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ORIGINAL POETRY.

(For the Literary Transcript.)

THOUGHTS.

WRITTEN ON THE ST. CHARLES MOUNTAINS.

The green woods are around me, and the stream
A pleasant song is babbling heedless by;
And through the setting sun a mellow gleam
Round giant trees that rear their tops on high,
And seem as if to uphold the sky;
This mossy stone a pillow for my head,
Perchance a Nature's mark o'er forms that lie
"North scared flocks, which form a fitting bed
For one whose kindred hopes are resting with the dead."

Yet life is strong around me; every leaf
Is peopled with its airy myriads, and the ray
Which rests upon my brow, of joy and grief
Contains a mighty sun. Proud man, away!
Holds Earth no joys or woes but those, poor clay!
Through every blade, the hourly trampled flowers,
Throng life, and change, and death, in those
Whose day

Is given and meted by creative powers
For ends, to God, perchance as great as spring
From ours.

We struggle through a dream,—a dream of life,
The troubled sleepers! Death alone can break!
And when at last, upon this scene of strife
We gaze from that calm shore where we awake,
How shall we smile at all the ills which shake
The eternal soul in Time's dull letters bound?
Or will Remembrance then her seat forsake,
And fabled Lethe's stream, no fable found,
Sweep darkly o'er the throne where once state
Memory crowned.

Alas! we know such knowledge is denied;
But if, when all is past, far hence, we can
Look o'er the awful gulph which shall divide
The state of mortal from immortal man,
If then unfolded all the mystic plan,
With scepter's sign, and seraph's judgment fan,
How shall we marvel at each act we scan,
And in each whirl of petty passion, join
Of such events the cause, as thro' creation through.

Even now the shades of those long ages gone,
Are haply stooping down, and gaze on me,—
The deep woods murmur with a solemn tone,
Like voices from the past eternally;
No shadowy forms my human ken may see,
My soul doth feel them round: the great, the good
Of old Athos's ages bending be
To hold dark converse in the heavy wood,
And bless with wordless joy my soul in solitude.

They tell of capture, we, like them, shall feel,
When all is known we long have craved to know;
When burst the mist away which now conceal
The mysteries of Heaven from man below;
When Fate, which seems too oft to work us woe,
And He who fate controls, shall then appear
Enrolled in love and mercy's glim'ring glow;
And, sunk with Death all sorrow, doubt, and fear,
Our Father's face shall shine, in good and glory clear.

A. G. L.

THE VACANT CHAIR.

(CONCLUDED.)

Time stole on towards midnight, and one by one the unsuccessful party returned. As foot after foot approached, every breath was held to listen. "No, no, no!" cried the mother again and again, with increasing anguish, "it is not the foot of my own bairn!"—while her keen gaze still remained riveted upon the door, and was not withdrawn nor the hope of despair relinquished till the individual entered, and with a silent and ominous shake of his head, betokened his fruitless efforts. The clock had struck twelve; all were returned save the father. The wind howled more wildly; the rain poured upon the windows in ceaseless torrents; and the roaring of the mountain rivers gave a character of deeper gloom to their sepulchral silence; for they saw, each wrapt in forebodings, listening to the storm, and no sounds were heard, save the groans of the mother, the weeping of her children, and the bitter and broken sobs of the bereaved maiden, who leaned her head upon her father's bosom, refusing to be comforted.

At length the barking of the farm-dog announced foot steps at a distance. Every eye was raised to listen, every eye turned to the

door; but, before the tread was yet audible to the listeners, "O, it is only Peter's foot!" said the miserable mother, and, weeping, arose to meet him.

"Janet! Janet!" he exclaimed, as he entered, and threw his arms around her neck, "what is this come upon us at last?"

He cast an inquisitive glance around his dwelling, and a convulsive shiver passed over his manly frame, as his eye again fell on the vacant chair, which no one had ventured to occupy. Hour succeeded hour, but the company separated not; and low, sorrowful whispers mingled with the lamentations of the parents.

"Neighbours," said Adam Bell, "the morn is a new day, and we will wait to see what it may bring forth; but, in the mean time, let us read a portion of the Devine word, and kneel together in prayer, that, whether or not the day dawn cause light to shine upon this singular bereavement, the Sun of Righteousness may arise with healing on his wings, upon the hearts of this afflicted family, and upon the hearts of all present."

"Amen!" responded Peter, wringing his hands; and his friend, taking down the "Hallowed Bible," read the chapter wherein it is written—"It is better to be in the house of mourning than in the house of feasting;" and again the portion which says—"If it will for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray."

The morning came, but brought no tidings of the lost son. After a solemn farewell, all the visitors, save Adam Bell and his daughter, returned every one to their own house; and the disconsolate father, with his servants, again renewed their search among the hills and surrounding villages.

Days, weeks, months, and years, rolled on. Time had subdued the anguish of the parents into a holy calm; but their lost first-born was not forgotten, although no trace of his fate had been discovered. The general belief was, that he had perished in the breaking up of the snow; and the few in whose remembrance he still lived merely spoke of his death as a very extraordinary circumstance, remarking that "he was a wild, venturesome sort of lad."

Christmas had succeeded Christmas, and Peter Elliot still kept it in commemoration of the birth-day of him who was not. For the first few years after the loss of their son, sadness and silence characterized the party who sat down to dinner at Marchlaw, and still at Peter's right hand was placed the vacant chair. But, as the younger branches of the family advanced in years, the remembrance of their brother became less poignant. Christmas was with all around them a day of rejoicing, and they began to make merry with their friends; while their parents partook in their enjoyment with a smile, half of approval and half of sorrow.

Twelve years had passed away; Christmas had again come; it was the counterpart of its fatal predecessor. The hills had not yet cast off their summer verdure; the sun, although shorn of its heat, had lost none of its brightness or glory, and looked down upon the earth as though participating in its gladness; and the clear, blue sky was tranquil at the sea sleeping beneath the moon. Many visitors had again assembled at Marchlaw. The sons of Mr. Elliot and the young men of the party were assembled upon a level green near the house, amusing themselves with throwing the hammer and other Border games, while himself and the elder guests stood by as spectators, recounting the deeds of their youth. Johnson, the sheep-farmer, whom we have already mentioned, now a brawny and gigantic fellow of two and thirty, bore away in every game the palm from all competitors. More than once, as Peter beheld his sons defeated, he felt the spirit of youth glowing in his veins, and "Oh!" muttered he, in bitterness, "had my Thomas been spared to me, he would have thrown his hammer blood after the hammer, before he would have been beat by ever a Johnson in the country!"

While he thus soliloquized, and with difficulty restrained an impulse to compete with

the victor himself, a dark, foreign-looking, strong-built seaman, unceremoniously approached, and, with his arms folded, cast a look of contempt upon the boasting competitor. Every eye was turned with a scrutinizing glance upon the stranger. In height he could not exceed five foot nine, but his wondrous frame was the model of muscular strength; his features were open and manly, but deeply sunburnt and weather-beaten; his long, glossy, black hair, curled into ringlets by the breeze and the pillow, fell thickly over his temples and forehead; and whiskers of a similar hue, more conspicuous for size than elegance, gave a character of fierceness to a countenance otherwise possessing a striking impress of manly beauty. Without asking permission, he stepped forward, lifted the hammer, and swinging it around his head, hurled it upwards of five yards beyond Johnson's most successful throw. "Well done!" shouted the astonished spectators. The heart of Peter Elliot warmed within him, and he was hurrying forward to grasp the stranger by the hand, when the words gushed in his throat, "It was just such a throw as my Thomas would have made!—my own—and I should!" The tears burst into his eyes, and, without speaking, he turned back, and hurried towards the house to conceal his emotion.

Successively at every game the stranger had defeated all who ventured to oppose him; when a messenger announced that some waited their arrival. Some of the guests were already seated, others entering; and, as heretofore, placed beside Mrs. Elliot was Elizabeth Bell, still in the nuptial tie; but sorrow had passed over her features like a veil before the countenance of an angel. Johnson, crestfallen and out of humour at his defeat, seated himself by her side. An evil life, he had regarded Thomas Elliot, as a rival for her affections; and stimulated by the knowledge that Adam Bell would be able to bestow several thousands upon his daughter for a dowry, he yet prosecuted his attentions with unabated assiduity, in despite of the daughter's aversion and the coldness of her father. Peter had taken his place at the table; and still by his side, unoccupied and sacred, appeared the vacant chair of his first-born, wherein none had sat since his mysterious death or disappearance.

"Hairs!" said he, "did none of ye ask the sailor to come up and take a bit o' quare with us?"

"We were afraid it might lead to a quarrel with Mr. Johnson," whispered one of the sons.

"He is come without asking," replied the stranger entering; and the wind still blew from a new point if I destroy the mirth or happiness of the company."

"Ye are a stranger, young man," said Peter, "or ye would ken this is no meeting o' mirth-makers. But, I assure ye, ye are welcome, heartily welcome. Haste ye, ladies," he added to the servants; "some o' ye get a chair for the gentleman."

"Gentleman indeed!" muttered Johnson, between his teeth.

"Never mind about a chair, my hearties," said the seaman; "this will do!" and, before Peter could speak to withhold him, he had taken himself carelessly into the hallowed, the venerated, the twelve-years unoccupied chair! The spirit of sacrifice uttering blasphemies from a pulpit, could not have smitten a congregation of pious worshippers with deeper horror and consternation, than did this filing of the vacant chair the inhabitants of Marchlaw.

"Excuse me, Sir! excuse me, Sir!" said Peter, the words trembling upon his tongue. "but ye cannot—ye cannot sit there!"

"O man! man!" cried Mrs. Elliot, "get out o' that! get out o' that!—take my chair!—take my chair in the house!—but dinna, dinna, sit there! It has never been sat in by mortal being since the death of my dear bairn; and to see it filled by another is a thing I cannot endure!"

"Sir! Sir!" continued the father, "ye have done it through ignorance, and we excuse ye. But that was my Thomas's seat.

Twelve years this very day—his birthday—he perished, Heaven sends how! He went out from our sight, like the cloud that passes over the hills—never—never to return. And oh, Sir, spare a father's feelings! For to see it filled with the blood from my worthy son!"

"Give me your hand, my heartie!" exclaimed the seaman; "I revere, nay, I adore, I would die for your feelings! But Tom Elliot was my friend, and I cast anchor in this chair by special commission. I know that a sudden loss of joy is a bad thing; out, as I don't know how to preach a sermon afore telling you, all I have to say is—that Tom ain't dead."

"Not dead?" said Peter, grasping the hand of the stranger, and speaking with an eagerness that almost choked his utterance; "Oh, Sir! Sir! tell me now how low Tom Elliot ye say ayeing?—Is my ain Thomas ayeing?"

"Not dead, ye say?" cried Adam Elliot, hurrying towards him, and grasping his other hand; "not dead! and shall I see my bairn again? Oh! may the blessing of heaven, and the blessing of a unconquered mother, be upon the father of the glorious infant! But tell me—how is it possible I as ye would expect happiness here or hereafter, dinna, dinna deceive me?"

"Deceive you?" returned the stranger, grasping with impassioned earnestness their hands of his; "never!—never! and all I can say is—Tom Elliot is aye and hearty."

"Aye, no?" said Elizabeth, rising from her seat; "he does not deceive us; here is trust in his countenance which respects a falsehood impossible; and she also endeavoured to move towards him, when Johnson threw his arm around her to withhold her."

"Dinna, dinna!" said Elizabeth, rising from her seat, "she was spinning towards them, 'or, suffer me! I'm shawing right through your fingers in the turning of a name-spoke!" and, clasping the lovely girl in his arms, "Blessy my love! I'm cried, 'don't you know your own Tom? Father, mother, don't you know me? Have you really forgot your own son? If twelve years have made some change on his face, his heart is sound as ever."

His sister, his mother, and his brothers, gazing around him, weeping, smiling, and asking a hundred questions together. He threw his arms around the neck of each, and in answer to their inquiries, replied, "Well! well! there is nae change to be answer questions, but not to-day, not to-day!"

"No, my dear, and his mother," we'll ask you no questions—nobody shall ask ye any! I'll out how—how were ye turn away from us, my love? And, oh, my! where—where have ye been?"

"It is a long story, mother," said he, "and would take a week to tell it. But, however, to make a long story short, you remember when the smugglers were pursued, and wished to conceal their brandy in our house, my father prevented them; my left shoulder revenge. This day twelve years, I went out with the intention of meeting Elizabeth and my father, when I came upon a party of the gang concealed in Field's Hole. In a moment that a dozen pistols were held to my breast, and, lying my hands to my sides, they dragged me into the cavern. Here I had not been long then prisoner, when the snow, rolling down the mountains, almost totally blocked up its mouth. On the second night, they cut down the snow, and, hurrying me along with them, I was bound to a horse before day-light found myself stowed, like a piece of old iron, in the hold of a smuggling barge. Within a week I was shipped on board a Dutch man-of-war; and for six years was kept dogging about on different stations, till one day, having received orders to sail the fleet which was tight against the English Duke of Cumberland. To tons of a liking against my own flesh and blood, was worse than to be cut to pieces by a cat-o'-nine-tails; and, under cover of the smoke of the first broadside, I sprang upon the gunwale, plunged into the sea, and swam for the English coast. Never, never shall I forget the moment that my feet first trod upon the deck of a British frigate!