

Choice Literature.

TO THE SOUTHWEST WIND.

(A Reply to Mr. Norman Gale.)

Let who will extol the North wind,
Biting blasts and blinding snow;
But to me the sweet Sou'wester
Is the fairest wind I know!
When old Boreas' savage splendour
Has at length its course outrun,
And from skies of April, tender,
Smiles the northward-veering sun;

When, in warm and sheltered places,
From brown beds of leafage sere,
Pale young blossoms lift sweet faces,
Shyly poised 'twixt hope and fear;
Comes the soft Sou'wester, blowing
From the isles of spice and palm,
Fields and woods with blossoms strewn,
Filling all the air with balm.

Life-restorer!—Beauty-giver!
How our hearts, with longing sore,
Throb to see the captive river
Sparkling to the sun once more!
While the happy thrush is telling
Sweet bird-gossip to his bride,
How the brown leaf-buds are swelling,
Where the gentle violets hide!

How the lily-bells are ringing
Chimes upon the fragrant breeze,
Incense-laden censers swinging
For the butterflies and bees!
How, the velvet mosses leaving,
Ferns their crosiers green upraise!
How thy fairy touch is weaving
Wreaths of bloom o'er woodland ways!

Glad, we hail thee, Southwind, bringing
Hint and glimpse of fairest things,
Of the woodland, gay with singing,
Of the rush of airy wings;
Happy toil of hopeful sower,
Bloom of summer's glorious prime,
Golden sheaves that bless the mower,
In the joyous autumn time!

Let who will, then, praise the North
wind,
Reigning king of frost and death;
Nature-lovers love the southwind,
With its life-bestowing breath!
Bearing to our human sadness
Dreams of beauty, far above
All our earthly spring of gladness,
In eternal life and love!

—Agnes M. Machar, Kingston, Canada.

"COALS OF FIRE."

Poor Bruno lay dying; his great brown eyes lifted up to his master's face in an almost human appeal for help; his burly black form that but a moment before was convulsed with agony, lying still and rigid.

It is over; and now the man turns away with a hard look on his face and bitter words on his lips. "I'll pay him for this!" Silas Merner and Rick Cobden had been good friends generally for at least a quarter of a century; but lately, through this very dog, a little cloud had arisen on the hitherto clear horizon.

Bruno had an especial antipathy to fowls, probably the result of his early training—and could never see a matronly "Biddy" industriously providing for a promising brood in his master's garden without evincing an unneighborly degree of severity. Yea, he had been known to encroach on foreign territory in times in pursuance of his own besetting sin; and it had even been hinted that he was guilty of graver offences, but of this we cannot speak of certainty. As boys, Rick and Silas had fought shoulder to shoulder in many a hard battle; in early manhood they had confided to each other their dearest secrets, their hopes, ambitions and disappointments; and none grieved more than Rick when a blight fell on his friend's affections—a blight that seemed to sour "the milk of human kindness" in the bosom of Silas Merner. "I'll pay him for this," he said, for he suspected that Rick had poisoned his favourite, as had complaint had been made the evening previous of Bruno's depredations, with a request to have him chained up—a request that had unfortunately been unheeded.

"Merner's dog's dead, father," said little Ted Cobden, as he came in from an evening's fishing. "I saw him buryin' it down by the pond, and I guess he thinks we've killed it, for he said if I came there fishin' again he would have me 'rested for trespassin' and he never said a word to Pete Hayes."

"I am sorry for Merner," said his father, "for he thought a sight of his dog, though I can't say I'm sorry it's dead; it was a mischievous brute at times, and I as good as caught it at that last sheep worrying. With the exception of his mother, it was the only friend he clung to lately; and yet I knew Silas Merner when he was a good deal different. Poor old fellow, I wouldn't have killed his dog for a farm, though I expected it would get him into trouble if he didn't tie him up, and so sent him word in time—as I thought."

A night or two afterwards, a valuable mare belonging to Cobden was hopelessly lamed by being cut in the fetlock joints while grazing in the pasture field. Rick was grieved to the heart about it, not only on account of his loss, but because he believed Silas had taken this plan to avenge the death of his dog, and it cut him to think that his old friend had proved so faithless, though not even to his own family did he tell his thoughts.

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

Strange that the preacher had chosen this text for the following Sabbath, a text that filled two of his hearers with wonder, as to how he could have found out what they had never breathed to mortal man.

"'Coals of fire!' I never thought of that," said Rick in such a loud whisper that more than one of the scattered congregation turned round to see who spoke.

"'Coals of fire!'" said Silas, as he passed through the village on his way home. "Great way that would be to pay him back."

"'Coals of fire!'" exclaimed Rick next morning, as he toiled in the hay-field under the burning rays of a July sun. "It was the Master's way, and it must be right. Give me grace to do it, Lord."

"'Coals of fire!'" shouted Silas, as he blew the forge until his iron was at a white heat. "Poor Bruno! I'll try it, though."

Never before did the dusty blacksmith wield the hammer with such giant force; and never before had the anvil rung out such mighty strokes. The words he had just spoken seemed to fill his already strong arm with Herculean power, and the iron was shaped as if by magic. But, hark! in spite of the deafening clang, that scream of terror has reached the striker's ear, and throwing down his hammer he rushes out to the mill pond, where a little form has just slipped from a log into the murky depths.

"Ted Cobden's gettin' drowned!" cried a shrill voice from the neighbourhood of the logs.

"Ted Cobden?" The blacksmith clinched his fist and hesitated a moment after repeating the name; "coals of fire," Silas; but see, he is already to the rescue, and soon the slimy little figure is recovered and resuscitated, for this is not the first time that the young blacksmith has brought back life's current to the stagnant heart. But warmth is needed now, so hastily fetching his coat he folds it around the child and hurries up the hill to the farmhouse.

"Here's your boy, Cobden," he said, uncovering his bundle. "He was most gone; but he'll come all right with plenty of blankets and hot water."

The hands had just been summoned from the field to dinner, and the sudden entrance of Silas in such a condition, together with his burden and ominous words, caused a momentary panic in which the company seemed unable to comprehend the situation.

"The boy has been nearly drowned!" shouted Silas. "Get blankets and hot water, quick!"

The mother was the first to grasp the truth, and soon the requisites were applied, after which the child fell into a quiet sleep; so, seeing that all was well, Silas left as abruptly as he entered and his absence was only discovered when the father thought of thanking him for rescuing his boy.

"I'll go there in the evening and take our thanks to him," he said to his wife; "by-gones must be by-gones after this."

As the farmer passed the blacksmith's shop at dusk, on the above errand, he was arrested by a moaning sound that seemed to proceed from the interior of the building, and on pushing open the door he dimly saw a prostrate figure in one of the farthest corners. Thinking that Silas had been taken suddenly ill, he hurried to his side and bent over him, when he discovered that the sufferer was a stranger.

"Well, my man, what's the matter?"

"Sick, dying; look here," groaned the poor wretch, pointing to a wound in his neck, from which his life's blood was ebbing.

"How did you come by this?" inquired Rick, in tones of alarm.

"Pistol went off in pocket," gasped the man.

"An accident, was it?"

The tramp nodded, and seeing there was no time to lose, Rick hurried away for help. In a few feeling words he thanked Silas for the life of his child, and then told him of the wounded man in the shop beyond, asking him to go and see if anything could be done until a physician was found.

On arriving at the village he learned that the doctor was not at home, but the servant promised to send him with all speed to "The Corners" on his return; so with apparent disappointment, the messenger retraced his steps, fearing that the aid he sought would come too late.

As he stumbled in the darkness over the threshold of the shop, a prolonged "sh!" came from the watcher, whom he discerned by the dim light of a lantern, bending over the dying man, so he quietly drew near and listened.

"No, never killed nobody; goin' to shoot dog if the poison I give him didn't work; bit me, so he did; sorry I cut the horse, thought 'twas Boulder's; he said I stole his sheep. It's all. D'y'e think he'll take me—that one? (looking upward), take a bad man? Will He?"

"Yes, He died for men, for bad men like you and me," said Silas, solemnly.

"Yo, yo," gasped the man, but the words would not come, and Silas gently laid the hand he held across the pulseless breast. "Can you forgive me, old fellow?" he said turning to Rick; "I was mean enough to blame you for killing my dog—you who have stood by me good and true all these years. Can you do it, Rick?"

"I believe you suspected me of this, and I was mean enough to blame you for ruining my mare out of revenge! Can you forgive, Silas?"

The men clasped hands in silent token of the words they could not utter in the presence of death, and of Him who forgives our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.—Exchange.

A SUPERB TEST OF THE JACK TAP.

For the name of the "Victoria" will ever be associated with a story that the nation will cherish as one of those precious records by which empires live. It was all over in fifteen minutes, but that fifteen minutes will live in history as lives the Balaclava charge, which did not last much longer. The testing times of life seldom last long. The first dip of the litmus paper in the solution proves the existence of acid, and the first moment of a supreme crisis suffices for a test. And as it has been said that it was almost worth the enormous expenditure of the Crimean War to have the object lesson which was afforded by the charge of the Six Hundred—of the absolute readiness of the British soldier to ride "into the jaws of death, into the mouth of hell"—so it may be said that it was almost worth while to lose the "Victoria" in order to have so superb an illustration of the mettle of our men. Death, in the old phrase, is the gate of life, but Death is more than that: Death is the sovereign alchemist who assays the value of the

coin struck in the mint of life. Death is the supreme test. Invincible in life, are our blue-jackets invincible also in death? Their drill goes like clock work by night and by day, their discipline is perfect by sea and by land. But how will it be when each individual, nay, when the whole ship's company with all its component weaknesses and shortcomings, is suddenly slung over an abyss yawning eighty fathoms deep below, with not one chance in three that any will escape alive? The "Victoria" supplied an answer. Not for a single moment does there seem to have been even a faltering word or a hurried deed.

Not even when the great ship reeled and quivered like a wounded thing beneath the crushing blow of 10,000 tons of metal hurled against it at the rate of eighteen miles an hour, did any of the crew or the officers lose their self-possession. Everything which had been laid down and provided for such an emergency was remembered and acted upon. Whether in trying to get out the collision mats or in the last desperate plunge shoreward, in which the half-sinking ship with her forepart all under water, steamed towards the land—everything seems to have been done with the regularity and steadiness and cool courage that are the distinguishing features of the British navy. And in the last dread moment when the order was given, "Each for himself," which dissolved the organic whole of the disciplined ship's company into a mass of individuals each set free to seek his own safety in his own way, nothing seems to have been done unworthy the name and the fame of the British sailor. The papers indeed, are full of stories of the self-remembering devotion of these blue-jackets to each other.

All seem to have been alike, from the admiral who sank with his ship to the chaplain who perished in saving others. The midshipman who refused to leave the admiral and went down by his side. The brave fellow who freed the diver from his lead-laden sinkers, and lost his own life while so doing, although he saved the diver's—and all the other incidents of heroic unselfishness and comradeship that is stronger than death—these things are a priceless addition to the heritage of our land.—From W. T. Stead's sketch of Admiral Tryon, in August Review of Reviews.

THE SACRED NATURE OF PROMISES.

Life is too short for evasions, quibbles, untruthfulness, and neglect; if we desire to get the best out of life, we must live the best ourselves. To every man and woman blessed with a liberal, or even a common school education, there is given an added responsibility. We must war against the corrupting influences of a foreign population which increases rapidly, and brings with it vice and ignorance; we must place our children side by side with children who know nothing of pure home training, and children who have never had a home; we must meet falsehood with truth, and dishonesty with honour, and so train the youth of this broad land, that a falsehood would be to them the vile thing it really is. At West Point, the young cadet is taught that a falsehood is beneath the dignity of an officer and a gentleman; in the wide world let us teach our young army of coming rulers, in small things, as in great, the mighty power of Truth. Alas for any people when Honour and Truth make way for Policy and Expediency. It was Ruskin who said: "Teach your sons that their deeds are but a firebrand's tossing, unless they are indeed just men and perfect in the fear of God.—Kate Tannatt Woods, in The Chautauquan.

The hearts of some women tremble like leaves at every breath of love which reaches them, and they are still again. Others, like the ocean, are moved only by the breath of the storm, and not so easily lulled to rest.—Longfellow.