

WINTER EVENING.

Westward the sunset is waning slow.
A far torn flame on the silent snow;
And dies, as the vast night waxes higher.
In scattering lines of stormy fire.

The piled clouds are sinking dreary and dun
On the red wild track of the setting sun;
Westward the fierce winds gather and fleet
Mightily down the frozen street.

Like the work of the painter's hand are pressed
On the pale clear brow of the yellow west;
The pointed spires and the dark and still
Towers of the town on the western hill.

Far through the firmament, misty fair,
Veiled and dimmed with their golden hair,
The moon and her chorus of sweet stars whirl
In their white torn mantles of cloudy pearl.

The hard snow shrieks on the beaten street—
Under the tread of the hurrying feet.
Sharp and shrill, like a thing in pain,
Bound in the Winter's Titan chain.

Westward away the wan day sinks:
I see, as I pass, through the shutter chinks
The bright ruddy lips of children prate
Round the red warm hearth and the blazing grate.

Ah, bright bitter winter, I love thee still
For thy strong bright wine to the strong man's will:
For thy stormy days of tempest and morn,
And the calm sweet peace that follows to-morn.

For thy bright white snow and the silver chime
Of bells that gladden the bitter time:
For the laughing lips and the children at play,
And the long mirthful hours that sweeten day.

Ottawa, January 22, 1883.

A. LAMPMAN.

A STAIN AS OF BLOOD.

We were a snub-nosed lot, like the plebeians we were; for the paper, albeit sufficiently well-to-do, was only a trader—a trader, too, in no more æsthetic articles of commerce than boots and shoes, a fact which, on our coming to Ayfield to live, away from the supposed contamination of business, we youngsters found peculiarly unfavourable to the enlargement of our circle of acquaintances amongst those who, compared with ourselves, had more birth, about the same amount of education, and less money. But boy Bert was one glorious exception; he was different from the rest of us; to him belonged the only suggestion of aristocratic origin to which we could point. We prized him accordingly; used him to distract attention from our own uncomeliness and want of grace; pushed him in front, as it were, when occasion demanded that we should create as pleasant an impression as possible. His face was clear-skinned and fair, with a cleanly-cut profile, a straight nose and sensitive little nostrils, merry blue eyes, and a passable mouth. His head yielded a golden crop, and altogether he was a picture of a patrician ten-year-old boy; fragile, ideal perhaps; but his ways were boyish and real enough whatever his appearance might be. With unbounded spirits and a keen appreciation of the superiority of his own sex, he loved boats, bats, balls, knives, and pistols, as ardently as he abominated a doll and this rest of the paraphernalia of girlhood. He poured terror into the heart of the Mater by his mechanical arrangements, whose intricacies of ropes and pulleys for ever made a journey from the top to the bottom of the house dangerous to life and limb. As for love, I believe he had more of it beneath that sailor's jacket of his than all the rest of us put together, and the one weakness he permitted himself, even when he had attained to the dignity of a decade of years, was to seat himself on his mother's lap and listen to one of the old, old tales which we had in turn all been told, had wondered at, and loved. Such, briefly, was Bert; except as to one attribute—his voice. This was his best gift. So pure, so sweet, so powerful was it, that many beyond our home circle heard and marvelled at it. And there was nothing he liked better than singing; yet, although petted, praised, and courted, he remained an unspoilt, unassuming child.

When Ayfield parish church was renovated, and the Reverend Sanders introduced himself and begged that our youngest boy might join the new choir in course of formation, both the parents vetoed his doing so; the boys who compose choirs, they said, were two frequently of a class unsuitable for Bert to associate with. But their objections were ultimately overruled, and our boy took the lead in the new choir, greatly to the satisfaction of Syms, the organist, and folk generally. I say folk generally, for so sure as it got wind in the village during the week that Bert was to sing a solo the next Sunday, the church was picked in a way which no prescher's eloquence succeeded in doing; and the vicar, who became an intimate friend and constant visitor of ours, would, in acknowledgement of his power, pull him lovingly by the ear, and say, "Ah, Bert; it is you the people go to hear, not me, I fear." Which indeed was the plain truth, much as it might be matter for regret.

The Mater noticed it the first Sunday after the new chancel window had been put in. So did we all, for the matter of that, although we said nothing. True, it was only a ray of light which pierced an old-shaped bit of crimson glass in the design of the window and fell in a quivering line across our boy's surprise about the breast; but viewed from the distance in conjunction with his pure young face, the golden glory of his head, and the whiteness of the fine lawn vestment, it had the appearance of a wound—a stain as of blood.

We were none of us superstitious—none; the Mater least so of any; but she confessed priv-

ately that she felt silly—to use her own word—about this reflection from the chancel window; it made her shudder and think of all sorts of dreadful things; she wished he could sit elsewhere so that the quivering streak of crimson light might fall anywhere but on her angel-voiced boy's breast. She even told the Vicar her dismal forebodings the next time he and his wife came to dinner; but he only laughed and begged her not to give way to such superstitious fancies. So Bert retained his old seat, and as regularly as Sunday morning came round the ominous stain appeared on the front of his surplice; sometimes duller, sometimes cruel and vivid, but always there. While confessing her foolishness and desiring to be rid of it, the Mater grew so to dread the sight which made her shudder and filled her heart with unspeakable alarm, that church only saw her at evening service, when the daylight had faded, the chancel lights were brilliant, and no dreadful blood-coloured reflection came from the stained-glass window.

Christmas was drawing near. It was the first great festival since the re-opening of the parish church, and there were to be grand doings in the way of decorations and choral services. The girls were drawing elaborate designs to be executed in the customary red cloths and white wadding, while I had been told off to construct numberless crosses and symbols out of wood, to be in due course glorified by coverings of berries and leaves.

But there was sorrow at our hearts; for Bert—Bert who was the central figure in everybody's calculations, despite his unflagging spirits, his boyish pranks, looked frailer than ever. Yet his voice was unimpaired, no weakness was perceptible there. After the choir practices and services, however, he was sometimes obliged to confess to being exhausted; and panting and sheet like, he would yield to our entreaties and lie down during Sunday afternoons to gain strength to sing at evensong. We wanted him to give it all up, but he loved the work so much that we hadn't the heart to insist on it.

About a month before Christmas there occurred a split between the Vicar and Syms. It was the most trivial of matters; but neither would budge an inch, and the upshot was that Syms threw up his appointment and departed, leaving us in the lurch for an organist. The Vicar was in a fine way. Mr. Sanders, although a passable pianoforte player, knew no more of organ-playing than the proverbial man in the moon.

I knew how it would be. Except Syms, I was the only person in the parish who could manipulate an organ, and sooner or later I was certain the Vicar would pray me to help him over the festival time and until he could get another organist. I hated taking a service; the whole business was so harassing. There was the ever-present fear of failing to drop in with the keynote of the responses at precisely the right moment, to say nothing of the dread of breaking into some half-finished prayer with the chords for the amen, or of playing a verse of a hymn beyond the prescribed number. But I resigned myself to the inevitable, and when the Reverend Sanders turned up at the homestead, as I expected he would, looking worried and prepared to prefer his request, I offered to do my best then and there, and earned his everlasting gratitude on the spot.

I set about drilling the choir-boys at once, determined that the musical arrangements should do me credit, and that Syms should not be missed if I could help it. By Christmas Eve there wasn't a line of the special psalms, a verse of the hymns, or a bar of the music which those unhappy youngsters had not got by heart. For the anthem I had chosen, with the vicar's concurrence, the Pastoral Symphony, the soprano recitatives immediately following, and the chorus which they led up to, "Glory to God in the Highest, from Handel's 'Messiah.' I had heard the greatest prima donnas England knew sing these soul-stirring recitatives, but it seemed to me that none had sung them as did my golden-haired brother. Small wonder that Mrs. Sanders, one day, listening to him in the empty church, whither we had come to practice, seized him as the last bell like note died away, hugged him to her heart, and cried with emotional delight.

We persuaded the Mater to do what she had not done for months—attend a morning service. Yes, for once, she said, she would smother her unfounded forebodings and go; it was so silly to feel as she did. She was proud of her boys and other's admiration of them made her glad. That Christmas morning we all set out, the Mater and Pater: the girls, Bert, and myself. The day was fresh and bright, the sun shone its best, and the church certainly looked its grandest—holly, mistletoe, and all manner of green everywhere. What was more, Bert appeared better in health than he had for many weeks, and we were consequently happy. But that dread-d reflection! On this sunlit morning it glowed like an unkindled gash from which the blood was welling. I struggled a shudder, and turned round to my duties at the organ, thinking of the Mater and her superstitious fear of the quite natural illusion.

All was going splendidly. My finger lingered on the last chords of the "Pastoral Symphony," then—

"There were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night."

—and on to the final recitative—

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying—"

Bert seized the "upper A" in the concluding bar, and, unaccompanied, it rang through the church like the voice of an angel; then the choir dashed in boldly, attacking the chorus, "Glory to God in the Highest." It was the grandest thing Ayfield had ever heard in its church. I felt repaid for my trouble, and too proud for words of my brother.

"But, old darling, you really must not sing any more to-day. To-night we must manage without you. We'll sing a hymn instead of repeating the anthem."

On reaching home the child had collapsed, so to speak; the excitement had proved too much, his eagerness to please too intense. His face was transparent and bloodless; his eyes strangely bright. Placing my hand over his heart, I felt it beating painfully.

"Oh, do please, let me sing to-night. I'm only a bit tired. I'll lie down all the afternoon, and before I go I can have an egg beaten up, you know." The tears were in his eyes and his lips quivered; the prospect of not singing was so great a disappointment.

He did lie down. By the evening he seemed himself again. We made him promise not to sing a note beyond his solo. This was the condition of his going.

If the church was crowded in the morning, it was fuller than ever in the evening; the aisles and passages were blocked, and people lined the chancel steps. All Ayfield was there. Not a gas-jet in the edifice remained unlighted, not a nook had been overlooked and left undecorated. The effect was imposing, gladdening; to a highly-strung temperament, hysteria producing perhaps.

Once more the last strains of the "Pastoral Symphony" died away. There was no ugly stain visible now. The chancel lights glorified our boy's golden head; a bright flush was in his cheeks, and for the second time that day those recitatives, which shall live while the earth lasts, filled the church from floor to roof with silver-toned melody. Bert was singing better than ever.

"And the angel said unto them, 'Fear not; for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'"

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and—"

But the last word never came. I heard our boy take the upper-note; it was followed by an inarticulate gurgle and a fall. There was a commotion in the chancel, a shriek from the body of the church, and a fearful horror seized me. I staggered from the organ seat, and the next minute I had Bert in my arms in the vestry. His head had dropped on his breast, his blue-veined eyelids were closed, his face was deathly pale; doubtless, a fainting fit brought on by over-excitement and the heat. I called for water, and raised his head. Good God! Could it be! From the corner of his pallid lips issued a thin red streak—blood! And there, on the breast of the fine lawn vestment, on the very spot where the fatal reflection had always fallen, was a stain—no illusion now; but real, dreadfully, horribly real. Bert had ruptured a blood vessel.

What consolation was it to us that there wasn't a conservatory for miles round that was not robbed of its every white blossom to that New Year tide to make a child's yawning grave a bower of beauty and sweet scents? What balm was it to our sore hearts that old and young, rich and poor, all gathered round to mingle their tears with ours? What comfort could it be that the choir-boys, in their attempts to do honour to the chiefest of them, broke down in the funeral hymn, every lad of them, and sobbed aloud? Earth had been deprived of too sweet a singer; our hearts and homes of a too-deeply loved one. We grudged him, oh, so much! But Heaven could not spare him; he was taken from us, and—

"There was one more voice in the angel choir.
And one more laugh in the fold."

WELWYN J. TUGWELL.

AFTER A TITLE.

"We've been having pretty fine weather lately," said a very dressy-looking youth, sauntering into the dramatic editor's room, and throwing himself carelessly into a chair.

"Yes," said the dramatic editor, looking his visitor over and wondering what dramatic snap he represented.

"I think we may fairly call it Indian summer weather," said the youth, pulling out a cigar with a gold collar about, and leisurely proceeding to light it.

"Have you any particular business with me?" asked the editor, laying down his pen and leaning back in his chair.

"Yes, I suppose you will do as well as any of the boys in the office," said the youth, pulling a wreath of smoke toward the ceiling and throwing one slender limb over the other.

"Well, don't you think it would be well to come to the point?" asked the editor. "Of course, we editors are gentlemen of leisure, but life is short, and I'm about to go out to luncheon."

"Of course," said the youth. "You see I'm the press agent of a lecturer, and I want to give him a lift, you know."

"What is the subject of the lecture?" asked the editor, taking up his pen.

"You see that's what bothers us," said the youth, sitting back in his chair and gazing arti-

tically at a variety bill on the wall before him. "We haven't made up our mind what to call it."

"Then you are just starting out," said the editor.

"Yes, my man belongs to Brooklyn. He got the lecture fever, and I thought I'd see him through."

"Well, what does he propose to lecture on?" asked the editor.

"He has struck a very novel subject," said the youth. "I think it will take with everybody. It is on the beauties of the ideal in a higher mode of existence, or something of that sort. Anything pays now in the form of a lecture, you know, but the subject isn't of so much consequence as the man. He's had a career, he has."

"Well give it to us," said the editor.

"You see he's an ex-convict, and he's been tried four times for murder, and he started in life as a preacher."

"That will do it," said the dramatic editor, "you have got the right man to make a fortune out of."

"Then you think—"

"I think you are a crank, and the quicker you light out the better it will be for your general health," shouted the editor, grasping a thick stick leaning against his desk, and the youth vanished through the door, and made lightning time down the stairs to the sidewalk.

THE DIGESTIBILITY OF OYSTERS.

Why oysters should be eaten raw is explained by Dr. William Roberts in his last lecture on "Digestion." He says that the general practice of eating the oysters raw is evidence that the popular judgment upon matters of diet is usually trustworthy. The fawn-colored mass, which is the delicious portion of the fish, is its liver, and is simply a mass of glycogen. Associated with the glycogen, but withheld from actual contact with it during life, is its appropriate digestive ferment—the hepatic diastase. The mere crushing of the oyster between the teeth brings these two bodies together, and then the glycogen is at once digested without any other help than the diastase. The raw or merely warmed oyster is self-digestive. But the advantage of this provision is wholly lost by cooking, for the heat immediately destroys the associated ferment, and a cooked oyster has to be digested, like any other food, by the eater's own digestive powers.

"My dear sir, do you want to ruin your digestion?" asked Prof. Houghton, of Trinity College, one day, of a friend who had ordered brandy and water with his oysters in a Dublin restaurant.

Then he sent for a glass of brandy and a glass of Guinness' XX, and put an oyster in each. In a very short time there lay in the bottom of the glass of brandy a tough, leathery substance resembling the finger of a kid glove, while in the porter there was hardly a trace of the oyster to be found.

HUMOROUS.

THE guests have dined and the host hands around a case of cigars. "I don't smoke myself," he says, but you will find them good—my man steals more of them than any other brand I ever had."

OLIVER once asked Mr. Charles Reade what would be a good name to give his new pet dog. "Tonic," answered the illustrious author, without a moment's hesitation; "for it is sure to be a mixture of bark, steel, and whine."

A GOOD Paddyism. —Hungry Traveller (arriving at inn on a remote Irish lake)—"What time does one get one's meals here?" Paddy—"Is it the males you mane, sorr; sure, three times a week, at one o'clock!" (Sonation!) But poor Paddy was only thinking of the post!

LAW PROFESSOR: "What constitutes burglary?" Student: "There must be a breaking." Professor: "Then if a man enters your door and takes a sovereign from your vest pocket in the hall, would that be burglary?" Student: "Yes, sir; because that would break me."

OUR SERVANTS AGAIN: "Why did you leave your last place?" inquired a young house-keeper about to engage a new servant. "Why, you see, ma'am," replied the applicant, "I was too good-looking; and when I opened the door folks took me for the mistress."

A BALL-ROOM EPISODE.

CHARLES:

Tell me, Laura, why that sadness?
Tell me, why that look of care?
Why has fled that look of gladness,
That this face was wont to wear?

LAURA:

Charles, 'tis useless to dissemble,
Well my face may wear a frown,
For I've lost my largest hair-pin,
And my hair is coming down!

CONSUMPTION CURED.

An old physician, retired from practice, having placed in his hands by an East India missionary the formula of a simple vegetable remedy for the speedy and permanent cure of Consumption, Bronchitis, Catarrh, Asthma and all throat and Lung Affections, also a positive and radical cure for Nervous Debility and all Nervous Complaints, after having tested its wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, has felt it his duty to make it known to his suffering fellows. Actuated by this motive and a desire to relieve human suffering, I will send free of charge, to all who desire it, this recipe, in German, French, or English, with full directions for preparing and using. Sent by mail by addressing with stamp, naming this paper, W. A. NAYLOR, 143 Power's Block, Rochester, N.Y.