

## ODE TO A LEAFLESS TREE IN JUNE.

BY SIR LYTTON BULWER.

Desolate Tree, why are thy branches bare?  
What hast thou done,  
To win strange winter from the summer air,  
Frost from the sun?

Thou wert not churlish, in thy palmier year,  
Unto the herd;  
Tenderly gav'st thou shelter to the deer,  
Home to the bird.

And ever, once, the earliest of the grove,  
Thy smiles were gay;  
Opening thy blossoms with the haste of love  
To the young May.

Then did the bees, and all the insect wings,  
Around thee gleam;  
Peaster and darling of the gilded things  
That dwell in th' beam.

Thy liberal course, poor prodigal, is sped,  
How lonely now!  
How bird and bee, late parasites, have fled  
Thy leafless bough!

Tell me, sad tree, why are thy branches bare?  
What hast thou done,  
To win strange winter from the summer air,  
Frost from the sun?

"Never," replied that forest-hermit, lone,  
(Old truth and endless!)  
"Never for evil done, but for one frown,  
Are we left friendless."

"Yet wholly, nor for winter, nor for storm,  
Doth Love depart:  
We are not all forsaken, till the worm  
Creeps to the heart!"

"Ah! nought without--within thee, if decay--  
Can heal or hurt thee!  
Nor boots it, if thy heart itself betray,  
Who may desert thee!"

Book of Beauty for 1839.

## JUVENILE TALES.

## MARIA HOWE;

## OR THE EFFECT OF WITCH STORIES.

I was brought up in the country. From my infancy I was always a weak and tender-spirited girl, subject to fears and depressions. My parents, and particularly my mother, were of a very different disposition. They were what is usually called gay: they loved pleasure, and parties, and visiting; but, as they found the turn of my mind to be quite opposite, they gave themselves little trouble about me—but upon such occasions generally left me to my choice, which was much oftener to stay at home, and indulge myself in my solitude, than to join in their rambling visits. I was always fond of being alone, yet always in a manner afraid. There was a book closet which led into my mother's dressing-room. Here I was eternally fond of being shut up by myself, to take down whatever volumes I pleased, and pore upon them, no matter whether they were fit for my years or no, or whether I understood them. Here, when the weather would not permit my going into the dark walk—*my walk*, as it was called—in the garden; here, when my parents have been from home, I have stayed for hours together, till the loneliness which pleased me so at first, has at length become quite frightful, and I have rushed out of the closet into the inhabited parts of the house, and sought refuge in the lap of some one of the female servants, or of my aunt, who would say, seeing me look pale, that Maria had been frightening herself with some of those *nasty books*. So she used to call my favourite volumes, which I would not have parted with, no, not with one of the least of them, if I had had the choice to be made a fine princess, and to govern the world. But my aunt was no reader. She used to excuse herself, and say, that reading hurt her eyes. I have been naughty enough to think that this was only an excuse; for I found that my aunt's weak eyes did not prevent her from poring ten hours a day upon her prayer-book, or her favourite Thomas a Kempis. But this was always her excuse for not reading any of the books I recommended. My aunt was my father's sister. She had never been married. My father was a good deal older than my mother, and my aunt was ten years older than my father. As I was often left at home with her, and as my serious disposition so well agreed with hers, an intimacy grew up between the old lady and me, and she would often say, that she loved only one person in the world, and that was me. Not that she and my parents were on very bad terms; but the old lady did not feel herself respected enough. The attention and fondness which she showed to me, conscious as I was that I was almost the only being she felt any thing like fondness to, made me love her, as it was natural: indeed, I am ashamed to say, that I fear I almost loved her better than both my parents put together. But there was an oddness, a silence about my aunt, which was never interrupted but by her occasional expressions of love to me, that

made me stand in fear of her. An odd look from under her spectacles, would sometimes scare me away, when I had been peering up in her face to make her kiss me. Then, she had a way of muttering to herself, which, though it was good words and religious words that she was mumbling, somehow I did not like. My weak spirits, and the fears I was always subject to, always made me afraid of any personal singularity or oddness in any one. I am ashamed, ladies, to lay open so many particulars of our family; but indeed it is necessary to the understanding of what I am going to tell you, of a very great weakness, if not wickedness, which I was guilty of towards my aunt. But I must return to my studies, and tell you what books I found in the closet, and what reading I chiefly admired. There was a great Book of Martyrs, in which I used to read, or rather I used to spell out meanings; for I was too ignorant to make out many words: but there it was written all about those good men who choose to be burned alive, rather than forsake their religion, and become naughty papists. Some words I could make out, some I could not: but I made out enough to fill my little head with vanity, and I used to think I was so courageous I could be burned, too—and I would put my hands upon the flames which were pictured in the pretty pictures which the book had, and feel them; but you know, ladies, there is a great difference between the flames in a picture, and real fire, and I am now ashamed of the conceit which I had of my own courage, and think how poor a martyr I should have made in those days. Then there was a book not so big; but it had pictures in. It was called Culpepper's Herbal: it was full of pictures of plants and herbs—but I did not much care for that. Then there was Salmon's Modern History, out of which I picked a good deal. It had pictures of Chinese gods, and the great hooded serpent, which ran strangely in my fancy. There were some law books, too; but the old English frightened me from reading them. But above all, what I relished, was Stackhouse's History of the Bible, where there was the picture of the ark, and all the beasts getting into it. This delighted me, because it puzzled me; and many an aching head have I got with poring into it, and contriving how it might be built, with such and such rooms to hold all the world, if there should be another flood, and sometimes settling what pretty beasts should be saved, and what should not—for I would have no ugly or deformed beast in my pretty ark. But this was only a piece of folly and vanity, that a little reflection might cure me of. Foolish girl that I was! to suppose that any creature is really ugly, that has all its limbs contrived with heavenly wisdom, and was doubtless formed to some beautiful end, though a child cannot comprehend it. Doubtless, a frog or a toad is not uglier in itself than a squirrel or a pretty green lizard; but we want understanding to see it.

These fancies, ladies, were not so very foolish or naughty, perhaps—but they may be forgiven in a child of six years old: but what I am going to tell, I shall be ashamed of, and repent, I hope, as long as I live. It will teach me not to form rash judgments. Besides the picture of the ark, and many others which I have forgot, Stackhouse contained one picture which made more impression upon my childish understanding than all the rest. It was the picture of the raising up of Samuel, which I used to call the Witch of Endor picture. I was always very fond of picking up stories about witches. There was a book called Glanvil on Witches, which used to lie about in this closet; it was thumbed about, and showed it had been much read in former times. This was my treasure. Here I used to pick out the strangest stories. My not being able to read them very well, probably made them appear more strange and out of the way to me. But I could collect enough to understand that witches were old women who gave themselves up to do mischief—how, by the help of spirits as bad as themselves, they lamed cattle, and made the corn not grow; and how they made images of wax to stand for people that had done them any injury; and how they burned the images before a slow fire, and stuck pins in them; and the persons which these waxen images represented, however far distant, felt all the pains and torments in good earnest, which were inflicted in show upon these images; and such a horror I had of these wicked witches, that though I am now better instructed, and look upon all these stories as mere idle tales, and invented to fill people's heads with nonsense, yet I cannot recall to mind the horrors which I then felt, without shuddering, and feeling something of the old fit return.

This foolish book of witch stories had no pictures in it, but I made up for them out of my own fancy, and out of the great picture of the raising up of Samuel, in Stackhouse. I was not old enough to understand the difference there was between these silly improbable tales, which imputed such powers to poor old women, who are the most helpless things in the creation, and the narrative in the Bible, which does not say that the witch, or pretended witch, raised up the dead body of Samuel by her own power, but, as it clearly appears, he was permitted by the divine will to appear, to confound the presumption of Saul; and that the witch herself was really as much frightened and confounded at the miracle as Saul himself, not expecting a real appearance; but probably having prepared some juggling, slight-of-hand tricks, and sham appearance, to deceive the eyes of Saul: whereas, she, nor any one living, had ever the power to raise the dead to life, but only He who made them from the first. These reasons I might have read in Stackhouse itself, if I had been old enough, and have read

them in that very book, since I was older, but at that time I looked at little beyond the picture.

These stories of witches so terrified me, that my sleeps were broken, and in my dreams I always had a fancy of a witch being in the room with me. I know now that it was only nervousness; but though I can laugh at it now as well as you, ladies, if you knew what I suffered, you would be thankful that you have had sensible people about you to instruct you and teach you better. I was let grow up wild like an ill weed, and thrived accordingly. One night that I had been terrified in my sleep with my imaginations, I got out of bed and crept softly to the adjoining room. My room was next to where my aunt usually sat when she was alone. Into her room I crept for relief from my fears. The old lady was not yet retired to rest, but was sitting with her eyes half open, half closed—her spectacles tottering upon her nose—her head nodding over her prayer-book—her lips mumbling the words as she read them, or half read them, in her dozing posture—her grotesque appearance—her old-fashioned dress, resembling what I had seen in that fatal picture in Stackhouse: all this, with the dead time of night, as it seemed to me (for I had gone through my first sleep), joined to produce a wicked fancy in me, that the form which I had beheld was not my aunt, but some witch. Her mumbling of her prayers confirmed me in this shocking idea. I had read in Glanvil, of those wicked creatures reading their prayers backwards, and I thought that this was the operation which her lips were at this time employed about. Instead of flying to her friendly lap for that protection which I had so often experienced when I have been weak and timid, I shrunk back terrified and bewildered to my bed, where I lay in broken sleeps and miserable fancies, till the morning, which I had so much reason to wish for, came. My fancies a little wore away with the light; but an impression was fixed, which could not for a long time be done away. In the day-time, when my father and mother were about the house, when I saw them familiarly speak to my aunt, my fears all vanished; and when the good creature has taken me upon her knees, and shown me any kindness more than ordinary, at such times I have melted into tears, and longed to tell her what naughty foolish fancies I had had of her. But when night returned, that figure which I had seen recurred—the posture, the half-closed eyes, the mumbling and muttering which I had heard—a confusion was in my head, *who* it was I had seen that night: it was my aunt, and it was not my aunt. It was that good creature who loved me above all the world, engaged at her good task of devotions—perhaps praying for some good to me. Again, it was a witch—a creature hateful to God and man, reading backwards the good prayers; who would perhaps destroy me. In these conflicts of mind, I passed several weeks; till, by a revolution in my fate, I was removed to the house of a female relation of my mother's, in a distant part of the country, who had come on a visit to our house, and observing my lonely ways, and apprehensive of the ill effect of my mode of living, upon my health, begged leave to take me home to her house, to reside for a short time. I went, with some reluctance at leaving my closet, my dark walk, and even my aunt, who had been such a source of both love and terror to me. But I went, and soon found the grand effects of a change of scene. Instead of melancholy closets, and lonely avenues of trees, I saw lightsome rooms and cheerful faces: I had companions of my own age. No books were allowed me but what were rational and sprightly—that gave me mirth or gave me instruction. I soon learned to laugh at witch stories; and when I returned, after three or four months' absence, to our own house, my good aunt appeared to me in the same light in which I had viewed her from my infancy, before that foolish fancy possessed me, or rather, I should say, more kind, more fond, more loving than before. It is impossible to say how much good that lady, the kind relation of my mother's that I spoke of, did to me by changing the scene. Quite a new turn of ideas was given to me: I became sociable and companionable; my parents soon discovered a change in me, and I have found a similar alteration in them. They have been plainly more fond of me since that change, as from that time I learned to conform myself more to their way of living. I impute almost all that I had to complain of in their neglect, to my having been a little, unsociable, uncompanionable mortal. I lived in this manner for a year or two—passing my time between our house and the lady's, who so kindly took me in hand, until by her advice I was sent to this school, where I have told you, ladies, what, for fear of ridicule, I never ventured to tell any person besides, the story of my foolish and naughty fancy.

**PUNISHMENT BY DEATH IN AUSTRIA.**—During the time that Ferdinand has been on the throne of his ancestors, the blood of not one of his millions of Austrian subjects have flowed upon the scaffold. One man was condemned to death for murder, in the second year after his accession; but his heart revolted against the barbarous punishment which the law still retains for that offence and he commuted the sentence to imprisonment for life—a punishment equally coercive with death, but which gives the offender opportunity and inducement to repentance; and does not destroy in the minds of the people the salutary notion of the sacredness of life which princes and legislators should ever cultivate and guard.