

AN AUTUMN EVENING AT THE SEA-SIDE.

[We are indebted to Mrs. Leprohon's graceful pen for the following beautiful lines. The word-painting is spirited, and one can almost hear, as he reads, the wailing of the night-wind, and the beating of the wild surges of the Atlantic upon the rock-bound shore.]

Darkly falls the autumn twilight, rustles low the crisp
leaf-sere,
Sadly wail the lonely night-winds, sweeping sea-wards
chill and drear,
Sullen dash the restless waters 'gainst a bleak and
rock-bound shore,
Whilst the sea-birds' weird-like voices mingle with
their surging roar.
Vainly seeks the eye a flow'ret 'mid the desolation
drear,
Or a spray of pleasant verdure, the gloomy scene to
cheer;
Nought but frowning crags and boulders, and long
sea-weeds, ghastly dank,
Or mosses and pale lichens that to the rocks cling
rank.
See, the fog clouds thickly rolling o'er the land-cape
far and wide,
Till the tall cliffs look like phantoms seeking mid their
shrouds to hide,
On they come, the misty masses of wreathing vapour
white,
Filling hill and dell and ravine, blotting earth and
heaven from sight.
Silent, mournful, am I standing, gazing from the win-
dow-pane,
Dimmed and blurred with heavy plasches of the fast
descending rain,
Whilst thoughts chiming with the hour my weary
brain pass through,
Till the shadows of the evening on my brow are mir-
rored too.
Rise, alike, uncalled—unbidden, memories of the dis-
tant past,
Of the dreams, the hopes, th' illusions that round
life's sweet sunshine cast,
Whilst the moan of winds and waters, with strange
mysterious art,
Seem to waken drear forebodings within the gaze's
heart.
Ah! it needs yon pleasant taper's enlivening, home-
like ray,
The sound of friendly voices in converse cheerful—gay,
The flash of warm red fire-light on happy faces glad,
To dispel the mournful fancies that make the hour so
sad.
I must turn from this lone musing, wilful nursing of
dark care,
And join the joyous circle of dear ones gathered there,
Who with smiles will greet my advent, and in that
pleasant room,
Shake off the dreary shadows of this scene of autumn
gloom.

MRS. LEPROHON

HALF A MILLION OF MONEY

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY,"
FOR "ALL THE YEAR ROUND," EDITED BY
CHARLES DICKENS.

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How he came to take this step, whether he married the governess for her own sake, or for the child's sake, or to gratify a passing caprice, were facts known only to himself. That he did marry her, and that, having married her, he continued to live precisely the same eccentric, sullen life as before, was all that even his own servants could tell about the matter. The second Lady Holmes visited nowhere, and was visited by none. What she had been as Miss Holme-Pierpoint's governess, she continued to be as Miss Holme-Pierpoint's stepmother. She claimed no authority. She called her husband "my lord," stood in awe of her servants, and yielded to the child's imperious temper just as she had done at the first. The result was, that she remained a cypher in her own house, and was treated as a cypher.

When, by-and-by, she also gave birth to a little daughter, there were no rejoicings; and when, some few years later, she died, and was laid beside her high-born predecessor, there were no lamentations. Had she brought an heir to the house, or had she filled her place in it more bravely, things, perchance, had gone differently. But the world is terribly apt to take people at their own valuation; and Lady Holmes, perplexed

"—with the burden of an honour
Unto which she was not born."

had rated herself according to the dictates of one of the lowliest and most timid hearts that ever beat in a woman's breast.

Thus it was that Lord Holmes became the father of two daughters, and was twice a widower. And thus it was that Captain Holme-Pierpoint of Sowerby escaped first Scylla and then Charybdis, and remained heir presumptive to his cousin's coronet after all.

No two girls ever grew up more unlike each other than the Honourable Miss Holme-Pierpoint. There was a difference of nearly six years in their age to begin with; but this was as nothing when compared with the difference in their appearance, dispositions, and tastes.

The elder was tall, stately, and remarkable from very early girlhood for that singular resemblance to Marie Antoinette, which became so striking in her at a later period in life. The younger, on the contrary, was pretty rather than beautiful, painfully sensitive and shy, and as unpretending as might have been the lowliest peasant girl upon her father's lands. Alethea never forgot that she was noble on both sides; but Elizabeth seemed never to remember that she was noble on either. Alethea was cold and ambitious; but Elizabeth's nature was as clinging and tender as it was unselfish. Elizabeth looked up to Alethea as to the noblest and most perfect of God's creatures; but Alethea, who had never forgiven her father's second marriage, held her half-sister in that kind of modified estimation in which a jeweller might hold a clouded diamond, or a sportsman a half-bred retriever.

Years went by; and as the girls grew to womanhood their unlikeness became more and more apparent. In due time, the Honourable Miss Holme-Pierpoint, being of an age to take her place in society, was presented at court by her aunt, the Countess of Glastonbury, and "brought out" after the sober fashion that prevailed in the days of George the Third. Before the close of that season she was engaged to Harold Wyneclyffe, fourth Earl of Castletowers, and early in the spring-time of the following year, while her young sister was yet in the schoolroom, the beautiful Alethea was married from her aunt's house in Somersetshire, where the ceremony was privately performed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

In the meanwhile, it was arranged that Lord Holmes' younger daughter was to be spared all those difficulties and dangers that beset a matrimonial choice. Her lot was cast for her. She was to marry Captain Holme-Pierpoint of Sowerby.

A more simple and admirable scheme could not have been devised. Captain Holme-Pierpoint was her father's heir, and it was of course desirable that Elizabeth's dowry should remain in the family. Then Elizabeth was very young, young even for her age, and her character needed to be judiciously formed. Captain Holme-Pierpoint was the very man to form a young lady's character. He was a man who got through a great deal of solid reading in the year; who delighted in statistics; who talked pompously—was a strict disciplinarian, and had "views" on the subject of education. In addition to these qualifications, it may be added that Captain Holme-Pierpoint was still handsome, and only forty-eight years of age.

Incredible as it may seem, however, Lord Holmes' second daughter was by no means so happy as she ought to have been in the contemplation of her destiny. Like most very young girls she had already dreamt dreams, and she could not bring herself to accept Captain Holme-Pierpoint as the realisation of that ideal

lover whom her imagination had delighted to picture. Her loving nature sorely needed something to cling to, something to live for, something to worship; but she knew that she could not possibly live for, or cling to, or worship Captain Holme-Pierpoint. Above all, she shrunk from the prospect of having her character formed according to his educational "views."

In order, therefore, to avoid this terrible contingency, the younger Miss Holme-Pierpoint deliberately rejected her destiny, and ran away with her drawing-master.

It was a frightful blow to the pride of the whole Pierpoint family. The Talbots and the Wyneclyffes were of opinion that Lord Holmes was simply reaping what he had sown, and that nothing better was to be expected from the daughter of a nursery governess; but Lord Holmes himself regarded the matter in a very different light. Harsh and eccentric as he was, this old man had really loved his younger child; but now his whole heart hardened towards her, and he swore that he would never see her, or speak to her, or forgive her while he lived. Then, having formally disinherited her, he desired that her name should be mentioned in his presence no more.

As for Lady Castletowers, her resentment was no less bitter. She, too, never saw or spoke to her half-sister again. She did not suffer, it is true, as her father had suffered. Her heart was not wrung like his—probably because she had less heart to be wrung; but her pride was even more deeply outraged. Neither of them made any effort to recal the fugitive. They merely blotted her name from their family records; burned, unread, the letters in which she implored their forgiveness, and behaved in all respects, not as though she were dead, but as though she had never existed.

In the meanwhile, Elizabeth Holme-Pierpoint had fled to Italy with her husband. He was a very young man—a mere student—rich in hope, poor in pocket, and an enthusiast in all that concerned his art. But enthusiasm is as frequently the index of taste as the touch-stone of talent, and Edgar Riviere, with all his exquisite feeling for form and colour, his worship of the antique, and his idolatry of Raffaele, lacked the one great gift that makes poet and painter—he had no creative power. He was a correct draughtsman and a brilliant colourist; but, wanting "the vision and the faculty divine," wanted just all that divides elegant mediocrity from genius. He believed in himself, however, and his wife believed in him; and for years he struggled on, painting ambitious pictures that never sold, and earning a scanty subsistence by copying the Raffaeles he so dearly loved. At last, however, the bitter truth forced itself upon him, and he knew that he had deceived himself with hopes destined never to be realised. But the discovery came too late. Long years of unrequited effort had impaired his health and bowed his spirit within him, and he had no spark left of that high courage which would once have armed him against all "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." He did not long survive the wreck of his ambition. He died in Florence, literally of a broken heart, some fifteen years after his romantic marriage with Elizabeth Holme-Pierpoint, leaving her and one surviving child wholly unprovided for.

Such were the destinies of these half-sisters, and such the family history of which William Trefalden gave Saxon a meagre outline, after his consultation with Abel Keckwitch.

CHAPTER XLVIII. WHAT THEY SAID AT THE CLUB.

"And now, Saxon," said Mr. Trefalden, "I can tell you nothing beyond the fact that Edgar Riviere died in Florence some three or four years since; but I think we need have no difficulty in guessing the parentage and history of your distressed damsel. I imagine that her mother must have been left simply destitute; and in this case, Lady Castletowers would, of course, do something to keep her from starvation. I doubt, however, that her charity went beyond that point."

"But, good Heavens!" exclaimed Saxon, who was now pacing up and down the room in a