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## SOULLESS PRAYER.

I do not like to hear him pray,  
On bended knee about an hour,  
For grace to spend aright the day,  
Who knows his neighbor has no flour.

I'd rather see him go to mill  
And buy the luckless brother bread,  
And see his children eat their fill,  
And laugh beneath their humble shed

I do not like to hear him pray,  
"Let blessings on the widow be,"  
Who never seeks her home to say—  
"If want o'ertakes you, come to me."

I hate the prayer so loud and long,  
That's offered for the orphan's weal,  
By him who sees him crushed by wrong,  
And only with the lips doth feel.

I do not like to hear her pray,  
With jeweled ear and silken dress,  
Whose washerwoman toils all day,  
And then is asked to work for less.

Such pious falsehoods I despise!  
The folded hands, the face demure,  
Of those with sanctimonious eyes,  
Who steal the earnings of the poor.

Those sainted faces that they wear  
To Church and for the public eye,  
Hide things that are not on the square,  
And wickedness done on the sly.

I do not like such soulless prayers!  
If wrong, I hope to be forgiven;  
Such prayers no angel upward bears—  
They're lost a million miles from heaven.

## THE WINDMILL ON THE DOWNS.

Two speakers; an old man and a young girl. He bowed down, passive, and enduring, his face, blank, hopeless, and furrowed, more by grief than time. She, upright, defiant, full of energy and vehement action, her countenance alternately fired by indignant protest or softened by sympathetic sorrow. A strong likeness between them notwithstanding the difference of age and complexion, for he, the bleaching of his hair and bronzing of his skin apart, is fair and Saxon-like; she, a brunette, olive-tinted dark-eyed, and with tresses only one shade short of black. They are moving, under a bright September sun, slowly along a strip of garden lying between a cottage and an old windmill, in the management of which, judging by the ample powdering of flour upon their garments, both are concerned.

She says, with the very faintest foreign accent, "I declare to you, father, that if I saw Reuben Straytor with his head upon the block of the guillotine, as I saw that wretched man in Paris of whom I have so often told you, and I had power to stay the falling knife, I declare to you, I say, I would not use it. All the misery you and I are now suffering is his work."

"Naomi! Naomi!" interposes the old man. "Ye'll not better matters by hard words, they be'an't like a Christian; even if ye were sure that you could trace the great hurt that's been done us to Reuben, it be'ant fit to be so revengeful; and as no one knows the rights of it, it's all the worse for you to talk on so. You, too, as would go yards out of your way rather nor tread on a worm!"

"Nobody knows the rights of it father?" she says, interrogatively, and suddenly standing still. "Has not Reuben been hanging about the mill for weeks and weeks, coming to it at all hours, never missing a chance, when one of the farm men could have done the affairs quite as well—coming, in fact, upon the slightest excuse and sometimes even upon none at all? and have you lived these many years in the world, and not seen enough of it to know that when a man does that sort of thing at a house where there is a pretty girl, there is but one conclusion to be drawn? and have not I, although we have never spoken of it to each other seen enough, when Jeanette and he have met, to fully warrant such conclusion?"

"Well," says the old man, "if so be it's Reuben that's done us this hurt, the Lord help us, and have mercy on him; but I cannot think it—I cannot think it; he was a proper good lad always, though spoilt at home."

"What! not think it?" replies Naomi, indignantly, "not think it now? when after these nine mysterious days of absence and total silence, and in spite of all our efforts, not a trace of her is to be found; when we remember that Reuben left the farm the day that Jeanette disappeared, and actually walked into Crewhaven with her, and that he, too, is not to be heard of—can it be possible that you do not see what has happened, and that you still say nobody knows the right of it? To me it's as

clear as yonder sky! Father! Father! I can hardly control myself when I think of it. The villainous coward! to trifle with, and deceive an unsuspecting child like her! a fine gentlemanlike thing to be sure; and he always talking, in his grand manner, about ladies and gentlemen, and their ways and behaviour, and trying to copy them in their voices and looks. Who is he, and who are we, that we are talking of ladies and gentlemen? We are millers here, with this old ramshackle, tumble-down mill for our estate, and he, the son of a Flockshire farmer, whose grandfather, *ma foi*, was at the plough's tail sixty years ago! Pretty pedigrees for ladies and gentlemen, by example! I declare to you again, Father, that if I saw that man dying of thirst at my feet, I would not put out my hand to give him a glass of water; if I saw him walking blindfold toward the edge of Shinglehead Cliff, I would not put out my arm to stop him! *Mon Dieu*, no," she adds, with much gesticulation, as she again moves forward.

The old man puts his arm through hers, endeavoring gently to restrain and quiet her, as he says, "Eh! but it's a mercy you were not born a man, Naomi, for ye'd ha' given the blow first, and the word afterward; and, as to my having lived all these years in the world I'd have said, if they've learned me anything, that Reuben comed here of late to look after my eldest daughter 'stead of my youngest! I never see'd more betwixt him and dear Jeannette than betwixt him and you. I be'an't going to say that you mayn't be right, but Reuben Straytor has many friends, and is off here and there and anywhere betimes, as he likes, neither by your leave, nor with your leave, and they knows no more of him at home than if he was at the poles. You'd be as just if you laid poor Jeanette's going from us at the door of any of those idle, gaping gentle folk visitors as come up sometimes from Crewhaven to look at th' old mill. Anyway, it's a'most broke my heart, and if I don't get tidings of her afore Michaelmas, I shall never see the beginning of another year," and the old man buries his face in his hands.

The mill is reached now, and the girl's angry mood giving place to the tenderer one, she affectionately caresses her father as he entered its quaint old

basement, and the two pass out of an Autumnal sunlight, which, for a brief while, has seemed by its cheerfulness, to mock their misery.

The mill itself? Well! it was as Naomi Gower had said, a ramshackle old building, not such another to be found for miles amid the many abounding upon the crests and ridges of the rolling Flockshire downs. A mill celebrated among artists, and specified by them under the name of one of their craft, who had made good stock-in-trade of it upon his canvasses. A wooden mill, black-brown and richly weather-stained with grey, and green, and yellow, with soft moss and crisp golden lichens peeping out from the little rifts and splits under the shelter of the broad eaves of the roof, and from beneath the floor of its square bluff body, where, poised upon its circular base, it could be turned to face the prevailing wind. The wind, too, had had its share in adapting it for the artist's hue, for, from long blowing against its sturdy front, and broad sweeping, milk-white sails, it had gradually canted it back many degrees out of the perpendicular. Strangers—and there were many who came up to look at it—would think it could not much longer withstand those strong breezes forever lunging at it upon its exposed position, and the creaking and moaning it made, if at work, would lead them to expect its immediate toppling over. Great would be their surprise to hear, if they chanced to speak with its old master, Amos Gower, that it had been like that ever since he was a boy, and that he heard his father say that he too had never remembered it otherwise. It stood but a little back upon the turf from the white, winding chalk road leading up to it; and as the huge sails, whirring and roaring through the air, swept round and round, their ends, in each succeeding descent looking as if they must strike the earth, and only sweeping clear of it by some foot and a half, one hesitated almost to pass it, so wild, inexorable and menacing did it look. It had been said more than once that a barrier should be set up to prevent the unwary from going too near, as a blow from one of those revolving beams would be fatal. But there never had been any accident. Who would ever go too

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