

Poetry.

HOPE ON, HOPE EVER!

BY GERALD MASSEY.

Hope on, hope ever! though the day be
dark,
The sweet sunburst may smile on me to-
morrow:
Though thou art lowly, there's an eye will
mark
Thy lowliness and guerdon all thy sor-
row!
Thou must toil 'mong cold and 'hardid
men,
With none to echo back thy thoughts or
love thee—
Cheer up, poor heart, thou dost not beat in
vain,
For God is over all and Heaven above
thee—
Hope on, hope ever!

The iron may enter in and pierce thy soul,
But cannot kill the love within thee burn-
ing;
The tears of misery, thy bitter dole,
Can never quench thy true heart's seraph
yearning
For better things, nor crush thy ardour's
trust
That error from the mind shall be up-
rooted,
That truths shall dawn as flowers spring
from the dust,
And love be cherished where hate was
embruted.
Hope on, hope ever!

I know 'tis hard to bear the sneer and taunt,
With the heart's honest pride at midnight
wrestle,
To feel the killing canker-worm of want.
While rich rogues in their stolen luxury
nestle;
For I have felt it; yet from earth's cold
real
My soul looks out on coming things, and
cheerful
The warm sunshine floods all the land ideal,
And still it whispers to the worn and
tearful,
Hope on, hope ever!

Hope on, hope ever! after darkest night,
Comes full of loving life the laughing
morning,
Hope on, hope ever! springtide, flushed
with light,
Aye crowns old winter with her rich
adorning.
Hope on, hope ever! yet the time shall
come
When man to man shall be as friend and
brother,
And this old world shall be a happy home,
And all earth's family love one another.
Hope on, hope ever!

Tales and Sketches.

THE "HAND" OF MICHAEL ANGELO.

FLORENTINE TRADITION.

It was a soft Italian though very dark night, of the year 1520, when a female figure, enveloped in a black woollen mantle, was seen traversing the space that separates the Quai of Slaves from the Rialto, at Venice. Her step was unequal, hesitating, almost convulsive. From time to time she cast around her an anxious and watchful glance; then, when she saw she was alone, she would clasp her hands together, as if in prayer, beneath her cloak, and thus she reached the highest part of the Rialto. Here, taking her stand, and looking down into the quiet waters of the blue and limpid Adriatic, her whole frame shaken with a tremulous terror, she fell upon her knees, and appeared to offer to Heaven, in a fervent and ecstatic prayer, all the earthly affections she had determined to quit for ever. "Antonio! my Antonio! farewell!" she whispered, and raising herself with all her remaining determination, she advanced resolutely to the parapet of the bridge leaned over the space below, as though to measure its depths, and then, by one of those strong instincts of self-preservation, which struggle so powerfully against the homicidal counsels of despair, she drew back, and, pale as death, stood trembling for an instant, but gathering courage from despair, she closed her eyes, advanced firmly to the parapet, mounted it without apparent effort, and her slender form drooped over the gulf about to receive it—when a strong arm suddenly interposed itself between the wretched girl and eternity.

A man of muscular form, and tall withal, had, by taking advantage, first of a projecting portico, then of some detached column, and eventually of jutting portions of the architecture of the bridge, succeeded in following her from the Quai of Slaves to the Rialto, and his powerful arm now snatched her from a grave beneath the waters of the Adriatic.

"Rash girl!" said he, "hear one word; if your conscience is oppressed with the remorse of a bad action—a crime—kill yourself if you will; death may be an expiation; but if you are only unhappy, go to your church of the Saviour, and kneeling upon the cold marble pavement, return thanks to God that you have been preserved from the commission of a fearful crime."

Far from being impressed with these words, though spoken in a tone of singular authority, she repulsed the stranger, exclaiming wildly, "Leave me, I wish to die!" And as though Heaven had heard her wish, she became lividly pale, and fell senseless on the pavement of the bridge.

The night, which had been very dark, now became suddenly light, as the moon emerged from a deep bank of dark clouds, and cast a flood of silvery light upon the deserted Rialto, shining brightly upon the two solitary figures. Supporting the fainting girl against the parapet of the bridge, the stranger drew back the mantle which partially concealed her face, and, starting, appeared deeply struck with the almost angelic beauty revealed to him. Indeed, as that young face lay still as death upon his stalwart arm—

"White as new-fallen snow,"

it formed, in contrast with his own burly figure, a picture that the poet or the painter might in vain sought elsewhere. Beauty was not then so rare in Venice as now; but there was then found a style of beauty distinct from that which those great masters loved to portray. It was a beauty formed by an exquisite delicacy united with firmness of form and feature.

Of such a character was the beauty of this maiden of Venice, who did not appear above the age of sixteen. Her dress, by its extreme simplicity, showed that she belonged to the plebeian class. But the stranger, as he gazed with curious interest upon her exquisitely chiselled features, seemed to be inwardly reflecting that fate had mistaken its office, in bestowing a lowly condition on one who was so true a patrician in all but rank—one of Nature's own nobility.

The man, however, who for a moment appeared to abandon himself to such reflections, was one of those who do not admire through the heart, but through the reason. He had known beauty in every phase, from the peasant to the queen, but its contemplation had never quickened the pulsation of his heart of ice by one spontaneous bound. The most beautiful had ever been to him a mere model of form, and nothing more, for he was an artist; and his pencil had immortalized more than one proud beauty.

The fainting girl slowly opened her large dark eyes, of that peculiar almond form so characteristic of scutcheon beauty, and seemed endeavoring, as she revived from a sort of artificial death, to re-unite the broken thread of her recollection. "Antonio!" at last she murmured; that word contained the secret of her young heart's misery—in that word was a whole romance of love and tears. As she pronounced so sweetly the name of Antonio, the contemplative and sombre artist felt a thrill, as though of jealousy, vibrate for a moment upon his heart, half revealing to him the ecstasy of an undeveloped sense; one which he had never known, and never knew.

The history of this poor girl, called Maria, and surnamed *La Bella*, from her extreme beauty, which had been conspicuous from her earliest childhood, was very simple, and may be stated in three words—an avaricious father—a poor lover—a disappointed love.

In vain had Maria pleaded with indefatigable constancy the cause of her heart. Her father, who kept on the Quai of Slaves one of the best frequented taverns of the district, above the doorway of which might be seen a rudely illuminated painting of the lion of Saint Marc, was obdurate, and treated the love of his daughter for the handsomest gondolier of the canal *grande* with the disdain of a prosperous host, and the irreverence of a calculator. One of these alterations took place on the night when the stranger artist first beheld Maria la Bella; the brutal Gianetti, in default of better argument, had even struck his beautiful child, and she had fled terrified and trembling to the Rialto to end her sorrows, and add another name to the martyrology of lovers.

The artist completed his good work by conducting the girl, whose life he had saved, to the tavern on the Quai of Slaves; but neither the event nor the preservation of his child appeared to cause any emotion in the breast of the proprietor. With the vulgar scepticism of the man of money, he believed that the attempted suicide was but a scheme intended to shake his resolution; and instead of opening his arms to receive his miraculously-preserved child, he reproached her brutally, and sarcastically, for a deception of which he declared himself too old and too cunning to be the dupe.

As he completed this unfeeling reproach with a sneering laugh, he turned angrily towards the stranger with an evident air of mistrust; but apparently discovered in the attitude, in the expression, and possibly in the Herculean frame of his unbidden guest, certain indications that any further remark might be disagreeably received, and therefore he allowed the artist quietly to seat himself at a table, while he himself withdrew to the other end of the apartment, casting however, occasionally malevolent and mistrustful glances towards his burly visitor.

The artist was, in fact, one of that imposing appearance, of that athletic frame, that gladiator might have envied; and the expression of his dark, lowering eye evidently indicated a determination equal to his apparent strength. The slight changes of color in his expressive face, when caused by any agitating circumstance, seemed the reflection of an inward flame, the symbol of compressed

passion, and gave an indescrivable effect to his features when roused by a sentiment of indignation. He wore a nearly tight dress of black velvet, which displayed to the greatest advantage the bold outline of his muscular frame; and on his head, tied beneath the chin, a silk cap of the same color, which only partially confined his crisp and abundant hair.

But few minutes had elapsed after the return of Maria la Bella with the artist, when Antonio Barbarigo, the handsome gondolier, rushed into the tavern, and seizing the hand of Maria, exclaimed in a voice tremulous with excessive agitation, "My dearest! my beloved!"

These sounds at once roused the dormant anger of the enraged Gianetti. "Hence! hence!" he cried; "out of this house—beggar—vagabond—lazzarone!"

But the gondolier did not stir—rendered daring by the danger his mistress had just incurred, but submissive by the depth of his love, which renders man insensible even to insult, when the welfare of the loved one is at stake—"Hear me, Gianetti," he said, coolly, "hear me—if you have finished insulting me, and if not, complete the list of foul names you have cast upon me, and then hear me. Have you never loved, Gianetti? Was the mother of Maria never as dear to you as her daughter is to me? Ah, Gianetti, you cannot have forgotten the love of your youth—no! And do you not know that when I was but ten years old, and Maria five, I was already her cavalier and defender? that even then, in childish fear of an imagined danger, she took refuge in my arms, as later beneath the shade of the sail of my gondola—friends, before we became as brother and sister, brother and sister before we became lovers, the little chapel of St. Marc received at last our vows, and will keep them for ever. And this betrothing, Gianetti, is beyond your power to cancel—beyond the power of man to break; our bodies may be separated—one of us may die; but our hearts—our souls are united for ever. Come, Gianetti, will you cheer the path of your old age with a blessing, or will you wet it with our tears?"

"This poor boatman speaks like an orator," murmured the thoughtful artist; "he is inspired—it is love. Strange, that all other men exult in a passion that I cannot, or," murmured he, in a still lower tone, "perhaps will not feel!"

But the eloquence of the gondolier produced no effect upon the obdurate Gianetti, who renewed his insults and his threats. "Stay! stay!" cried Antonio, "I may become rich! I have youth—I have strength—I have ambition—I have hope—I have enthusiasm; these may lead me far, may—"

"The dreaming of an idiot!" interrupted Gianetti.

"Why not of a prophet?" replied the still undaunted Antonio; "Lorenzo de Medici was but a cloth-merchant, and Giacomo Siorza but a cow-herd."

Here the artist, who could contain himself no longer, interposed, and touching the shoulder of the gondolier, said, "Barbarigo, thou hast spoken well; confidence and success are twin brothers. Maria la Bella shall be your wife!"

"Never!" exclaimed Gianetti.

"Master Jew," continued the artist, turning disdainfully towards Gianetti, "suppose that this man put six hundred pistoles into the wedding-casket!"

"It will be time to talk of that when he has the six hundred pistoles to dispose of," replied the tavern-keeper. "He cannot even call the four planks of his gondola his own property."

"He will possess the six hundred pistoles before to-morrow," replied the artist, motioning Gianetti from him by the turn of the hand; and drawing from within his vest a small roll of parchment, he detached a small piece, and spread it out carefully upon a table. Then securing the corners with four forks, which were lying ready for the use of hungry visitors, with marvellous ease and rapidity he drew a human hand—a hand as expressive as a face. It was widely opened; but the fingers bending up, seemed as though about to clutch something with anxious joy, as if a shower of gold were about to pour wealth within its grasp—and that it would close upon it, not only with ecstatic joy, but with a grasp of iron. It was the hand of a miser, trembling with sensitive impatience for his only idol, his only treasure—his gold! A thick silver ring of peculiar pattern seemed to make a portrait of that speaking hand. It was, in fact, a portrait, and Gianetti unwittingly furnished the name to the anonymous picture, exclaiming, "But that is my hand." "And your history," added the artist. Then giving the drawing to the gondolier, "Take it," said he, to the Father Bourdo, the chief librarian of St. Marc, and ask of him six hundred pistoles."

"Six hundred pistoles!" exclaimed the astonished Gianetti; "the man is mad—raving mad! I would not give a sequin for it." To which the artist only replied by a contemptuous silence, quietly turning his back upon the tavern-keeper, and carefully rolling up the remaining pieces of parchment, which he placed within the folds of his vest.

Antonio Barbarigo still remained at the same spot, holding the piece of vellum upon which that expressive hand had been traced, and which still seemed to cry out "Gold! give me gold!" He looked towards Maria for advice. She read the question in his eyes;

and with the credulity of love, but the scepticism of fear, she hesitatingly whispered, rather than spoke the words, "Who knows?"

But it was enough; Barbarigo had darted from the place before the gentle sounds had died upon the ear.

Maria la Bella was upon her knees in prayer, and the sombre artist paced moodily to and fro along the rough floor of the tavern, and thus an hour was past.

Antonio returned, the bearer of a letter, begging the favor of a visit from the artist to the librarian of St. Marc, who was, as every one knows, at the same secretary of Leo X., and the lover of Lucrezia Borgia. But Antonio was also the bearer of a small canvas bag; he placed it before the astonished Gianetti, whose hand advanced greedily, to clutch it, and so precisely resembled, at that moment, its portrait by the strange artist, that all exclaimed "The hand! the hand!" and a momentary feeling of awe seemed to pervade the feelings of all present, except the cold proud artist, as though something of magic had been practical.

After a moment, the artist brook the uneasy silence. "Weigh them," said he to Gianetti; "you will find them real gold." Antonio Barbarigo, who stood gazing on Maria, pale with excess of joy, now threw himself with true Italian enthusiasm at the feet of his benefactor. "One more boon," exclaimed he, "one more—who are you?"

"What matters it?" said the stranger, turning proudly away.

"What matters it, say you?" cried the gondolier, with a delirium of enthusiasm, of that earnest enthusiasm, that communicates itself to all around, to the coldest natures—to the hardest hearts. "What matters it? then what matters the name of God to the priest who glorifies him, or to the faithful who adore him—or what matters to a lover the name of his betrothed? Your name, signor, your name! that I may add it to the religion of my heart!"

"I am Michael Angelo Buonarrotti."

"Michael Angelo!" exclaimed the surrounding group—and with one accord they bent the knee before the renown of the great painter, sculptor, and architect; for in Italy the majesty of genius is always acknowledged with enthusiasm.

"It is now my turn to ask my favor," said Michael Angelo, grasping the hand of the gondolier; "but I will not fix the date of its performance. You must allow me to reproduce upon canvas, or in marble, the exquisite form of the beautiful wife I have given you."

Was it only the great artist that spoke?—dreaming of conferring the immortality of a masterpiece upon evanescent but exquisite beauty that stood blooming in its short-lived youth before him?—or was it the man that spoke, longing to preserve the record of a moment which had roused, though but for an instant, some dormant, but yet not absent sentiment in his being—the softness of which, though rejected, was yet sweet in recollection?

His cold face showed no sign by which the enigma might be guessed.

Maria had not uttered a word since the return of Antonio.

Sentiment suffocates words, as words destroy sentiment; which Montaigne felt, when he so actively exclaimed, "Nothing empties the heart like the tongue." But now, Maria approached the great artist, and taking that hand which had wrought so many marvellous works—the most marvellous of which appeared to her, her marriage with Antonio—she reverently kissed it, and as she did so, a tear fell from her beautiful eyes, the overflowing fountains of her gratitude, and traced its silver course over the dark hand of the deeply-moved Buonarrotti. His pulse beat tumultuously, and a world of gentleness, and love, and beauty appeared to him for a moment—as the clear serenity of heaven is seen sometimes for an instant through the dark clouds of the tempest—but brief, too, as the glimpse of azure in the storm, was that gleam of a world of love to the solitary soul of the great painter; the vision closed—and for ever.

The destiny is written in the character of man; his fatality consists in his organization; and the great Michael Angelo was destined to make the eventful voyage of life alone, as his rival, the more genial Raphael, once said, "loudly as the headsmen."

Twenty years passed, and Antonio Barbarigo found, as Buonarrotti has foretold to him, that confidence and success are twin brothers; he became, step by step, a distinguished commander in the service of the Venetian Republic, but never forgot his debt of gratitude to the artist, which accompanied Buonarrotti to the last. Maria la Bella, too, continued to render her pure homage and gratitude to the name and genius of Michael Angelo; and his name was always associated with her purest reveries, and most fervent prayers.

The "hand"—the almost momentary work of a small piece of black chalk, guided by the inspiration of genius—was long preserved in the library of St. Marc; but on the French invasion when so many rare and valuable works were dispersed, it was carried to France by a private soldier, and found its way to the matchless collections of drawing of the great masters in the Louvre, where it was carefully preserved, and formed one of the rarest gems even of that incomparable casket. But the year 1814 brought about the fall of France; and the trophies of her victories were borne

from her, many to be restored to their original and legitimate homes, but many more to be lost for ever. I have since sought the famous "hand" of Michael Angelo in the collections of Venice, Rome, and Florence, without success; but the last named city preserves among its popular traditions the little romance I have endeavored to narrate.

THE SORCERER.

I can only tell you what happened, and you have only my bare word to rely on. For all you know I may be a little mad on one subject; at least I run the risk of being thought so by telling you the story at all. However, there are others in the world who can vouch for it, though they are not here now, and if you choose to have it, you may.

I am a colonel and a gray-headed man, now; but this happened when I was a young fellow of twenty-five, and only a lieutenant—a newly-made one, also. Our regiment had been ordered to India, and I, of course, was ready to do my duty, but had only been married a fortnight to a girl I loved intensely. It was as terrible to both of us, and in our excitement, we said and did some very foolish things, I have no doubt. Among others, we promised each other that, if either should die, his or her spirit would appear to the survivor.

"You would not be afraid of me, my dear?" she asked. "You would never be afraid of me, even were I dead; and I promise never to show any signs of terror, if you are the one to visit me."

And it was likelier by far that I should be the one to keep the promise, if it could be kept, since I was going into battle, and she remained at home.

The day came at last which tore us apart; and for many more, of course we could hear nothing of each other. I wrote whenever I could, and her answers came full of love and tenderness.

It is not my intention to tell you of the battles we fought, or of dangers we encountered. My story begins in a time of peace when our tents were pitched on an arid plain, and we languished beneath the burning sun of India in the height of its fierce summer. Men died of sun-stroke every day. Fevers broke out in the camp. I myself was not ill, but too languid to move.

I thought of my wife incessantly. I had waited a long time in vain for an answer to my last letter; vague doubts troubled me. The horrible impossibility of receiving any news, the terrible necessity for the tardy mails, was almost more than I could bear. I was ready to seize upon anything, however ridiculous, that could afford me relief. I counted the steps of the sentry just without the gate, and said to myself, if he makes an odd step she is safe. He made an even number. I opened the Bible at random, saying to myself, if nothing is wrong, Heaven will comfort by giving me a gentle answer, and the words I read were those of grief and lamentations.

Near me sat some other officers. One was smoking, one asleep, one trying to read a tattered newspaper. None of us had energy enough to attempt conversation.

So we remained nearly all the afternoon, and the sun was going down flinging long bars of crimson light across the tent, when my servant appeared at its opening, saluted, and waited to be questioned.

"Well, Norris?" I asked.

"I beg pardon, sir, but a sorcerer is waiting outside. He has done some wonderful things, and I took the liberty of telling you, sir. He would amuse you, sir, I think. He promises"—and here Norris turned red—"to look for anything you please—anywhere on earth. And if you please, sir, he described my Nancy. She was walking in the park with a little child as she does always on an afternoon with her missus' children."

"He will only be a bore," said the colonel.

But I sprang to my feet at once. I was in the mood for some such thing. And it was my tent in which we were, and I was master there.

"Show him in, Norris," I said. "Gentlemen, I fancy the man may at least amuse us. I have seen them do some curious things."

Norris departed. In a moment more he returned with a tall hollow-eyed man, of about forty, who wore a robe embroidered with gold thread, and was followed by a boy of about ten years old, who wore nothing but a piece of blue cloth about his loins.

Over his arm the sorcerer carried a large white cloth, and the boy bore a red cushion on his head. Both bowed profoundly; and the sorcerer having uttered some cabalistic words spread the cloth upon the ground and ordered the boy to place the cushion upon it. This being accomplished he seated the boy upon the cushion and begged to tie the cloth about him knotting it over his head until he and the cushion were one huge bundle, when with furious cries and oaths he began to beat it with a knotted club that he had fastened at his waist, while the poor child's moans filled the whole tent and forced from us exclamations of horror, although we felt assured that it was all part of some trick, and that no blows really fell upon the boy.

At last he desisted and unwrapped the cloth. Within it was the cushion, but no boy. We had seen him tie the little fellow up; in the bundle, but he was there no longer. The magician appeared furious. He called upon