

Lehigh



Register.

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Poetical Department.

THE DIRGE.

What is the existence of man's life,
But open war, or slumber'd strife;
Where sickness to his sense presents
The combat of the elements;
And never feels a perfect peace
Till Death's cold hands sighs his release!

It is a storm—where the hot blood
Outvies in rage the boiling flood;
And each loose passion of the mind
Is like a furious gust of wind,
Which beats his bark with many a wave,
Till he casts anchor in the grave.

It is a flower—which buds, and grows,
And withers as the leaves disclose;
Whose spring and fall faint seasons keep,
Like fits of waking before sleep;
Then sinks into that fatal mould
Where its first being was enfold'd!

It is a dream—whose seeming truth
Is moralized in age and youth;
Where all the comforts he can share,
As wandering as his fancies are,
Till in a mist of dark decay,
The dreamer vanishes quiet away.

It is a dial—which points out
The sun-set, as it moves about;
And shadows out in lines of night,
The subtle stages of Time's flight;
Till all obscuring earth hath laid
His body in per, cruel shade.

It is a weary interlude—
Which doth short joys, long woes, include,
The world, the stage, the protegee tears,
The acid vain hopes and varied fears;
The scene shuts up with loss of breath,
And leaves no epilogue but death.

The Poor Man and his Sons.

Work, work, my boys, be not afraid,
Look labor boldly in the face;
Take up the hammer or the spade,
And blush not for your humble place.

Hold up your brow in honest pride,
Though rough and swarth your hands may be,
Such hands are sap-veins that provide
The life-blood of the Nation's tree.

There's honor in the tilling part,
That finds us in the furrowed field;
It stamps a crest upon the heart
Worth more than all your quarter shield.

Work, work, my boys, and murmur not,
The fustian garb betrays no shame;
The grim of forge soon leaves no blot,
And labor gilds the meanest name.

And man is never half so blest,
As when the busy day is spent,
So as to make his evening's rest
A holiday of glad content.

God grant thee but a due reward,
A guerdon portion, fair and just,
And then ne'er think thy station hard,
But work, my boy, work hope, and trust.

Miscellaneous Selections.

The Old Man's Story.

A THRILLING SKETCH.

I never shall forget the commencement of the temperance reform. I was a child at the time, of some ten years of age. Our home had every comfort and my parents idolized me, their child. Wine was often on the table, and both my father and mother frequently give it to me in the bottom of the glass.

One Sunday, at church, a startling announcement was made to our people. I knew nothing of its purport, but there was much whispering among the men. The pastor said that on the next evening there would be a meeting, and an address upon the evils of intemperance in the use of alcoholic drinks. He expressed himself ignorant of the object of the meeting, and could not say what course it would be better to pursue in the matter.

The subject of the meeting came up at our table after the service, and I questioned my father about it with all the curious eagerness of a child. The whispers and words which had been dropped in my hearing clothed the whole affair with a great mystery to me, and I was all eagerness to learn the strange thing.

My father merely said it was a scheme to unite Church and State.

The night came, and groups of people gathered on the tavern steps, and I heard the jest, and the laugh, and saw drunken men reeling out of the bar-room. I urged my father to let me go, but he first refused. Finally, thinking it would be an innocent gratification of my curiosity, he put on his hat and we passed across the green to the church. I remember well how the people appeared as they came in, seeming to wonder what kind of an exhibition was to come off.

In the corner was the tavern keeper, and around him a number of friends. For an hour the people of the place continued to come in, until there was a fair house full. All curiously watching at the door, wondering what would appear next. The pastor stole in and took a seat behind a pillar in the gallery, as if doubtful of the propriety of being in church at all.

Two men finally came in and went to the altar, and took their seats. All eyes were fixed upon them, and a general stillness pervaded the house.

The men were unlike in appearance, one being short and thick set in build, the other tall and well formed. The younger had the manner and dress of a clergyman, a full, round face, and a quiet, good-natured look, as he leisurely looked round the audience.

But my childish interest was all in the old man. His broad, deep chest, and unusual height, looked giant-like as he strode up the aisle. His hair was white, his brows were deeply creased with furrows, and around his handsome mouth lines of calm and touching sadness. His eye was black and restless, and kindled as the tavern keeper uttered a low just aloud. His lips were compressed, and a crimson flush went and came over his pale cheek. One arm was off above the elbow, and there was a wide scar over the right eye.

The younger finally arose and stated the object of the meeting, and asked if there was a clergyman present to open with prayer.

Our pastor kept his seat and the speaker himself made a short prayer, and then made a short address, at the conclusion calling upon any one present to make remarks.

The pastor rose under the gallery, and attacked the position of the speaker, using arguments which I have often heard since, and concluded by denouncing those engaged in the new movement as middle-class fanatics, who wished to break up the time-honored usages of good society, and injure the business of respectable men. At the conclusion of his remarks, the tavern keeper and his friends got up a cheer, and the current of feeling was evidently against the strangers and their plan.

While the pastor was speaking the old man fixed his dark eye upon him, and leaned forward as if to catch every word.

As the pastor took his seat, the old man arose, his tall form towering in its symmetry, and his thin, dilated nostrils. To me, at that time, there was something awe-inspiring and grand in the appearance of the old man as he stood with his full eye upon the audience, his teeth shut hard, and a silence like that of death throughout the church.

He bent his gaze upon the tavern keeper, and that peculiar eye lingered and kindled for a half moment.

The scar grew red upon his forehead, and beneath the heavy eyebrows his eyes glittered and glowed like those of a serpent. The tavern keeper quailed before that searching glance, and I felt a relief when the old man withdrew his gaze. For a moment he seemed lost in thought, and then in a low and tremulous tone commenced:—

There was a depth in that voice, a thrilling pathos and sweetness, which riveted every heart in the house, before the first period had been rounded. My father's attention had become fixed on the speaker with an interest which I had never before seen him exhibit. I can but briefly remember the substance of what the old man said, though the scene is as vivid before me as any that I ever witnessed.

'My friends!—I am a stranger in your village, and I trust I may call you friends— a new star has arisen, and there is hope in the dark night which hangs like a pall of gloom over our country.' With a thrilling depth of voice, the speaker continued:—'O God, thou who lookest with compassion upon the most erring of earth's children, I thank thee that a brazen serpent has been lifted, upon which the drunkard can look and be healed; that a beacon has burst out upon the darkness that surrounds him, which shall guide back to honor and heaven, the bruised and weary wanderer.'

It is strange what power there is in some voices. The speaker was slow and measured, but a tear trembled in every tone; and before I knew why, a tear dropped upon my hand, followed by others like rain drops. The old man brushed one from his own eyes and continued:

'Men and Christians! You have just heard that I am a vagrant and fanatic. I am not. As God knows my own sad heart, I came here to do good. Here me, and be just.'

'I am an old man, standing alone at the end of life's journey. There is a deep sorrow in my heart, and tears in my eyes. I

have journeyed over a dark and benighted ocean, and all life's hopes have been wrecked. I am without friends, home or kindred upon earth, and look with longing to the rest of the night of earth. Without friends, kindred or home! It was not so once.'

No one could withstand the touching pathos of the old man. I noticed a tear trembling on the lid of my father's eye, and I no more felt ashamed of my own.

'No, my friends, it was not so once— Away over the dark waves which have wrecked my hopes, there is the blessed light of happiness and home. I reach again convulsively for the shrines of the household idols that once were, now mine no more.'

The old man seemed looking away through fancy upon some bright vision, his lips apart and his finger extended. Involuntarily turned in the direction where it was pointed, dreading to see some shadow invoked by its magic movements.

'I once had a mother. With her old heart crushed with sorrows, she went down to her grave! I once had a wife—a fair, angel-hearted creature as ever smiled in an earthly home. Her eyes as mild as a summer sky, and her heart as true as ever guarded and cherished a husband's love. Her blue eye grew dim as the floods of sorrow washed away its brightness, and the living heart wrung until every fibre was broken. I once had a noble, a brave and beautiful boy, but he was driven out from the ruins of his home, and my old heart yearns to know if he yet lives. I once had a babe—a sweet, tender blossom—but my hands destroyed it, and it liveth with one who loves children.'

'Do not be startled, friends; I am not a murderer, in the common acceptance of the term. Yet there is a light in my evening sky. A spirit mother rejoices over the return of her prodigal son. The wife smiles upon him who thus turns back to virtue, and honor. The child-angel visits me at night-fall, and I feel the hallowing touch of a true path upon my feverish cheek. My brave boy, if he yet lives, would forgive the sorrowing old man for the treatment which drove him into the world, and the blow that maimed him for life. God forgive me for the ruin which I have brought upon me; and mine.'

He again wiped a tear from his eye. My father watched him with a strange interest, and a countenance unusually pale, and excited by some strange emotion.

'I was once a fanatic, and madly followed the malign influence which led me to ruin. I was a fanatic when I sacrificed my wife, children, happiness and home, to the accursed demon of the bowl. I once adored the gentle being whom I injured so deeply.'

'I was a drunkard. From respectability and affluence, I plunged into degradation and poverty. I dragged my family down with me. For years I saw her cheek pale, and her step grow weary. I left her alone amid the wreck of her home idols, and rioted at the tavern. She never complained, yet she and the children went hungry for bread.'

'One New Year's night, I returned late to the hut where charity had given us a roof. She was yet up, and shivering over the coals. I demanded food, but she burst into tears and told me there was none. I fiercely ordered her to get some. She turned her eyes sadly upon me, the tears falling fast over her pale cheek. At this moment the child in the cradle awoke and sent up a fainting wail, starting the despairing mother like a serpent's sting.'

'We have no food, James—have had none for several days. I have nothing for the babe. My once kind husband, must we starve?'

'That sad, pleading face, and those streaming eyes, and the feeble wail of the child, maddened me, and I—yes, I struck her a fierce blow in the face, and she fell forward upon the hearth. The fires of hell boiled in my bosom, and with deeper intensity as I felt I had committed a wrong. I had never struck Mary before, but now some terrible impulse bore me on, and I stooped as well as I could in my drunken state, and clenched both hands in her hair.'

'God of mercy, James!' exclaimed my wife, as she looked up in my fiendish countenance 'you will not kill us—you will not harm Willie'; and she sprang to the cradle and grasped him in her embrace. I caught her again by the hair, and dragged her to the door, and as I lifted the latch, the wind burst in with a cloud of snow. With the yell of a fiend, I still dragged her on, and hurled her out into the darkness and storm. With a wild 'ha! ha!' I closed the door and turned the button, her pleading moans mingling with the wail of the blast and sharp cry of her babe! But my work was not complete.

I turned to the little bed where lay my elder son, and snatched him from his slumbers; and against his half-awakened struggles, opened the door and thrust him out. In the agony of fear, he called to me by a name I was no longer fit to bear, and locked his fingers into my side pocket. I could not wrench that frenzied grasp away, and with the coolness of a devil as I was, shut the door upon his arm, and with my knife served it at the wrist.'

The speaker ceased a moment and buried his face in his hands, as if to shut out some fearful dream; and his deep chest heaved like a storm-swept sea. My father had risen from his seat, and was leaning forward, his countenance bloodless, and the large drops standing out upon his brow. Chills crept back to my young heart, and I wished I was at home. The old man looked up and I never have since beheld such mortal agony pictured upon a human face as there was on his.

'It was morning when I woke, and the storm had ceased, but the cold was intense. I first secured a drink of water, and then looked in the accustomed place for Mary. As I missed her, for the first time, a shadowy sense of some horrible nightmare began to draw upon my wandering mind.— I thought I had a fearful dream, but I involuntarily opened the outside door with a shuddering dread. As the door opened, the snow burst in, followed by the fall of something across the threshold, scattering the snow and striking the floor with a sharp hard sound. My blood shot like red-hot arrows through my veins, and I rubbed my eyes to keep out the sight. It was—O God, how horrible!—it was my own injured Mary and her babe frozen to ice! The true mother had bowed herself over the child to shield it, her own person stark and bare to the storm. She had placed her hair over the face of the child, and the sheet had frozen it to the white cheek. The frost was white in the half-opened eyes and upon its tiny fingers. I know not what became of my brave boy.'

Again the old man bowed his head and wept and all that were in the house sobbed like a child. In tones of low and heart-broken pathos, the old man concluded:

'I was arrested, and for long months raved in delirium. I woke, and was sentenced to prison for ten years, but no tortures could have been like those I endured within my own bosom. O God, no!—no not a fanatic.— I wish to injure no one. But while I live, let me strive to warn others not to enter the path which has been so dark and fearful a one to me.'

The old man sat down, but a spell so deep and strong as that wrought by some wizard's breath, rested upon the audience. Hearts could have been heard in their beating, and tears to fall. The old man then asked the people to sign the pledge. My father leaped from his seat, and snatched at it eagerly. I had followed him, and as he hesitated a moment with the pen in the ink, a tear from the old man's eyes fell on the paper.

'Sign it, sign it, young man. Angles would sign it. I would write my name there ten thousand times in blood if it would bring back my loved ones.'

My father wrote 'MOURNING HUDSON.' The old man looked, wiped his fearful eyes and looked again, his countenance alternately flushed with a red and deathlike paleness.

'It is—no, it cannot be—yet how strange murmured the old man. 'Pardon me, sir, but that was the name of my brave boy.'

My father trembled, and held up the left arm, from which the hand had been severed. They looked for a moment in each other's eyes, both reeled and gasped—

'My own injured son!'

'My father!'

They fell upon each other's necks and wept until it seemed that their souls would grow and mingle into one. There was sweeping in that church, and sad faces around us.

Let me thank God for this great blessing which has gladdened my guilt-burdened soul! exclaimed the old man; and kneeling down, he poured out his heart in one of the most melting prayers I ever heard. The spell was then broken, and all eagerly signed the pledge, slowly going to their homes, as if loth to leave the spot.

The old man is dead, but the lesson he taught his grand child on his knee, as his evening sun went down without a cloud, will never be forgotten. His fanaticism has lost none of its fire in manhood's heart.

THE WIDOW'S BEAU;

OR, A HIT AT GOSPIERS.

Service had commenced in the neat little sanctuary, which the inhabitants of Fairmount had consecrated to the worship of Gode. The minister had read the Psalm and the Scripture lesson, and the first lines of the opening hymn. The eyes of his people were fixed intently upon him, for he was not only a good, sound, eloquent preacher, but he was a fine looking one too, and thus enclined usually not only the attention of the true but the false worshipper. The house was very still—the clear, melodious tones of the speaker were the only sounds that thrilled on the balmy, golden air which the midsummer Sabbath morn had breathed into that holy place. The first syllable of the second line was trembling on his lips, when a rustle at the door, and the entrance of two persons, a lady and a gentleman, dissolved the charm. In a second, every eye turned from the pulpit to the broad aisle, and watched with more than ordinary eagerness the progress of the couple. A most searching ordeal were they subjected to, and when they were fairly and quietly seated in

the front pew, immediately before the pulpit, what a nudging of elbows there was, and how many whispers too. In vain sought the good B. to seal again the attention of his hearers. They had eyes and thoughts for nobody but widow C., and widow C.'s young and dashing looking attendant.

How she had cheated them! Hadn't she said a hundred times or more that her heart was in the grave of her buried one; that she would never marry again? Hadn't she refused always to walk out or ride out with any of the unappropriated gentlemen of the village? Hadn't she said she didn't feel as though she could ever wear anything but mourning? And in spite of these protestations, hadn't she come out all at once, dressed in white, and walked into church in broad daylight leaning on the arm of a young gentleman?

Yes indeed she had. She would have pleaded guilty to all these charges, grave ones as they were, and to the last two, how many witnesses might have been subpoenaed.— She was actually dressed in white. A beautiful robe of India mull, tucked to the waist, with an open corsage, displaying an elaborately wrought chemise, and a pair of sleeves trimmed with the richest of Mechlin lace, under-stove of the same expensive material, a white crape shawl, a white lace hat with orange buds and flowers, white kid gloves and light gutters,—such was the description every lady had on her tongue's end to repeat over as soon as service was closed. And the gentleman—he was dressed in style. Didn't he wear white pants of the latest pattern, and a white vest, and a coat of 'satin finish,' and white kids too; and didn't he sport a massive chain, and didn't he gaze often, and tenderly, and lovingly, on the fair creature beside him? Ah, yes, he did so, and there was no further room to doubt. Widow C. had cheated them. She had won a beau, laid aside her mourning, put on bridal attire and was going to be married in church. But who the beau was, or whence he came was more difficult to solve.

Service proceeded. The choir sang, and the minister prayed and preached—the people wondered when the ceremony would take place. But, to their utter astonishment, they were left to wonder. For when the benediction was pronounced widow C. and the strange gentleman walked with the rest of the congregation quietly out of church. When they reached the pavement, he offered his arm very gracefully, and she placed her hand very confidently on the beautifully soft coat sleeve, and they passed on.

What a nooning that was in Fairmount! What a world of conjectures, surmises, inquiries and doubts rolled over and over in the brains of not only gossiping ladies, but sober, matter-of-fact gentlemen. 'The like of such a thing' had never occurred in the annals of the village. There was something new under the sun; a lady had a beau, and nobody knew of it. Widow C. didn't you ears burn that day? Ah, we wonder they hadn't dropped off; surely they must have been crisp and crimson.

The Rev. Mr. B. preached to a crowd of house that afternoon; no compliment to him though. The magnet was in the pew before him. Every eye was sure the wedding would take place then; but everybody was again sadly disappointed; and it tongues had run at railroad speed before, they traveled then on electric wires. The minister might have preached in Greek that day, and his sermons would have been quite as edifying. But one subject engrossed the village mind—the widow's beau, that was the topic.

It actually seemed to us though the lady tried to make all the talk she could. After tea, arm in arm, with the strange gentleman, she walked the whole length of the village, and away out into the cemetery, and never returned till the moon was high.

'A nice-looking dress, I guess she had,' drawled out old grandma W., as she listened to the widow's wanderings. 'I'm glad I hadn't got to wash it, all dabbled up with dew as it must have been—but I don't suppose she thought or cared a word about it, she's so carried away with him. But I'll give her a piece of my mind, the first time I have a chance, see if I don't. Cheating us all in this way.'

But the good old dame began to fear that she should never have the desired chance. She hurried through her washing on Monday, and hobbled over to the widow's as soon as possible, but the door was locked, and one of the neighbors said Mrs. C. and the gentleman went off in a carriage; nobody knew where, very early in the morning. 'Yes, and never got home till nine o'clock in the evening.' Look out, widow C. Your character is on the carpet.

If she knew it, apparently she didn't care, for the next day she went sailing with her beau, and the next day rambling with him away off to the mountain, and on the next forenoon went with him in a carriage to the station house, and there not only wept as she parted from him, but actually embraced and actually kissed him.

'What, in broad daylight?' exclaimed grandma W. 'Well, if I ever seed or heard the like on't.'

Little Nell, the old lady's youngest grand

child, wondered to herself if it was any worse in broad daylight than at any other time. Perhaps you will wonder too. We do at least.

'There was a very large attendance that afternoon at the weekly meeting of the sewing society. Every body went that could possibly leave home. And what a chattering there was when the bustle of assembling was over. There was but one topic, but that was all sufficient, all engrossing; the widow's beau—for the gentleman must be her beau, or at least, he ought to be.

Everybody had something to tell, something to wonder about. (But suddenly every magic tongue was hushed, a universal stroke of numb palsy seemed to have fallen on the group, as looking up, it perceived the very lady about whom they were conversing so eagerly, standing in the doorway. 'Good afternoon, ladies,' said she in her usual quiet, lady-like way. 'I am glad to see so large and happy a gathering. It is a beautiful day for our meeting,' and then she proceeded to the table, helped herself to a block of patch work, inquired for the sewing silk, which, having received, she sat down in the only vacant chair, and commenced hemming a very red bird with a yellow wing, on to a very green twig, which latter had already been hemmed on to a square piece of white cloth, and the whole when completed was designed to form the twentieth part of a bedspread. She seemed all engrossed with the bird's bill, and spoke to no one. Everybody wondered if she had heard what they were saying when she came in, but her placid countenance soon reassured the most fearful, and every one longed to commence a personal attack.

Old grandma W. was the first venture.— She meant to do up the matter, very delicately, and in so 'roundabout a way,' the lady should not suspect her of curiosity. So she began by praising Mrs. C.'s dress. 'Why, it's really a beauty,' said she, 'Where did you get it?'

'I bought it,' was the quiet reply. 'Here?'

'No.'

'Where then?'

'In New York, last spring.'

'O, you did, did you? But I thought you wasn't never going to wear anything but black again.' Every eye scrutinized the lady's face this time in search of a blush, but it continued as pale as was usual, while she answered:

'I did think and say so once, but I have finally changed my mind.'

'You have, ah! But what made you?'

'O, I had good reasons.' Here the hearers and lookers-on winked expressively at each other.

'But did not you spoil your beautiful white dress Sunday night, wearing it 'way up, there to the burying-ground?'

'I did not wear it.'

'Here was a damper to the old lady. She had such a long lecture to read on extravagance, and she was so determined to do it too, when unfortunately for her eloquent strain, Mrs. C.'s dress had hung up in her wardrobe all the time, and she had worn an old black silk.'

After a while the old lady took a fresh start. She would not be so baffled again.— She would find out all about that beau before she went home, 'that she would.' So she began by saying, 'your company went away this morning, didn't they?'

'They did,' was the answer, a wee bit of emphasis resting on the 'they.'

'He didn't say very long, did he?'

'Not as long as I wish he had,' was the emphatic answer this time. And how the ladies did look at each other. It was as good as a confession.

'When did he come?'

'Saturday evening.'

'Was you looking for him?'

'I had been expecting him a fortnight.'

'Why, du tell, if you had then, and you never told on't either. Had he business in the place?'

'He had.'

'What was it? This was rather more direct and blunt than grandma had meant to put, and she forthwith apologized by saying, 'I didn't mean that—I only thought—'

'O, I'd as lief you knew as not,' said the lady, with a charming air of *naïveté*.

'O, widow C. Did your good name go down then. Be careful what you say next, or you'll have only a remnant of character to go home with, and remnants go cheap.'

'He did, did he, and he didn't come for nothing else than? But was you glad to see him?'

'Indeed I was. It was one of the happiest moments of my existence.'

'Well, well, said the old lady, hardly knowing how to frame her next question, 'well, he's a real good looking man, anyway.'

'I think so too, and he's not only good looking, but he's good hearted; one of the best men I ever knew.'

'You don't say so! But is he rich?'

'Worth a hundred thousand or so, said the lady carelessly.

'Why, du tell, if he is. Why, you'll live like a lady, won't you? But what's his name?'