Martyrs.

My child whose soul is like a flame
Within a crystal altar lamp,
Bends o'er an ancient book, its name
Obscured by mildew damp:

And tracing down the yellow leaves,
Where quaint and crooked letters stand,
Her breath comes quick, her bosom heaves,
Hard shuts the eager hand.

"Mammia"—I meet the uplifted eyes
That, softened, shine through gathering tears—
"God surely gives them in the skies,
For all those dreadful years,

Some sweeter things than others have,
To comfort after so much pain;
But, tell me, could we be as brave
Through fire and rack and chain?

"I'm glad there are no martyrs now."
Blithe rings the voice and positive.
"Ah, love," my own heart answers low,
"The martyrs ever live.

"A royal line, in silk and lace,
Or robed in serge and hodden-gray,
With fearless step and steadfast face
They tread the common way.

"Than dungeon bolt or folding blaze
Their cross unseen may heavier press,
And none suspect, through smiling days,
Their utmost bitterness."

"Some sweet thing surely God must keep
To comfort," said my little one;
"They thank Him now if tender sleep
Come when the day is done."

God's angel Sleep, with manifold
Soft touches, smoothing brows of care,
Dwells not beyond the gates of gold,
Because no night is there.

—MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

Selected Serial.

SHILOH:
OR WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

BY W. M. L. JAY.

CHAPTER XXXII.—Continued.

"The source from whence it was drawn is still accessible," I observed quietly. "But what was your conception of the Daughter of Wisdom?"

"I scarce remember what it was; I can give you an idea of what it is. I see her springing swiftly forth to meet the Bridegroom; her newly-kindled lamp in her hand, throwing a strong light upon her pure, noble features, which are still further illuminated from within by joyous anticipation; she looks straight before her, with an eager intent gaze, as if already catching sight of the Bridegroom, in the distance, while her whole soul goes out to meet him; yet, with a tender, unfailing charity, she touches her sleeping sister as she passes her by, loth to go without a last attempt to waken and warn her. Her face is so full of earnest impulse, and her figure of airy motion, that she seems actually stepping forth from the canvas—ah! if I could only fasten her upon it!"

"You will do it some day," said I, "for the conception is too beautiful to be lost."

Then, he set before us a female head, saying simply, "The Call."

It was not needed. The fair, listening face, slightly raised—the eyes, gazing intently in the direction of the voice just heard, and recognized—told their own story; and told it so well that we looked and listened, too

The next was also a head—"Repose." I had not looked at it many moments, when, with the fine, quick insight which belongs to the true artist, he laid it aside, saying—

"You do not care for it, I see; yet artists rate it higher than the other, they account it a tolerable success in the department of colour."

"I do not care for colour unless there is a soul—a significance—under it,"—returned I, with more frankness than courtesy.

Mr. Cambur turned a surprised face upon me, and his eyes lit. "Not care for colour?" he exclaimed—"why, it is the darling child of light, the very crown and glory of the material universe. To be consistent, he who does not care for colour should not care for light, since, as colour without light is impossible, so light without colour would be unendurable. Colour is to the eye what tone is to the ear—capable, in its combinations, of the most varied and exquisite harmony. Colour is the most vivid of all the ideas that make up my conception of heaven. It is never the form of the holy city—the new Jerusalem, descending from God—which enraptures my imagination, but it is ineffable, entrancing glory and magnificence of colour—the yellow gleam of its golden streets, the fadeless green of its tree of life, the dazzling whiteness of its gates of pearl, the myriad changeful hues of its walls of precious stones—jasper, sapphire, jacinth, amethyst, and all the shining gems between, lit by the glory of God, and radiating colours too gorgeous for mortal vision. What endless joy for the eye is stored up in that splendour and opulence of colour! Take it away from the inspired description, and see how much of the charm is fled."

"True," said I; "but what if the colour were only a thin crust of paint?"

He stared, uncomprehending. He had entirely lost sight of the point where the discussion began. Recollecting himself, after a moment, he said, with a good-humored laugh—

"Upon my word, I had quite forgotten that unlucky picture of mine; do not set down my rhapsody for a tilt in its defence. I am not such a fool as to attempt to argue with the feeling stirred by my pictures, be it indifference or dislike. Artists, as well as authors, must take such measure of appreciation as is vouchsafed them, and be thankful. Inappreciation—" He hesitated.

"They can attribute to ignorance," said I, laughingly finishing the sentence.

"No—not always; oftener it is the offspring of a lack of sympathy with their mood or intent. The worst of it is, the critic himself seldom recognizes it for that; instead of saying, 'This picture does not suit me,' he pronounces, 'It is good for nothing.' The first he has an undoubted right to say, anywhere, of anything; the last he should be careful of saying unless he is reasonably certain that his disapprobation has its deep foundation in the immutable laws of life and art, and not in mere individual taste. But here is something, Miss Frost, which perhaps will please you better."

He held up a pencil-sketch, the first rough jotting-down of his ideas for a picture of Faith and Guidance. It represented a young girl walking meekly along a narrow path, lit, for a few footsteps in advance, by the small, bright flame of a lamp in her hand; beside her, but unseen, a watchful, protecting angel walked, too, whose white wing, pointing upward into the sky, cast a deep shadow across her brow and eyes.

The artist gave the sweet key-note of the sketch, by saying, quietly, "I suspect that many of our trials are but the shadows of angels' wings."

My eyes filled with sudden tears. If we could always think that, how much easier to bear the trial!

This sketch interested me most of all, partly on account of the beauty and pathos of the subject, and partly because it still glowed with the fire of inspiration, bringing the spectator closer to the heart and imagination of the artist than the picture to be elaborated from it could ever do; for this was genius in its first fervent heat, its swift moment of its effervescence—unadulterated by any colder or staler mood, full of the animating power of a single, earnest thought. It affected me so deeply that I turned away, not caring to see anything more. Here was the Gospel—the good word—for which I had come hither. Leaving Mr. Cambur explaining another sketch to Ruth, I walked away toward the window.

But, as I went, my skirt caught on one of the unframed canvases standing against the wall and threw it down, face upward. I stooped to pick it up, and involuntarily my gaze fastened upon it.

It was an exquisitely lovely female head, the features pure and delicate, the colouring rich and soft; but its chief charm was in the expression of the face—an earnest looking forth, blended with something of solitude, something of hope, something of submissiveness, all held together in that fine equilibrium so essential to a work of high art.

"This is the best thing I have seen yet," said I.—"What do you call it?"

"It is called—" the artist hesitated long, and the word seemed to be drawn forth, by Truth, from some exceeding deep well, where it would fain have hidden itself—"Waiting!"

"For what is she waiting?" I asked, after a pause.

"For whatever you please," returned he, smiling. "I have long since learned that the interpretation of my pictures varies with the eyes and the moods that look upon them. They never tell exactly the same story to any two persons—the details differ, if the substance is identical."

I continued to survey the picture attentively. Suddenly the mystic cord of association stirred within me. "Waiting!" I exclaimed, giving Mr. Cambur a surprised look—why that was the subject of Harry Archum's last picture—the one which has been so favourably—" I stopped, confounded. I had just discovered the initials, "H. B. A." painted artist-wise in one corner of the canvas.

"Yes, replied Mr. Cambur, in a slightly constrained tone, "this is a copy of that; he painted it for me."

Involuntarily I glanced at "The Call," and was at once struck by the great similarity of style and treatment in the two pictures. Impossible to believe that they had not been conceived in the same imagination, and executed by the same hand. The first breathing of an odd suspicion went through my mind. He coloured; his quick perception detected it at once.

Ruth, less interested in the "Waiting!" had gone back to the "Foolish Virgin," and was studying her attentively. The artist drew near to me.

"Can you keep a secret?" he asked, in a low voice.

"I can keep my own secrets," I answered, lightly, "and I recommend others to do the same, except where intimate friendship warrants or enjoins their disclosure."

He drew himself up. "You wish me to understand that you are not my friend," said he.

"Well, perhaps not—in the closer and truer sense, that is—not enough your friend to have any good claim upon your confidence; yet too much your friend to listen to any forced, unpremeditated revelation, of which you might repent to-morrow."

"Pardon me, but it was not so much confidence as explanation that I was about to offer you."

"Believe me when I say that I do not need it. Knowing that you are Henry Archum, and remembering how highly my father thought of you I am satisfied that your motives for your present incognito are good, or, at least, innocent."

He looked down on me, gravely smiling. "Trust without friendship!" said he musingly—"well, it is better than friendship without trust."

"Friendship, Mr. Cambur, is generally of slow growth; trust is often intuitive, and springs up in a moment."

"In some cases, friendship is partially the offspring of the will," he replied. "Miss Frost, just now you alluded to your father. You do not know how strongly I was attached to him, nor with what good reason; he it was who—when I sank down, bewildered, speechless before the mighty tide of art that swept over me on my arrival in Rome, crushed with the sense of my own littleness and feebleness, and wondering that I had ever dared to call myself an artist—he it was who lifted me up and gave me new hope and confidence; he first spoke to me words of kindly, intelligent, discriminating praise. I vowed to myself that I never would forget it, and I never have forgotten it. It so happened that I was in Florence at the time of his death, or I should have keen at your side, caring for him as a son, for you as a brother. He went so suddenly, at last!—I did not even know that he was gone, until you had left Italy. I returned to Rome, to find only a vacant place, where I had always before found ready sympathy, wise counsel, seasonable encouragement, a cordial welcome. And for his sake, you see, do you not, that I must needs be his daughter's friend, whether she will be mine, or no; my willing service, my faithful regard are always at her disposal; whenever she needs them, she has but to reach out her hand, and take them up—they will be ready for her."

My eyes were fast filling with tears. Seeing them just ready to fall, he gave my hand a gentle, sympathizing pressure, and, with instinctive delicacy, went to join Ruth.

As for me, I sat down and settled accounts with my pride; for it was that which had repelled the artist's confidence; it had haughtily declined to listen to any confidential communication from Harry Archum which was not spontaneous, but merely forced out by circumstances. In return, he had heaped coals of forbearance and generosity on its head. I need not say that I found no balance in it favour!

In a few moments, Ruth came toward me, with an appealing look.

"Mr. Cambur asks if I am ready to sit," said she. "You: you come?"

The necessary arrangements were quickly made, and the sitting began.

For a time I sat and watched the twain. They made a pleasing picture, in the artfully arranged lights and shadows of the studio—the absorbed and delighted artist, standing at his easel; the beautiful sitter, blushing beneath his intent gaze. I wondered if the opening chapter of a pleasant little romance might not be shaping itself before my eyes. What more could an artist need—or ask—than to have that surpassingly lovely face always at his side, for inspiration, model, comfort, blessing?

Then, as Ruth grew to be more at ease in her position, and began to respond to the artist's efforts to engage her in conversation, I went and sat down before the "Waiting," letting it sink into my heart. Ah, Francesca! if I could but look forward to my future in just the spirit which softens and beautifies that face!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE UNOPENED LETTER.

During the few weeks past some of the hitherto disconnected threads of this narrative have become curiously entangled. It is typical, perhaps, of the way in which lives and characters, apparently the most remote, will be found to have been intimate in relation and reciprocal in influence, when the day of knowing as we are known shall enlighten our souls.

To make you understand it all, I must go back to a certain morning near the end of August. What a morning it was! There had been a shower in the night, and the earth—still fair with undimmed summer greenness and glory—seemed as dantily fresh and sweet as a newly-washed babe. The sight stirred Mrs. Prescott's instincts of neatness into renewed activity. Soon after breakfast, I heard her energetic footsteps overhead in the garret, mingled with enlivening sounds of brushing and scrubbing; and the staircase was quickly monopolized by a procession of brooms, dustpans, mops, pails of water, &c., of which Alice acted as the unwilling minister. A little later, I heard the busy household reformer's voice projected from the garret window toward Mrs. Divine at the well-curb.

"You have no idea, mother, how nasty this garret is! I shouldn't suppose it had had a thorough cleaning out since the year One. The dust is half an inch thick under the eaves, and there's cobwebs enough hanging from the rafters to make a carpet for the floor, if 'twas all spun and wove!"

"Um!" returned Mrs. Divine, in a tone to indicate that her mind was busy with some other subject, and declined to quit it for the consideration of the one thus brought to her notice.

"For my part," pursued Mrs. Prescott, seeing that no further response was to be hoped for, and with a slight accession of sharpness in her tone, "if there's anything I like, it's to be clean—I can't abide nastiness—I don't mean to wallow in the dirt til I'm buried in it; and that's the worst thing about being buried; to my mind, I'd rather be burnt up or dissolved in a barrel of aqua fortis."

"Priscilla," remarked Mrs. Divine, mildly, yet not without a certain decision in her tone, "the garret's clean enough for my purpose, just as 'tis; if it ain't for yours, you've got the privilege of scrubbing it till its suited to your mind; but don't expect me to bother about it—I've got my soap to attend to, which you use up faster than I can make it. I reckon dirt is only one o' the miseries that Eve brought on us by eating the apple, and I dont mean to spend all my strength in fighting that, so I shan't have any to bring to bear on the rest. When the earth gets too filthy for decent folks to live in, perhaps the Lord'll be good enough to send another deluge, and give it a good washing out."

"He's more likely to send a fire," rejoined Mrs. Prescott, grimly—"and that reminds me, there's the greatest lot of old, useless trumpery up here that was ever got together; if I had my way, I'd make a bonfire of it; I can't think what your saving it all for! Do let me clear some of it out!"

Mrs Divine quickly let go the dripping bucket, and mounted the stairs, in terror for the safety of her accumulations. Some of that "trumpery," doubtless, was very closely entwined with her heart-strings. Time, while making it vulgar, dingy, cherished and ridiculous to others, had apotheosized it to her sight; moreover, it was better than a chronological table of her life.

At the foot of the garret stairs she stopped, as if struck by a sudden thought, and called out to me—"Miss Frost, if you've a mind to step up garret a minute, I guess I can show you something that'll interest you. There's a whole secretary full of curiosities up there that brother Horace brought home from sea."

The secretary proved to be a time-battered combination of desk and bureau, such as was in vogue a century ago, minus two claw-feet, half the brass rings that did the duty of modern knobs, and the lid which had been convertible into a writing-table. The top was composed of the oddest little drawers and pigeon-holes, enough, it would seem, hopelessly to confuse the memory of whoever sought to make use of them—even a ghostly owner (and it must have had more than one) would need all his spiritual attributes to discover in which of them he had deposited his mortal secrets. Altogether, it looked just fit to be the repository of the curious medley stored within it—shells, corals, uncut gems, coins, medals, buckles, amulets, seeds, weapons, African fetishes, and whatever of rare or curious the deceased captain (who appears to have had a very pretty taste in such matters) had been able to pick up during his lifelong employment, in one capacity or another, in the merchant service. Many an odd or obsolete knick-knack, for which a virtuoso would give half his fortune, was here hidden, and likely to remain so till the dry-rotted rafters overhead should fall and bury them in their ruins.

I was vainly trying to pick out and comprehend the curiously recondite stitch of a piece of Fejecan embroidery while listening to Mrs. Divine's animated rendition of an odd legend attached to it, when she broke off abruptly, and uttered an exclamation that instantly drew my attention. She was holding a letter up to the light—a large, thick letter, written on a sheet of extraordinay size, and folded and sealed as was customary before envelopes came into use. The paper was yellow as parchment, and the seal was unbroken.

"If that don't beat all!" she cried. Here I've found a letter stuck fast in the crack between the back and bottom of that drawer, and the direction is in Horace's handwriting, and it's never been opened! And he died fifteen years ago, last spring! Can you make out that direction, Miss Frost? My spectacles don't seem to see quite so well as they used to."

I took the letter, and read, "Frederick Thorne, Esq., No 49,——Street, New Orleans."

"Why that's stranger yet!" exclaimed she, staring at me in great amaze. "That must be Mrs. Thorne's husband, who died eight or ten years ago, at least, and I never heard Horace mention his name, and didn't suppose he knew him! A letter from a dead man to a dead man, and the seal never broke—it's not quite comfortable!" And Mrs. Divine looked around as if she half-expected one or the other of the interested parties to gather up his bones and his ashes, and whatever shadowy habiliments came to hand, and come forth from the dimmest corner of the garret to claim his forgotten property.

"What's the use of wasting so much time on the outside?" demanded Mrs. Prescott, impatiently. "Open it, and see what is in it."

Mrs. Divine looked at her meditatively. "I don't feel certain I've got any right to do that," she answered slowly; "I reckon Mrs. Thorne or Rick's got the best right to open Mr. Thorne's letters."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Prescott—"when the person the letter is written to is dead it's always sent back to the writer."

"When he's alive," returned Mrs. Divine; "but, you see, Horace ain't; and it's beat into my mind, somehow, that he never wrote to Mr. Thorne, except on Mr. Thorne's own business; and I don't feel no call to pry into that man's affairs, dead or alive."

Mrs. Prescott launched another suggestion. "Most likely Horace concluded not to send it, after 'twas written.

Mrs. Divine gave it a momentary consideration, and shook her head. "If he had, he would have destroyed it. No, no, Priscilla—either he thought 'twas sent, or he was taken away before he had a chance to send it. You remember he died on a return voyage, within sight of port."

The matter was finally referred to Uncle True. Having turned the letter over and over, spelled out its address, weighed it on his palm, and balanced it on his forefinger, the wood-pile philosopher decided thus:—

"If a man's doin's died with him, and was buried five foot under ground, so he is—the best thing to do with such a letter as this 'ud be to put it right inter the middle of a good, hot fire, and kick t'other way while the ashes was agoin' up chimney. But we're all links in a chain, and it don't do to let go of one on 'em till its hitched on to another; a man's papers gen'rally does that; there's one chance to nine that this letter was meant to do suthing o' that sort; and we mustn't send that chance a scurryin' up chimney in smoke. Put on your bonnet, Hannah, and go up to Mis' Thorne, and you and she open the letter together."

Mrs. Divine looked aghast. "Land sakes! I can't do any such thing! I'm right in the thick of soap-making."

"Wall, send Priscilly, then."

It was Mrs. Prescott's turn to demur.

"What! and leave all that muss on the stairs and up garret! Not for forty letters! I shan't stop and dress up till I'm through, and that won't be before night; besides, I don't know Mrs. Thorne, and I don't want to."

Mrs. Prescott, be it understood, is not one wit-less fastidious about her acquaintance, in her own way, than Mrs. Thorne herself.

There was a moment of perplexed silence. Curious as the party undeniably were, their curiosity was not to be gratified at the expense of personal integrity, nor of household order.

"Well," said Mrs. Divine at last, "it must wait till to-morrow then." And she turned slowly away.

Uncle True looked dissatisfied, and scratched his head reflectively. "It strikes me that a letter that has waited fifteen year to be opened, has waited about long enough," said he. "News and peaches often spile by keepin' just a little too long. I'd go up thar myself, only my old chair ain't able to travel quite so fur. Perhaps Miss Frost 'ull do it, now; she's allers obligin.' Besides, she knows Mis' Thorne. She'd do up the bus'ness right, and bring us hum a full report."

And as this plan seemed best to satisfy the homely uprightness of the parties—leaving a way open for the speedy gratification of curiosity, or interest, without interfering with the day's labors—it was decided upon.

To be Continued.

—She stood beside the counter,
The day he'll ne'er forget;
She thought the muslin dearer
Than any she'd seen yet;
He watched her playful fingers
The silk and satin toss,
The shopman looked uneasy,
And felt a little cross.

"Show me some velvet ribbon,
Barege and satin pure."
She said, "I want to purchase!"
Then gave the goods a jerk.
The shopman, all obedience—
Brought satins, silks and crape;
At length, with hesitation,
She bought a yard of tape!

—"Have you," asked the Judge of a recently-convicted man, "anything to offer the court before sentence is passed?" "No, your honor," replied the prisoner, "my lawyer took my last cent."

—A little boy, whose parents are always moving from one house to another, was asked recently by the Sunday-school teacher, "Why did the Israelites move out of Egypt?" and promptly replied, "Because they couldn't pay the rent."

—A story is told of an old lady who refused to be comforted by her pastor's assurance that when he left she would have a better pastor as successor. "Na, na," she said, "I have seen fourteen changes in the ministers since I attended the kirk, and every one had been waur than anither."

—The ludicrous side of the drink question was well shown by a Queenland magistrate, mentioned in "Advance Australia," a book by the Hon. Harold Finch-Hatton, reviewed in the *Temperance Record* (June 18). The magistrate, who was drunk, had not heard half the evidence in a trifling case before him, when he put on his old hat in imitation of a judge's black cap and said, "Take 'im out and hang him." The policeman tried repeatedly to explain, but in vain. "'Ear what I say? Take 'im out and 'ang him.' The policeman removed the prisoner, and returned. "Taken 'im away and 'ung him?" "Yes, your worship." "All right. I 'shmiss the case."

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