

blows from a hammer not quite big enough to stun him. He sat still without saying a word. He had forgotten for the moment all about poor Gifted Hopkins, who had got out his manuscript at last, and was calming the disturbed corners of it. Coming to himself a little, he took a large and beautiful silk handkerchief, one of his new purchases, from his pocket and applied it to his face, for the weather seemed to have grown very warm all at once. Then he remembered the errand on which he had come, and thought of this youth, who had got to receive his first hard lesson in life, and whom he had brought to this kind man that it should be gently administered.

"You surprise me," he said—"you surprise me. Dead and buried. Dead and buried. I had sometimes thought that—at some future period, after I was gone, it might—but I hardly know what to say about your suggestions. But here is my young friend, Mr. Hopkins, who would like to talk with you, and I will leave him in your hands. I am at the Plane House, if you should care to call upon me. Good morning. Mr. Hopkins will explain everything to you more at his ease, without me, I am confident."

Master Gridley could not quite make up his mind to stay through the interview between the young poet and the publisher. The flush of hope was bright in Gifted's eye and cheek, and the good man knew that young hearts are apt to be over-sanguine, and that one who enters a shower-bath often feels very differently from the same person when he has pulled the string.

"I have brought you my Poems in the original autographs, sir," said Mr. Gifted Hopkins.

He laid the manuscript on the table, caressing the leaves still with one hand, as loth to let it go.

"What disposition had you thought of making of them?" the publisher asked in a pleasant tone. He was as kind a man as lived, though he worked the chief engine in a chamber of torture.

"I wish to read you a few specimens of the poems," he said, "with reference to their proposed publication in a volume."

"By all means," said the kind publisher, who determined to be very patient with the protégé of the hitherto little known but remarkable writer, Professor Gridley. At the same time he extended his foot in an accidental sort of way and pressed it on the right hand knob of three which were arranged in a line beneath the table. A little bell in a distant apartment—the little bell marked C—gave one slight note, loud enough to start a small boy up, who looked at the clock and knew that he was to go and call the publisher in just twenty-five minutes. "A, five minutes; B, ten minutes; C, twenty-five minutes";—that was the small boy's working formula.

Mr. Hopkins was treated to the full allowance of time, as being introduced by Professor Gridley.

The young man laid open the manuscript so that the title-page, written out very handsomely in his own hand, should win the eye of the publisher.

### BLOSSOMS OF THE SOUL.

*A Wreath of Verse; Original.*

BY GIFTED HOPKINS.

"A youth to fortune and to fame unknown."

[Gray.]

"Shall I read you some of the rhymed pieces first, or some of the blank-verse poems, sir?" Gifted asked.

"Read what you think is best,—a specimen of your first-class style of composition."

"I will read you the very last poem I have written," he said, and he began:

#### THE TRIUMPH OF SONG.

"I met that gold-haired maiden, all too dear:  
And I to her: Lo! thou art very fair,  
Fairer than all the ladies in the world  
That fan the sweetened air with scented fans,  
And I am scorched with exceeding love,  
Yea, crisped till my bones are dry as straw.  
Look not away with that high-arched brow,  
But turn its whiteness that I may behold,  
And lift thy great eyes till they blaze on mine,  
And lay thy finger on thy perfect mouth,  
And let thy luccent ears of carven pearl  
Drink in the murmured music of my soul,  
As the lush grass drinks in the globed dew;  
For I have many scrolls of sweetest rhyme  
I will unroll and make thee glad to hear.

Then she: O shaper of the marvellous phrase  
That openeth woman's heart as doth a key,  
I dare not hear thee—lest the bolt should slide  
That locks another's heart within my own.  
Go, leave me,—and she let her eyelids fall  
And the great tears rolled from her large blue eyes.

Then I: if thou not hear me, I shall die,  
Yea, in my desperate mood may lift my hand  
And do myself a hurt no leech can mend;  
For poets ever were of dark resolve,  
And swift stern deed—

That maiden heard no more,  
But spake: Alas! my heart is very weak,  
And but for—Stay! And if some dreadful morn,  
After great search and shouting through the world,

We found thee missing,—strangled,—drowned!—  
the mere—

Then should I go distraught and be clean mad!  
O poet, read! read all thy wondrous scroll!  
Yea, read the verse that maketh glad to hear!  
Then I began and read two sweet, brief hours,  
And she forgot all love save only mine!"

"Is all this from real life?" asked the publisher.

"It—no, sir—not exactly from real life—that is, the leading female person is not wholly fictitious—and the incident is one which might have happened. Shall I read you the poems referred to in the one you have just heard, sir?"

"Allow me, one moment. Two hours' reading, I think you said. I fear I shall hardly be able to spare quite time to hear them all. Let me ask what you intend doing with these productions, Mr ————Popkins."

"Hopkins, if you please, sir, not Popkins," said Gifted, plaintively. He expressed his willingness to dispose of the copyright, to