

## HE AND SHE.

He sat in honor's seat,  
And rapturous ladies gazed into his eyes,  
She stood without, beneath the wintry skies,  
In snow and sleet.

He spoke of Faith's deeney;  
The ladies sighed because he spoke so true.  
She hid her face in hands frost-numbed and blue,  
But dared not pray.

In church, in court, and street,  
Men bowed and ladies smiled where'er he went,  
She stole through life, by shame and hunger bent,  
With bleeding feet.

Upon his wedding-day  
She stood, with burning eyes that fain would weep,  
And heard the dancers' tread, the music's sweep,  
Sound far away.

The bride so pure and true  
He took unto himself in haughty mood.  
And all the paltry world applauding stood,  
Though well it knew:

The while in frost and snow  
Half clad she stood upon whose maiden breast  
He pledged his faith, for love's supremest test,  
In joy and woe.

HJALMAR HJORTH BOYESEN.

## GIRLS' GOSSIP FROM LONDON.

Madge writes: I am rather inclined to envy you in this troubled and noisy December. You have no idea how detestable the weeks just previous to Christmas are in London, the streets overcrowded, the poor horses straining and slipping and over-loaded, and almost every human creature apparently in a violent hurry. After Christmas there is a kind of temporary lull, the holiday folk taking their pleasure, which, to a certain percentage of them, consists unfortunately in filling the streets with drunkenness and orange-peel.

You are spared all this, as well as the discomfort of the dreadful dramatic posters which flare upon the distressed vision from every wall. During the last two months these have really been too horrid. One represented a burning house with one or two human beings falling through space, pursued by blazing rafters. Another showed a man, evidently intoxicated, trying to knock another man down with a brandy-bottle. Then there was a man holding another down and striking him over the head with a pair of tongs. And as if these were not enough, there are the advertisements that jump up and down and make one's eyes ache. The letters are so made that they are perpetually winking, and they exercise a curious fascination over the beholder, who tries to look away, but reverts continually to the throbbing things. One longs to provide them with eyelashes that will button down. I wonder if they go on twinkling all night? These are especially prominent at the railway stations, and add a further horror to life. By-the-way, do you not wish that the word "accident" could be smothered up a little when one is travelling? The first thing one sees, in large letters, at the stations, is "Accident Insurance," and if one buys a railway novel, these are the most prominent words on the back of it. It isn't cheerful, is it?

Neither is this letter, you will say! But then, you know, I am very much nicer than my letters. Every nice girl is. Something absolutely delightful has happened—the sort of thing one reads of with appreciation in a novel, but that is too delicious in reality. Papa's brother, who left home a lad and has never been heard of since, has turned up as rich as Cressus, though not quite so wealthy as Vanderbilt. He is so red and jolly, and laughs so boisterously that every one stares. He says it is because his lungs are properly up to their work, which reminded Maud and me of the old lady in one of Mr. James Payn's novels, who accounts for the intermittent nature of her H's by saying she suffers from asthma!

This delightful old uncle has brought us all the loveliest presents. He is fresh from Australia, but, luckily for us, he stayed in Paris on the way. He has given me a set of pearls, the sweetest things you ever saw, and a pair of Turkish slippers which just fit, and are one mass of real gold and silver. He brought opals for Maud, and luckily her birth-month is October, so that they cannot be unlucky to her, October being the opal month. Among other things are lace from Malta and Brussels, and, oh! bitter drop in the cup! bonnets from Berlin, the most awful atrocities you ever saw, which the dear old fellow thinks perfectly lovely, and which we have to wear, for fear of hurting his feelings. We look frights in them, and perhaps that is why I take such a gloomy view of the world out of doors just now. I have, while out in that bonnet, to console myself by repeating, over and over again: "Those darling pearls! those precious slippers! and that lace!"

Uncle Tom has given Lilla a set of silver *entrées* dishes bought in Paris. She has hitherto neglected her *entrées* shamefully, but now, she and the cook spend half the morning in consultations over "made" dishes, and the result must be very pleasant to poor George, who has not had a proper dinner at home since he was married. Have you ever tried stuffed artichokes at an *entrée*? They are very good. Boil them till tender, then pluck out the little bunch of leaves that form the apex, filling the space left with a stuffing made of mushrooms, parsley, shalot, salt, pepper, bread-crumbs, all mixed together with fine salad oil. Then stew again slowly in a little good stock. The parsley and shalot must be put in by the hand of a miser.

I have bought all my Christmas cards to send away. Some of them certainly are lovely, and their beauty renders selection a matter of some difficulty. The satin ones are delightful, but Lesbia says that she would much rather have one of those sweet little pigs that are to be seen everywhere now, or a darling impudent-faced china-pug, or even a mandarin. She contends that one puts one's cards carefully away, and seldom sees them again; whereas the pig or the pig, or the dainty, tiny flower-vase, would be ever-present on its especial bracket, a memento of the giver. My only objection to Christmas cards is that people who used to give as nice little presents at Christmas and on our birthdays now think a handsome card will do as well. But it does not! I would rather have a pair of gloves—much rather—and, better still, I should like a dozen! They are such a heavy item in one's expenditure. I could easily spend half my allowance on gloves, boots, and shoes. Could not you?

Papa brought home the *Lancet* the other day, on purpose to show us a paragraph in it about the excessive weight of women's clothes. It describes the burden of the garments depending from the waist as "a load heavier than a felon's chains." I do not know the weight of a felon's chains, but I do know that the winter mantles are almost intolerably weighty this season. I told you that papa gave me a very handsome one in the autumn? Well, dear, I have been obliged to have it cut down. I simply could not walk in it—could scarcely breathe. I have had a pretty, short dolman made of it, and utilized the remainder for trimming a brown vicuña dress. The long, heavy mantles are fit to be worn only in a carriage. Weight is not heat, though many women dress as though they thought it was.

It needs a really skilful dressmaker to produce a stylish-looking costume without making it unbearably heavy. And how many really skilful dressmakers are there? Not above a score in the whole of London. A good cook is rare enough (see the almost pathetic advertisements for them in the dailies!) but a thoroughly good dressmaker is as hard to find as a four-leaved shamrock; and when she is found, her price is, only too literally, "far above rubies." Doesn't she charge! Other things that make the dresses so heavy are the round weights sewn under the present fashionable tabs, to keep them down. I have sixteen of them round the basque of my velvet bodice, and as each weight is nearly three quarters of an ounce, they make no slight addition to the burden of my clothes. I wonder why we do it—why submit to such tyranny? Oh, for some clever and pretty woman to show us a way out of our bondage!

## THE HAND OF DEATH.

Death is the most momentous leap in the dark which it is the lot of poor mortality to take. It is not so much the fear of annihilation which is its chief sting; it is rather the tremendous knowledge that the final departure of the breath from the body confronts us with the absolutely unknown and the irrevocable. In one of the finest sonnets of the English language Blanco White has analysed the sentiment, and has presented it in its most hopeful aspect. When, he asks, Adam first knew of night "from report Divine,"

"Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,  
This glorious canopy of light and blue?  
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,  
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,  
Hesperus, with the host of heaven, came,  
And lo, creation widened in man's view!"

If, is the conclusion of the sonnet, the sun can make man blind to such countless orbs, why may not existence have an analogous influence?

"Why do we, then, shun death with anxious strife?  
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?"

The simple answer to the first of these questions is that death is shunned because nothing whatever is known, or can be known, about it. A majority of the scientific personages of the day declare their belief that when every vital function has come to an end, consciousness and existence cease, and that the only immortality which is reserved for the children of men is that which can be claimed by electricity, gas, and water, and the other constituents of the earthly frame. A considerable body of religionists are convinced that death is synonymous with an eternity of torture for a large proportion of the human race. The faith is held by another that after an uncertain period of probation or punishment, of an unknown character, every one will be admitted to the fruition of felicity of an indefinable kind. Many other varieties of faith, or unfaith, upon this matter there are. They may be all roughly classed under the heading of belief or disbelief in a life beyond the grave, and of these the former is shared by those who think that such life will be one of misery or of happiness for the bulk of created beings. Eschatology, as the science or speculation of those who are learned or interested in such matters is called, has a library to itself, and where its doctors disagree, who shall decide?

Till within the last two thousand years the world was not seriously troubled with what might become of it after death. The patriarchs and potentates of Israel were gathered to their fathers and awaited their doom with tranquillity. A few philosophic and cultivated minds in Greece or Rome discussed the question, and arrived at no definite conclusion. According to the national religion of the Latin and Hellenic civilisations, as illustrated in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey* and the sixth of the *Aeneid*,

there was a system of rewards and punishments in the world of shadows. But the educated classes reposed little more belief in this revelation than they did in the deities to whom they sacrificed, because custom and etiquette prescribed the rite. Even in the New Testament there is no full or direct light thrown upon the state of those who have passed beyond the veil. The central fact, in the religion of Christianity, is the Resurrection, and all we can know of the condition of the dead we are admonished to infer from that. The Founder of the Christian faith signified the triumph of life over death. St. Paul elaborated the act which crowned the earthly career of the Master, in the epistles that he addressed to the faithful, into the keystone of a religious system. But of definite knowledge as to the momentous future he gave us none. The evidence in favour of a future life is now what it was then—neither less nor more; it is supplemented only by faith and tradition. The generations come and go; men and women are born to labour and to sorrow, to indolence and to happiness; they live their life, and presently they are no more. To those who survive them for a while they leave a store of memories and associations full of joy or of pain, as the case may be. The grave closes over them amid the tears and the indifference of relatives and friends. The funeral ceremony is over, and in a year, a month, or a week, they are as completely forgotten as if they had never lived. What has become of them? When the coffin is lowered into the grave, and the adlatus of the officiating clergyman throws a few grains of sand as an accompaniment of the words "Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," what is the state of the dead occupant of that small tombment—of him or her who, a week ago, was a living man or woman, but who has since been only spoken of as "it"? There is a poem, written by Mr. Browning, which, in connection with this subject, produces an effect that may safely be said to be unequalled in English literature. The diction is of unsurpassed strength and beauty. Every line seems instinct with spiritual meaning and life. Every couplet appears to flash a new revelation on the mind. At last, just as the reader, brought up to the highest point of expectation, makes ready to grasp the great secret, the poem closes and the bard is abruptly silent. These things are a parable; and the lesson they teach is that of the futility and the despair which are the reward of those who would penetrate into the great mystery. One after another, friends and foes are hurried away. Those we hold dearest vanish through the dim portal, and make no sign. Whether they fare well or ill, whether they take any interest in our fate, whether our fortunes affect them at all—these are matters on which we know just as much and just as little as when Aristotle mooted the question in a famous chapter in the *Ethics*. Yet no one doubts that the slightest intimation on any one of these points would make all the difference between grief and happiness to those who are left behind—that the knowledge of a future meeting "beyond the sun," to use the phrase which exigencies of rhyme compelled the Laureate to employ, with those who have gone before, supplemented by the further knowledge that meanwhile it is well with them and not ill, would transfigure the earthly existence of hundreds.

It is an ineradicable instinct in human nature to desire an authentic assurance on such matters as these. The riddle may be beyond the capacity of the human mind to guess, but the attempt will be made to guess it. "A faithless and adulterous generation," we may be told, "ask for a sign, and no sign is given it but that of the prophet Jonah." But the passionate aspiration after a distinct faith, the unspeakable yearning for a positive belief, will not be quenched. *Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo* may well be the cry of the despairing spirit. The resolution which the words embody may be said to be acted upon. When knowledge is withheld, superstition steps in. Men and women, foiled in their efforts to know, become the dupes of their own credulity. Where authentic revelation throws no light they kindle a false fire for themselves. This may be contemptible, but it is profoundly sad as well. "Mr. Sludge, the medium," is a sufficiently discredited person, but the cause and opportunity of his vocation are the unsatisfied craving of human nature. The phenomena of what is known as spiritualism have no meaning except with reference to a future life, and professed spiritualists prosper because they appeal to feelings which are the common heritage of humanity. They pretend to take up the story of the soul at the precise point at which the narrative is dropped by religion. That is the true explanation of their influence and their success at the present day. They may be denounced as mischievous impostors; but they offer human nature what it can get nowhere else—what it cannot, perhaps, get from them—and the offer will never be wholly refused. "Psychological research," to employ the learned synonym for spiritualism which has recently been invented, is the organised attempt to supply what the oracles of Christianity refuse. It will be persevered in till the end of the chapter, or until, possibly, the oracles which are now dumb begin to speak.

MATTHEW ARNOLD has discovered that the great want of the French is morality; the German, civil courage; and of the English, lucidity. Like a good many discoveries, this is far from the truth. The great want of French, German, English, or anybody else is money.

## VARIETIES.

Two gardeners returning home talk about a rose named "Lady Flora." An old lady listens wonderingly, and is much exercised as to who and what she is. First gardener: "Man Jeems, 'Lady Flora' lookit braw the day! Hoo did ye get her intae sich fine bloom?" Second gardener: "Weel, Tam, I've had an unco faicht wi' her. We've had her in the hoose an' oot the hoose, in this bed an' syne in that bed, but somehow she aye lookit seekly; an' it wis only when I took her doon amang the shrubbery an' happit her weel up wi' dead leaves that she really cam' tae."

The following joke is attributed to a manager at Boston. He came before the curtain, made a low bow, and then preceded to this effect:—"Ladies and gentlemen,—We are going to vary the performance of the evening by a little practice in the right way of getting out of the house in case of accident. Have the goodness to imagine that the theatre is on fire. One of you will be kind enough to sniff uneasily, while those in his neighborhood will mutter in an undertone, 'Surely that is a smell of smoke!' The whole house will then begin to show signs of alarm, and if a lady or two could manage conveniently to faint it would help to complete the illusion. I will then appear before the footlights in a state of the greatest agitation and alarm, and will cry out at the top of my voice, 'Unless you clear out in double quick time you will all be roasted alive!' These words will naturally send a thrill of horror through the house; but you must not lose your heads. Every one will rise quietly, and those who have brought umbrellas will not forget to take them away. A doorkeeper will be stationed at each exit to regulate your retreat; and when the theatre is quite cleared he will invite you to return. You will then simply have to turn on your heels and go back to your places, when the performance will be resumed." The audience did not relish the sarcasm; they did not move, but they yelled, and the manager retired without scoring a triumph.

OFFICIAL MOURNING IN CHINA.—A correspondent of an American newspaper, writing from China, describes the conduct of officials there when a parent dies, thus:—"The mother of Li Hung Chang has died, and in consequence that eminent public servant has withdrawn temporarily from office. It has been known for some time past that the old lady, who was over eighty years of age, was in a very precarious condition, and speculation was rife as to the effect which the event might have on the political fortunes of her illustrious son. It is well known that Chinese etiquette strictly demands retirement from office for the space of three years on the death of either parent. To this there is hardly ever an exception. The theory is that the grief of the bereaved son is so inconsolable as to incapacitate him for his public functions, and, moreover, the sacred duties of attending to the funeral ceremonies and performing the sacrifices at the grave must necessarily absorb his time and attention. Whatever his rank or wealth may be, he must go about clad in a coarse hempen garment unstitched at the borders; he must sleep for forty-nine nights on the bare floor, with a brick for his pillow, beside the coffin; he must remain unshaved and uncombed for one hundred days; and for the whole period of three years he can have no music or joyous event of any kind in his house. At such a time public duty must give way to private, and the official, no matter what his standing, who would omit to report the fact of his father's or mother's decease and request permission to retire would certainly incur grave censure, and probably be dismissed from office altogether."

A CURIOUS SCENE occurred a few weeks ago at the lecture-room of a well-known school of pharmacy. The room was pretty well filled, and the lecture was on capsicum and other stimulants. "Capsicum," said the professor, "is well known to you all; you have, no doubt, often gathered it in your botanical excursions with my learned colleague who occupies the chair of botany in this institution. You all know that, when the pods are properly dried and reduced to powder, they produce our ordinary cayenne pepper. They also yield a tincture which is often used as an adjunct to medicines when it is desirable to stimulate the mucous membrane of the digestive organs. Cayenne pepper itself has been used with some effect in the treatment of delirium tremens, and a moderate dose of it given on going to bed has been known to cut short a violent attack of cold or ague. The active ingredient of the capsicum pods, as before observed, is soluble in alcohol: little is yet known about it." The lecturer had got to this point of his discourse when it was suddenly interrupted. One of the laboratory students was desirous of seeing the active principle contained in the tincture, and had been for some minutes evaporating a little over a spirit-lamp. The fumes of the alcohol carried up into the air of the lecture-room a notable quantity of capsicum, and everybody began to sneeze most violently, including the professor. In about two minutes it was quite impossible to stay in the room, and the place was rapidly evacuated by about forty pharmaceutical students amid a perfect volley of sneezing and laughter. The professor, who had just observed that, with regard to capsicum, "little was known about it," was made more intimately acquainted with it at that moment than he desired.