after, waiting patiently for the Angel of Death to unlock the gate of a new life! that has no sickness, no disappointment, no end!"

"I planted a laurel on Eddie's grave, and a sensitive plant beside it—mute emblems of the spirit, that had struggled in the frail form below. 'Why was he taken? I asked with tears, as I turned from it the last time; 'How the wicked world no need of his pure spirit! How many hundreds it might of spared before him! Thus we complain, short-sighted gropers along the shore of eternity!'"

Aunt Hannah paused for the first time, and sat poised her needles upon her idle fingers, as though buried in reverie. Mary drew a deep breath and asked, softly, at last—

"And what if you were mistaken, Mary?" said Aunt Hannah, laying her hand on her shoulder.

"Why? Did you ever teach, Aunt Hannah? I am sure there was no need of it; you were rich, and—"

"And you think teaching a penance, which none but the penniless would go through," said the lady, laughing.

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