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From the Tribute.

STANZAS.

BY W. WORDSWORTH, ESQ.

The moon that sails along the sky,
Moves with a happy destiny,
Or is she hid from mortal eye
Or dimly seen;
But when the clouds asunder fly,
How bright her amen!

Not flagging when the winds all sleep,
Not hurried onward, when they sweep,
The bosom of th' æthereal deep,
Not turned aside;
She knows an even course to keep,
Whate'er betide.

Perverse are we—a froward race;
Thousands, though rich in fortune's grace,
With cherished sullenness of pace
Their way pursue,
Ingrates, who wear a smile-less face
The whole year through.

If kindred humour e'er should make
My spirit droop for drooping's sake,
From fancy following in thy wake,
Bright Ship of Heaven,
A counter-impulse let me take
And be forgiven.

From Blackwood's Magazine for January.

THE HOUSEHOLD WRECK.

Such is the title of the opening paper of Blackwood's Magazine for the present year. It is written in that startling, vivid style, for which Christopher North has long been ranked high above his contemporaries. The story is slight—that of a sensitive husband, who is agonized almost unto death by his beautiful wife being accused of shoplifting. The tale extends to some forty pages, so that we can only quote a scene, and it shall be that in which the lovely yet afflicted wife effects her escape from prison; one attempt having already been made to bribe the jailor.

Two days we mourned over this failure, and scarcely knew which way to turn for another ray of hope;—on the third morning we received intelligence that this very jailor had been attacked by the fever, which, after long desolating the city, had at length made its way into the prison. In a very few days the jailor was lying without hope of recovery; and of necessity another person was appointed to fill his station for the present. This person I had seen, and I liked him less by much than the one he succeeded: he had an Italian appearance, and he wore an air of Italian subtlety and dissimulation. I was surprised to find, on proposing the same service to him, and on the same terms, that he made no objection whatever, but closed instantly with my offers. In prudence, however, I had made this change in the articles: a sum equal to two hundred English guineas, or one sixth part of the whole money, he was to receive beforehand as a retaining fee; but the remainder was to be paid only to himself, or to anybody of his appointing, at the very moment of our finding the prison gates thrown open to us. He spoke fairly enough, and seemed to meditate no treachery; nor was there any obvious or known interest to serve by treachery; and yet I doubted him grievously.

The night came: it was chosen as a gala night, one of two nights throughout the year in which the prisoners were allowed to celebrate a great national event: and in those days of relaxed prison management, the utmost license was allowed to the rejoicing. This indulgence was extended to prisoners of all classes, though, of course, under more restrictions with regard to the criminal class. Ten o'clock came—the hour at which we had been instructed to hold ourselves in readiness. We had been long prepared. Agnes had been dressed by Hannah (the servant), in such a costume externally (a man's hat and cloak, &c.) that from her height, she might easily have passed amongst a mob of masquerading figures in the debtors' halls and galleries for a young stripling. Pierpoint, my friend, and myself, were also to certain degree disguised; so far at least that we should not have been recognized at any hurried glance by those of the prison officers who had become acquainted with our persons. We were all more or less disguised about the face; and in that age when masks were commonly used at all hours by people of a certain rank, there would have been nothing suspicious in any possible costume of the kind in a night like this, if we could succeed in passing for friends or debtors.

I am impatient of these details, and I hasten over the ground. One entire hour passed away, and no jailor appeared. We began to despond heavily; and Agnes, poor thing! was now the

most agitated of us all. At length eleven o'clock struck in the harsh tones of the prison-clock. A few minutes after, we heard the sounds of bolts drawing, and bars unfastening. The jailor entered—drunk, and much disposed to be insolent. I thought it advisable to give him another bribe, and he resumed the fawning insinuations of his manner. He now directed us, by passages which he pointed out, to gain the other side of the prison. There we were to mix with the debtors and their mob of friends, and to await his joining us, which in that crowd he could do without much suspicion. He wished us to traverse the passages separately; but this was impossible, for it was necessary that one of us should support Agnes on each side. I previously persuaded her to take a small quantity of brandy, which we rejoiced to see had given her, at this moment of starting, a most reasonable strength and animation. The gloomy passages were more than us y empty, for all the turnkeys were employed in a vigilant custody of the gates, and examination of the parties going out. So the jailor had told us, and the news alarmed us. We came at length to a turning which brought us in sight of a strong iron gate, that divided the two main quarters of the prison. For this we had not been prepared. The man, however opened the gate without a word spoken, only putting out his hand for a fee; and in my joy, perhaps, I gave him one imprudently large. After passing this gate, the distant uproar of the debtors guided us to the scene of their merriment; and when there, such was the tumult and the vast multitude assembled, that we now hoped in good earnest to accomplish our purpose without accident. Just at this moment the jailor appeared in the distance; he seemed looking towards us, and at length one of our party could distinguish that he was beckoning to us. We went forward, and found him in some agitation, real or counterfeit. He muttered a word or two, quite unintelligible about the man at the wicket, told us we must wait awhile, and he would then see what would be done for us. We were beginning to demur, and to express the suspicions which now too earnestly arose, when he, seeing, or affecting to see some object of alarm, pushed us with a hurried movement into a cell opening upon the part of the gallery at which we were now standing. Not knowing whether we really might not be retreating from some danger, we could do no otherwise than comply with his signals; but we were troubled at finding ourselves immediately locked in from the outside, and thus apparently all our motions had only sufficed to exchange one prison for another.

We were now completely in the dark, and found, by a hard breathing from one corner of the little dormitory, that it was not unoccupied. Having taken care to provide ourselves separately with means for striking a light, we soon had more than one torch burning. The brilliant light falling upon the eyes of a man who lay stretched on the iron bedstead, woke him. It proved to be my friend the under-jailor, Ratcliffe, but no longer holding any office in the prison. He sprang up, and a rapid explanation took place. He had become a prisoner for debt; and on this evening, after having caroused through the day with some friends from the country, had retired at an early hour to sleep away his intoxication. I on my part thought it prudent to entrust him unreservedly with our situation and purposes, not omitting our gloomy suspicions. Ratcliffe looked with a pity that won my love, upon the poor wasted Agnes. He had seen her on her first entrance into the prison, had spoken to her, and therefore knew from what she had fallen, to what. Even then he had felt for her; how much more at this time, when he beheld, by the fierce light of the torches, her wo-worn features!

“Who was it,” he asked eagerly, “you made the bargain with? Manasseh?”

“The same.”

“Then I can tell you this—not a greater villain walks the earth. He is a Jew from Portugal; he has betrayed many a man, and will many another, unless he gets his own neck stretched, which might happen if I told all I know.”

“But what was it probable that this man meditated? Or how could it profit him to betray us?”

“That's more than I can tell. He wants to get your money, and that he doesn't know how to bring about without doing his part. But that's what he never will do, take my word for it. That would cut him out of a chance for the head-jailor's place.” He mused a little, and then told us that he could himself put us outside the prison-walls, and would do it without fee or reward. “But we must be quiet, or that devil will bethink him of me. I'll wager something he thought that I was out merry-making

like the rest; and if he should chance to light upon the truth, he'll be back in no time.” Ratcliffe then removed an old fire-grate, at the back of which was an iron plate; that swung round into a similar fire-place in the contiguous cell. From that, by a removal of a few slight obstacles, we passed, by a long avenue, into the chapel. Then he left us, whilst he went out all alone to reconnoitre his ground. Agnes was now in so pitiable a condition of weakness, as we stood on the very brink of our final effort, that we placed her in a pew, where she could rest as upon a sofa. Previously we had stood upon graves, and with monuments more or less conspicuous all around us; some raised by friends to the memory of friends—some by subscriptions in the prison—some by children, who had risen into prosperity, to the memory of a father, brother, or other relative, who had died in captivity. I was grieved that these sad memorials should meet the eye of my wife at this moment of awe and terrific anxiety. Pierpoint and I were well armed, and all of us determined not to suffer a recapture, now that we were free of the crowds that made resistance hopeless. This Agnes easily perceived; and that, by suggesting a bloody arbitration, did not lessen her agitation. I hoped therefore that, by placing her in the pew, I might at least liberate her for the moment from the besetting memorials of sorrow and calamity. But, as if in the very teeth of my purpose, one of the large columns which supported the roof of the chapel had its basis and lower part of the shaft in this very pew. On the side of it, and just facing her as she lay reclining on the cushions, appeared a mural tablet, with a bas-relief in white marble, to the memory of two children, twins, who had lived and died at the same time, and in this prison—children who had never breathed another air than that of captivity, their parents having passed many years within these walls, under confinement for debt. The sculptures were not remarkable, being a trite, but not the less affecting, representation of angels descending to receive the infants; but the hallowed words of the inscription, distinct and legible, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God”—met her eye, and by the thoughts they awakened, made me fear that she would become unequal to the exertions which yet awaited her. At this moment Ratcliffe returned, and informed us that all was right; and that, from the ruinous state of all the buildings which surrounded the chapel, no difficulty remained for us, who were, in fact, beyond the strong part of the prison, excepting at a single door, which we should be obliged to break down. But had we any means arranged for pursuing our flight, and turning this escape to account when out of confinement? All that, I assured him, was provided for long ago. We proceeded, and soon reached the door. We had one crow-bar amongst us, but beyond that had no better weapons than the loose stones found about some new-made graves in the chapel. Ratcliffe and Pierpoint, both powerful men, applied themselves by turns to the door, whilst Hannah and I supported Agnes. The door did not yield, being of enormous strength; but the wall did, and a large mass of stone-work fell outwards, twisting the door aside; so that, by afterwards working with our hands, we removed stones many enough to admit of our egress. Unfortunately this aperture was high above the ground, and it was necessary to climb over a huge heap of loose rubbish in order to profit by it. My brother-in-law passed first, in order to receive my wife, quite helpless at surmounting the obstacle by her own efforts, out of my arms. He had gone through the opening, and, turning round so as to face me, he naturally could see something that I did not see. “Look behind!” he called out rapidly. I did so, and saw the murderous villain Manasseh with his arm uplifted and in the act of cutting at my wife, nearly insensible as she was, with a cutlass. The blow was not for me, but for her, as the fugitive prisoner; and the law would have borne him out in the act. I saw, I comprehended the whole. I groped, as far as I could without letting my wife drop, for my pistols; but all that I could do would have been murdered in my arms. But—and that was what none of us saw—neither I, nor Pierpoint, nor the hound Manasseh—no person stood back in the shade; no person had seen, but had not uttered a word on seeing Manasseh advancing through the shades; no person only had forecast the exact succession of all that was coming; me she saw embarrassed and my hands preoccupied—Pierpoint and Ratcliffe useless by position—and the gleam of the dog's eye directed her to his aim. The crow-bar was leaning against the shattered wall. This she had silently seized. One blow knocked up the sword; a second laid the villain prostrate. At this moment appeared another of the turnkeys advancing from the rear; for the noise of our assault