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Poetry.

BUILDING ON THE SAND.

BY ELIZA COOK.

'Tis well to woo, 'tis good to wed,
For so the world has done
Since myrtle grew, and roses blew,
And morning brought the sun.

But have a care, ye young and fair;
Be sure ye pledge with truth;
Be certain that your love will wear
Beyond the days of youth;

For, if ye give not heart for heart,
As well as hand for hand,
You'll find you've played the "unwise" part,
And "built upon the sand."

'Tis well to save, 'tis well to have
A goodly store of gold,
And hold enough of shining stuff,
For Charity is cold.

But place not all your hope and trust
In what the deep and ocean brings;
We cannot live on yello'w dust
Unmind with pure things.

And he who piles up wealth alone
Will often have to stand
Beside his coffee-stand, and own
'Tis "built upon the sand."

'Tis good to speak in kindly guise,
And smile where'er we can,
Fair speech should blind the human mind,
And love-link man to man.

But stay not at the gentle words,
Let deeds with language dwell,
The one who plums starving birds
Should scatter crumbs as well.

The Mercy that is warm and true
Must lend a helping hand,
For those who talk, yet fail to do,
But "build upon the sand."

Literature.

THE MERCHANT OF MARSEILLES.

Those who have been at Marseilles will remember that vast building on the quay (close to the Hotel de Ville, and in the same style of architecture), which, though now subdivided into warehouses, bears token, by the unity of its design, of once having been in the possession of one owner, and originally intended for one purpose. That great building was long known as the Hotel St. Victor, and belonged to the wealthy family bearing the name.

In the year 1700, he who bore the honours of the house was in trouble. His firm, for years the largest and richest in Marseilles, was on the eve of bankruptcy; their credit, which had stood for ages unimpeached, was tottering to its very base. He was a man in the prime of life, that St. Victor, but the dark fine hair was thickly strewn with silver, and the broad brow was furrowed by lines that care must have planted there. All around the room in which he sat, silent and alone, might be seen the evidences of the wealth once possessed by the family, and of the luxury in which they had been accustomed to live; rich furniture, velvet, and gold, mirrors, carvings, soft carpets—rare luxuries in France even at the present time—trinkets, pictures, all that money could purchase or taste could select,

were gathered in that splendid apartment. Each panel of the walls contained, or had contained, the rarest paintings, of large size, and mostly by the Italian masters, but it might be observed that some of them had been recently displaced, and such,—as the marks on the walls testified, had been of greater size than those remaining, and, doubtless of greater value, though those still hanging on the panels were meet for the palaces of kings. Above the high mantel-piece, of pure white marble with its elaborate decoration, and majestic proportions, hung an oval portrait—the portrait of a young man. It was a fair, radiant face, with an open, happy expression, and surrounded by soft, falling hair. It was the portrait of St. Victor—but of St. Victor long ago. Every now and then, and mechanically as it were, the man, amid his sad, silent musings, would raise his eyes to the bright picture of the boy. What a contrast did these present!—the one, how beautiful—how happy! the other; how mournful, and how wan!

The door opened, and an old man entered. He was old enough to be the father of St. Victor; but it was only Devereux, once head clerk to the house of St. Victor, now a substantial merchant of Marseilles. The dress of this person was worn and rich, his gait was feeble, and he leaned heavily on his staff, his brow was also furrowed, but the lines were those of age and thought; there was much of harshness, of pride, of determination to be traced on his countenance, but none of that woful anxiety which seemed withering up the manly prime of St. Victor.

The latter rose at his entrance, and moved towards him with evident pleasure,—

"Devereux!" he exclaimed—"Welcome!" But Devereux put back the offered hand with a smile, and said,—

"To-morrow, St. Victor, all those bills I hold of yours become due."

"St. Victor started.

"It is so, I know; but I am safe, for you hold them; and you will not press me."

"You miscalculate, St. Victor," said the old man, coldly. "I shall want the money." St. Victor tried to laugh.

"You know, Devereux—you know it is impossible that I could meet the demand. I could not take up one of those bills, far less the whole number."

"I want not the amount of one, nor two, nor three, but of all; and 'tis this I come to say."

"Devereux," said the debtor, with a cheek as white as ashes, "you might throw me into prison, you might ruin my credit and my name for ever; but I take Heaven to witness, I could not raise one-half the sum, though it were to save my soul. What mean you? Is it not as a friend that you have become the holder of those bills?"

The creditor rose to his feet.

"No!"

The poor debtor groaned aloud—"It was not always thus. Why do you now turn against me?"

"I turn not now," answered Devereux.

"I have longed for this hour—sought it early and late—lived but for it! You wronged me once, St. Victor, but my revenge is at hand! Yes, they shall be thine! the disgrace of bonds, the ignominy of the prison—proud, beautiful, beloved St. Victor! I shall triumph now!"

Does the old man rave? This—St. Victor, shrinking, bending before him, weary, care-worn, with dark locks so sadly streaked with white—this world-broken man! How is he worthy such epithets!—"proud, beautiful, beloved."

But the old man speaking thus, looked not at his wondering auditor: his eyes were raised to the bright, smiling portrait, and to that he spoke.

Devereux continued,—

"Ah! St. Victor, dost thou remember, long ago, when thou wert a young gay gallant, and I but a poor clerk in thy father's prosperous house? When you, the young heir, wert but a boy, I was past the season of youth. When you attained your brilliant majority, I, Devereux, was a man of sober middle-age. But I loved, oh! passionately and truly, loved for the first time, and even yet, St. Victor, that love is here!" And he laid his withered hand upon his heart.

"She was very beautiful and good, that girl, and she accepted my suit; we should have been happy, but you came. I need not tell you how it was: how soon the young, the dazzling St. Victor won from the plain clerk that heart, with all its wealth of love; how soon I was forgotten and discarded, how deeply you were loved. I need not repeat all—all my efforts to retain her, all my pleadings—pleadings poured vainly on the ear of passion—pleadings both to you and to her. But I will remind you of one day, when, scorned by her in your presence, I made a last appeal—an appeal to her faith, her honour,—to your generosity, your pity, when, stung to madness by the sight of your happiness, I ventured on bolder words than, perhaps, I should have used, and you answered by a blow! Yes, St. Victor, you stooped to that! you struck the poor clerk, rendered mad by his injuries and agony of mind—you answered by a blow! But you were happy, and you soon forgot that circumstance. Soon the maiden died—"

And here his voice, that failed and faltered, his eyes, that seemed to dim with tears, his lips that quivered, gave tokens that he spoke the truth when he said his love for her yet lived. And the poor debtor, while listening, forgot the troubles of the moment, thought not of the present. The past, with all its sorrow and its joy, its unimaginable happiness, its unimagined woe, was his again.

Devereux continued:

"The maiden died. Well for her she died, before your love grew cold, before she learned how much she had cast away for ever. She died before remorse or retribution could arrive, she died in your arms! Above her grave we met again. My love must have been strong,