

THE CONCEPTION-BAY MAN.

SELECT POETRY.

NAPOLEON AND THE BRITISH SAILOR.

BY THOMAS CAMPELLE.

I love contemplating, apart
From all his homicidal glory,
The traits that soften to our hearts
Napoleon's story.

'Twas when his banners at Boulogne
Arm'd in our island every freeman,
His navy chanced to capture one
Poor British seaman.

They suffer'd him, I know not how,
Unprison'd on the shore to roam,
And aye was bent his youthful brow
On England's home.

His eye, methought, perceived the flight
Of birds, to Britain half-way over,
With envy—they could reach the white
Dear cliffs of Dover.

A stormy midnight-watch, he thought,
Than his sojourn would have been dearer,
If but the storm his vessel brought
To England nearer.

At length, when care had banished sleep,
He saw, one morning, dreaming, doating,
An empty hoghead, on the deep,
Come shoreward, floating.

He hid it in a cave, and wrought
The live-long day laborious, lurking,
Until he launch'd a tiny boat,
By mighty working.

Heaven help us! 'twas a thing beyond description!
Such a wretched wherry,
Perhaps, ne'er ventured on a pond,
Or cross'd a ferry.

For ploughing on the salt sea field
'Twould make the very boldest shudder—
Untarr'd, uncompass'd, and unkeel'd,
No sail, no rudder.

From neighbouring woods, ne interlaced
His sorry skiff with wattled willows:
And, thus equip'd, he would have faced
The raging billows.

The French guard caught him on the beach,
His little argus sorely jeering,
Till tidings of it came to reach
Napoleon's hearing.

With folded arms Napoleon stood,
Serene alike in peace and danger,
And, in his wonted attitude,
Address'd the stranger:

'Rash youth, that would'st yon channel pass
With twigs and staves so rudely fasten'd,
Thy heart to some sweet English lass
Must be impassion'd.'

'I have no sweetheart,' said the lad;
But, absent years from one another,
Great was the longing that I had
To see my mother.'

'And so thou shalt,' Napoleon said;
'You've both my favor fairly won;
A noble mother must have bred
So brave a son.'

He gave the tar a piece of gold,
And, with a flag of truce command'd
He should be shipp'd to England old,
And safely landed.

Our sailor oft could scantily shift
To find a dinner plain and hearty,
But never changed the coin and gift
Of Bonaparte!

LITERATURE.

THE BLIND WOMAN.

(FROM THE MANUSCRIPT JOURNAL OF A CITY MISSIONARY.)

Having been for some time a missionary to one of the suburbs of Glasgow, I was brought into the knowledge of many distressing histories. One of these I purpose to relate at present. There was a dilapidated land of houses in one of the back courts of my district, which I had not, at the date I am about to mention, yet visited. One cold day in November of 184—, I ascended the stairs for the first time, and knocked at the door of what is there termed a single house, or house of one apartment. A faint voice from within bade me open, and come in.

The door opened into a wretched chamber, without furniture of any sort, beyond a few chairs. On one of these sat an old woman whose hair was passing from black to grey, and whose skin was brown and wrinkled. She was leaning forward on a long staff, which she grasped in the middle, and looking fixedly in the direction of the door at which I was entering. There was something about the stare of her eyes which I did not like at first. I thought

their expression rude and insolent. Yet I soon perceived that it was the expression of disease, and that she was stone-blind.

"Who are you?" she asked, sharply, when I had shut the door.

I told her my name and the object of my visit. She turned her body slowly round upon her seat, and bent forward as if to look for a particular thing. After staring for a second at one corner of the apartment, she pointed to a chair, and said, "There should be a seat in that corner. Bring it near, and sit down and talk with me, for I am blind." When I had taken my seat, she instantly began to talk herself. She lifted her sightless eyeballs, and fixed them upon me, until I thought her blindness was feigned, and that she was seeing into my very soul. There was a sad and melancholy disagreeableness in the tones of her voice, which I cannot describe; but the words she uttered, as nearly as I can remember, were as follows:—

"Yes, sir, I am blind. It is seven years past at Martinmas since I lost my sight. I felt it growing dimmer and dimmer still for three weeks, until it would not serve me to see the death of my only boy." She paused at these words, and seemed to have forgotten my presence; but resumed in a little, as if answering to a question which she supposed me to have put:—

"Ay, sir, I had a boy; a brave, well-made, kind-hearted boy. But he died, sir; he died a week after I lost my sight. A week! no, not a week. He died on Friday; and the last light I ever saw was on the Sunday before. Do you recollect, sir?" She raised her voice and spoke rapidly. "You must recollect. It was seven years last Martinmas." Pausing, as if to test her memory, she leaned her head upon her hands, which grasped the staff, and left me in a most painful silence for some minutes. I had no power to speak. One word, either of consolation or common-place, I could not utter. The very mystery of her grief froze me into silence. At length, however, without lifting her head, she murmured to herself. "Last Martinmas? This Martinmas!" Her voice rose suddenly into a scream, and her head was lifted up, and her eyeballs fixed upon mine with a fearful glare. "This very month—this very day, good sir! Seven years—seven weary years—seven dark and unblest years—this very day, since my dear boy died. One, two, three! Yes; every year has left its mark upon my heart. I see them, and they are all bleeding my very life away. And now another wound must be made to-day. Ay, sir, it is twelve o'clock! I stood by his dead body at this hour, and kissed his cold lips, and felt them taking even that comfort from my touch. Oh, it is sore, sore, to be reminded of it by this day's return! But it will not last for ever, and—"

What she said in concluding these exclamations I could not catch, for her voice again sunk into its low murmuring tone, and then into silence for a time.

"I know what you want to ask," she said; "you want to ask of what he died. And why should I conceal it from you? My boy was innocent, innocent, sir! She did not see him doing it. She saw the others, but not him. She wouldn't swear to that. She was false, false, sir; but not false enough to say he did the deed. She couldn't. He couldn't do it. My kind-hearted son would not kill a sleeping man. The judge asked her if she saw the knife in his hand? No, she replied.—Did you see him at the bedside? No, she replied again.—Where did you see him, then? In the room, my lord.—It was this that put my son to death. In the room, my lord! For that word of the false woman poor Billie had to die. You remember? You must remember. It was seven years ago this morning, that my poor Billie died before the jail."

She was by this time too excited to proceed. The unearthly glare forsook her eyeballs, and she began to rock herself mournfully on the chair. In the painful pause, a little girl entered, ragged and filthy, and set herself down at the old woman's feet. For a moment or two she remained unnoticed, and busied herself in scanning my features and dress. I observed that she paid no attention to the old woman's conduct, as if it had been no unusual sight to her. I wished to speak to the girl, but could not; and I sat looking at the two before me.

Like one awaking from a dream, the elder began to feel the child at her feet. "You are there," she said at length; but I have something to say to this gentleman, my dear; and you must play at the stair-foot till he goes away." The little girl did not appear to comprehend what was thus addressed to her, until the old woman signed with her hand, and then she rose and went reluctantly away. The sightless face was again turned in the direction of the door, and I sought until the child's footstep was out of hearing.

"That, sir, is my grandchild," said my companion, turning her face again towards me. "That is his barn. Poor lamb! I like her for her father's sake. They say that she is like him. God help her, if she be! For he was weel kened; and it is not lucky to be like the dead." Another pause. "Ah, sir, if you would teach her to read? Him who would have taught her they put to death. The merciless crew! That barn was born on the day of his trial, and its mother died in grief; for she never dreamed that her

child's father was to die the death he did. And how could she? She had seen nothing but love and soberness in Billie. It was an old story, sir—a cruel old story, raked up by the false woman who swore his life away. It was fourteen years gone past and more. Poor Billie was witless in his youth, and that false woman and her companions deceived him into their ways. He went with them one night—I mind it well—and was in the room—only in the room, sir—when the murder was committed. They were all dead years ago, except that woman and Bill. She thought, at first, he would have married her, did that false woman; but he loathed her, and fled from her presence, and concealed himself in an English town far away. Poor Billie! He married another, and was happy, and went to church again. His minister came all the way to Glasgow to say a word in his behalf, and then wrote up to London, when speaking wouldn't do. Billie came home one night from church, and was sitting by the fire telling his wife what he had heard. A beggar-woman opened their door, and asked for bread that she might not die. They took her in, and warmed her, and gave her food, and sent her away filled. She told all this herself to the judges; and yet it was she who gave my Billie up. For it was the false woman, sir, whom they helped. She found him out. Her vile revenge was gratified; and she left his door only to return with the hounds of law. Fourteen years had passed. Oh, it was cruel—most cruel! If they hadn't been kind to the poor, she couldn't have discovered him as she did. I prayed on my bended knees that I might never see the day of my son's death; and my prayer was heard, sir—heard to my anguish. Oh! I would have given a world to have seen him for five minutes on that dark morning. I prayed for that, but I was not heard. I prayed to see the men who were taking him away, that I might curse them with a mother's curse, but I was not heard in that either. Oh, sir, it was dark that morning to me! Out and in all was darkness, black and deep. I saw the darkness, sir; I am sure that I saw the darkness, although I saw nothing else.—I fear I am vexing you? You are very good to listen to me. Few will stay so long beside me; every body seems afraid. Ha, ha! afraid of a blind old woman! They have not felt my fear. I was with Billie from two o'clock that morning, and I was shaking with terror. The fear of the darkness made me tremble. I thought that, if I had not been blind, I could have seen some door through which my son could have escaped; I thought that if I had retained my sight I could have pled for his life; and many other mad things passed through my mind. I cannot tell you all; for, in truth, I remember best his heavy sobs, and fearful moanings about Margaret—poor Margaret—the barn's mother, sir—who was by that time in her grave. At length I heard the tread of their feet who were to take him away. And when the chain was broken, and he was taken to the hall, there was a sermon preached, which I forgot. Don't be offended, sir; but I thought that sermon was all falsehood when I heard it. I thought it was a mockery of comfort to a man whose life they were about to destroy. Mayhap I was wrong. I was allowed to go with Billie to the outer door. St. Andrew's clock began to strike eight as we passed the threshold. Billie stood for a little. He took my right hand between his palms and pressed it as if he would cling to it and live. He did not speak. I heard the crowd wondering why he was not coming; but Billie did not say a word. Only he stood pressing my hand between his cold icy palms, until the last stroke of the bell had sounded, and then they took him away from me forever."

I made arrangements to get Billie's child sent to school. In less than a week I returned to tell her grandmother I had done so. To my surprise they had left. Their house was filled with others, and no one could tell whether they had gone. I only learned that they left by night. I cannot explain the cause of their departure; but I conjecture that the old woman wished to bring up the girl in ignorance of her father's fate, and therefore removed to places where they were both unknown; but that either her necessities or her anxiety to justify her son, made her garrulous over-much, and her secret slipped out and fell among the children, who returned it in taunts upon their playmate, the little girl I saw. If this conjecture be correct, perhaps at this moment these two are leaving the home to which they then removed, and going out beneath the cold stars, to escape the gibes of those who cannot feel for the unfortunate, and to seek a new dwelling-place among strangers.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON AND FATHER MATHEW.—In 1847, the leader of one of the temperance bands in Cork enlisted in the army. He was the chief support of an aged mother his wife, and six children. The amiable Father Mathew applied to the colonel of the regiment he wrote, contrary to the advice of his friends, to the Commander of the Forces, who, by return of post, sent an autograph as follows:—"Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to the Very Rev. Mr Mathew—he could not refuse his application, and has directed the discharge of the soldier he desired."

AN ALDERMAN OUTWITTED.—Our own lamented Chantrey, who, though fully alive to the merits of the good things of this world, was one of the unselfish and liberal of men, told a story of a passage during one of the city feasts at which he was present. The great national sculptor—for truly great and truly national he was—sat next to a functionary before whom stood a large tureen of turtle-soup. This citizen instantly possessed himself of the ladle, carefully fished out the coarser parts and offered the plate containing them to Chantrey, who declined.

"I watched," said he, "the progress of the plate; at last it was set down before the Lord Mayor's chaplain; and the expression of that man's face, when he beheld it, I shall never forget."

The functionary went on helping till he had cleared the soupe of all but the green fat and richer partes, the whole of which he piled up in a capacious plate for himself. Then up spoke our sculptor and said:

"If you will allow me to change my mind, I'll take a little turtle."

And the waiter who held the plate placed it, to the horror of the dispensing expectant before Chantrey, who immediately commenced spoon exercise, as Jonathan delicately describes such evolutions.

"And this did," said Chantrey, "so punished him for his greed."

What was the unhappy functionary to do? His own tureen was exhausted, and in half frantic tone he called to one of the waiters to bring him some turtle. But at city feasts the guests are very industrious, especially when turtle is the order of the day, and the waiter, after trying about brought back to our greedy citizen the identical plate of fatless flesh which had so astounded the chaplain, who had contrived to exchange his unweleoms portion for one more worthy of a sleek son of the Church.

"And then," Chantrey would add, "my attentive neighbour's visage was awful to look upon."

There was no help for it; so the disconcerted functionary betook himself to the rejected plate, with the additional discomfure of seeing Chantrey send away his, still rich with calipee, fat, and fins—

ABREDCING HER PRIVILEGES.—A young enthusiast was talking to his intended a few days since, urging upon her speedy marriage, and a start to spend the honeymoon in California. "I tell you," said he, his face glowing with enthusiasm, "California is the paradise of this earth. There's no use talking!" "No use talking!" exclaimed the lady, with a look of some surprise. "No use talking," he repeated. "Well, if there's no use talking," said the lady, "what in the name of sense do you want of woman there? I don't go!"

DONE FOR.—A laughable circumstance occurred the other day on the railway. A young gentleman was traveling to town, and when they arrived at Watford, a prim sedate gentleman of the older school got into the carriage. As soon as the train had started, without asking the old boy whether he liked it or not, the young one pulled out his cigar, and began to puff away, on which old Square Toes violently remonstrated and said he should make a regular complaint to the authorities when he got to town. Nothing daunted, he continued his cigar till just before he got to Euston Square, when, jumping out of the carriage, he called to a policeman and begged him to take his friend into custody, as he had been smoking in the carriage contrary to his express wishes. While the altercation was going on our young friend mixed in the crowd, and has never been heard of since.—Northampton Herald.

"I BELIEVE IT'S ME, SIR!"—A gentleman told me that news was one day accidentally brought to the locality where he was mining, that a man who had committed a robbery, in a neighbouring camp, or diggings some two miles away, had been arrested, and was to be hanged. It created no excitement; drew nobody from employment; but, being himself somewhat curious in such things, he walked over to the spot, and found several miners gathered near some trees talking very quietly in little groups. Not knowing any one, and wishing to have the criminal pointed out to him, he inquired of a person who was standing a little apart, which was the man they were about to hang; to which he replied, without the slightest change of countenance: "I believe it's me, sir?" Half an hour after, he was suspended from a bough of a tree, and the little community dispersed to their respective suppers, without the smallest demonstration.

The Montreal Herald states that the Arctic expedition fitted out by the Hudson Bay Company was to have started from Great Slave Lake some time since. The object of this expedition is to visit the locality where, according to information furnished by Dr Rae, Sir John Franklin and his unfortunate companions perished, and to ascertain more fully, if possible, respecting their sad fate.

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