

Crowded Out.

By NORAH MARBLE.

"**L**ITERATOOR!" What a cloud the word brought over the old man's face as the gaunt white horse jogged on its way to the station. "So you be one of them literatoor fellows, eh? Well, well!" and the speaker eyed the complacent, prosperous-looking man by his side, with a curious mingling of admiration and pity strange to see. "I never hears that word," he went on, sadly, "but I thinks of our Allen—Allen Day, sir, the likeliest young feller airy country town ever turned out. You never heerd onto him? No, I reckon not; but you would hev, mister, if the dear soul hed hed half a chance; but he were crowded out, you see—crowded clar out into another spheer."

The speaker's hands twitched nervously upon the reins which lay idly in his lap, and the working of his seamed, homely old face betrayed the tears which lay unshed beneath his sandy-lashed eyelids.

"You'd like to know," after a pause, "how our Allan were crowded out? I say our Allen, 'cause I worked in the field with his father long afore ever he was born, and when I hed hopes, in fact, of winnin' Patty Higgins, his mother, fer myself. Yes," shyly, flicking a fly off the horse's back, "I hed hopes that onct, sir; but Amasa Day, a likelier feller'n me—and who'd a-gone through college if he hadn't been expelled for some prank or 'nother—was lookin' that way hisself, consequently I stood no airthly chance of winnin', even if I hed entered the race. So Amasa and Patty was married, and him and her, nor nobody else, ever guessed how cut up I was over the matter. It weren't but a few years, howsomever, afore Amasa died and left Patty a widder with one son, delekitt like his father, and given like him to dreamin' over books and sich, so out of friendship's sake I took the managin' of the Day farm, that was considerably run down and purty well mor'gided to boot."

An expression upon his companion's face made him pause.

"No," sadly; "you aire mistaken in your calkerlations, mister—you aire indeed. No; Patty somehow hed growed clar out of my reach, and I would no more hev asked her to yoke herself to a clodhopper like me then—then—a shanghie would think of matin' with a dove—not a bit more, sir, not a bit more. But that didn't hinder me from dedicatin' my life to her service and the boy's, so I worked airly and late without any hope or thought of reward, feelin' myself well paid when the boy come home from school lookin' so gentle and speakin' so refined and scholar-like."

"Well, Allen weren't more than nineteen afore he took a sitivation in a bookstore up in the great city. That jest suited him, you see, and his letters to Patty and me was as full of poetry as—as life is full of sorrier and disappointment, sir, jest as full. Yes, that boy was a born poet, if there ever was one, and he only wanted half a chance to— But," he broke off, a little bitterly, "if it were intended from the beginnin', no doubt, that Allen were to be crowded out—foreordained, as it were, sir, you know—foreordained."

His companion making no reply, the old man, after a longer pause than usual, resumed:

"For some cause or 'nother Allen's employer failed, and there he was without a sitivation. He was hopeful, though, and writ as how he was expectin' to git into one every day. He had lots of promises, sir, lots! It were astonishin' how many were ready to give him a place as soon as airy openin' offered, and right proud was Patty and me that our boy stood so high up in the great city."

"A month, then two, well-nigh three, went by, and it was hopin' and sendin' him money to git along on while-a-waitin' for them aire promised 'openin's' till Patty and me were despairin'. The crops, too, turned out bad that season, and at last we writ for Allen to come home, thinkin', contrariwise to him, that them openin's would be held for him, wherever he might be."

"Thin and deliketer than ever he apeared when he did come home, and it weren't long afore Patty drawed out of

him how he had been livin' on one meal a day; me and her not calkerlatin', you see, sir, onto advertisin' and other city expenses when we sent him the little we could spare. No wonder he looked run down, and from that hour Patty and me looked onto the city as a great monster what had to be fed daily with strugglin' innocent lads from the country."

"Then it weren't long afore we were staggerin' under another mor'gidge. Winter was a-comin' on, too, and Patty was a-grievin' over Allen's shabby overcoat, and wonderin' how she was goin' to get him a new one. Me and her didn't keer for fine clothes for ourselves, mister, but Allen was our pride, and it was hard to see him wantin' for anything that a gentleman ought to have. As for me," he added, glancing from the well-appointed person of his companion to his own cuffless wrists, and with a slight motion toward his collarless and cravatless throat—"as for me, I never hev lived in the city, you know, and consequentially hev had no use for its superfluities, sir; none whatever."

Involuntarily the listener's soft white hand fell upon the rough labor-worn one of the other, as if in tribute to his simplicity and honest, humble nature.

"Thankee, sir," said the old man, gently, partly divining his companion's thoughts—"thankee, sir."

"Well," resuming, "Allen had been used to shuttin' hisself up every day alone for hours, and onct, when Patty had been worryin' over things, he says, says he, 'I haven't been idle all this time, mother. Wait awhile longer and I may be able to change all these things for you.' It weren't long after that afore Patty came to me one day with great tears rollin' down her cheeks, yet with smiles a-strugglin' through like—like a blade o' grass a-peepin' from under the snow."

"Silas," says she, 'Allen is writin' a tale all in verse'; then she looked at me reproachful, 'cause I didn't fall into a apoplectic fit to onct."

"A tale," says I, 'in verse?' for all the world as if she hed said the buckwheat was out, or the pertaters gone to seed."

"Yes," says she, defiant like, 'a poem after the style of Tennyson's "Idyls of the King."'

"Idols of the King," says I; 'somethin' Scriptural, then, I take it.'

"You see, sir," humbly explained the old man, "I didn't know as much about literatoor in them days as I do now. Since then I've read some mighty purty verses by that same Tennyson, and I calkerlate onto'em doin' me more good then airy hymn into airy hymn book I ever see. There was one," he ruminated, "called 'Dora,' all about a meek and patient maiden whose heart yearned toward William, who loved and married another; and one, what ennymost broke my heart, about Enoch and Annie and Philip. 'Not to tell her,' he quoted brokenly; "never to let her know." Poor Enoch!"

The listener understood fully all that was passing in the heart of the simple, tender being beside him, and again did his hand fall in a sympathetic pressure upon the toil-hardened one of the other.

"And so," with a sad smile, "Patty was the happiest woman on the planet, when Allen, all blushin' and hesitatin', told us the poem was done, and when, at her coaxin', he read it out loud, I don't know which was the prouder of that boy, mister—her or me; I raily don't. Afore he was through we was both a-sobbin' as though our hearts would break, the poem was that true and simple and affectin'; a tale of simple lives like our own, a-hopin' and lookin' for better days, as we hed been doin' for so long. Me and Patty said never a word when it was done, and Allen set pale and quiet, as though lookin' at something we couldn't see, with great beads of perspiration a-glisten'n' like dew agin the purple shadders under his eyes. There weren't no need of words, sir; our smiles and tears had said enough, and Allen was satisfied."

"The next day the precious poem was mailed to a magazine up in the city, and Patty and me fell at once to specu-