

POETRY.

EVENING.

BY THE REV. GEORGE CROLY

When eve is purpling cliff and cave,
The zephyrs of the heart, how soft ye flow!
Not softer on the western wave
The golden lines of sunset glow.

Then all, by chance or fate removed,
Like sparks crowd upon the eye,
The few we liked—the one we loved!
And the whole heart is memory

And life is like a fading flower,
Its beauty dying as we gaze;
Yet as the shadows round us loom,
Heaven pours above a brighter blaze.

When morning sheds its gorgeous dye,
Our hope, our heart, to earth is given,
But dark and lonely is the eye
That turns not at its eve to heaven

THE NEGRO.

AN INCIDENT IN REAL LIFE.

ONE winter evening, when "norland winds were piping" loudly, but harmlessly, around the walls of our old substantial English dwelling, our whole family, consisting of four persons, to wit, my father and mother, my sister and myself, were sitting before a cheerful fire, enjoying the dim delicious hour that intervenes between the night and the day, ere shutters are closed, or candles on the table. On the present occasion, this hour was spun out to an unusual length, and yet not one of us felt inclined to have the lights brought in. My father, who had been much abroad during his life, was peculiarly animated in his narration of the various scenes he had witnessed, and our questions ever and anon stimulated him to some fresh recollection. A pause at last ensued, however; and the close of the twilight enjoyment seemed inevitable, when my sister put a question which prolonged it for a considerable time farther. "What," said she, "was the happiest passage, father, in your life?" "Bless her dear heart! had the candles been flaring upon the table, she would not have put that question. She was then eighteen, and the blissful dream of love was uppermost in her thoughts. But my father's reply had no reference to that subject, as the reader will learn, if he has patience enough to pursue the following story, as it came from the narrator's lips.

"I shall tell you, my children," said our father, "what passage in my life gives me most satisfaction in the retrospect. Soon after your mother had united her fate with mine, I fell into a respectable and profitable business in New York, where, as you are aware, that competency was earned, which now enables me to pass the evening of life in comfort in my native England. The occupation which I followed required my daily presence for some hours in the centre of that city, where I met the parties with whom I had business connections. The time which I generally chose for this purpose was the hottest part of the day, when every one almost is within doors, and there was less chance of missing my object. The streets at this period of the day are often remarkably empty, only a straggler being visible here and there. It was on one of these business visits, that I saw, in a back street, two men, an Irishman and a negro, jostling, or rather struggling with each other. There was no other object in the street to divert my attention, and I therefore, almost involuntarily, kept my eyes fixed on the men. The negro was a powerful, athletic man, and had evidently the better in the struggle, which speedily became a complete wrestle. The Irishman felt his inferiority, and being irritated, raised his arm, and gave his opponent a tre-

mendous blow, which felled him on his knees. The Irishman after this threw himself into a defensive attitude, and on the black raising himself from the ground, blows were rapidly interchanged by the parties. All this passed almost instantaneously, and the issue was equally speedy. The negro struck his adversary on the side of the head with sufficient force to drive him to the ground. The unfortunate Irishman's head came in contact with a stone, and his skull was fractured. Within a few moments after the fall, he was dead!

No one was near enough to witness the course of this affair but myself. A crowd, however, soon collected on the spot, and as the street was chiefly inhabited by the labouring Irish, the assemblage was principally composed of that nation. The injured man was carried into a house to receive medical assistance, and I, losing sight of the negro, proceeded on my way home.

My own affairs occupied so much of my time and attention, that the unhappy incident I had witnessed, passed almost entirely from my mind. A few mornings after it happened, however, I was much shocked to perceive by the news papers that the negro had been committed to prison on a charge of willful murder, several Irishmen having sworn before the coroner that they had seen the black strike the deceased with a stone. To give colour to this assertion, one of them had the audacity to bring forward what the paper called 'the fatal stone.' Horrified at such a villany as this, I instantly formed the resolution of going forward at the trial, and telling the truth, as I had witnessed it. Your mother and my friends attempted in vain to dissuade me, on the ground that I would inevitably incur, by such conduct, the hatred of the lower orders of the Irish, who, disappointed of their victim, might wreak their revenge on me. A sense of duty to the negro and to justice enabled me, thank heaven, to resist these representations, though, reason admitted their feasibility. 'The poor negro is, like myself, in a land of strangers,' said I, 'he is far from the hearth of his infancy, and, perhaps, has not one friend in the world. He is of a persecuted and despised race; and come what may, I am resolved that he shall at least have the advantage of having the truth stated regarding the melancholy accident in which he has been involved.' Recollect, my children, that this was only my duty, and that the peculiar circumstances of the case alone gave my resolve—if indeed it did possess—my merit.

On the morning of the trial I was in attendance at the court-house. On applying for admittance to the grand jury room, I was informed that a true bill had been found against the negro, and that the gentlemen on the jury had given orders for the admission of no more witnesses, being perfectly satisfied with the evidence laid before them. I was not to be put off, however, in this manner, but forced my way, almost in spite of the attending official, into the room, and, after relating the whole of my story to the grand jury, was admitted as an evidence. At the same time, the true bill already found, was held still as the conclusion to which these gentlemen had come, and the poor negro's life was thus left dependent on the effect of my testimony at the trial.

The cause came on. Witness after witness swore to the same facts, until the jury were thoroughly satisfied, and the court impatient to hear the sentence pronounced against a wretch so vile as the black seemed to be. He, poor fellow, seemed more thunderstruck at the deliberate falsehoods uttered, than alarmed at his dangerous predicament. No voice was lifted up in his favour; no eye glanced on him with compassion or sympathy; friendless and hopeless, he sat like a being of an inferior

kind among his fellow men. I was called at length, and gave a plain and full statement of the facts of the case: that I was the only person in the street, besides the deceased and the prisoner, at the time of the occurrence; that I knew neither of the parties: the Irishman struck the negro first, bringing him on his knees with a blow, and causing the blood to gush from his nose; that the black rose, and wiping the blood from his face with his left hand, after a short struggle, with the same hand gave the Irishman a blow on the side of the head, which drove him to the ground, where his head, striking the curbstone, was fatally injured, and that no stone could possibly be in the negro's hand without my observing it.

I feel pleasure, my children, in stating, for the honour of human nature, that a buzz of satisfaction ran through the court-room at the conclusion of my story. My own character and station in life, together with the total absence of interested motives, caused the entire overthrow of the whole of the previous given evidence, and compassion and sympathy for the accused took the place of anger and abhorrence in every breast. * * * The jury, without the slightest hesitation, acquitted the prisoner of the charge of murder, and returned a verdict of manslaughter. He was sentenced to be imprisoned for some months; but this was merely formal, for in a few days he was restored to perfect liberty."

"Did you ever hear of the negro afterwards?" interrupted my sister.

"I never saw him more than two or three times. The first time was about a month after the trial, when, in passing an oyster shop or cellar, a voice called out, 'Massa G——! Massa G——!' I turned and recognised in the owner of the store the unfortunate negro. His gratitude for the service which accident had enabled me to do for him, was written in every line of his countenance. He compelled me to taste a few of his oysters, and anxiously pressed me to inform him of my residence, that he might carry thither his whole stock as a present for me. 'Ah! massa,' said he, 'when me stand at bar without friend, and when me saw respectable gentleman go in box, me think, what? you going to hang me too! But when me heard massa speak true, me thank God for sending one gentleman to speak my cause. De prayer will be answered from de sky which poor nigger speak for massa G——. Me could not help cry de first time many year.' And the tears again ran down his cheeks as he spoke.

"This passage of my life," continued my father, "if not the happiest at the time, is at least one of the most pleasing to look back upon. And this my children, is the best test of all happy passages in life."

"Did you suffer nothing for your behaviour from those wretches of Irishmen?" asked my sister; "those vindictive—" "Hush, Betsy," said my father; "do not vent general reflections, as I fear you are about to do, upon a nation which has shown so many great and good men in the list of her sons, and whose every error has been owing to ignorance, and, it may be, hard usage. Those Irishmen who were connected with the affair I have described, had never enjoyed opportunities of education, and their errors ought not to be assumed as a ground for general reproach to their country. You will I hope, see such things more clearly as you grow older."

Dear little Betsy did see these things more clearly as she grew older, for she is now the happy wife of as good a man as ever lived, and he is an Irishman. Heigho!—her eldest girl, I fear me, will make me, some day soon, a grand uncle!