

WHAT A WRETCHED WOMAN SAID TO ME.

ALL the broad East was laced with tender rings
Of widening light ; the Daybreak shone afar ;
Deep in the hollow, 'twixt her fiery wings,
Fluttered the morning star.

A cloud, that through the time of darkness went
With wanton winds, now, heavy-hearted, came
And fell upon the sunshine, penitent,
And burning up with shame.

The grass was wet with dew ; the sheep-fields lay
Lapping together far as eye could see ;
And the great harvest hung the golden way
Of Nature's charity.

My house was full of comfort ; I was propped
With life's delights, all sweet as they could be,
When at my door a wretched woman stopped,
And, weeping, said to me,—

"Its rose-root in youth's seasonable hours
Love in thy bosom set, so blest wert thou ;
Hence all the pretty little red-mouthed flowers
That climb and kiss thee now !

"I loved, but I must stifle Nature's cries
With old dry blood, else perish, I was told ;
Hence the young light shrunk up within my eyes,
And left them blank and bold.

"I take my deeds, all, bad as they have been,—
The way was dark, the awful pitfall bare ;—
In my weak hands, up through the fires of sin,
I hold them for my prayer."

"The thick, tough husk of evil grows about
Each soul that lives," I mused, "but doth it kill ?
When the tree rots, the imprisoned wedge falls out,
Rusted, but iron still.

Shall He who to the daisy has access,
Reaching it down its little lamp of dew
To light it up through earth, do any less,
Last and best work, for you ?"

SONGS OF THE SEA.

Not Dibdin's; not Barry Cornwall's; not Tom Campbell's; not any of the "Pirate's Serenades" and "I'm afloats!" which appear in the music-shop-windows, illustrated by lithographic vignettes of impossible ships in impracticable positions. These are sung by landmen yachting in still waters and in sight of green fields, by romantic young ladies in comfortable and unmoving drawing-rooms to the tinkling of Chickering's pianos. What are the songs the sailor sings to the accompaniment of the thrilling shrouds, the booming double-bass of the hollow topsails, and the multitudinous chorus of Ocean? What does the coaster, in his brief walk "three steps and overboard," hum to himself, as he tramps up and down his little deck through the swathing mists of a Bank fog? What sings the cook at the galley-fire in doleful unison with the bubble of his coppers? Surely not songs that exult in the life of the sea. Certainly not, my amateur friend, anything that breathes of mastery over the elements. The sea is a real thing to him. He never is familiar with it, or thinks of it or speaks of it as his slave. It is "a steed that knows his rider," and, like many another steed which the men of the fore-castle have mounted, knows that it can throw its rider at pleasure, and the riders know it too. Now and then a sailor will utter some fierce imprecation upon wind or sea, but it is in the impotence of despair, and not in the conscious, boastful mastery which the land-songs attribute to him. What, then, does the sailor sing?—and does he sing at all?

Certainly the sailor sings. Did you ever walk through Ann Street, Boston, or haunt the purlieus of the Fulton Market? and when there did you never espy a huckster's board covered with little slips of printed paper of the size and shape of the bills-of-fare at the Commonwealth Hotel? They are printed on much coarser paper, and are by no means as

typographically exact as the aforesaid *carte*, or as this page of the "Atlantic Monthly," but they are what the sailor sings. I know they are there, for I once spent a long summer's day in the former place, searching those files for a copy of the delightful ballad sung (or attempted to be sung) by Dick Fletcher in Scott's "Pirate,"—the ballad beginning

"It was a ship, and a ship of fame,
Launched off the stocks, bound for the
main."

I did not find my ballad, and to this day remain in ignorance of what fate befell the "hundred and fifty brisk young men" therein commemorated. But I found what the sailor does sing. It was a miscellaneous collection of sentimental songs, the worn-out rags of the stage and the parlor, or ditties of highwaymen, or ballad narratives of young women who ran away from a rich "parient" with "silvier and gold" to follow the sea. The truth of the story was generally established by the expedient of putting the damsel's name in the last verse,—delicately suppressing all but the initial and final letters. The only sea-songs that I remember were other ballads descriptive of piracies, of murders by cruel captains, and of mutinies, with a sprinkling of sea-fights dating from the last war with England.

The point of remark is, that all of these depend for their interest upon a human association. Not one of them professes any concern with the sea or ships for their own sake. The sea is a sad, solemn reality, the theatre upon which the seaman acts his life's tragedy. It has no more of enchantment to him than the "magic fairy palace" of the ballet has to a scene-shifter.

But other songs the sailor sings. The Mediterranean sailor is popularly supposed to chant snatches of opera over his fishing-nets; but, after all, his is only a larger sort of lake, with water of a ques-