

# THE ORANGE LILY.

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## Poetry.

### PHANTOMS.

All houses wherein men have lived and died  
Are haunted houses. Thro' the open doors  
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,  
With feet that makes no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the doorway, on the stair,  
Along the passages they come and go,  
Impalpable impressions on the air,  
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more ghosts at table than the hosts  
Invited; the illuminated hall  
Is throng'd with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,  
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see  
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear,  
He but perceives what is; while unto me  
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title deeds to house or lands;  
Owners and occupants of earlier dates  
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands  
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit-world around this world of sense  
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere  
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapors dense  
A vital breath of mere ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipoise  
By opposite attractions and desires;  
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,  
And the more noble instinct that aspires.

The perturbations, the perpetual jar  
Of earthly wants and aspirations high,  
Come from the influence of that unseen star,  
That undiscover'd planet in our sky.

And as the moon, from some dark gate of cloud,  
Thro' o'er the sea a floating bridge of light,  
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd,  
Into the realm of mystery and night.

So from the world of spirits there descends  
A bridge of light connecting it with this,  
O'er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,  
Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.

### The Blind Man's Wreath.

(From Household Words.)

EDITED BY CHARLES DICKENS

"My boy, my poor blind boy!"

This sorrowful exclamation broke from the lips of Mrs. Owen, as she lay upon the couch to which a long and wasting illness had confined her, and whence she well knew she was never more to rise.

Her son, the only child of her widowed hearth, the sole object of her cares and affections, knelt beside her, his face bowed upon her pillow, for now only, in a moment of solemn communion with his mother, had she revealed the fatal truth, and told him she must soon die! He had watched and hoped and trembled for many weary months, but never yet had he admitted to himself the possibility of losing her; her fading cheek and sunken eye could not reveal to him the progress of decay, and so long as the loved voice maintained its music to his ear and cheered him with promises of im-

provement so long as her hand still clasped his, he had hoped she would recover.

He had been blind since he was three years old; stricken by lightning, he had totally lost his sight. A dim remembrance of his widowed mother's face, her smoothly braided hair, and flowing white dress, was one of the few recollections entwined with the period before all became dark to him.

The boy grew up, tall, slender, delicate, with dark pensive eyes which bore no trace of the calamity which had destroyed their powers of vision; grave, though not sad; dreamy, enthusiastic, and requiring his mother's care with the deepest veneration and tenderness. In the first years of his childhood, and whenever his education did not take them to London and elsewhere, they had resided near Bytown on the seacoast in one of the prettiest parts of England.

Independently of this natural kindness which very rarely fails to be shown towards any person who is blind, there was that about both the widow and her son which invariably rendered them acceptable guests; for their intellectual resources, and powers of conversation, were equally diversified and uncommon. Mrs. Owen had studied much in order to teach her son, and thus, by improving her natural abilities, had become a person of no common stamp: her intellectuality, however, being always subservient to, and fitly shadowed by, the superior feminine attribute of love, gentleness, and sympathy; for Heaven help the woman in whom these gifts are not predominant over any mental endowments whatsoever!

When they walked out together his mother took his arm; ne'er was proud of that, he liked to fancy he was some support to her, and many pitying eyes used lately to follow the figure of the widow in the black dress she constantly wore, and the tall pale son on whom she leaned confidently, as if striving to a secret deception to convince him that it was indeed the staff of her declining age. But gradually the mother's form bent, her step dragged wearily along, and the expression of her face indicated increasing weakness. The walks were at an end, and before long she was too feeble to leave her bed, excepting to be carried to a summer parlor, where she lay upon a sofa beside an open window, with flowers twining around the easement, and the warm sunshine tiling all things with joy, save her foreboding heart and the anxious son who incessantly hung over her. Friends often came to visit them, and turned away with a deep sadness as they noted the progress of her malady, and heard the blind man ask each time whether they did not think her better—oh, surely a little better than when they last beheld her?

Among all these, no friend was so welcome or brought such solace to the sick room as Mary P., a joyous girl of nineteen, one of the beauties of the country, and the admiration of all who knew her. Mrs. Owen had danced Mary upon her knees, and Edward used to make baskets and weave garlands for her when he was a boy of twelve, and she, a little fairy of six years old or thereabouts, stood beside him, praising his skill, and wondering how he could manage so cleverly though blind. None of his childish companions ever led him so

carefully as Mary, or seemed so much impressed with his mental superiority; she would leave those games of her playmates in which the blindness prevented him from joining, and would listen for hours to the stories with which his memory was well stored, or which his own imagination enabled him to invent.

As she grew up, there was no change in the frank and confiding nature of their intercourse. Mary still made him the recipient of her girlish secrets, and plans, and dreams, just as she had done of her little griefs and joys in childhood: asked him to quote his favorite passages of poetry, or stationed herself near him at the piano, suggesting subjects for him to play, which he extemporized at her bidding. Bright and blooming as Mary was, the life of every party, beaming with animation and enjoyment, no attention was capable of rendering her unmindful of him; and she was often known to sit out several dances in an evening to talk to Edward Owen, who would be sad if he thought himself neglected.

And now she daily visited the invalid; her buoyant spirits tempered by sympathy for her increasing sufferings; but still diffusing such an atmosphere of sunshine and hope around her, that gloom and despondency seemed to vanish at her presence. Edward's sightless eyes were always raised to her bright face, as if he felt the magic influence it imparted.

His mother had noted all this with a mother's watchfulness; and, on that day, when strong in her love, she had undertaken to break to him the fact which all others shrank from communicating, she spoke likewise of Mary, and of the vague wish she had always cherished of one day seeing her his wife.

"No, mother, no!" exclaimed the blind man. "Dear mother, in this you are not true to yourself! What! Would you wish to see her in all her spring-time of youth and beauty sacrificed to such a one as I—to see Mary, as you have described her to me, as my soul tells me she is, and down to be the guide, and leader, and support of one who could not make one step in her defence; whose helplessness alone in the eyes of man, would be his means of sheltering and protecting her! Would you hear her pined,—our bright Mary pined—as a blind man's wife, mother?"

"But Edward—if she loves you, as I am sure she does—"

"Love me, mother! Yes, as angels love mortals, as a sister loves a brother, as you love me! And for this benignant love, this tender sympathy, I could kneel and kiss the ground she treads upon, but beyond this—were you to entreat her to marry your blind and solitary son, and sue in pity answered yes,—would I accept her on such terms, and rivet the chains she had consented to assume? Oh mother, mother, I have not studied you in vain, your life has been one long self-sacrifice to me; its silent teaching shall bear fruit! Do not grieve so bitterly for me. God was very merciful in giving me such a mother, let us trust Him for the future!"

Ah, poor tortured heart, speaking bravely forth, striving to cheer the mother;