

The Poet's Page.

Old Letters.

ELIZABETH PAXTON.

—For Truth.

On the coals I laid the letters, and though they were
not to blame,
Yet I watched them writhe and quiver in the clutches
of the flame
With a silent satisfaction, thinking how my heart
had died
On the coals of desolation in the years forever dead.
Yes, I burned them, burned them slowly, all but
this one; just at last,
I had snatched it, burned and blackened, where the
fire's footstep passed;
There are blisters on my fingers, where I took the
coals apart—
There are scars of deeper blisters on my brain and on
my heart—

There are wounds I thought would never bleed, or
ache, or smart again;
But I learned of my mistake, to-night, with sudden
sting of pain,
When the fierce flames sucked the letter, and the words
I loved so well
Sprang up into sudden clearness as the red light on
the coffin.

O'er me—as I snatched the letter with a sudden
burst of tears—
Drifted scenes I thought forgotten; drifted from the
distant years
Like a panoramic vision. And this letter, smirched
with black,
Is the thin and pallid showman that has rolled the
curtain back.

First a swallow-haunted river, near whose margin,
cool and deep,
In the arms of dusky shadows, white pond lilies lie
asleep;
And a boat that with the current slowly floats adown
the stream
O'er a path of limpid radiance, like the moonlight in
a dream.

Tender words across the distance, thrill me with a
strange delight,
As of old I heard them, mingled with the voices of
the night,
Mingled with the sound of waters, where they washed
the trailing reed,
Or in wavelets softly murmured breaking on the
peaceful shore.

Woodland walks in sheltered glades, where two
youthful lovers stray,
O'er drifts of golden sunlight edged by shifting
shores of shade,
Alternate with winter pictures; and the song the
skaters sing
Flits across the firelight silence with the skates exult-
ant ring.

Then two low but rocky ledges, with a brawling
stream between,
O'er whose foam-flecked, wave-washed margin, fern
fronds droop and willows lean,
And a rustic bridge above it, throws its brawny arms
across
From each ledge where roses blossom, and the stones
laugh out in merriment.

And two happy lovers, talking, through the woodland
lily stray,
Reach the bridge and pass beyond it down the sha-
dow-haunted way;
Where the song-birds making music in the branches
leading near
Scarcely cease their song a moment as the low-voiced
words they hear.

Still the fire. The scene is changing; I can hear the
north winds blow
Through the bare and chilly forest. All the paths are
white with snow;
On the bridge a woman muses sadly of her love she
lost,
While the naked rock trees shiver, and the rocks are
velled with frost.

And a boat upon a river, without steersman, sail or
oar,
All alone on turbid waters drifts towards an un-
known shore
Where no lilies on the margin through the shifting
shadows gleam,
Not a rose bloom, golden-tinted, waves its censur-
er the stream.

Drop the curtain, pallid showman; lay the shifting
scenes away,
Bring no more your sombre shadows o'er the pictures
of to-day;
Faded from fire, though scorched and blackened, for
the magic that you hold,
Keep for me but happy pictures framed in memory's
glittering gold.

WACHNATON, Wis.

True Courage.

BY MRS. CHRISTINA F. FOSTER.

—For Truth.

We speak of men of backbone
And fear as real in hours of strife,
Whose courage plays the hero's part
And the varied life of life.
They stand amid the wreck of things
They fondly loved and held most dear,
With carriage grand as ancient kings,
And stemmed like them the "any" fear.

They gaze on scenes which ruin brings,
As if unconscious how to feel,
More either men they stand as kings,
Whose heart and brain and nerve are steel.
The tempest blows on them in vain,
Heaven's thunderbolt awakes no fear,
The firm set mouth will not complain,
Their eyes refuse to yield to tears.

There's men that stand upon the field,
With dauntless men and heart of rock,
Who would not to the foe man yield,
But stand the battle's fiercest shock.
They stood amid the shot and shell
That fell in fiery rain around,
And fought like heroes till they fell
Upon the blood-beckoned ground.

They can stand up with dauntless front,
And courage flashing in the eye,
And stem the battle's fiercest brunt,
And bravely for their country die.
But courage proud, mid-pleasing steel
Bright die away like battle's roar,
And coward in such an hour may fail,
The hero's garb enshrine them o'er.

There's some can hear the tempest wail,
When its great heart throbs high with pain,
And never know in heart a quail,
Though all around foam his the main.
They can ride on the foaming flood,
While other's cheeks are blanched and pale,
They feel within the bounding blood,
Dancing in concert with the gale.

But 'tis a nobler courage far
To stand for truth when men will sneer,
Than that displayed on fields of war,
Where each one does his comrade cheer—
To stand for right when right seems wrong,
For slender numbers join his train,
And when the surging, vulgar throng,
Within truth's sacred temples reign.

Courage may be nobler far
That dares say "no" when others yield,
Than that which leads the van in war,
And carries laurels from the field.
The taunt and jeer make deeper scars,
Than foeman's steel and darters keen,
Than those received on fields of war,
Although by human eye unseen.

Brave is the soul that stands alone,
The butt of ridicule and jest,
And dares with virtue kinship own,
While sinks the sting within the breast.
'Tis brave to say "I will not sin,"
Whether it brings me loss or gain;
I will obey the voice within
Though that obedience bring me pain.

Its braver far to say you're poor,
And say you can afford to cost,
Than daily feel what those endure,
Whose soul is for appearance lost.
The soul's sublime that stems the tide
Of man's opinion without fear,
And says with honest, manly pride,
I only am as I appear.

Its nobler far to wear a coat
Of texture rough which is your own,
Though publishing your humble lot
If paid in sinew, sweat and bone,
Than sport a finer, fashion-made,
Which, when your tailor sees, he sighs,
Because for work he never was paid,
But by your promise and your lies.

Be brave in all the things you do,
Be never backward in the right,
But be a soul sincere and true
And you will be a man of might.
And when your soul shall wave the palm
Of victory beyond the grave,
Men will your noble deeds acclaim,
And say here lies a man once brave.

Gone Before.

J. O. FAIRBANK.

Little Olive—Died Oct. 24, 1882.

When the harvest moon was shining,
And the autumn winds blew cold;
And a myrtle hand was painting
Forest leaves in shades untold;
Then it was, as nature faded,
That our little Olive bright,
Tropied, then fell, like a sweet blossom,
In the cold grave from our sight.

Oh! how dear is life around us,
Since our darling baby died;
Empty cradle, little dress
Tearfully are laid aside;
For she never more shall need them,
O'er our fond and loving care;
Angel forms do now attend her
In the city over there.

Could we but have seen her spirit
As it gained the glittering strand,
Heard the rapturous song of "Welcome,"
From the bright immortal land,
Ah! I think we'd cease from weeping,
And submissively would say,
"Blessed be the Lord who giveth,
Blessed be who takes away."

She will never know the sorrow
Of life's dark and toilsome way;
Never feel the heavy burden
We oft bear from day to day;
No! she was but sent to cheer us
For a few short months below;
Blessed here to bloom in Heaven,
And with richer beauty glow.

Sweetest Olive! precious blossom!
Though we miss thy form so fair,
Yet we would not wish to call thee
Back to this cold world of care;
But I faithful to the Master,
Till life's clouding hour shall come,
We shall meet thee, dear and forever
Dwell within the Father's best home.

STANFORD, N. S.

Tom's Soliloquy.

BY M. A. MANTLAND.

—For Truth.

And so I must bundle away to bed.
'Tis a hard and cheerless doom,
Sent up from the glow of the embers red,
To this lonely attic room.

How I wonder why I was made at all,
And what I was made to be,
When neither in parlor, kitchen, nor hall,
Is ever a place for me.

There is room for every shimmering guest,
And I hate them one and all,
For I'm always earlier sent to rest,
Whenever they choose to call.

And I must resign the coalcat chair,
No matter how tired I be,
For the sake of that growling, gouty bear,
Who always looks cross at me.

'Tis "Tommy," come here," and "Tommy, go
there,"
At every one's beck and call!
And whether the weather be foul or fair,
Why, Tommy must weather it all.

To-day, when our set had the highest score
In the game we played on the ice,
I needs must struggle to the play-story,
'Twas nothing, of course, to me.

I am only a clumsy, awkward lad,—
At least so my sisters say;
I am always plotting on something bad,
And always am in the way.

When I am a man—as I mean to be—
And have lots of rousing boys,
They will never torment or worry me,
With their bustle or their noise.

They may whistle and shout the whole house
Over,
And wrestle and whoop and call,
They may spin their tops on the parlor floor,
And play marbles in the hall.

They may rummage the pantry shelves at will,—
For school is a hungry place,
And the boys are ready to eat their fill,
With never a thought of "grace."

My boys will just be the fellest lot,
The best and heartiest fed;
And I won't give them the coarsest spot,
And bundle them off to bed!

STANFORD, Ont.

The Daisy.

A. G. GIDD.

—For Truth.

Not words on words in phalanx deep,
Need we to prove a God is here;
The daisy, fresh from nature's sleep,
Tells of its hand in lines as clear.

For who but He who arched the skies,
And poured the day-spring's living flood,
Wondrous alike in all his tries,
Could raise the daisy's purple bud?

Would its green cup, its wiry stem
Its fringed border nicely spin,
And cut the gold-embossed gem,
That, set in silver, gleams within.

And fling it, unrestrained and free,
O'er hill and dale, and desert soil,
That man, wherever he walks, may see
In every step the stamp of God?

Only a Vision.

BY J. A. WILKINSON.

—For Truth.

It was only a dream—a vision,
But I stood on a lofty mountain
Than the world hath ever seen,
And gazed down a "deep, dark valley,"
Where strangely rolled between
Shores that were veiled, and unearthly,
A river as black as death's doom,
When a brooding soul is departing,
And the night comes in horror and gloom.

And the old and young there assembled,
With business too precious to leave;
And their moans and lamentations
Rose up from every where,
And I saw by a light dim, and waning,
A region of deep, dark despair;
And a voice as of God, sternly warning,
"Up on high it leded somewhere!"

And I raised my eyes toward Heaven,
Not a ray of sunlight was there;
Fierce clouds swept along, as if driven
By winds through the desolate air!
And I listened in awe as that warning
Came in tones stern, yet tender as love;
Reaching down in that sorrowful valley,
It said, "Hopeless souls look above."

And up from those depths, dark and dreary,
Rose a prayer, such as earth never heard;
So full of unutterable pleading,
The very hills and mountains were stirred;
And suddenly the clouds rent asunder,
Rolled back, and the lights of the spheres
Shed forth in intenseness and glory;
Lighting up that lone valley of tears.

And I heard songs of praise and rejoicing,
Such music as earth never heard;
Entrancing my soul with its rapture,
Such immeasurable joy it conferred,
And quickly that vale, late so barren,
Blossomed with fruit and the fairest of flowers;
And music and laughter came rippling
From hillside, sweet vale, and bright bowers.

And the river flowed onward in beauty,
By marvellous so fair on the ice;
On, and on—flashing bright in the sunlight,

Peacefully murmuring towards the sea.
And I knew there was rejoicing in Heaven,
When the wanderers returned to the fold;
For I heard the songs of the angels,
Attuned to their sweet harp of gold.

I, too, would have joined in rejoicing
With the friends of the dear long ago;
One, fair as the angels, awaited me
Where the sunset gates are aglow.
But suddenly the thought came to me
That I was forsaken, and I alone
On a desolate mountain height,
Cast out forever from home and friends.

And there was no way down from the mountain,
And I sank with a bitter cry
On the bleached and storm-swept rocks,
O'erwhelmed, and alone to die!
Many years have passed since that vision
Wrought my soul on that fated day;
And still I am lost on that mountain,
And Heaven seems far away.

LEAMINGTON, Ont.

Room For You.

BY GEORGE D. HOWARTH.

Who shall sweep away the errors
Crowding on us from the past?
Who shall clear the mists and shadows
That the future overcast?

Soon we busy teeming millions
Will have ended all this strife,
And the myriads crowding on us
Must take up the task of life.

Ah! the workers in the vineyard
Are too faint and all too few,
And the field of honest effort
Lies waste, young friends for you.

Room for boyhood, strong and sturdy—
Manhood manly, brave and true;
Room for honest, lusty vigor—
Room, my young friends, room for you.

Room for every sweet-voiced singer
That can thrill the heart with song;
Room for thoughts and words and actions,
That will drive the world along.

Statesmen, warriors, men of science,
Once, my friends, were boys like you;
And the grandest deeds of history
Are the ones that you may do.

The Spirit of Content.

BY MRS. M. A. LIME.

Why standst drooping in sadness?
Why sorrow and repine?
The earth is full of gladness,
And joy may yet be thine.
What though the fruit ye gathered
Proved bitter to the taste?
Though fierce the blast you weathered
Along the barren waste—
Life hath its joys and pleasures,
Thick strewn along the way,
In duty's path full measure
To cheer thee day by day.
Then cease thine idle weeping,
And search the way alone,
And treasures for thy keeping
Shall flow a wondrous throng.
One gem, best in possession,
May yet to thee be sent:
The best of earthly blessing—
The Spirit of Content.

Hope Resurrected.

BY MRS. MYRA DOUGLASS.

I thought that hope was dead. I saw her lie,
So cold and lifeless, on the unfeeling ground
Where seemed no warmth, and darkly closed her eyes,
And Death and Desolation reigned around.
I gazed so pining upon her form,
My dearest friend she'd been to me,
To see her stricken thus and all forlorn,
A sad and bitter sight it was to me.

I bowed my head above her form so dear
Said, pitying tears I dropped upon her face,
And thought of hours, that she and I so near
Had passed together. Time can never efface
The hours when sitting musing, all alone,
Her dear companionship was all I craved;
How many happy thoughts thro' her were known,
And must she now be laid within the grave?

I cried aloud, O come with grief and woe,
"Oh, must I yield thee to the dreadful tomb,
And thy dear love and comfort never know
Until the day of reckoning and of doom?"
I wept above her, and my tears they fell
Upon her face so dear, and oh, so cold!
My agony of heart no tongue could tell,
As memories thronged of happy days of old.

Thro' tears I gazed upon that once so dear,
I bowed my head and knelt beside her then,
And felt I could not yield her to the hier,
And still my life so full of woe to bear.
I laid my hand so loving on her head,
I kissed that face so cold and pale to see,
And wildly cried, "Thou canst not, hope, be dead,
Thou canst not hide thy face from me!"

Oh, is no life still left within the form?
There's warmth within, I feel, I know there must
Be spirit of life still left, for thou art warm,
I can not, will not, yield thee to the dust.
I feel—I plead—I wildly thee implore
—I clasp thy form so close in my embrace;
Oh, live and comfort, leave me nevermore,
Thank God, all life is not from thee effaced.

She moves—she lives—unconscious that soft eye,
That eye, that ever beamed so kind on me,
And with soft murmuring to my words replies,
And kindly tells me still my staff she'll be.
Oh, precious hope, I hold her once again!
Life I can bear if she is e'er my friend,
My late accept of sorrow and of pain,
And wait the joys the future may me send.

Fallon's Weekly.