

LITERATURE.

SONNET.

BY CALDER CAMPBELL.

YE who the lack of gold would plead as lack
Of power to help another, think not so;
But where the stumbling steps of sickness go,
Follow with friendly foot; and in the track
Of life when ye encounter, 'midst the snow
Bewildered wanderers, turn not proudly back,
But lead them gently from their walks of woe
By such kind words as cast a brighter glow
Than gold around them. Oh be sure of this—
The alms most precious man can give to man
Are kind and truthful words; nor come amiss
Warm sympathising tears to eyes that scan
The world aright! The only error is,
Neglect to do the little good we can!

SONNET TO THE BUTTERCUP.

WILL no one sing of thee, thou pleasing flower,
With livelier tint than daisy e'er put on?
Who, when warm Phœbus gives to May her dower,
Smiling art seen the grass-green meads among;
What time the cuckoo tunes his mellow flute,
And on the sward the grasshopper we hear,
'Tis then all gaily in thy yellow suit
A smiling floral star thou dost appear.
Memory wipes off the dust of time, and brings
Sweet recollections of those joyous hours,
When wandering gladly near Dove's pleasant springs,
I culled a copious harvest of thy flowers;
With pinafore filled out—a venturesome boy,
I tumbled in the grass, and shouted wild for joy.

THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER.

BY ABBOTT LEE.

(Concluded.)

We pass for a moment from the trivialities of girlhood in luxurious boudoirs to the fury of men in the battlefield. The peals of reverberating cannon had died away, the smoke of gunpowder, fit for the incense of hell, had dissipated afar, and a hushed stillness succeeded to the dire din of the horrible confusion, broken only by the deep groans of the dying, who lay weltering in blood. The streams of life from thousands of hearts whose affections might have thrown sunshine over as many household hearths, were commingling there, and saturating the very earth. The cords of love that had so lately bound the living to the dead, were rent and broken. The survivors spoke in hushed voices, feeling that they were in the ghastly majesty of death's presence. Thousands, whose pulses had throbbed no quicker under the flash of the sword or the roaring of the cannon, quailed before the solemn sovereignty that then possessed the field of Waterloo. Many a man who fears not a living enemy, trembles at the proximity of a dead one. Multitudes were there who until that hour had never seen the awful aspect of the king of terrors; many were fearfully altered, the buoyancy of youth being changed into the sternness of men by an almost instantaneous process. In some, the awful horrors of the scene had banished all bodily feelings of fatigue; in others, worn-out nature so imperatively needed repose, that men might be seen even making a pillow of a dead foe; while here and there, some of those harpies that are known to follow in the wake of an army were seen hovering over the blood-dyed field, and pillaging the dying and the dead.

The hero of a hundred fights leapt from the brave horse that had carried him through the rage and fury of the battle. 'An express for home—for England!' exclaimed the commander-in-chief.

The officer to whom this duty was entrusted, presumed to speak a few words to the commander-in-chief. They referred to a tall pale young man who was standing at his elbow, blackened with smoke and smeared with blood, and evidently exhausted in body, yet looking stern and intensely anxious. As the officer spoke, the general cast his eye on the young man and answered, 'Yes, let him accompany you. He has signalized himself. I marked him. He may look for promotion. Take him with you.'

The pale face of the stern-looking young man flushed through the smoke and the bloody smearings, and he bowed profoundly.

That young man was our old acquaintance, Lieutenant Lincoln.

Old Ellison was sitting in his own dressing-room, with his elbows on the table, and his face buried in his hands. The silence was so deep, that even the ticking of his watch seemed a powerful sound. The house was hushed in repose. Who has not felt how insupportably painful that stillness is, which is not the stillness of peace.

The clock of the neighbouring church doled out its solemn measurement of life—the merchant started and lifted up his head. *One, two, three.* As he listened to the solemn measurement of time—of life—his eyes assumed an expression such as might be supposed to weigh upon a man whose days are numbered. Ah! merciful is the uncertainty of death. And now well

might the merchant be called *old* Ellison. The well-dressed polished man had certainly grown rusty. The sleek smooth locks had now a mingling of silver threads among them. The sharp quick eye was wild and restless—frowns intersected the wrinkles on his brow, and the expression of his lip was withering, the complexion of his face was black and yellow mingled, and altogether it might have been difficult for those who had known the smooth, smiling, piquant, luxurious stock-jobber a little twelvemonth before, to have recognised him again, as he sat thus moodily in the dead of the night, in his lonely dressing-room, with his two wax candles guttering down beside him.

'No help! no outlet! no escape!' muttered the stock-jobber. 'Nothing but ruin staring me in the face on every hand! Ruin! ruin! ruin! To-morrow seals my doom. Twenty thousand pounds worth of bills, and not twenty pounds to meet them. I shall be chalked up on those accursed walls! A name that never had an idle breath upon it until now!—and as men pass they will point, and smile, and sneer, and say, 'Have you heard! look there! Ah, there's no knowing any one in this world! Would you have thought he was so rotten! Good luck! and, O dear! and who'd have thought it! And then one will say, How much are you in for? and what have you lost by that scamp? and what are you done in? and—and—the stock-jobber ground his teeth together.'

A sort of despairing calmness succeeded to this frenzy. The flush of passion subsided into a sort of malignant, fiend-like feeling, not altogether without a spice of triumph in it.

'But I need not fear it! need not see it!—There is one way of escaping! I can get out of the way. Who cares for their mockery?—Not I? I laugh at it! I can grin in their faces, and they shall be afraid to look at me! I can answer them sneer for sneer, and the cowards shall huddle away!'

'I wonder if I shall feel when I am in my coffin; I suppose they will bring me in insane, and give me Christian burial! Ha! ha! ha! Ah! what is that behind the curtain? Mocking fiend, I see thee beckoning me! What, another, and another! Away! away!—and yet, better with ye than alone! Ah! how awful to be alone! Well, fiends that ye are! ye are the only friends that are left me.'

'How strange that the shadows of my childhood should come upon me at this hour; I remember me well, when I was a little child, my mother taught me to pray. It was a pretty prayer that childish lisping that my mother taught me. I wonder if I could remember it now. Forty years ago. I was just four years old when she died. I am forty-four years old—they will put it on my coffin!'

'Poor Isabella, I wish she had been well settled. I wish I had suffered her to marry that Lieutenant Lincoln. She submitted to me without a murmur, but she has never held up her head since. Poor thing, she will be sad enough when she hears—but Providence will raise her up a friend. Is there, then, a Providence? What is it, then, that goads my inmost soul and pricks my spirit? Well, in another hour I shall know this great secret!'

The stock-jobber rose from the damask-covered easy chair on which he had been sitting. 'No,' he said to himself—'no; pistols are doubtless prompt enough, and I would rather die in my own house, whilst I might call it my own; but I will not. No, no, I will not go out of the world committing an act of cruelty; I will not let those eyes first see me, whose blood it must curdle. I have always deprecated the brutality of those men, who, having resolved on suicide, commit the fearful action, so that their mangled bodies first curse the sight of some poor, weak, doting, helpless woman. Poor Isabella—she shall not find my blood upon the floor. No, no, it shall not stain her feeble hands, or blast her quailing sight. She may hear what has befallen her, and that will be heavy enough, but she shall not see! No, no. A quarter of an hour will bring me to the river, and there is water enough to wash away all my troubles!'

Not a puff of smoke had yet issued from any of the tall chimneys whose vast accumulation mark the locality of our great city, when the unhappy merchant unchained and unbolted, for the first time in his life, the door of his own dwelling. His own servants were wrapped in heavy, stupid, dreamless sleep, and when they woke their greatest grief was but the trouble of idleness. The merchant envied the very dog that was only too sleepy to snarl at him as he passed. Old Ellison looked around: the grey mist of the morning was gently melting away before the coming sunlight, but still the objects around were lying indistinctly in the shade. The gas was burning, but seemed every moment to grow paler under the influence of the oncoming day. The merchant glanced suspiciously around, as men do who know they have something to hide, though it be but a feeling; he looked up to his own dwelling, the home he thought to behold no more, and at the trees which he had never till that moment believed that he cared for, but which, now he was losing them forever, he felt as if he loved. Strange, how the melted feelings flow into every nook and cranny round them! The only living being was a man wrapped in a large coat, leaning against the railings of the square, and as the stock-jobber closed his own door behind him, he almost fancied that the individual started as if coming towards him. Perhaps the idea disturbed any further trains of thought and feeling, and made the

stock-jobber hurry forward on his accursed purpose of *self-murder*.

The stock-jobber walked as if life rather than death depended on his speed, or like a slave under the lash seeking to escape from its goadings, and in a little while he stood in one of the recesses of Blackfriars Bridge, his head leaning over the balustrade, and gazing on the black moody tide that was ebbing away beneath.

'I shall soon know it all!' said the stock-jobber—'all! If there be a Providence, why does it not interfere with me? But I am left to myself—or, rather, I am left to the fiends! Providence has nothing to do with me: so down into that yawning grave—down! down!'

The stock-jobber clambered to the top of the parapet, and expanded his arms for the fatal plunge: the impulse had been given, and another moment would have precipitated him into the current; but even at the instant when he was arraigning Providence, a strong muscular grasp from behind pulled him headlong down upon the ground, and, both stunned and astonished at this different termination of his purpose, the stock-jobber lay for a few moments in sullen bewilderment, with a tall thin young man, muffled up in a military cloak, leaning over him.

'Madman!' exclaimed the stranger, 'is death such a pleasant thing that you court it thus roughly? I tell you, better any life of woe, or toil, or drudgery, than noisome death. Be thankful that you are spared from this mad reckless act.'

'Death is my only friend,' replied the stock-jobber sullenly, 'and I know not where to look for another.'

'Had you seen it in as many shapes as I have,' replied his companion, 'you would have thought that whole bones, in a whole skin, with the breath still in your body, a better condition than that of a dead king. But how do you know that you have not better friends in the living than the dead?'

'You are a stranger to me,' replied the stock-jobber moodily. 'You may think you have done me a service that entitles you to be free, but I think differently. You are a stranger! Go your way, and I will go mine.'

'Your way is my way!'

Old Ellison stamped his foot angrily upon the ground. 'Go! leave me! I do not thank you for what you have done. I am in no humour to brook intrusion.'

'Mr. Ellison, I shall not leave you at your bidding.'

'Ha! do you know me then?'

'I am no stranger,' replied the other, 'as I will soon satisfy you.' And as he spoke, he opened his large military wrap cloak, and lifted off the undress cap.

'Lincoln! Is it possible!' exclaimed the stock-jobber.

And Lincoln it was, though strangely and grievously altered. His under garments were those that he had worn in the field of battle, torn, smeared, soiled, stained, and bloody. His eyes were sunken and bloodshot, his lips parched and pallid, his face withered, and he bore the stamp of a man worn to the utmost limits of intense fatigue and anxiety.

'Is this accident, or are you here to reproach me in my extremity?' exclaimed the stock-jobber.

'Neither,' returned the young soldier.—'With the exception of one circumstance, you were ever a kind friend to me, and even for that one, I have grown so far worldly wise as to feel that you had justice and reason on your side. I had no right to wish to reduce your daughter to beggary.'

'And within this hour I have been wishing that I had not denied you. Isabella's feelings were with you, and I should not then have left her alone in the world.'

'I thank you for that wish,' returned the soldier, holding out his hand, which the stock-jobber shook, 'and I trust that brighter days are in store for us all.'

'I am a ruined man!' exclaimed the stock-jobber. 'Nothing can save me! I will not live to be pitied and despised!'

'I can save you!' replied the soldier.

'Pshaw!' exclaimed the stock-jobber; 'you have nothing but your paltry pay, and I owe seventy thousand pounds!'

'No matter,' replied Lincoln, 'even though it were double! I have been growing worldly wise since I last saw you. I own to you that I am tired with this mean position which I fill in the world. I confess I love the ease and the deference that wait on wealth. I fully believe that I can never acquire these by any of those slow processes by which other men delve on at half-crown profits, and I am venturing all upon a masterly stroke. Mr. Ellison, will you come into my terms? If I show you a road to a princely fortune, to be made in a day, will you give me half of it and Isabella?'

Something like the stock-jobber's old scornful smile broke over his haggard face as he answered.

'I remember telling you that you were young, and now I am wondering how you have grown so old in so short a time.'

A little flush of embarrassment broke over the soldier's face.

'In mingling with the world, Mr. Ellison, we grow worldly too, and perhaps it was yourself who gave me one of my first lessons. Is it or is it not a bargain?'

'Are you not sanguine about the means?'

'If I am so of course I miss the end.'

'Well I have nothing to lose,' replied the stock-jobber. 'I fear you are too credulous—or perhaps you are only cheating me into another day of life.'

'Is it a bargain?'