

The North Branch Democrat.

HARVEY SICKLER, Proprietor.

"TO SPEAK HIS THOUGHTS IS EVERY FREEMAN'S RIGHTS."—Thomas Jefferson.

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Poet's Corner,

BITTER AND SWEET.

BY A. P. M'COMBS.

What is life? the strangest compound,
All contraries vice, y bled,
Each propelling and controlling,
Through the human finding vent,
Who says Nature is a failure,
Or her works are incomplete?
Good and evil hath its uses:
Every bitter hath a sweet.

Every spring must have a summer,
Summer will grow sore and bare,
Winter weaves with frosty fingers,
Garments for the next to wear.
Change, decay are written widespread,
Man can find no still retreat,
By this law he only liveth:
Every bitter hath its sweet.

Never would the eye of pity
Gleam with sympathetic tear,
But for misery's broken pleading,
Melting on the human ear.
What would be our social structure?
How would man his brother meet,
If there were no need of mercy,
Nor a bitter for a sweet?

If the world were void of danger,
Man no toil, or hopes or fears,
Need not the help or counsel,
Or the flow of friendly tears,
Surely it would be less lovely
For the tread of human feet;
For 'tis sin, and pain, and sorrow,
Brings, through bitter, every sweet.

Troubles all are blessings truly,
With the host of fleebly ill;
Riches valleys, robes in beauty,
Could not bloom without the hills
So through life, if we look rightly
On the trials which we meet,
We will see their holy lessons,
Bless the bitter for the sweet.

One but proves the ether's being;
Each must have its opposite;
By contrast only are we measured,
Know the darkness from the light,
Heat is only for the weary,
Cold is requisite as heat;
Every principle in nature
Hath a bitter and a sweet.

He who'd taste the bliss of heaven,
Must pass through a fiery hell;
He who drains the cup of sorrow,
Drinketh at the Perian well.
Hunger, want, disease, despairing,
Are but wisdom's law replete;
The fruit of the Eternal
Every bitter hath its sweet.

All that's high, and grand, and glorious,
Centre here, and outward spring;
Life without them would be tasteless,
Man a soulless, passive thing
Through the ever-changing changes
That our outward senses greet,
Man is ever moving onward,
Through the bitter to the sweet.

All that's noble in our manhood,
Every aspiration high,
Every grand essential feature,
Teaching man he cannot die,
Cometh through this glorious doctrine,
All things everywhere repeat,
Making life quite worth the living,
Having bitter and a sweet.

All this talk, that sin and sorrow
Were not in God's primal plan,
And that toil, disease and suffering
Was the after-work of man,
Must give way to light and reason,
That finds everything complete—
All the work of Nature perfect;
Every bitter with a sweet.

MARTIN IN BAVARIA.—The people in Bavaria are not allowed to marry until they have what is termed an "assured means of subsistence." The law, however does not work well, as will be seen by the following remarks of a correspondent:—

"I have heard of a case of two poor people having to wait fifteen years for permission to marry, and spending two hundred florins on applications. One of the writers on the subject gives the following instance:—

"An operative earning twelve shillings a week was engaged to a girl earning seven, and owner of a house valued at £120, and a cow. They applied for permission to marry, and were refused; means of subsistence not assured. Time went on; they had two children, and still their application was refused on the same ground. The owner of the manufactory took up their cause and pleaded it himself with the official, saying that by his refusal was not what was intended by the Government. The official replied curtly, "What does that matter to us; the Government may have its own ideas on the subject, but we have ours, and I in particular am of opinion that such marriages are neither right nor useful." The author from whom I quote this adds, "While I am writing, my servant girl, aged fifteen years, comes in dressed for a fest day, and says that her father and mother are to be married to day, and she must henceforth be called by her father's name. Twelve times her father's application for license to marry was rejected, and each time he had to pay fees and expenses, lawyers bills, &c."

SPEAK KINDLY.—How much misery may be abated, how much suffering may be removed by the simple tone and expression of the human voice! Upon the heart that is lone and desolate how sweetly falls the voice of sympathy and consolation! Why is it, then, since everything proves—and none are ignorant of the fact—that all must lie down in mother earth together, since all are travelers in this highway to death—why is it that each should be so sparing of that which costs him nothing, but which might raise the drooping spirits of his neighbor, and cheer him on his journey—a few kind words and kindly looks.

"I say, Josh, I was going down street 'tother day and I seed a tree bark!"
"Golly, Sam! I seed it hollow. I seed the same one leave."
"Did it take its trunk with it?"
"No, It left that for board."

Select Story.

THE LETTER "G."

BY MRS. MARY C. HAZLET.

"No, Mary, you shall never be the wife of George Stanford," said old Mr. Carleton, with a lowering brow, and a determined eye.

"And why not," said the gentle Mary, striving to conceal her emotion. "Is he not of a good family; is he not regarded as a high-minded, honorable young man; are not his business prospects flattering, and is not his attachment to me as strong and sincere as you or I would wish?"

"That may all be very true, my child; but he has associated himself with a society which dares not to unfold its secret workings to the world, and which the world has never been able to discover as accomplishing any good. In short, Mary, Stanford is a Freemason."

"And is that your only objection, father?"

"Is not that a sufficient one?" he said sternly. "Dare you, a mere child, presume to array your feeble judgment against my age and experience?"

"I do not wish to be disrespectful, my father, but I cannot help thinking you judge Masonry unjustly. I have known, for a long time, that George was a Mason, and this fact has led me to investigate its principles. Elder Williams, who lives next door to us, is a Mason, and he has allowed me to read his Monitor, magazines and other Masonic works; and if Masonry is what those works describe it to be, it is a good institution, and the world would suffer from its loss."

"You can tell nothing about it by the books they publish. They are only printed for effect, and to conceal the real corruption of the institution. If there was anything good about it, it would not be kept secret; the Bible commands men not to hide their light under a bushel."

"But, father, the Bible says also, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; and I think I have discovered some good deeds by Masons. There is old Mr. Strong, who lives down by the mill, and who has not been able to work for nearly a year. The Masons have taken care of him for a long time. They bring him provisions and everything else he needs, and every night one or two of them come to stay with him—for he is failing very fast, and it would not be safe to leave him alone."

"Then he is one of their number, and their caring of him is owing to a species of honor among thieves," said Mr. Carleton.

"No," said Mary, "he is not, and never has been a Mason. He told me so himself this morning, when I went to carry him some fruit and flowers, and he said he should have died of want long ago but for their kindness, and he hoped God would bless and reward them. And then," continued Mary, "there is dear Mattie Dow, whose father belonged to the society, the Masons are sending her to the young ladies' boarding school, and preparing her for a teacher. They are paying all her expenses, and she told me they had cared for her ever since the death of her parents, and that she loved them as much as if they were her own brothers. Oh, father! it cannot be that those who perform such good deeds are bad men, for a tree is known by its fruits."

But old Mr. Carleton was not a man to be turned from his purpose. His prejudice against Masonry had grown older, and the gentle pleading of his beautiful daughter only served to irritate him.

"Mary," he said very sternly, "it is of no use to talk to me about Masonry; and it is worse than folly for you to attempt to gain my consent to your marriage with George Stanford. You were eighteen years of age yesterday, and can, of course do as you please in this matter; but if you dare to disobey my wishes you are no longer my child. I would sooner sink my wealth in the depths of the ocean, or give it to the most miserable beggar in this great city of New York, than bestow it upon a daughter who is so ungrateful as to marry against her father's will. Choose, therefore, between your father's wealth and love, and George Stanford, the Freemason. I shall expect your decision to-morrow morning."

Mary Carleton arose and left her father's presence; with slow, unsteady step she sought her own room. She felt that the crisis of her life had arrived, and she now had to decide. Her father had encouraged the attentions of Stanford until within the last few days. Discovering that he was a Freemason, Mr. Carleton had told him laughingly that he must renounce all connection with the institution or discontinue his visits to the house. This young man had met this unreasonable demand with the proper spirit, and firmly, but respectfully, asserted his determination to be a Freemason while he lived. He had been ordered from the house, and told never to enter it again. Such were the circumstances leading to the above conversation between Mr. Carleton and his daughter.

Mary knelt at her bedside, and implored her God to give her strength and wisdom. She felt that her father was in the wrong; but could she meet his frowns and lasting displeasure? She thought she could not; but there arose before her the vision of her affianced husband, the noble, upright, generous George Stanford, and she realized that his loss would cause her a life of misery.

There came a rap at her door; a servant handed her a sealed note, and departed. She opened it, and found it to be a few lines from Stanford, inclosing a ring entirely plain, with the exception of the small letter G on the upper side. The note was as follows:

"MY DEAR MARY:—Your father has forbidden our further correspondence; but both duty and inclination prompt me to seek acknowledgment of your pleasure before conceding to his wishes. I love the Masonic institution, and cannot, consistently with my feelings, and with my sense of duty and honor renounce it. The ring I send you, is ornamented with the letter G—a Masonic emblem. If you are willing to become the wife of a Freemason, wear the ring for my sake, and I will protect you while I live; if not, its return will signify to me that we must henceforth be strangers."

On the following morning, Mary sought the presence of her father. She was very pale and moved wearily, for sleep had not visited her eyelids.

"Well, child," said Mr. Carleton, "I trust a few hours reflection has served to show you your duty, and that I have this morning an obedient daughter."

For reply, she held up her hand upon which was the ring sent her by Stanford.

"What means that ring?" said the old man starting violently.

"It means," said Mary in a voice low, but firm, "that I have decided to wear it while I live, for the sake of Mr. Stanford, who will soon be my husband."

Mr. Carleton was dumb with astonishment. He had not believed his daughter would dare to meet his displeasure. Mistaking the cause of his silence, Mary advanced to his side, and twining her arms about his neck, she kissed his cheek.

"Oh, father!" she said, "do not, I pray you, turn me from you. You will be lonely without me, and I cannot endure your frowns. Let me beg of you to consider that Washington, Warren, Lafayette, and the pious Wesley, were masons. Surely that cannot be evil which was honored and loved by so much nobleness and talent."

Mr. Carleton pushed his daughter from him angrily.

"Go, foolish child," he exclaimed, "never dare to speak to me again. You have no longer a father or a home."

Poor Mary was so wretched to reply; but the yearning look she cast upon her father, as she glided, ghost-like, from the room haunted him years afterwards.

In a week she and Stanford were married. With a view to remove his wife from all unpleasant associations, George emigrated to a western city, and became a partner in a mercantile house. His business prospered, and a beautiful house was purchased on the shore of one of those crystal lakes so common in the West.

But the tocsin of war was sounded, and leaving his business in the care of his partner, Stanford collected a company of volunteers, and bidding adieu to his wife and infant son, hastened to Washington.

It was now Mary Stanford's lot, with thousands of others, to watch eagerly, for news from the army, to pray for a husband's safety, and wait for his return.

But there came a day when news of a terrible battle went flashing over the country, and a telegram reached the city of L—, stating that Company A had suffered severely, and that Captain Stanford was among the missing. Gently as possible was Mary made to understand that she was a widow; but the shock was too great for her delicate frame, and for weeks she raved in the delirium of fever.

When at length she slowly recovered, it was to find that her husband's partner had proved recreant to his trust. He had taxed the credit of the firm to the utmost, by borrowing, and with the money thus obtained left the country.

Mary's elegant house was hers no longer. She now wrote to her father, acquainting him with her bereavement and misfortunes, and begged him to receive her again into the home of her childhood. Long and anxiously she waited for a reply, but none came. Then she determined to go to her father, and in person entreat him to receive and care for her child, while she would support herself by teaching.

With what means she had remaining—only about three hundred dollars—she set out upon her journey to New York. She proceeded in safety until she arrived at the city of B—. Here a brief but severe illness of her child detained her for a few days; and when she was ready to proceed, she found that she had been robbed of all the money she possessed. Deprived of the means of going to her father, she determined to make one more effort to communicate with him. She addressed a letter to a gentleman who had been a friend to her father's asking him to inform her, whether he still lived, and if he was in the city. In a few days came a reply to the effect that Mr. Carleton had left New York some two months previously, and that he was not expected at home for a year, as business would detain him in a distant city.

It now seemed to Mary Stanford that heaven had indeed deserted her, and she could only caress her child, and pray that God would interpose in her behalf. There remained but one course for her to pursue. She sought for and obtained an humble dwelling in an obscure street; and disposing of her jewelry and some few articles of wearing apparel, discharged her indebtedness to the landlord of the W— hotel; and, taking the little Willie by the hand,

set out for her new lodgings with a sad heart. She hoped to be able to earn a subsistence by her needle, until her father should return to his home, when she firmly believed he would relieve her sufferings, if not for her own, for his grand-child's sake.

Bravely she entered upon her new life. Morning, noon and night found her bending over her sewing or embroidery. Her form drooped, her cheek grew paler and paler, her eyes were dim with weeping—No answers came to the many letters she addressed to her father, and hope at length died out of her heart. To add to her misery the winter was at hand, and she was forced to the conviction, that the avails of her needle were not sufficient to supply her wants. But there was no alternative, and with a sort of dumb despair, she still toiled on.

The morning of January 1st, 1864, found Mrs. Stanford placing in the grate the last of her little store of fuel. The cold was intense, and she covered closer the form of the sleeping Willie, now nearly three years of age. She knelt by his side, and imprinted kiss after kiss upon his pallid brow. Never before had she felt as now the meaning of the sunken cheek and bloodless lips. She shuddered with a new fear, for the conviction that he was slowly starving, had fastened itself upon her mind.

"Oh, God!" she cried, clasping her hands in agony, "hast Thou indeed forsaken me? art Thou still the widow's support, and the friend of the fatherless? I pray Thee, stretch forth Thine hand and save my child."

Tenderly she laid her hand upon his curling locks, and as she did so, her eye fell upon the ring and the letter G, which years before she had placed upon her finger as the seal of her destiny. She gazed at it vacantly, as her mind busied itself with the past. Swiftly the various scenes of her checked life passed in review before her; all finely terminating in the misery of the present. What was to be done? Willie would soon awake, and she had no more bread to appease his hunger. The fire would soon die out, and then both must perish with cold. The ring must be of some value, and she could sell it and obtain enough to preserve them a day or two at the least. It was the last article she possessed that would procure bread. Her heart gave a great, painful throb; but she looked at her child, and her decision was taken.

Wrapping a faded shawl around her emaciated form, she stirred the expiring fire, and closing the door softly behind her, descended into the street, and walked rapidly in the direction of the shop. Where she reached her destination benumbed and shivering, and paused for a moment before the glowing grate before making known her errand. An old gentleman enveloped in a great, warm cloak, entered, and advanced directly to the counter.

"I wish to purchase a bracelet, as a New Year's present for my daughter," he said, cheerily.

The shopman placed a case of jewels before him, and then turned to his poorer customer.

"How much will you give me for this ring?" she said, with emotion.

"Its actual value is but trifling," he replied; "it is very old. I will give you one dollar."

"Oh, sir! it is not worth more than that?" she said. "It is very dear to me for its associations, and nothing but the most pressing want would induce me to part with it. I pray you give me all it is worth."

"I can give no more," he said, dropping it on the counter, carelessly.

Mrs. Stanford grasped it, and pressed it to her lips; then she laid it down reverently and extended her hand for the money.

The old gentleman who had come to purchase a bracelet, had listened in silence to this little dialogue between the poor woman and the shop keeper; but he now moved to her side and said, respectfully:

"You seem very unwilling to part with this ring, madam; will you allow me to examine it?"

"Certainly, sir," said Mrs. Stanford, passing it to him.

The man started as his eyes fell upon the letter G, and he asked quickly:

"Where did you obtain this?"

"Oh, sir!" said Mary, "it was a gift from my husband, previous to our marriage. I prize it very highly, for he is dead, and it is the last memento I have. But his child is starving, and it must be sold."

"Do you know the meaning of this letter?" he said.

"No, sir, except that my husband told me it was a Masonic emblem, and if I was willing to become the wife of a Freemason, I was to wear it for his sake."

"Well, well," said the old man, "I presume you are in haste to return to your child. I have taken a fancy to this ring, and I will give you more for it than the shopkeeper can afford to give," and placing a ten dollar note in her hand, he deposited the ring in his vest pocket.

"Oh, sir, a thousand thanks, and may heaven bless and reward you," said Mrs. Stanford.

"How far is it to your house?" said the gentleman.

"Only two blocks distant," she replied.

"It is very cold and I will accompany you, and lend you my cloak," he said kindly.

Wrapping it carefully around her, he walked by her side in the direction of her

poor lodgings.

"I must stop here, and purchase some bread for my child," said Mary.

"Very well; I will wait here for you." In a few moments she returned, and they proceeded.

A single glance at the wretched room served to show to the kind hearted old man the full extent of Mrs. Stanford's poverty. Willie was awake, and sat shivering upon his miserable bed. His great hungry eyes lighted as they fell upon the package his mother deposited upon the rickety table, and the only response to her caress was, "bread, mamma; bread!"

The old man, standing by the door, waited to hear no more; and when Mary turned to thank him for his kindness, he had gone, leaving his cloak behind him.

A few moments afterward, Mary opened her door in response to a loud rap, and found a large basket of coal upon the threshold. The person who brought it had already reached the foot of the stairway. But there could be no doubt for whom the coal was designed, and Mrs. Stanford's poor house was soon comfortably warmed.

A half hour later, a supply of provisions arrived in the same mysterious manner, and the loving mother wept and smiled by turns, as the greedy Willie, with hands trembling with excitement, lifted package after package of wholesome food from the basket to the table. At the bottom lay a note which read thus—"Place your trust in God, and He will supply and guard you."

On the following evening, Humanity Lodge, No.—, met in regular communication. The usual business of the evening having been transacted, an old man arose and said:

"My brethren, you all know a Freemason's duty toward the widow and orphan, especially the widow and orphan of a brother. At No. 6 E— street, lives a poor woman, who was forced to encounter the intense cold of yesterday morning, in the effort to procure food for herself and child, and fuel to keep them from freezing. I have placed them above present want by a small supply of provisions and coal; and her landlady, who describes the poor woman as one who is worthy, and has seen better days, will care for her until we can aid her further. I first discovered her in the shop of a J. W., endeavoring to procure money by the sale of a ring engraved with the letter G. The Jew would give her but a trifle for it, and I purchased it myself. She told me it was a present from her husband previous to her marriage."

"Have you the ring with you?" said a strange voice quivering with emotion.

"Yes," replied the old man searching for it in his vest pocket. "Any one who wishes may examine it."

The stranger, who was a tall, fine looking man, but very pale, as if from sickness, crossed the room quickly and looked eagerly at the ring.

"Oh, heaven!" he exclaimed, "it is Mary's ring. Where did you say, No. 6 E— street? My wife! my poor wife!"

He vanished from the room, but the old man followed. When he reached the home of Mary, it was to find her lying insensible upon her wretched couch, and her husband endeavoring to restore consciousness by bathing her brow and chafing the hands hardened by toil.

Captain Stanford, of Company A, had been indeed among the missing, but he was not dead. He had pressed forward in advance of his men, and fallen where the fight was thickest. He had been borne from the field as a prisoner, by Confederate soldiers, and it was many weeks before an exchange was effected. Then, rewarded for his bravery, with a colonel's commission, but still weak from the effects of a severe wound, he obtained a furlough, and hastened to his western home. His wife had left for New York; his perfidious partner had been discovered and arrested, and a large part of the money he had purloined had been recovered. Leaving the case in charge of an attorney, Colonel Stanford followed his wife searching New York, no trace of her could be discovered. Thinking perhaps she might have ascertained the locality of her father, and gone to him, Stanford resigned his commission and went again in pursuit. He finally succeeded in finding Mr. Carlton in St. Louis, prostrated with fever, which in a few days terminated fatally. George remained with him until the last, and on his death bed, the old man had repented his unjust treatment of his daughter, and instructed George to bear to her his blessing.

Thinking that perhaps Mary might have returned home in his absence, he again sought the city of L—. But she was not there, and, half maddened with grief and anxiety, he renewed his search.

But his cause seemed hopeless, when, arriving at B—, he determined to visit the Lodge, and request his brethren to assist in ascertaining if she was in that city. The result we have already seen, and it only remains to say, Col. Stanford, his wife and the boy Willie—now the picture of health and happy childhood—are dwelling again in the beautiful home on the banks of the Lake W—.

A half penitent Mongrel editor in Pennsylvania says: "We have got about enough of Samba." He must have swallowed a nigger whole.