

Choice Miscellany.

The Children's Hour.

Between the dark and the daylight, When the night is beginning to lower, Comes a change in the day's occupations, That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me The patter of little feet, The sound of a door that is opened, And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight, Descending the broad hall stair, Gave Alice, and laughing Allegra, And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence: Yet I know by their merry eyes They are plotting and planning together To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway, A sudden raid from the hall! By three doors left unguarded They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret 'O'er the arms and the back of my chair; If I try to escape they surround me, They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses, Their arms about me entwine, Till I think of the bishop of Bangor In his mouse tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti, Because you have scaled the wall, Such an old mouse-tower as I am, Is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress, And will not let you depart, But put you down in the dungeon In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever, Yes forever and a day, Till the walls shall crumble to ruin, And moulder in dust away.

—Longfellow.

To Aspiring Authors.

MARK TWAIN GIVES THEM SOME ADVICE IN A GENERAL WAY.

Every man who becomes editor of a newspaper or magazine straightway begins to receive MSS. from literary aspirants, together with requests that he will deliver judgement upon the same; and, after complying in eight or ten instances, he finally takes refuge in a general sermon upon the subject, which he inserts in his publication, and always afterwards refers such correspondence to that sermon for answer.

I have at last reached this station in my literary career, and proceed to construct my public sermon.

Literature, like the ministry, medicine, the law, and all other occupations, is cramped and hindered for want of men to do the work, not want of work to do. When people tell you the reverse, they speak that which is not true. If you desire to test this, you need only hunt up a first-class editor, reporter, business manager, foreman of a shop, mechanic, or artist in any branch of industry, and try to hire him.

He is sober, industrious, capable, and reliable, and is always in demand. He cannot get a day's holiday except by courtesy of his employer, or of his city, or of the great general public. But if you need idlers, shirkers, half-instructed, unambitious, and comfort-seeking editors, reporters, lawyers, doctors, and mechanics, apply anywhere. There are millions of them to be had at the dropping of a handkerchief.

2. No. I must not and will not, venture my opinion whatever as to literary merit of your productions. The public is the only critic whose judgment is worth anything at all. Do not take my poor word for this, but reflect a moment and take your own. For instance, if Sylvanus Cobb or T. S. Arthur had submitted their maiden MSS. to you, you would have said with tears in your eyes, "Now please don't write any more!" But you see yourself how popular they are. And if it had been left to you, you would have said that "Marble Faun" was tiresome, and that even "Paradise Lost" lacked cheerfulness; but you know they sell.

3. I shrink from hunting up literary labor for you to do and receive pay for. Whenever your productions have proved for themselves that they have a real value, you will never have to go round hunting for remunerative work to do. You will require more hands than you have now, and more brains than you probably ever will have, to do even half the work that will be offered to you. Now, in order to arrive at the proof of value herebefore spoken of, one needs only to adopt a very simple and certainly very sure process—and that is, to write without pay until somebody offers pay.

If nobody offers pay within three years, the candidate may look upon this circumstance with the most implicit confidence, that seeing wood was what he was intended for. If he has any wisdom at all, then he will retire with dignity, and assume his Heaven-appointed vocation.

In the above remarks I have only offered a course of action which Mr. Dickens and most other successful literary men had to follow; but it is a course of action which will find no sympathy with my client, perhaps. The young literary aspirant is a very, very, curious creature. He knows that if he is to become a tinner the master-smith would require him to prove the possession of a good character and would require him

to stay in the shop three years—possibly four—and would make him sweep out and bring water and build fires all the first year, and let him learn to black stoves in the intervals. If he wanted to become a mechanic of any other kind, he would have to undergo this same tedious, ill-paid apprenticeship. If he wanted to become a lawyer or a doctor, he would have fifty times worse, for he would get nothing at all during his long apprenticeship, and in addition would have to pay a large sum for tuition, and have the privilege of boarding and clothing himself. The literary aspirant knows all this, and yet he has the hardihood to present himself for reception into the literary guild, and ask to share its high honors and emoluments, without a single twelvemonth's apprenticeship and in exchange for his presumption! He would smile pleasantly if he were asked even to make so small a thing as a ten-cent tin dipper without previous instruction in the art; but, all green and ignorant, wordily, pompously assertive, ungrammatical, and with a vague, distorted knowledge of men and the world, acquired in a back country village, he will serenely take up so dangerous a weapon as a pen and attack the most formidable subject that finance, commerce, war, or politics can furnish him withal. It would be laughable if it were not so sad and so pitiable. The poor fellow would not intrude upon the limelight without an apprenticeship, but is willing to seize and wield with unpractised hand an instrument which is able to overthrow dynasties, change religions, and decree the weal or woe of nations.

If my correspondent will write free of charge for the newspapers of his neighborhood, it will be one of the strangest things that ever happened if he does not get all the employment he can attend to on those terms. And as soon as ever his writings are worth money, plenty of people will hasten to offer it.

And, by way of serious and well-meant encouragement, I wish to urge upon him once more the truth, that acceptable writers for the press are so scarce that book and periodical publishers are seeking them, and with a vigilance that never grows heedless for a moment.

A Sad Story.

John B. Gough tells the following story: A minister of the gospel told me one of the most thrilling incidents I have ever heard in my life. A member of his congregation came home for the first time in his life intoxicated, and his boy met him on the door-step clapping his hands and exclaiming "Papa has come home!" He seized the boy by the shoulder, swung him round, staggered, and fell in the hall. That minister said to me: "I spent the night in that house. I went out, bared my brow, that the night air might fall upon it and cool it. I walked up and down the hall. There was his wife in strong convulsions, and he asleep." A man about thirty years of age, with a dead child in the house, having a blue mark upon the temple where the corner of the marble steps had come in contact with the head as he swung him around, and a wife upon the brink of the grave. "Mr. Gough" said my friend, "I cursed the drink. He had told me that I must remain until he awoke, and I did. When he awoke he passed his hand over his face, and exclaimed, 'What is the matter? Where am I? Where is my boy? You cannot see him!' Stand out of my way! I will see my boy!" To prevent confusion I took him to the child's bed, and turned over the sheet and showed him the corpse. He uttered a wild shriek "Ah my child!" That minister said further to me, "One year after that he was brought from a lunatic asylum to the side by side with his wife in the grave, and I attended the funeral." The minister that told me that fact is to-day a drunken hostler in a stable in Boston.

Now, tell me what rum will not do. It will debase, inebriate, and damn everything that is noble, bright, glorious, and godlike in a human being. There is nothing drink will not do that is not vile, dastardly, cowardly, sneaking, or hellish. Why are we not to fight it till the day of our death?

Becher was Alive.

There are probably but few newspaper reporters in this city that have not interviewed Henry Ward Beecher. The Plymouth pastor enjoys great popularity among the reporters, for he is accessible, genial, and, as a rule, talkative. He is always ready to engage in a harmless bit of chaff with the newspaper men, but he will not brook insolence. The last mentioned fact was impressed upon the mind of a swaggering youngster who said that he represented a Brooklyn paper. A rumor that Mr. Beecher was dead got started in some unaccountable manner and spread like wildfire. Reporters by the score hurried to Mr. Beecher's house and were there confronted by the famous preacher hale and hearty. After a while along came a young man who said to Mr. Beecher with an impudent grin that he had been sent by the city editor of the Brooklyn— "to find out whether Beecher was alive or dead."

"Well," said the Plymouth pastor, "I suppose you know who I am?" "Oh, yes," answered the fellow pertly, "but I would like to have it directly from you that you are not dead."

"Ah," murmured the stalwart pastor, as he laid a heavy hand on the funny young man's coat collar. The next instant the young man was held in the air and shaken as a dog would shake a saw dust doll. Mr. Beecher set him down on the sidewalk not any too gently and quietly remarked: "Now you can go to

your city editor and tell him that you have received actual proof that I am alive."—N. Y. Times.

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