

CHOICE LITERATURE.

THE BORDER LAND.

In fleshy weakness abed I lie,
And through the casement catch the gentle swing
Of emerald boughs against the sapphire sky,
And list the sweet wild birds their vespers sing

I have no wish but my tired soul to lay
Upon the bosom of the Good and Great;
To fold my hands in meek content and say,
"Well if Thou bid'st to come, well if to wait."

One word, "Forgive," embraces all past years;
With praise for present gifts my heart runs o'er,
While through the mist of silent, tranquil tears
Gleams the far vision of a golden door

Stands it ajar for me this summer night?
To greet me there are my lost angels met;
Am I so soon to share their pure delight?
Hark! a soft voice responsive saith, "Not yet"

Go back once more a simple child to school—
The world's wide battle school of toil and heat;
Follow no law but Christ's most loving rule,
And bring each day new trophies to His feet:

Some selfish aim subdued, dark passion slain,
Some sweet forgiveness of a bitter wrong,
Some tender solace of a brother's pain,
Some sorrow bravely borne in duty strong.

And aye the more you wrestle on to know,
And knowing, walk the path the Master trod,
Your all of hope in lowlier homage throw
Upon the mercy of the perfect God.

Ah, yes! When sickness unto death goes by,
The border land should be a holy place—
A glorious mount of pause 'twixt earth and sky,
Whose finer airs give souls a deeper grace.

So be it mine henceforth in chastened mood
To wear my lengthened years, forgetting never
The Pisgah height where I this night have stood,
And glimpsed afar the home beyond the river!

—Good Words.

FROM THE WAYSIDE.

It was Dr. Silas Walsh who sat one day in his office reading a very interesting book. It was part of his business, this reading, for the book was upon a science within the scope of his profession. He was comparatively a young man, and had the reputation of being an excellent physician. While he read some one rang the bell. He laid aside his book and went to the door, and when he saw what was upon the stepping-stone he was indignant.

It was a ragged, dirty boy, known in Ensworth as "Hammer Jim"—ragged and dirty, and with the violence of the slums upon him—a boy vicious and profane, against whom every other boy was warned—a boy who was called a thief and a villain, whom no efforts of the overseers had been able to reclaim, and who seemed to care for nothing but to make people afraid of him. His true name, as the overseers had it, was James Ammerton. About his father no one in Ensworth had ever known. His mother had died an inmate of the poorhouse.

On the present occasion, Jim's face was not only dirty, but bloody; and there was blood on his grimed and tattered garments.

"Please sir, won't you fix my head? I've got a hurt."
"What kind of a hurt?" asked the doctor.
"I'm afraid it's bad, sir," sobbed the boy. "One of Mr. Dunn's men hit me with a rock. O!"

"What did he hit you for?" asked the doctor.

"I dunno, sir."

"Yes, you do know. What did he throw that stone at you for?"

"Why, sir, I was picking up an apple under one of the trees."

Dr. Walsh would not touch the boy's head with his finger's. There was no need of it. He could see that there was only a scalp wound and that the blood had ceased to flow.

"Go home," he said; "let your folks wash your head and put on a clean bandage."

"Please, sir, I hain't got no home, and I hain't got no folks," replied the boy.

"You stop somewhere, don't you?"

"I stop at the poor's when they don't kick me out."

"Well, boy, you are not going to die from this. Go and get somebody to wash your head, or go and wash it yourself and tie your handkerchief on."

"Please, sir, I hain't got no—"

"Hold up, boy. I haven't got time to waste. You won't suffer if you go as you are."

And with this Dr. Silas Walsh closed the door and returned to his book. He had not meant to be unkind; but really he had not thought there was any need of professional service on his part; and certainly he did not want that boy in his office.

But Dr. Walsh had not been alone cognizant of the boy's visit. There had been a witness in an upper window. The doctor's wife had seen and heard. She was a woman.

She was not strong and resolute and dignified like her husband. Her heart was not only tender, but it was used to aching. She had no children living; but there were two little mounds in the churchyard which told her of angels in heaven that could call her mother! Acting upon her impulse, as she was very apt to act, she slipped down and called the boy in, by the back way, to the wash-room. He

came in, ragged, dirt and all, wondering what was wanted. The sweet voice that had called him had not frightened him. He stood looking at Mary Walsh, and as he looked his sobs ceased.

"Sit down, my boy."

He sat down.

"If I help you, will you try to be good?"

"I can't be good."

"Why not?"

"'Cause I can't. 'Tain't in me. Everybody says so."

"But can't you try?"

"I dunno."

"If I should help you, you would be willing to please me?"

"Yes'm—I should, certain."

Mrs. Walsh brought a basin of water, a soft sponge, and with tender hand she washed the boy's head and face. Then with a scissors she clipped away the hair from the wound—curling, handsome hair—and found it not a bad wound. She brought a piece of sticking plaster, which she fixed upon it, and then she brushed the hair back from the fair brow and looked into the boy's face—not a bad face—not an evil face. Shutting out the rags and dirt, it was really a handsome face.

"What's your name, my boy?"

"Hammer Jim, ma'am; and sometimes I tagged Jim."

"I mean, how were you christened?"

"Which'm?"

"Don't you know what name your parents gave you?"

"O, yes. It's down on the seers book, mum, as James Ammerton."

"Well, James, the hurt on your head is not bad, and if you are careful not to rub off the plaster, it will very soon heal up. Are you hungry?"

"Please mum, I hain't eat nothing to-day."

Mrs. Walsh brought out some bread and butter, and a cup of milk, and allowed the little boy to sit there in the wash-room and eat. And while he ate she watched him narrowly, scanning every feature. Surely, if the science of physiognomy, which her husband studied so much, and with such faith, was reliable, this boy ought to have grand capacities. Once more shutting out the filth and rags, and only observing the hair, now glossy and waving, from her dexterous manipulations, over a shapely head, and making the face with its eyes of lustrous gray, and the mouth like cupid's bow, and the chin strong without being unseemly—seeing this without the dregs, the boy was handsome. Mrs. Walsh, thinking of the little mounds in the churchyard, prayed God that she might be a happy mother; and, if a boy was to bless her maternity, she would not ask that he should be handsomer than she believed she could make this boy.

Jim finished eating and stood.

"James," said the little woman—for she was a little woman—"when you are hungry and have nothing to eat, if you will come to this door, I will feed you. I don't want you to go hungry."

"I should like to come, mum."

"And if I feed you when you are hungry, will you not try to be good for my sake?"

The boy hung his head and considered. Some might have wondered that he did not answer at once, as a grateful boy ought, but Mrs. Walsh was deeper than that. The lad was considering how he must answer. Then he spoke sadly and truly.

"If they'd let me be good, ma'am, but they won't, he at length replied.

"Will you try all you can?"

"Yes'm, I'll try all I can."

Mrs. Walsh gave the lad a small parcel of food in a paper, and patted his curly head. The boy had not shed a tear since the wound was assuaged. Some might have thought he was not grateful, but the little woman could see the gratitude in the deeper night of his blue eyes. The old crust was not broken enough yet for tears.

Afterwards, Mrs. Walsh told her husband what she had done, and he laughed at her.

"Do you think, Mary, that your kindness can help that ragged wail?"

"I do not think it will hurt him, Silas!"

It was not the first time that Mrs. Walsh had delivered answers to the erudite doctor which effectually stopped discussion.

After that Jim came often to the door and was fed; and he came cleaner and more orderly with each succeeding visit. At length, Mrs. Walsh was informed that a friend was going away into a far western country to take up land and make a frontier farm. The thought occurred to her that this might be a good opportunity for James Ammerton. She saw her friend and brought Jim to his notice, and the result was the boy went away with the emigrant adventurer. And she heard from her friend a year later that he liked the boy very much. Two years later the emigrant wrote that Jim was a treasure. And Mrs. Walsh shewed the letter to her husband, and he smiled and kissed the little wife, and said he was glad.

And he had another source of gladness. Upon her bosom his little wife bore a robust, healthy boy—their own son—who gave promise of life and happiness in time to come.

The years sped on and James Ammerton dropped out from the life that Mary Walsh knew. The last she heard was five years after he went away from Ensworth, and Jim had then started for the golden mountains on his own account to commence in earnest his own life battle.

But there were joy and pride in the little woman's life which held its place and grew and strengthened. Her boy, whom they called Philip, grew to be a youth of great promise—a bright, kind-hearted, good boy, whom everybody loved, and none loved him more than did his parents. In fact, they worshipped him; or, at least his mother did. At the age of seventeen Philip Walsh entered college, and at the age of twenty-one graduated with honour; but the long and severe study had taxed his system, and he entered upon the stage of manhood not quite so strong in body as he should have been. His mother saw it and was anxious; his father saw it and decided that he should have recreation and recuperation before he entered into active business. Dr.

Walsh was not pecuniarily able to send his son on an expensive travel, but he found opportunity for his engagement upon the staff of an exploring expedition which would combine healthful recreation with an equally healthful occupation.

The expedition was bound for the western wilderness, and we need not tell of the parting between the mother and the son. She kissed him and blessed him, and hung upon his neck with more kisses, then went away to her chamber and cried.

Philip wrote home often while on his way out; and he wrote after he had reached the wilderness. His accounts were glowing and his health was improving. Three months of forest life and forest labour, of which Philip wrote in a letter that had to be borne more than a hundred miles to the nearest post, and then followed months of silence.

Where was Philip? Why did he not write?
One day Dr. Walsh came home pale and faint, with a newspaper crumpled and crushed in his hand. Not immediately, but by and by, he was forced to let his wife read what he had seen in that paper. She read and felt like one mortally stricken. It was a paper from a far distant city, and it told the sad fate of the exploring party under the charge of Colonel Beauchamp, how they had been attacked by an overpowering body of Indians, and how those not massacred had been carried away captive.

Poor little woman! Poor Dr. Walsh. But the mother suffered most. Her head, already taking on its crown of silver, was bowed in blinding agony, and her heart was well-nigh broken. The joy had gone out of her life and thick darkness was round about her.

And so half a year passed. One day the postman left a letter at the door. The hand of the superscription was familiar, Mrs. Walsh tore it open and glanced her eyes over the contents. O, joy, O, rapture! Her boy lived, was well, and was on his way home to her.

When Dr. Walsh entered the room he found his wife fainting, with the letter clutched tight in her grasp.

By and by, when the great surge had passed, husband and wife sat down and read the letter understandingly.

"Thank God! I found a true friend, or I should say a true friend found me," wrote Philip, after he had told of his safety and his whereabouts. "But for the coming of this friend I should have died ere this. He heard of me by name and when he learned that I was from Ensworth, and was the son of Silas and Mary Walsh, he bent all his energies for my release. He spent thousands of dollars in enlisting and equipping men for the work, and with his own hand struck down my savage captors and took me henceforth under his care and protection. God bless him! And be you ready, both, to bless him, for he's coming home with me."

Upon their bended knees that night the rejoicing parents thanked God for all His goodness, and asked blessings upon the head of the unknown preserver of their son.

And in due time, radiant and strong, their Philip came home to them—came home a bold, innocent man—fitted for the battle of life—came none knowing enough of life's vicissitudes, and prepared to appreciate its blessings.

And with Philip came a man of middle age—a strong, frank-faced, handsome man, with gray eyes and curling hair.

"This," said the son, when he had been released from the mother's rapturous embrace, "is my preserver. Do you know him?"

The doctor looked and shook his head. He did not know him.

But the little woman observed more keenly. Upon her the light broke overpoweringly.

"Is it," she whispered, putting forth her hands—"is it James Ammerton?"

"Yes," said the man—a stranger now no more. "I am James Ammerton! and I thank God who has given me an opportunity thus to shew how gratefully I remember all your kindness to me, my more than mother."

And he held her hands and pressed them to his lips, and blessed her again, telling her, with streaming eyes, that she, of all the world, had lifted him up and saved him.

Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.
—Shakespeare.

MORALITY without religion is only a kind of dead-reckoning—an endeavour to find our place on a cloudy sea by measuring the distance we have to run, but without any observation of the heavenly bodies.—Longfellow.

To cure us of our immoderate love of gain, we should seriously consider how many goods there are that money will not purchase, and these the best; and how many evils there are that money will not remedy, and these the worst.—Colton.

INFINITE toil would not enable you to sweep away a mist; but by a ending a little you may often look over it altogether. So it is with our moral improvement; we wrestle fiercely with a vicious habit, which could have no hold upon us if we ascended into a higher moral atmosphere.—Helps.

THE course of the river is often broken by sudden rapids or perilous eddies. The life of the Christian is not one perpetual flow of buoyant melody. It has its breaks, its discords, its attritions. Like the river, its course is often fretted by the eddies of trouble or disturbed by the sandbars of defeat.—The Interior.

The guilty mind
Debases the great image that it wears
And levels us with brutes.
—Hazard.

MEN often speak of the fruits of the Spirit, but the apostle is careful to say *fruit*—one holy fruit, or result, comprising many virtues. Love is the juice of the fruit, sweet to God and man; joy, its beautiful bloom; peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, form its mellow softness; faith is its consistence, and also forms its characteristic and incomparable flavour; temperance, the rind of the fruit, binding it together, keeping it fresh, and preserving its good qualities from waste.—D. Frazer.