

TO AN INFANT.

Sweet babe, I would the power were mine to draw
Aside the dark, impenetrable veil,
Which hides futurity, and gaze with calm,
Prophetic eye upon the path of life,
Ordained by Heaven for thee to tread; observe
Where fate shall kindly strew her sweetest
flowers,
Or, darkly frowning, scatter cruel thorns
To pierce thy tender feet.

Vain, idle wish!

'Twere better far in lowly faith to kneel
Beside thy bed and breathe this heartfelt
prayer
For thee—"Oh! Father, mercifully shield
This tender nestling from the storms of life
Beneath Thine own Almighty wing; endow
His infant soul with Heavenly grace; vouch-
safe
To guide his footsteps when the snares of sin
Are spread for his unwary feet; and when
The angel death shall bid his spirit quit
This mortal clay, receive his ransomed soul
To dwell with Thee in everlasting joy."

THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

IN TERRA DEL FUEGO, SURREY.

How many years is it since we saved up for weeks every penny we could scrape together to buy squibs and crackers for the 5th of November, and also bought a whole pound of powder and turned ourselves into sweeps while powdering charcoal to make a golden rain? Perhaps it is as well not to reckon, but all the same, there were never such fireworks as those made before or since. Of course, that is and was our private opinion, and has nothing to do with Mr. Brock's manufactory, where we are standing this sappy wet day, ready for a tour of inspection to see how fireworks are made.

Most people must know these works almost as well as they know the glorious blazes of color that are produced at the Crystal Palace. They consist of those five-and-twenty lightly built sheds standing in a seven-acre field—wooden sheds, save one, which is of brick; and, while by law the sheds are five-and-twenty yards apart for safety's sake in case of explosion or fire, this one brick building, which we approach with fear and trembling, is fifty yards from its neighbors; and, on the door being opened, we go inside to stand amongst a lot of little barrels, every one of which contains enough gunpowder to blow the building down and scatter us in fragments all over the place.

There is not much to be seen here in this powder magazine; but it is the abode of the gentle—the slave of the firework-maker, for this plain gunpowder is the active principle in many of the glorious *feu de jete* which are here prepared; and knowing as we do its awful power it is with a feeling of calm satisfaction that we see the little kegs disappear behind the closing door, and breathe once more freely the open air untainted with the smell of the "villainous saltpetre."

Passing then from the powder magazine, we crossed to a shed where the other constituents of the fireworks were kept, to see them stored away in open tubs and great jars—curious chemicals, won from nature by the study of many years, and each possessing its peculiar property of giving a tint to burning flame. Here in this tub was a sort of sparkling black powder—antimony—for giving a white light or pale blue; in another tub realgar, a rich orange sulphuret of arsenic; and by its side yellow orpiment, another combination of the deadly poison with sulphur, and, like its relative, useful for making a brilliant pale flame; in the next tanks familiar flower of brimstone or sulphur, and next snowy potash of saltpetre. In these jars are inoffensive-looking salts—this, strontia, which will burn of a ruby red; that, baryta, which will turn a flame emerald green; salts of copper for sapphire blue; cunning preparations one and all, which, when manipulated, have gladdened the eyes of thousands.

In the next shed we see women and girls busy with paper and paste brush, rolling paper pipes or cylinders for rocket, squib, and Roman candle, which when dried are light and hard, and ready for "choking"—that is to have one end closed in. They are of all sizes, from the tiny halfpenny squib to the great blue light which blazes for many minutes. But this is a very simple manufacture, and from here we go to another store, where paper and wood predominate. Ready-made cases, sheaves of rocket sticks, reams of paper, and half shells, like the *papier mâché* imitation of large half oranges with the pulp scooped out. Here, too, are wooden wheels of all kinds, carefully turned, and fitted ready even with an iron pin upon which they are to revolve, but harmless—lifeless one and all, for they are not charged or primed with those loaded cases, whose blue touch-paper, twisted up so neatly, seems to ask a light.

One of the great features of the firework-maker is the star, and this he introduces in nearly every beautiful work of his art; his Roman candle throws up stars, his rocket bursts and scatters stars of many tints, and the *papier mâché* shells which we saw empty are filled with stars, and sent on high from mortars, when they explode, and down falls a rain of the brilliant gems. This being the case, then we go to a

shed where a grimy boy is busy over a tray of composition—a mixture of chemicals in a state of moisture, and this he attacks with a little implement, something like the mould with which a cook will cut out ornaments from paste; but this implement is provided with a piston, and as the boy chokes it with composition, the little piston rod forces the plug out, just a tiny pill-box shaped piece of the hardened compressed material; and the lad, quick at his work, soon fills a tray with these little pellets, which goes with many more to a drying house, where they all stand round the hot-water heated place and grow dry and hard, ready for busy-fingered girls to wrap paper cases round them and paste them to make them firm. And these are stars—latent, glowing gems—that only need to be fired by the meal powder of their shell or rocket to burst forth in jewelled splendor upon the eye.

Going to another shed, we see the dry stars ready for use. Two of the paper shells have been turned into one complete sphere by gluing canvas round the edges; but a round hole is left and into this—according to the size of the shells, which run from three to sixteen inches in diameter,—dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of stars are poured. Then these are primed with powder, and have a cartridge attached ready for firing from a mortar, to burst in air.

So much for the shells, and we go on to the rocket shed, where men are busy with case, rammer, composition, mallet, and spoon. A core of wood is left up the centre of these cases as the composition is placed in, and they are rammed hollow, so that in a finished rocket there is a hole right up the centre of the charge to where, in a chamber at the top, lie a dozen or two of stars ready to light when the rocket has shot up with its trailing stick, burnt out its train of fire, and burst in a glory of many hues.

Again, here are men charging blue-lights, great heavy fireworks, into which the blackened dingy composition powder is driven with great force till it becomes almost solid, and is finished off with a layer of clay, to keep all safe where the priming of meal gunpowder is placed. Similar is the process by which the Roman candle is prepared; but here stars are required, and if we watch the man, he places in first, with a tiny measuring spoon, a charge of gunpowder on which is placed a star, then comes so much burning composition, well rammed down, next more gunpowder—meal powder it is called here when ground fine—another star, more composition, and so on, with red, blue, green, or white stars for variety, till the top of the case is reached, the whole being done by rule and graduated scale of amount of powder, etc., learned only by constant practice.

The firework-maker has his tools. More than once a spoon has been mentioned, but this is not the little implement with which Mrs. Perkins would stir up her tea, but a little circular dipper or measure which holds the exact quantity of the chemicals required—chemicals indeed, for your modern firework-maker is a chemist in a large way, and is ever on the experimental watch for new combinations and shades of color. As to being in a large way, here is a little fact, that at a display a few days since, on the occasion of Mr. Brock's benefit, about three tons of composition of one kind and another were burnt.

It was a busy season at our visit, and a long way on to a hundred employes were at work, for the time was fast approaching when the feast of the renowned Guido Fawkes was to be held, and not only were dealers to be supplied, but orders had to be made up for schools in different parts of the country; for a large and extended business is done here at Nunhead. In fact, if the Sultan of Turkey or the Pasha of Egypt wants what schoolboys call a good flare-up, he sends here, and shells, rockets, and set pieces go out, perhaps under the care of the maker himself, for the delectation of the Osmanli.

There is plenty to be seen though yet, for here are boys filling the immortal squib, looking the while like half of the ten little niggers of the song. Their business, too, was also—imp that they were—that of making blue devils, so called, because they are not blue, but only a larger kind of squib with a glorious bang; and the boys seemed to ram away and ladle in the black, grimy composition with genuine pleasure, previous to these same filled cases going to another or finishing shed, where they are covered with white paper and tipped with blue by deft-fingered maidens, who twist on this blue touch-paper, and then tie it securely on with red twine in a nimble way that the eye can scarcely follow. Before the looker-on could see how it was done a dozen squibs would be knitted on to a piece of string, and put aside to make place for another dozen, and another, till heaps of dozens were lying ready to be borne off to a fresh shed for finishing and packing.

It is to this care in isolating the different processes that the work people owe the immunity they enjoy from accident, though the obliging manager who took us round explained that, in the event of fire, there could be no explosion, only the rapid combustion of the made-up and unfinished fireworks.

But there was the finishing shed yet to be seen, where the tied-up fireworks came; and here were busy men ornamenting the outer cases with colored paper, tying them up in bundles, attaching rockets to sticks, Roman candles to frames, so as to form bouquets; and to every separate firework was fastened a label containing simple instruction for letting off, while to each wheel was also fixed a screw or pin upon which it should revolve. What a pile

of quiescent glories! It was enough to make one feel boyish again, and long for those good old times when it was the height of bravery in one's own estimation to hold a squib in one's hand until it gave its concluding pop, or to bear a squibbing without a murmur. On every side were piled up the neat cylinders and wheels, fascies, and great bundles, though these were but a portion of the finished articles; the manufacturer, for safety's sake, having stores at *Workington*, on the river, where a couple of barges are moored for that purpose. But, all the same, there are rockets here that it must require nerve to fire—great fellows with conical tops that might be used for the Ashantee war if bullets were substituted for the stars, and magnesium lights, and parachutes which they are destined to bear aloft. In fact, with the exception of the charge in the head, size is the only distinction between the rocket of the *feu de jete* and that used in war. The usage is different, though; for while the sightseer's rocket is trained for ascent, that which is to send alarm and destruction into hostile ranks is fired horizontally from a tube.

One peculiar feature here is the manufacture of slow and quick match, which is made by steeping the match in charcoal and petroleum. This is made by the hundred yards, and is used to form communications between the various cases of a set piece, going off with the rapidity of lightning, and acting to the various parts of a firework like an electric telegraph wire, if enclosed in a paper case, but burning slowly in the open air.—*Once a Week.*

A REVELATION FROM THE SEA.

"I may write to you, Alice, mayn't I?"

Alice shook her head. "Better not," she said; "much better not." Still the denial was faint. "But I shall write," said the young man warmly; "it is all the comfort I have. I don't ask you to write to me, but I will write to you, and—"

"He would be angry," said Alice, shaking her head; "no, you really mustn't."

"All right," said the sailor, with a warm sunny smile; "to your sister then—all right. I know you'll go and ask her for a letter sometimes. Good-by, darling—one kiss."

The kiss was given hurriedly and surreptitiously, and the sailor sprang from the landing-stage into a boat that was waiting alongside, and presently the oars were flashing in the sunshine as she made rapidly for a bark lying in the stream. Alice stood and watched the receding boat, watched it till it reached the ship and was hauled up on the davits. Presently the cheery song of the sailors was heard over the water, the clink of the windlass, as they hauled the anchor home. Then she shook out her sails and departed. A shore-boat, however, had put off from the ship at the very last moment, and came slowly against the tide towards the land. It reached the landing-stage, and a wizened elderly man landed and came up the stairs.

"Well, Alice," he said, "well, you've waited a long time for Dicky—good girl, good girl! Now, my birdie, we'll go home to our little cage."

Alice sighed and put her hand in his arm, and they went off, he with a springy shambling gait, meant to be sprightly and juvenile; she with a slow lifeless step that yet kept pace with him.

Richard Toft, the ship-owner, who had just landed, was seventy years old or more, and he had married Alice Graham, who was only nineteen. But then Toft was the richest man in the port of Melford Regis, and everybody said she had done well for herself. There had been some silly love-passages between her and William Black, the son of Widow Black, of Woodbine Cottage, but he was only a mate in one of Richard's ships, and could never have made a home for her, to say nothing of the misery of marrying a sailor, and being a widow, as it were, for four years out of five. Now it wasn't in the course of nature that Dicky Toft should live forever; and then, if she played her cards well, what a happy woman she might be! She would have to play her cards, mind you, for she was a poor girl when she married, and Dicky had kept all his money at his own disposal; but then what fool like an old fool? and a pretty girl, like Alice, ought to be able to wind him round her little finger.

Certainly Mr. Toft was wonderfully proud of his wife, and with good cause, for she was one of the prettiest girls in Melford. To be sure, after her marriage she seemed to fade a little, whilst Dicky seemed to grow young and green again, and responded to all the rallery of which he was the subject as archly and wickedly as any grizzled old monkey on a perch.

Nothing was too good for Alice in Mr. Toft's opinion. He bought her shawls from the Indies, beautiful muslins and silks that would stand on end; he gave her jewels too, and decked her out with chains and trinkets and earrings, till she grew ashamed of her splendor.

By and by, Willie Black came home from a long voyage, and one of the first to welcome him and invite him to his house was Mr. Toft, the ship-owner. He had heard all about this little love affair, but he had such confidence in his wife—she was such a jewel, so devoted to him—he was anxious that his rival should see how completely she had forgotten.

"You brought him yourself," said Alice in her own heart, looking rather hardily at her husband, as he tolled up the steep hill that led to their house, panting and shaking, but refusing to acknowledge that he was tired. "I had

school myself to be content, and with your own hand you shattered all my good resolves."

"Let us stay here for a moment," said Mr. Toft, "and admire this pleasant view. Oh, I'm not tired—no, no—not at all; but see the ship standing out the sea. She's a capital sailer, eh? ah, yes."

Her sails were spread out far in the distance, rosy with the beams of the setting sun, but a chilly mist was creeping up, and presently the glow vanished and the white sails were blotted out, disappearing in the great vague world of mist and sea and shadow.

"Why, what's the matter, Alice?" said Mr. Toft, turning sharply round. "Tears! Ah, well, yes, yes, we know—a little hysterical, eh? Don't excite yourself, dearest. My dear poppets, we will walk home very quietly, and then we will have tea in our little nest."

She followed her lord and master slowly up the hill to their home on Lookout hill; it was a pleasant little villa with a fine garden.

Things went on quietly enough at Lookout villa for another couple of years. Mrs. Toft had not been blessed by children, as Richard had hoped, and the old man was a good deal crest-fallen thereat; still he lived in hope and seemed fonder than ever of his young wife. By and by the rumor went about that he had sent for Lawyer Emlyn to make his will—he had always been very stubborn against making wills; and presently, when Mrs. Emlyn tolled up Lookout hill to visit Mrs. Toft—the Emlyns had never visited before at that house—and some time after invited her to spend a quiet evening in the High street, everybody shrewdly surmised how the will was made, and judged that the property disposed of was not inconsiderable.

Meantime the *Peruvia*, the good ship that had sailed away that fine summer's evening, had been heard of more than once. She had not been spoken, however, later than the last October, when she had left Krachee with the north-east monsoon for the Red Sea, intending to come home by Suez and the Mediterranean. Any day she might return, any day might witness William Black striding up Lookout hill; any one of the white-winged ships that dotted the horizon might be the one ship that heart-sore Alice was secretly longing to see. He had been very good; he had not written to her sister—she had forbidden him to do so, and he had obeyed her; and yet if he knew how she longed to hear he was safe—after all, it was better not.

Mr. Toft was breaking a little, people said. He was no longer as active as he had been only a short year since. He rarely came down into the town now, and when he did it was pitiable to see him toiling back up the hill, making believe that the ascent was not painful to him. He had been used to come each morning to the reading-room; but now he had given that up, and had the *Times* sent up to him on the next day after publication.

One summer evening—her husband had been poorly all day, and Alice had been constantly occupied in attending to him, but now he had gone off to sleep—she put on her things and went down into the town to make a few purchases, intending to spend half an hour with Mrs. Emlyn, to enjoy a gossip with that lively conversable lady.

Down the hill she went, the cool sea-breeze fanning her parched cheeks. The evening was divine, and the sea was stretched before her in long golden swaths, the murmur of it sounding gently in her ears. Ships were stirring, some outward-bound were heaving at their anchors, and the well-remembered sailor's song came softly over the waters: some homeward-bound were making for their anchoring-grounds with full-bellied sails. She strained her eyes, and fancied that now this and now that might be the long-expected *Peruvia*. But no, there would be no doubt then; her heart would tell her at once, "That is William's ship!"

The sun was getting low, and she hastened quickly down the hill. She met sundry townspeople she knew by sight, and nodded to them a good-natured greeting; they turned and looked at her, and watched her down the hill. "How rude people are getting," she thought. "There was a time when these would all have touched their hats to the wife of the ship-owner."

At each shop she visited she noticed something strange about the people. Mr. Meagre, the draper, came out of his little box and stared at her, and Mrs. Meagre's stony visage appeared over the glass door, sternly regarding her. It was the same at the other shops, everybody looked queer.

"Imagination," she told herself. "I feel altogether strange, and I find my own feelings reflected in other people's faces. Here comes Mrs. Emlyn."

Mrs. Emlyn came up to her and looked at her with vacant unrecognizing gaze.

"Mrs. Emlyn," she cried, "how fortunate I am to meet you!"

The lady gathered together her skirts and passed coldly on.

"Oh, what have I done—what is the matter?" cried Alice. She felt faint and giddy; something dreadful had happened. The air grew heavy and thick; all the houses in the red, quaint High street seemed to blink at her; the sky was brassy and dull above her. She was as if in a dream, when the last trumpet seems to sound, and the universe quakes around. But it was nothing; it could be nothing; Mrs. Emlyn was often queer.

But she turned round and made her way home. Her husband was awake and crying for her like a sick child. She could do nothing to-night, but in the morning she would go down