

Poetry.

THE TIME TO MARRY.

The would-be wise this counsel give—
 "Let love's fond passion cool!
 The man who early wed will live
 To think himself a fool.
 The galling chain that frets his limb,
 Wears deeper day by day;
 Experience little teaches him
 Who gives the heart its way,
 He wisely waits who weddeth late,
 A thrifty, unimpassioned mate."
 When wrinkled oaks shall twining cling,
 With tendrils like the vine;
 When ravens like the linnets sing
 With melody divine;
 When honey drops from wither'd leaves,
 And not from summer flowers;
 When winter brings us golden sheaves,
 And snow-drifts sunny hours;
 When truth abuses makes falsehood right,
 Go, withering, wed and find delight.
 The trembling notes young birds awake,
 Rise sweetly into tune,
 As April buds expanding make
 The flowery wreath of June;
 So love begun in life's prime—
 Defies the canker of decay,
 And stronger grows with time,
 As life shall pass away,
 O, early quaff love's nuptial vine,
 And all that's best in life is thine.

Select Tale.

[From Harper's Magazine.]

MY NEIGHBOR'S STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LILY."

I have a neighbor. We occupy adjoining rooms in a shabby-genteel boarding house, where the cheap boarding party consoles us for its discomforts. My neighbor is a grave, faded, silent woman of forty or thereabouts, always dressed in sombre colors, with a plain muslin cap concealing her gray hair, and a reserve of manner which baffles curiosity and questions.

She has no visitors; she rarely leaves the house; the postman's arrival never causes a stir of joy or sorrow upon her countenance; and after each meal she slowly retires from the dining-room with her usual heavy, listless tread, and is not seen again until the bell summons us to the table once more.

If addressed, she answers quickly and firmly, glancing a moment at her interlocutor; and then looking down upon her plate, as if she wished to let you understand that politeness alone induced her reply.

Always punctual in her weekly payments, so mysteriously regular in her conduct, so averse to gossip, at first my neighbor was a great card in the house, and we shuffled and dealt her every day so soon as her back was turned.

"Who was she?" No one could tell. She gave her name as Mrs. Brown; and weeks lengthened into months, and months into years, and still, grave, faded, silent, with her dark gowns and her measured footfall, the stranger lived in our midst as unknown as if she wore an iron mask, and did not speak our language.

Gradually the interest in her died away.—The inmates of the boarding house left off wondering about her, for no fresh food was served up for their eager swallow—she just stayed at the same point, neither lessening nor increasing her self-concentrated style of life—so, sadly and wearily my neighbor's days dragged along in their unbroken calm and unwavering reserve.

She was still to me a subject of thought. Whether it were because I was more pertentious than my fellow boarders, or whether being in the next room, I seemed nearer to her, and could hear her frequently pacing her narrow chamber for hours, not restlessly, but with a solemn, marked, continuous march which often lasted till the gray dawn peeped through my shutters—whether this made a bond between us, unfelt by others, I do not know; but certain it is, that long after the rest had ceased to notice her, I still watched, and strove to pierce the envelope which shut us out from her ideas, feelings and sorrows.

After a night passed as I have described, she would appear at the breakfast-table with no traces of tears or sleepiness—just the same haggard look around her large eyes, the same patient suffering wrinkling her faded mouth, the same entire hopelessness of carriage and air.

She asked no sympathy—she needed none. I saw very soon that she was unaccustomed to the coarse fair which our landlady provided; others had remarked that, soon after her arrival, and once some one had said to her, "You don't relish your victuals, ma'am? You have been used to better, perhaps?"

She had fixed her steadiest look upon the speaker. "You are mistaken," she said, dropping her eyelids instantly; "every thing is better than I am in the habit of seeing."

And from that day the meanest dish on the humble board was always her choice, although she could not sometimes dispose of the contents; but would play with her knife and three-pronged fork, and rise from among us

without having eaten enough to nourish a sparrow.

There was another singular incident which, early in her stay, caused much comment.

One morning she chanced to sit next our landlady, who, awkwardly enough, upset the ewer of boiled milk over the sleeve and hand of Mrs. Brown. It was not very hot, the milk—it never was—but Mrs. Plunkett started up with apologies, and, in spite of my neighbor's resistance, would wipe and rub the wet hand herself. In a few seconds all the boarders saw with amazement that the well-polished hand contrasted singularly with its fellow, which was brown and harsh; while the one clasped by Mrs. Plunkett was delicate, fair, blue-veined, and admirably beautiful.

The boarders were almost content at losing their coffee, since the spilt milk had secured the knowledge of this mystery; but my neighbor drew her sleeve over her hand and retired. At dinner they appeared to have resumed their likeness; and worthy Mrs. Plunkett will to her last hour believe that the constant use of boiled milk (tepid) will produce the happiest results upon the most unsatisfactory skins.

Last week I remarked that my neighbor was more than usually depressed. Through the partition-wall I frequently heard her sigh, and for three nights the steady footsteps kept up their regular beat without intermission.

Each day she looked more worn, and my old eyes filled with tears as I watched her.—Latterly she had not turned with a vexed frown from my observation, as I had often had the pain of seeing her do, but once or twice she gave me an earnest glance from beneath her fatigued brow, while her arms dropped wearily and weakly beside her.

She seemed thinner, more fragile than ever. Her gown-waist was pinned over more closely each day; a willow wand is scarcely slighter than her waist.

But, as I was saying, last week—it was about eight o'clock in the evening, and I was sitting in my own room, intending to write a letter to my absent child, who was toiling in California, when a sob—so loud, so deep, so heart breaking—came to me from my neighbor.

It was irresistible. I started up and went into the passage. A light shown below the closed door of my neighbor's room. I listened. All was still, except from the parlor down stairs, where one of the ladies was torturing the piano.

Again that heavy sigh. It was as if a long pent-up agony, like a mighty river bursting its bounds rushed sweepingly, distractingly, overwhelmingly into sound and action. Sob upon sob; tears falling in mad sorrow; and then a fall, as if a figure gathered up to its full height had suddenly dropped prone upon the floor.

I felt the impropriety—the intrusion—but I softly opened the door, carried away by a sympathy stronger than conventional rules.

There lay my neighbor. Her long hair untwisted, disheveled, her head buried in her arms, gathered in a reckless heap, writhing in uncontrollable misery. Bitter sighs, half-uttered words, ceaseless moans. The room was bare; no curtains to the hard, comfortable bed; none at the solitary window. A stiff, uncushioned chair, a small trunk, not a book, not a sign of woman's presence; the most cheerless spot conceivable. But opposite to me there rested an object so strange to find in such an apartment, that it riveted my attention and kept me spell-bound.

A large packing-case held a picture in a splendid frame; the upper side had been removed only recently, for it yet leaned partly against the picture.

It was a portrait—a full-length portrait—of a beautiful woman; so brilliantly beautiful that I wondered if lips so red and eyes so dazzling could ever have existed. The dress was of a fashion of fifteen years back or more; the surroundings represented a drawing-room, handsomely furnished, and, reclining upon a sofa, with one arm half buried in its downy depths, lay this beauty—a sparkling petulance; a haughty grace enveloping her, and shining jewels decking her lovely person with a glorious fitness, like dew-drops upon morning blossoms.

By the light of a sixpenny glass lamp, in which burned camphene, on the table near, I saw this luxurious picture, and the weeping, groveling woman, in her coarse garments and her fierce sorrow, on the floor at its feet. They seemed the antipodes of life; and yet it appeared to me that in the lofty dignity of the one I could trace a dreamy likeness of the lowly poverty of the other.

Was it so? Had these wearied, melancholy eyes, which now were veiled by her silvered hair, ever been faithfully represented by those insolently beautiful ones? Was there truly a connection between the portrait and the owner of it?

Was it Madgalen weeping before her early self?

The more I looked, the more I believed it. Withered, worn, shabby, old as she now was—this portrait had once, like a mirror, reflected the features of my neighbor.

What business had I there? What could I do for grief like this? The proud spirit which danced in every sparkle of the portrait's eye, the pretty scorn which shown in its air, might yet linger in my neighbor's breast. She was aroused. She was no longer patient, uncomplaining; some sorrow was stirring within her, which had overleaped her stoical calm.

I closed the door gently and held my breath lest I should disturb her.

"Poor thing!" I could not write. In spite of my sixty years, boyish tears wet my cheek, and I listened—listened—and heard the low sobs die out: then came the heavy, grief-laden footsteps.

"Who and what was my neighbor?" Her door opened; not as I had opened it, but quickly, violently; and she ran—she who always walked as if shod with lead—down the stair. I caught a glimpse of her. Her bonnet was dashed upon her head, and a shawl thrown around her.

In a moment I was after her, watched the course she took, and followed.

Up one quiet street, down another, to the finest quarter of the city, flew my neighbor. At last we were almost driven over by carriages making their way in the same direction; and, to my surprise, she stopped where they did.

A grand old house! Lights streaming from the hall and through each window-chink.—Files of servants in livery marshaling the guests, crowds of by-standers gazing into the entrance door and gazing at the company, as coach after coach set down its richly dressed occupants upon the carpet which was spread for dusty feet.

I was quite bewildered.

She stood three paces from me as I hid in the shade. The rigged boys jostled her, and a big Irish woman thrust her aside. Her bonnet was pulled over her face, but I could see the large eyes flashing now: and when a police officer shoved the crowd into order, and bade her "stand back," I saw her turn upon him with a gesture worthy of the portrait; and then clasping her hands in agony, she shrank back, and leaning panting against the iron railing.

Presently she raised her bowed head and looked eagerly around: then she slipped through the mass, and I followed after. She gained the back entrance, a deserted lane dimly lighted, and almost feeling in this darkness, opened a small gate and passed in.

I waited to hear her step forward, then pushed the gate gently, and found myself in a large garden. She was a few yards in advance, cautiously making her way.

Nothing daunted, I did likewise. She threaded the alleys with perfect ease, avoiding the broader paths and walking steadily on.—At length she paused so abruptly, at a sudden turn that I was almost upon her heels. Immediately in front of us, with no impediment to our sight but the trunk of the tree, behind which she partially screened herself, was spread out the whole company, whose simultaneous arrival was now accounted for.

The night was warm (though in mid-winter) tea-shutters were folded back, and in this sumptuous drawing room stood a bridal party.

The bride was of a soft and gentle beauty, very young fair and tender, blushing timidly beneath her veil and orange blossoms, and looking up with mingled bashfulness and love at her bridegroom. We had arrived singular enough just as they took their places for the ceremony.

A stout, severe, elderly man, with bushy brows and an obstinate, harsh expression breaking through the present suavity of his look, supported this young creature on her left. He was evidently her father or guardian, while as evidently I decided that the youth on the bridegroom's other side was her brother. He glanced suspiciously, stealthily from time to time at his sister; then nervously watched the motions of the older man, and seemed helplessly anxious and uneasy.

All this I took in at one look; for it has been my pleasure and habit for many a long year to study my fellow-beings, and I have acquired a quickness of perception which grows with what it feeds upon.

My neighbor grasped a drooping branch of the old oak, pressing her weak frame against its strength, and gazing ahead with such painful intensity, such starting eyeballs, that she neither noticed me, nor, I believe, would have turned her look aside even had she perceived me.

The low rustling of rich skirts as the elderly ladies stood up—a soft fluttering of fans and laces as the younger ones settled themselves—a faint cough or two—then a breathless silence.

"Dearly beloved.—If any man can show just cause why these may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace."

"I do!" rang out my neighbor's voice, clear and shrill. It responded throughout that great empty garden—it echoed from the ancient walls—it stunned me for a second.

A wild cry—a confused swaying of the crowd—the bride sinking in her bridegroom's

arms—a momentary hush, and then some sprang to the open windows, and all was hurry and pursuit.

I seized my neighbor's arm; she struggled, but I dragged her on; and while eyes were peering into the darkness, and rapid feet were close upon us, we gained the little gate, and were safe. She was quieter now; only her hand was marble cold, and she muttered:

"My darlings—my poor forsaken darlings! I led her into the silent park which borders that portion of the city, and seated her on a bench.

The stars twinkled above our heads—really, it appeared to me, and with a feverish, uncertain gleam. There was no calm any where. Did the tumultuous beatings of that sorrowful heart fill the atmosphere, and make even heavens lights burn fitfully?

It was not noisy—it was not rough; it was a wild, silent, desperate throb.

"How came you here?" she said, at last, turning upon me. "You were with me in the garden?"

"I was. I followed you. You have made me eager to serve and comfort you."

"Comfort me! Listen. That house which we have just left was once mine. There I lived its proud and idolized mistress. That young bride is my daughter—My own fair-haired Emma. My petted boy—my darling Horace—you saw him, did you not? They clung to me, they were so young. Yes—I left them!"

She paused.

"I scarcely know your name—but latterly I have seen that you feel for me—that you pity me. You are an old man. My heart is breaking to-night. God help me I thought 'it had

permitted myself the luxury of a friendly word. I never speak. When I was a woman beautiful and admired, men used to worship my wit, and bow down before my sarcastic eloquence it is one of my penances now to be silent—to permit myself no relaxation from this strict vow. But to-night I must speak.

"Is she not lovely?" my gentle Emma? Did you see the bridegroom? I know him. He is cruel, heartless, cold, selfish, unwarmed by a single virtue or even vice. He feels too little to be even wicked. All his calculation. Hard as adamant, unbending as the steadfast rock, he will crush my darling's timid spirit. He will not ill-use her, but she shall die from sheer want of sympathy. He will eneer at her girlish feelings, and put down her rising thoughts.

"He is twelve years her senior and marries her for her father's gold.

"How long is it since I deserted them? My brain wanders to-night—she put back her tangled hair, and beat upon her knee with her thin hand.

"I was very beautiful—very haughty—I could not brook control; and, in my wrath, meeting each day a will striving to be stronger than my own, I grew restive. Life to me was such a wearisome business.—He came—did I love him? I do not know. Was it vanity or passion? a yearning after some powerful interest or a mere outburst of fretted pride? I can not tell now. Then I thought it a love stronger than reason.

"Five years I reigned the tainted queen of dishonoring homage. Who so bright, so grandly towering in the midst of her hollow court?

"One day a new light broke upon me. In full career—with not a charm impaired—with not a wrinkle to warm my cheek that time was fleeting past—with no tarnish on my lips or brow—in the plenitude of my meridian glory, I turned with disgust from the revelry and empty, vicious joys.

"It was satiety. It palled upon me. I pined for my children's pure kisses. I hated the train of bold, bad men who worshipped and despised me. I loathed the painted, meretricious women who formed my society.—With fearless scorn I bade them farewell. I tore the jewels from my arms and brow, and gave the wages of sin to feed the poor and clothe the naked.

"It was a night like this, when assembling the wicked, careless crowd for one last festival, more superb than ever—in robes so costly that the women about me paled their ineffectual faces before the dazzle of my beauty and magnificence—I took (mentally and forever) my leave of them.

"Never was my supremacy more loudly acknowledged. Eyes hung upon mine. Men quailed before my bitter tongue, and then crept to my feet to sun themselves in the dangerous softness of my smile.

"How I hate them all!" "At early dawn I was miles away. Straight as the lapwing to her nest, I sought my children.

"I came to this city disguised. There were no marks of age then—mid night orgies had respected their fit associate—the devil had cared for his own. I stained my face—my raven beautiful hands. The feet which had been planted in their slender divinity upon the necks of my subjects, were hidden in coarse shoes. The figure whose voluptuous proportions sculptors and artists had delighted to perpetuate, was now swathed in rusty garments, which enabled me, unobserved,

unrecognized, to dog the footsteps of my children and their attendants.

"One day Emma stumbled, and I caught her in my arms. The graceful, modest girl of twelve turned her blue eyes gratefully upon me. I tremble like those leaves which the wind now beats aside; her governess drew her away with murmured thanks, and looked askance at me as I slowly moved along.

"Years has passed since then. I do not give myself the enjoyment, the passive delight of even a hut, where in perfect solitude I might brood over my life—my griefs.

"There is a refinement of penance to my mind in searching out such spots as the one in which I now live.

"To surround myself with commonplace, ignorant, prying people, whose very contact would have disgusted me. They irritate me now; they are the hair-shirt and the lash which devout Catholics administer to themselves.

"Do you realize my life? Do you understand it? This is my jar of ointment. I pour it out daily.

"The only relic I possess of what I was, is the cruelest stab which yet remains to be told.

"When I left my home my children, my all, the stern, inflexible father of those children sent me my portrait, taken in my youthful pride and bloom of my youthful maturity. He would not retain a vestige which spoke of me. I have it still. When the storm of 'vexed passions,' of undying regrets rages highest within me, I open the box in which it stands.

"It is not the sight of my passed beauty (for I need no disguises now) which wrings my very soul, but the memory of my innocence."

She stopped.

"Away!" she cried, lifting up her arms; "the hurricane is at hand now! Who can teach me to wipe out the past? Repentance will not do it!"

"But prayer will," I whispered softly, folding both fiercely nervous hands in my aged ones.

"Prayer!" she repeated scornfully. "Prayer will not give me my children, my lost name, my proud position. Prayer cannot heal the bleeding wounds that make up my heart."

Prayer cannot prevent what has happened this night—the sacrifice of my Emma. Prayer cannot restore to them the blessing of a virtuous and loving mother; nor to me dutiful and happy children. Prayer might save my soul, but cannot help them."

Alas! alas!

I almost hoped that I read aright—my neighbors mind had gone astray as well as her poor, faltering footsteps.

"Farewell!" she said, rising abruptly; "farewell. I thank you. Do not follow me. Ask no questions about me. They tell me you write tales for your bread. If you can, make a warning of me. Farewell!"

She walked straight down the path far into the darkness. I saw the flow of her black gown and her steady march until the trees shut her out.

I began by saying I have a neighbor; I should have said 'I had.'

I looked for her in her usual seat the next morning; she was not at the breakfast-table.

"Where is Mrs. Brown?" I asked.

"Ah!" answered Mrs. Plunkett, "she left at daylight bag and baggage; not much of it, though; she has to move—only a big flat box and a trunk. The Lord, he knows where she has gone. A queer soul that Mrs. Brown! I am not sorry to lose her. Shall I fill your cup, Sir?"

SENTENCE OF A MURDERER.—In giving an account of the sentence of John Fitzgerald, convicted of the murder of his father, mother and brother, the Auburn (New York) American says:

He rose to his feet when requested to do so by the judge, and fixed his eyes firmly upon him. The sentence was long, but ably appropriated and full of earnest appeals to the heart, the head and conscience of the wretched culprit. He exhausted language and ingenuity in an attempt to arouse him to realizing a sense of the enormity of his monstrous crime and its awful consequences, but his efforts utterly failed. While all in the court room were powerfully moved—not a few even to tears—yet Fitzgerald stood unmoved throughout the trying scene. Not a muscle moved. His countenance was bold, hardened in every feature, and his eye cold as marble. When asked if he had anything to say why the last direful penalty of the law should not be passed upon him, he promptly, and in a low voice replied: "No, sir; not a word!" and when the judge having sentenced him to be hung on Friday, the 28th of March, concluded with an earnest appeal to Almighty God in his behalf, Fitzgerald said: "I am much obliged to you, sir!" and took his seat, utterly unmoved and apparently unconcerned.

A dandy at a hotel table wanted the milk passed to him, and thus asked for it:

"Please send your cow this way."
 To which the landlady retorted as follows:
 "Waiter, take the cow down to where the calf is bleating!"