

Poetry.

WORKINGMEN.

The noblest men I know on earth,
Are men whose hands are brown with toil;
Who, backed by no ancestral graves,
Hew down the wood and till the soil,
And win thereby a prouder fame
Than follows king or warrior's name.

The workingmen, whatever their task,
To carve the stone or bear the hod,
The sweat upon their honest brows,
The royal stamp and seal of God!
And brighter are their drops of sweat
Than diamonds in a coronet.

God bless the noble workingmen!
Who rear the cities of the plain—
Who dig the mines and build the ships,
And drive the commerce on the main;
God bless them! for their swarthy hands
Have wrought the glory of all lands.

I WONDER WHY.

I wonder why this world's good things,
Should fall in such unequal shares;
Why some should taste of all the joys,
And others only feel the cares.
I wonder why the sunshine bright
Should fall in paths some people tread,
While others shiver in the shade
Of clouds that gather overhead.

I wonder why the trees that hang
So full of luscious fruit, should grow
Only where some may reach and eat,
While others faint and thirsty go!
Why should sweet flowers bloom for some,
For others only thorns be found?
And some grow rich from fruitful earth,
While others till but barren ground?

I wonder why the hearts of some
O'erflow with joy and happiness,
While others go their lonely way
Unblessed with aught of tenderness!
I wonder why the eyes of some
Should never be moistened with a tear,
While others weep from morn till night,
Their hearts all crushed with sorrow here?

Ah, well, we may not know, indeed,
The ways, the wherefores of each life;
But this we know—there's One who sees
And watches us through joy and strife.
Each life its mission here fulfils,
And only He may know the end;
And loving Him, we can be strong
Through storm and sunshine He may send.

Tales and Sketches.

NEW YEAR'S AT LEIGH HOUSE.

BY S. ANNIE FROST.

It was New Year's day, and Mr. James Leigh had consented to his house being made a rendezvous for all his pretty daughter's friends, on that evening. There had been no morning receptions, but invitations were out for a large social meeting in the evening, and more than one pretty face had its blushes deepened by the thought of some special partner with whom to dance at Anna Leigh's New Year's party. It had been a custom of Mr. Leigh's sister for many years to have this annual gathering, and pretty motherless Anna had been allowed to come down in her simple white dress and partake of the festivities, although not "out," but this year the young girl was to take her place as the hostess, having been regularly introduced into society a few months previously.

The little flutter of expectation that girls, heart-whole and free, experience before a party, had given place with Annie to the deep calm happiness of loving where she had won the pure devotion of a noble upright heart in return. From a child, Harold Leslie had been her favorite companion and friend, and when he came to her to plead for the sweetest title man wins from woman, she put no mask over face or heart, but let him read the love in her voice and eyes. It was a match that suited all; Mr. Leslie was wealthy, well born, and gentlemanly; sweet Anna Leigh was the only child of a millionaire, a lady in position, education, and birth. So the course of true love ran very smooth, and, as Anna pinned to her dress the sprig of myrtle Harry had placed in the bouquet sent that morning, she had no thought of any jar in the smooth current of her happy life. Before another New Year dawned she hoped to be a happy beloved wife, dispensing the hospitalities of her husband's house.

The large parlors were filled at an early hour by the invited guests, and as Mrs. Morton and Anna greeted one after another of their friends, the elder lady had scarcely time to note a missing link in the chain. But the eyes of love, watching for one face, will never forget to note its loss, though the whole world beside crowded round. The hours passed heavily to the young hostess, for in the brilliant throng there was not one voice that could make the music her heart coveted. Where was he? In the morning he had called, his bright, manly self, full of life and vigor. It seemed impossible to believe that any ill had befallen him in those few short hours, yet equally impossible to think anything but an imperative necessity could have kept him from her side.

"Father!"

It was late in the evening when the word fell, in pleading accents, upon James Leigh's ear. He had withdrawn a little from his guests, and stood looking over the room with a gloomy brow and firmly-set lips.

"Well, Anna?"
"What was it Mr. Hunter said, just now, about Norris Leslie. Harry is not here!"
The last sentence whispered low, as if the utterance choked her.

"I'll tell you to-morrow. Go dance now, child; and see here, Anna, don't be too stiff to young Markham; he comes of good stock. No swindlers in his family, I'll be bound."

"Father, what is it? Tell me now. Come, we are not wanted. Come into the library."
"To-morrow, child, to-morrow."
"Now, O father, come now."

The white face, imploring eyes, and the suppressed agony in the voice were more than the loving father could resist. Reluctantly he yielded to the hand that led him from the room, but before the library was gained his arm was wound round the young girl's waist, to keep the trembling, shivering figure from falling.

"Is Harry dead?" she said, as he closed the door.

"Dead! Better if he were!"

"No, no, father; you cannot have such desperate news as that for me!"

"Anna, you must tear him from your heart, blot him from your life. Norris Leslie absconded to-day with the funds of the bank of which he is president—he is a swindler!"

"But, father, Harold!"

"His son accompanied him."

She dropped at his feet as if the sentence had shot her dead.

"It is a pretty mess, altogether," muttered the merchant, as he lifted the little figure in his arms, and carried it to a sofa, "and my little pet will be worst sufferer. I'd like to have them here for one hour," and he ground his teeth together. "Now, if I call folks in, this will be all over town to-morrow, and I won't have Anna's name bandied about in this connection. Fortunately the engagement is not much known. Anna! darling! Anna!"

But there was no answer to his loving call. As pale as death the girl lay unconscious of her father's voice and loving caress. Crushing the bright dress and flowers she had put on with such dainty care to please the eyes of him she loved, she lay cold and insensible like a crushed lily.

"Anna! Speak to me, pet," pleaded her father. "I must call Kate. Confound the fellow."
And Mr. Leigh strode off to the parlor again, to find his sister. Of course she had to be hunted up, as people waited in a hurry always do, but he found her at last, and, taking her place, sent her, with a whispered caution to be quiet, to the library.

Utterly ignorant of any cause for the illness, the good lady was bewildered to find her niece lying in a fainting fit on the sofa, as unlike the gay pretty little belle of an hour previous as it is possible to imagine. Her womanly skill and tenderness soon put the proper remedies to work, and when the father returned, a short time later, he found Anna conscious, but evidently unable to face her guests again that evening.

"I'll carry her up stairs, Kate," he said, "and you must make the best excuse you can."

"But what is the matter?" inquired the bewildered lady.

"To-morrow—I'll tell you to-morrow. Go back now, and make the best story you can. If she don't know herself she can't tell anybody else," he muttered, as his sister left the room. "Come, birdie, put your arms around my neck, and I'll carry you to your room."

She clung to him fondly. This was a love she could confide in, pure, true, unshaken from her infancy. Her little figure nestled into his strong arms, as he lifted her from the sofa, and her head sank down wearily yet trustingly upon the broad shoulder, that never yet turned away from its pressure.

"Yes," he said, as he put her on her bed, and sat down beside her, "yes, pet, I see what your eyes are asking me, and I will tell you all I know. Better tell you than have you in a brain fever with conjecture. You see they calculated to have a twenty-four hours' start, as this is a holiday, but there was some suspicion roused by Mr. Leslie's proceedings yesterday, and to-day some of the directors went to the bank, too late to prevent, but in time to discover the abduction. They went at once to the house. The old gentleman left early this morning; Harold at noon. It is a bad business! If it was only a money loss, pet, I would not play the stern father to your love, but disgrace has never touched our name."

"And shall not, through me! It will be a hard fight, father, but I will live it down."

"That's my brave girl! Shall"—and the loving voice sank to a whisper—"shall I say a prayer for my child to-night?"

"Here—now—papa."

And while the echo of the band playing a Strauss waltz came floating up the broad staircase, and the faint sound of moving feet and merry voices mingled with the music, in the room above the father prayed that the young girl, for whose pleasure the gayety had been awakened, might have strength to bear the sorrow that evening had brought to her happy life.

Many of the guests had departed before the host entered the drawing-room again, and soon the quiet of the house was unbroken, save by the stealthy feet of the servants as they made all fast, before retiring. In the cold gray light of the early winter morning, alone in her room, Anna Leigh looked upon her dead past and her future. She was a very fairy in face and form, this little heroine of mine; was small, graceful, and wonderfully pretty. Her deep blue eyes were childlike in their frank innocence, and round her shoulders clusters of sunny curls fell like a shower of golden threads. From her babyhood she had known no grief. Her mother died before she had learned to lisp her name, and her father's widowed sister had filled her place from the hour of her death. Loving her tall magnificent father with an almost worshipping love, Anna had been repaid by the tenderest, most caressing affection ever bestowed upon a child. Surrounded by the purest Christian influences, her religion had been one of the beauties of her life, gilding and refining all else. Then the love that had grown so unconsciously in her heart was almost a childish passion, so long ago seemed its commencement.

As she sat in the low arm-chair before the fire, on that cold morning, she let her thoughts dwell upon Harold as she believed him to be. The tall manly figure, the frank, open face, the voice, ringing and cheerful; not one memory was there of an act or word that was not open and frank as the sunshine. Harold Leslie a swindler? It was very hard to realize, and the more memory painted of his life, the more clearly she contradicted the supposition.

"It is false!" she said at last, in her heart. "He is noble, good, and true, and he will yet prove himself so. I cannot grieve father by any violent assertion of what I believe, but I will wait! I am yours, Harry, yours only. My promise was not made for a day or a week, but for life, and if you never come to claim it, I will die, true to my first, only love." She pressed her lips to the diamond circlet upon her finger, and in her heart pledged herself to keep her betrothal vow.

Mr. Leigh looked anxiously at the pale little face, as Anna came in to breakfast, but she gave him a brave sweet smile, and he was satisfied.

"I never dreamed the little witch had so much pride," he said to his sister.

"She's a true Leigh," was the proud answer.

And Anna only smiled, thinking the day would come when she might confess that more than pride sustained her.

It was a sore struggle at first for Anna Leigh to enter again into society soon enough to prevent conjecture as to her withdrawal. Her engagement was so recent that no certain tidings of it were afloat, and the New Year's party, planned that the loving father might introduce his intended son-in-law to his friends, had passed without any suspicion being aroused of the failure of its main object. The days crept wearily to the girl's darkened life. In vain she brought pride, religion, and duty to bear upon her heart: there was still ever present the bitter, wearing sense of loneliness and pain. She loved her father fondly; she loved her aunt, but she had given to Harold a deeper, stronger love than either, and her heart cried out against the cruel separation and the cloud upon his name. Could she have thought him the unworthy man the public voice proclaimed him to be, she had pride enough to have thrust his love from her heart, even if she broke it with the rupture; but her faith was not yet shaken. There was some mystery yet to be explained; he had been forced perhaps, to join his father, implicated innocently. She knew nothing of business arrangements, but she was sure he would return yet, unspotted, and prove his innocence.

Nearly a year had passed, and no news had been obtained of the defaulters. The bank was closed, and the directors trying to meet some of the claims upon them. Execrations against the name of the president had gone up from merchants crippled or ruined, from widows and orphans beggared, from old men and women who had been years toiling for the sums invested, from sufferers and sympathizers, till Anna's heart would cover and shrink, as if from a blow, whenever the name fell upon her ears. Yet in her heart she gave the lie to every word that touched her lover's good name.

Summer was over, and fall brought the Leighs from Newport to Leigh House, their city home. It was an old-fashioned homestead, built during the Revolution, before the city was more than a village, and in spite of modern improvements and additions, it retained its old title still. Anna's face had changed in these months of suspense and trial. From a careless child she had become a thoughtful woman, bearing a secret sorrow hidden from every eye. The laughing eyes of old were now earnest and grave; the smiling lips firmer, the face less mobile, yet sweet and winning in its expression of dignity. A tiny woman, but winsome and lovely in her dignified grace.

Leon Markham worshipped her. It is not too strong a word to paint the passionate adoration he poured forth at her feet. He had guessed something on that New Year's night, when he missed her from the room, but her reappearance a few days later, her gentle loveliness all unchanged, with only a dignity that might be the throwing aside of childishness, completely deceived him. He had none

of the claim of childhood's acquaintance, for he had come from a New England home to Anna's native city but a few years before. There was everything to favor him. His position and family were good, he was wealthy and talented, so without much fear he went to James Leigh for permission to address his daughter.

The father was delighted. Here was a chance to blot out entirely the memory of the prior engagement, if—if his thoughts halted over that. Anna's demeanor was not that of one who had forgotten. Yet he was sincere when he bade Leon Markham good speed in his wooing.

I wish I could paint for you this young New England gentleman, who loved Anna Leigh. He was handsome, yet it was not mere outline of feature that made his face so winning. There was a charm in the earnest expression of his full dark eyes, a feeling of security in the play of the beautiful mouth, a beauty of expression that made trust cling instinctively to this man wherever he went. He was that rarely perfect combination, a Christian gentleman.

Seeing these two in the highest attributes of their hearts, you can picture the torture of that interview when Leon besought Anna to be his wife. She admired, respected, trusted him, but there was no love in her heart for any but Harold.

Noting the agony on his face when she told him she could give him only friendship, her womanly pity was roused, and with the quick intuition of one noble heart reading another, she threw herself upon his generosity, and showed him her heart.

"The whole world believes him unworthy," she said, in conclusion, "and I have never, even to my father, spoken his name since the fatal New Year's night, but I can be the wife of no man but Harold Leslie."

"If your faith is shaken?" he questioned.

"If he proves unworthy, my love may die. I cannot tell, for I cannot believe him what the world says he is."

There was a moment of silence, so deep that even the breathing of the two disturbed it. Then he rose from his seat and stood before her.

"I thank you for your confidence," he said, in low, tender tones, "and from my heart I pray that your faith may prove true."

She rose too, as he spoke, and placed her little hand in his. Twice she tried to speak, but the words died on her lips. It had been an hour of intense mental pain, and she was delicately organized and felt such keenly.

"I am your friend?" he asked.

"My brother," she said softly.

"So be it. Remember, if I can serve you, my life is at the call of my little sister," and he bent over her and kissed the sunny hair rippling from her low broad forehead, and so left her, comforted and soothed, to carry away his own agony, and fight down the bitterest torture of his life. Said I not truly this was a Christian gentleman?

Three years glided away, and Leon Markham had visited many spots in the Old World where tourists love to linger. His home had grown insupportable when the hope that had made his love-life beautiful was wrested from him, and he had wandered away in quest of change and excitement. It was early winter, and he was in Italy, when, wandering one day through the streets of Rome, he met what seemed to him the shadow of Harold Leslie. There was a moment's pause, then hand grasped hand in cordial pressure.

"You are ill?" was Leon's first question.

"I have been, may be again. I hope so," was the desponding answer. "How long since you left the States?"

"Nearly three years."

"Do you hear often?"

"Never, scarcely. I have no correspondence."

"Then you—my father? I did not know but—"

"What! I am your friend, Harold."

"My father died, you know, in Florence, three months ago, of malarious fever. I had never found him, in all these years, but he saw my name on a list of arrivals there and sent for me. It is a long story, Leon." There was something almost pitiful in the pleading eyes he raised to his friend's face.

"Come to my room, and tell me all," said Leon. "It is no idle curiosity prompts me."

It was a short walk, and when once the tale was commenced Harold poured it forth in terse, hurried words.

He had found upon the table, on that fatal New Year's day, a note from his father bidding him farewell, and hinting at his crime. At once he had followed him, but was too late to catch the European steamer from New York. Waiting until the next, he had tried for three years to find Norris Leslie, and the last year published his name wherever he went, hoping it might catch his father's eyes: The one aim and hope of his life had been to persuade his father to restore the ill-gotten wealth, and clear his name. At Florence he was summoned to Norris Leslie's death-bed, and gained his point. All that was left of the money so fraudulently obtained was sent in trusty hands to America; but, unknown to his son, his father had also transmitted a letter, clearing the young man's name from all blame, stating his course, and amply exonerating him from any share in the swindle, or knowledge of its contemplation.

It was a long, sad story.

"I never knew of the letter till I saw it published in the—"*Cassett*," said Harold.

"My father is buried in Florence, under his own name. His assumed one was only dropping the surname, and it is recorded on the hotel register as Norris."

"But what are you doing?"
"Painting portraits. Very poor daubs too, I fear, but I manage to live."
"You will return now, to your home?"
"Never! I—in fact, Leon, you don't know all."

"But I know this," he answered, firmly, though the words seemed to burn his lips, "Anna Leigh trusted you through all, and loves you still."

"Leon! You would not deceive me?"

"I had it from her own lips."
There was a New Year's party at Leigh House a few weeks after the above conversation. It was the first one given since the night when Norris Leslie ran away from his native city, to die in Florence.

Anna Leigh was a graceful, pretty hostess, and the light has come back to her eyes, the spring to her step, for besides her stands the tall, manly figure of one who has come home to live down his father's shame, in his own upright life. Leon Markham is there too, and if his heart bleeds yet from its old wounds, he gives no sign to his "little sister," as she raised her grateful glance to his face, and thanks him for the crowning blessing of her life.

THE GIPSY GIRL.

A TALE OF EDWARD THE FOURTH.

Up the polished stairs, and along the lofty hall of Moorland, laden with flowers, bounded a light and graceful figure. Pausing at the oaken door of a turret chamber, Leonora Estrange tapped lightly, listening with bent head while she knocked. But moment after moment went by, and still the silence remained unbroken. At last, opening the door, Leonora entered.

The room was filled with a faint golden light, as the sunbeams shone through the voluminous folds of the draped curtains. With one glance at the couch, around which the crimson hangings were still fluttering with the motion of the opening door, she advanced to a small table, upon which stood an empty vase. Filling this from a crystal goblet, and seating herself, she began slowly to arrange her fragrant burthen.

Nearly an hour passed ere she had completed her pleasing task; then, as she brushed the last drooping leaf before her, she arose, and crossing to the couch, gathered back the silken curtains, and laid her hand gently upon the brow of the youthful sleeper, saying, in a low, sweet voice, "Sleeping yet, dear lady, and the morning sun full an hour old?"

"Ah, Leonora! dear Leonora, is it you?" murmured the half-awakened girl. "I must indeed have been weary to have slept thus." And rising, she threw a muslin mantle around her, and sank languidly into a cushioned chair. Here she bent over the beautiful blossoms with a murmur of delight as she parted their glossy leaves, and drew forth a white rose, tremulous with dew, and pressed it to her lips.

Suddenly the hand that was busy amid her golden curls trembled violently, and Leonora bent low, to hide the varying colour of her cheeks, and the wild flashing of her eyes.

The Lady Clare saw not the passionate flush that flitted across the beautiful face of her companion, for it had passed when she looked up.

Half-an-hour afterwards there arose the soft notes of a bugle, followed by a stir within the paved court beneath the high window. Soon the quick clatter of a horse's hoof was heard. A faint colour came to the delicate cheeks of the Lady Clare, and a warm smile to her lips, as she fastened the last fold of her riding-habit. She received her cap and plume from the hand of Leonora, but the feather was vibrating as if a sudden gust of wind had swept through the open window; and yet there was not air enough astir to have lifted a leaf. As the Lady Clare touched the hand of Leonora, it was icy cold. A shade of uneasiness overspread her placid features as she said, kindly, "You are not well, dearest Leonora."

But the girl shook her head with a faint smile, and turned away. The next moment the curtain was gathered back with a quick, eager motion, and Leonora, half-enveloped within its folds, stood gazing down upon the group below. But not upon the proud steed, the beautiful little pony, nor the gaily dressed grooms did she look. Her eyes were fixed upon the tall and graceful figure of a cavalier of some two-and-twenty summers, who wore, with an air of indescribable grace, his simple riding-dress of Lincoln green. He stood leaning carelessly against the wall which surrounded the ancient dwelling, half castle, half hall. The sable plumes of his hat, drooping low over his brow, concealed the upper portion of his face, leaving but the Grecian nose, and the chiselled lip, shaded by the dark chestnut moustache, exposed. Once or twice he struck his spurred boot upon the stones beneath, with a vehemence that brought the drooping forms of the indolent grooms quickly erect, and occasionally he pressed his hand upon his brow, as if some dark and troubled thought were crossing his reveries. Suddenly there was a stir, and the pony raised its head. At this Lord Francis Clairmont bobbed quickly up, for such was the name of the cavalier, and beheld the Lady Clare, who came forth leaning upon the arm