

## THE PROFESSOR AT THE BREAKFAST-TABLE.

WHAT HE SAID, WHAT HE HEARD, AND WHAT HE SAW.

*Iris, her Book.*

I PRAY thee by the soul of her that bore thee,  
By thine own sister's spirit I implore thee,  
Deal gently with the leaves that lie before  
thee!

For Iris had no mother to infold her,  
Nor ever leaned upon a sister's shoulder,  
Telling the twilight thoughts that Nature told  
her.

She had not learned the mystery of awaking  
Those chorded keys that soothe a sorrow's  
aching,  
Giving the dumb heart voice, that else were  
breaking.

Yet lived, wrought, suffered. Lo, the pictured  
token!

Why should her fleeting day-dreams fade un-  
spoken,  
Like daffodils that die with sheaths unbrok-  
en?

She knew not love, yet lived in maiden fan-  
cies,—  
Walked simply clad, a queen of high ro-  
mances,  
And talked strange tongues with angels in  
her trances.

Twin-souled she seemed, a twofold nature  
wearing,—  
Sometimes a flashing falcon in her daring,  
Then a poor mateless dove that droops de-  
spairing.

Questioning all things: Why her Lord had  
sent her?

What were these torturing gifts, and where-  
fore lent her?

Scornful as spirit fallen, its own tormentor.

And then all tears and anguish: Queen of  
Heaven,  
Sweet Saints, and Thou by mortal sorrows  
riven,  
Save me! oh, save me! Shall I die forgiven?

And then— Ah, God! But nay, it little  
matters:

Look at the wasted seeds that autumn scat-  
ters,  
The myriad germs that Nature shapes and  
shatters!

If she had — Well! She longed, and knew  
not wherefore.

Had the world nothing she might live to care  
for?

No second self to say her evening prayer for?

She knew the marble shapes that set men  
dreaming,

Yet with her shoulders bare and tresses  
streaming

Showed not unlovely to her simple seeming.

Vain? Let it be so! Nature was her teacher.  
What if a lonely and unsistered creature  
Loved her own harmless gift of pleasing fea-  
ture,

Saying, unsaddened,— This shall soon be fad-  
ed,

And double-hued the shining tresses braided,  
And all the sunlight of the morning shaded?

— This her poor book is full of saddest fol-  
lies,

Of tearful smiles and laughing melancholies,  
With summer roses twined and wintry hollies.

In the strange crossing of uncertain chances,  
Somewhere, beneath some maiden's tear-dim-  
med glances

May fall her little book of dreams and fancies.

Sweet sister! Iris, who shall never name  
thee,

Trembling for fear her open heart may shame  
thee,

Speaks from this vision-haunted page to claim  
thee.

Spare her, I pray thee! If the maid is sleep-  
ing,

Peace with her! she has had her hour of  
weeping.

No more! She leaves her memory in thy  
keeping.

These verses were written in the first  
leaves of the locked volume. As I turn-

ed the pages, I hesitated for a moment. Is it quite fair to take advantage of a generous, trusting impulse to read the unsunned depths of a young girl's nature, which I can look through, as the balloon-voyagers tell us they see from their hanging-baskets through the translucent waters which the keenest eye of such as sail over them in ships might strive to pierce in vain? Why has the child trusted *me* with such artless confessions,—self-revelations, which might be whispered by trembling lips, under the veil of twilight, in sacred confessionals, but which I cannot look at in the light of day without a feeling of wronging a sacred confidence?

To all this the answer seemed plain enough after a little thought. She did not know how fearfully she had disclosed herself; she was too profoundly innocent. Her soul was no more ashamed than the fair shapes that walked in Eden without a thought of over-liberal loveliness. Having nobody to tell her story to,—having, as she said in her verses, no musical instrument to laugh and cry with her,—nothing, in short, but the language of pen and pencil,—all the veinings of her nature were impressed on these pages, as those of a fresh leaf are transferred to the blank sheets which inclose it. It was the same thing which I remember seeing beautifully shown in a child of some four or five years we had one day at our boarding-house. This child was a deaf mute. But its soul had the inner sense that answers to hearing, and the shaping capacity which through natural organs realizes itself in words. Only it had to talk with its face alone; and such speaking eyes, such rapid alternations of feeling and shifting expressions of thought as flitted over its face, I have never seen in any other human countenance.

I wonder if something of spiritual *transparency* is not typified in the golden-blond organization. There are a great many little creatures,—many small fishes, for instance,—that are literally transparent, with the exception of some of the internal organs. The heart can be seen beating as if in a case of clouded crystal.

The central nervous column with its sheath runs as a dark stripe through the whole length of the diaphanous muscles of the body. Other little creatures are so darkened with pigment that we can see only their surface. Conspirators and poisoners are painted with black, beady eyes and swarthy hue; Judas, in Leonardo's picture, is the model of them all.

However this may be, I should say there never had been a book like this of *Iris*,—so full of the heart's silent language, so transparent that the heart itself could be seen beating through it. I should say there never could have been such a book, but for one recollection, which is not peculiar to myself, but is shared by a certain number of my former townsmen. If you think I overcolor this matter of the young girl's book, hear this, which there are others, as I just said, besides myself, will tell you is strictly true.

*The Book of the Three Maiden Sisters.*

IN the town called Cantabridge, now a city, water-veined and gas-windpiped, in the street running down to the Bridge, beyond which dwelt Sally, told of in a book of a friend of mine, was of old a house inhabited by three maidens. They left no near kinsfolk, I believe; if they did, I have no ill to speak of them; for they lived and died in all good report and maidenly credit. The house they lived in was of the small, gambrel-roofed cottage pattern, after the shape of Esquires' houses, but after the size of the dwellings of handicraftsmen. The lower story was fitted up as a shop. Specially was it provided with one of those half-doors now so rarely met with, which are to whole doors as spencers worn by old folk are to coats. They speak of limited commerce united with a social or observing disposition on the part of the shopkeeper,—allowing, as they do, talk with passers-by, yet keeping off such as have not the excuse of business to cross the threshold. On the door-posts, at either side, above the half-door, hung certain perennial articles of merchandise, of which my memory still has hanging

among its faded photographs a kind of netted scarf and some pairs of thick woollen stockings. More articles, but not very many, were stored inside; and there was one drawer, containing children's books, out of which I once was treated to a minute quarto ornamented with handsome cuts. This was the only purchase I ever *knew* to be made at the shop kept by the three maiden ladies, though it is probable there were others. So long as I remember the shop, the same scarf and, I should say, the same stockings hung on the door-posts.—[You think I am exaggerating again, and that shopkeepers would not keep the same article exposed for years. Come to me, the Professor, and I will take you in five minutes to a shop in this city where I will show you an article hanging now in the very place where more than *thirty years ago* I myself inquired the price of it of the present head of the establishment.]

The three maidens were of comely presence, and one of them had had claims to be considered a Beauty. When I saw them in the old meeting-house on Sundays, as they rustled in through the aisles in silks and satins, not gay, but more than decent, as I remember them, I thought of My Lady Bountiful in the history of "Little King Pippin," and of the Madame Blaize of Goldsmith (who, by the way, may have taken the hint of it from a pleasant poem, "Monsieur de la Palisse," attributed to De la Monnoye, in the collection of French songs before me). There was some story of an old romance in which the Beauty had played her part. Perhaps they all had had lovers; for, as I said, they were shapely and seemly personages, as I remember them; but their lives were out of the flower and in the berry at the time of my first recollections.

One after another they all three dropped away, objects of kindly attention to the good people round, leaving little or almost nothing, and nobody to inherit it. Not absolutely nothing, of course. There must have been a few old dresses,—per-

haps some bits of furniture, a Bible, and the spectacles the good old souls read it through, and little keepsakes, such as make us cry to look at, when we find them in old drawers;—such relics there must have been. But there was more. There was a manuscript of some hundred pages, closely written, in which the poor things had chronicled for many years the incidents of their daily life. After their death it was passed round somewhat freely, and fell into my hands. How I have cried and laughed and colored over it! There was nothing in it to be ashamed of, perhaps there was nothing in it to laugh at, but such a picture of the mode of being of poor simple good old women I do believe was never drawn before. And there were all the smallest incidents recorded, such as do really make up humble life, but which die out of all mere literary memoirs, as the houses where the Egyptians or the Athenians lived crumble and leave only their temples standing. I know, for instance, that on a given day of a certain year, a kindly woman, herself a poor widow, now, I trust, not without special mercies in heaven for her good deeds,—for I read her name on a proper tablet in the churchyard a week ago,—sent a fractional pudding from her own table to the Maiden Sisters, who, I fear, from the warmth and detail of their description, were fasting, or at least on short allowance, about that time. I know who sent them the segment of melon, which in her riotous fancy one of them compared to those huge barges to which we give the ungracious name of nudscows. But why should I illustrate further what it seems almost a breach of confidence to speak of? Some kind friend, who could challenge a nearer interest than the curious strangers into whose hands the book might fall, at last claimed it, and I was glad that it should be henceforth sealed to common eyes. I learned from it that every good and, alas! every evil act we do may slumber unforgotten even in some earthly record. I got a new lesson in that humanity which our sharp race finds it so hard to learn. The poor wid-

ow, fighting hard to feed and clothe and educate her children, had not forgotten the poorer ancient maidens. I remembered it the other day, as I stood by her place of rest, and I felt sure that it was remembered elsewhere. I know there are prettier words than *pudding*, but I can't help it,—the pudding went upon the record, I feel sure, with the mite which was cast into the treasury by that other poor widow whose deed the world shall remember forever, and with the coats and garments which the good women cried over, when Tabitha, called by interpretation Dorcas, lay dead in the upper chamber, with her charitable needlework strewed around her.

—Such was the Book of the Maiden Sisters. You will believe me more readily now when I tell you that I found the soul of Iris in the one that lay open before me. Sometimes it was a poem that held it, sometimes a drawing,—angel, arabesque, caricature, or a mere hieroglyphic symbol of which I could make nothing. A rag of cloud on one page, as I remember, with a streak of red zigzagging out of it across the paper as naturally as a crack runs through a China bowl. On the next page a dead bird,—some little favorite, I suppose; for it was worked out with a special love, and I saw on the leaf that sign with which once or twice in my life I have had a letter sealed,—a round spot where the paper is slightly corrugated, and, if there is writing there, the letters are somewhat faint and blurred. Most of the pages were surrounded with emblematic traceries. It was strange to me at first to see how often she introduced those homelier wild-flowers which we call *weeds*,—for it seemed there was none of them too humble for her to love, and none too little cared for by Nature to be without its beauty for her artist eye and pencil. By the side of the garden-flowers,—of Spring's curled darlings, the hyacinths, of rosebuds, dear to sketching maidens, of flower-de-luces and morning-glories,—nay, oftener than these, and

more tenderly caressed by the colored brush that rendered them,—were those common growths that fling themselves to be crushed under our feet and our wheels, making themselves so cheap in this perpetual martyrdom that we forget each of them is a ray of the Divine beauty.

Yellow jappanned buttercups and star-disked dandelions,—just as we see them lying in the grass, like sparks that have leaped from the kindling sun of summer; the profuse daisy-like flower which whitens the fields, to the great disgust of liberal shepherds, yet seems fair to loving eyes, with its button-like mound of gold set round with milk-white rays; the tall-stemmed succory, setting its pale blue flowers afloat, one after another, sparingly, as the lights are kindled in the candelabra of decaying palaces when the heirs of dethroned monarchs are dying out; the red and white clovers; the broad, flat leaves of the plantain,—“the white man's foot,” as the Indians called it,—the wiry, jointed stems of that iron creeping plant which we call “knot-grass,” and which loves its life so dearly that it is next to impossible to murder it with a hoe, as it clings to the cracks of the pavement;—all these plants, and many more, she wove into her fanciful garlands and borders.—On one of the pages were some musical notes. I touched them from curiosity on a piano belonging to one of our boarders. Strange! There are passages that I have heard before, plaintive, full of some hidden meaning, as if they were gasping for words to interpret them. She must have heard the strains that have so excited my curiosity, coming from my neighbor's chamber. The illuminated border she had traced round the page that held these notes took the place of the words they seemed to be aching for. Above, a long, monotonous sweep of waves, leaden-hued, anxious and jaded and sullen, if you can imagine such an expression in water. On one side an Alpine *needle*, as it were, of black basalt, girdled with snow. On the other a threaded waterfall. The red morning-tint that shone in the drops had something fear-

ful,—one would say the cliff was bleeding;—perhaps she did not mean it. Below, a stretch of sand, and a solitary bird of prey, with his wings spread over some unseen object.—And on the very next page a procession wound along, after the fashion of that on the title-page of Fuller's "Holy War," in which I recognized without difficulty every boarder at our table in all the glory of the most resplendent caricature,—three only excepted,—the Little Gentleman, myself, and one other.

I confess I did expect to see something that would remind me of the girl's little deformed neighbor, if not portraits of him.—There is a left arm again, though;—no,—that is from the "Fighting Gladiator,"—the "*Jeune Héros combattant*" of the Louvre;—there is the broad ring of the shield. From a cast, doubtless. [The separate casts of the "Gladiator's" arm look immense; but in its place the limb looks light, almost slender,—such is the perfection of that miraculous marble. I never felt as if I touched the life of the old Greeks until I looked on that statue.]—Here is something very odd, to be sure. An Eden of all the humped and crooked creatures! What could have been in her head when she worked out such a fantasy? She has contrived to give them all beauty or dignity or melancholy grace. A Bactrian camel lying under a palm. A dromedary flashing up the sands,—spray of the dry ocean sailed by the "ship of the desert." A herd of buffaloes, uncouth, shaggy-maned, heavy in the forehead, light in the hind-quarter. [The buffalo is the *lion* of the ruminants.] And there is a Norman horse, with his huge, rough collar, echoing, as it were, the natural form of the other beast. And here are twisted serpents; and stately swans, with answering curves in their bowed necks, as if they had snake's blood under their white feathers; and grave, high-shouldered herons, standing on one foot like cripples, and looking at life round them with the cold stare of monumental effigies.—A very odd page indeed! Not a creature in it without a

curve or a twist, and not one of them a mean figure to look at. You can make your own comment; I am fanciful, you know. I believe she is trying to idealize what we vulgarly call deformity, which she strives to look at in the light of one of Nature's eccentric curves, belonging to her system of beauty, as the hyperbola and parabola belong to the conic sections, though we cannot see them as symmetrical and entire figures, like the circle and ellipse. At any rate, I cannot help referring this paradise of twisted spines to some idea floating in her head connected with her friend whom Nature has warped in the moulding.—That is nothing to another transcendental fancy of mine. I believe her soul thinks itself in his little crooked body at times,—if it does not really get freed or half freed from her own. Did you ever see a case of catalepsy? You know what I mean,—transient loss of sense, will, and motion; body and limbs taking any position in which they are put, as if they belonged to a lay-figure. She had been talking with him and listening to him one day when the boarders moved from the table nearly all at once. But she sat as before, her cheek resting on her hand, her amber eyes wide open and still. I went to her,—she was breathing as usual, and her heart was beating naturally enough,—but she did not answer. I bent her arm; it was as plastic as softened wax, and kept the place I gave it.—This will never do, though,—and I sprinkled a few drops of water on her forehead. She started and looked round.—I have been in a dream,—she said;—I feel as if all my strength were in this arm;—give me your hand!—She took my right hand in her left, which looked soft and white enough, but—Good Heaven! I believe she will crack my bones! All the nervous power in her body must have flashed through those muscles; as when a crazy lady snaps her iron window-bars,—she who could hardly glove herself when in her common health. Iris turned pale, and the tears came to her eyes;—she saw she had given pain. Then she trem-

bled, and might have fallen but for me;—the poor little soul had been in one of those trances that belong to the spiritual pathology of higher natures, mostly those of women.

To come back to this wondrous book of Iris. Two pages faced each other which I took for symbolical expressions of two states of mind. On the left hand, a bright blue sky washed over the page, specked with a single bird. No trace of earth, but still the winged creature seemed to be soaring upward and upward. Facing it, one of those black dungeons such as Piranesi alone of all men has pictured. I am sure she must have seen those awful prisons of his, out of which the Opium-Eater got his nightmare vision, described by another as "cemeteries of departed greatness, where monstrous and forbidden things are crawling and twining their slimy convolutions among mouldering bones, broken sculpture, and mutilated inscriptions." Such a black dungeon faced the page that held the blue sky and the single bird; at the bottom of it something was coiled,—what, and whether meant for dead or alive, my eyes could not make out.

I told you the young girl's soul was in this book. As I turned over the last leaves I could not help starting. There were all sorts of faces among the arabesques which laughed and scowled in the borders that ran round the pages. They had mostly the outline of childish or womanly or manly beauty, without very distinct individuality. But at last it seemed to me that some of them were taking on a look not wholly unfamiliar to me; there were features that did not seem new.—Can it be so? Was there ever such innocence in a creature so full of life? She tells her heart's secrets as a three-years-old child betrays itself without need of being questioned! This was no common miss, such as are turned out in scores from the young-lady-factories, with parchments warranting them accomplished and virtuous,—in case anybody should question the fact. I began to understand her;—and what is so charming

as to read the secret of a real *femme incomprise*?—for such there are, though they are not the ones who think themselves uncomprehended women.

Poets are never young, in one sense. Their delicate ear hears the far-off whippers of eternity, which coarser souls must travel towards for scores of years before their dull sense is touched by them. A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience. I have frequently seen children, long exercised by pain and exhaustion, whose features had a strange look of advanced age. Too often one meets such in our charitable institutions. Their faces are saddened and wrinkled, as if their few summers were three-score years and ten.

And so, many youthful poets have written as if their hearts were old before their time; their pensive morning twilight has been as cool and saddening as that of evening in more common lives. The profound melancholy of those lines of Shelley,

"I could lie down like a tired child  
And weep away the life of care  
Which I have borne and yet must bear,"

came from a heart, as he says, "too soon grown old,"—at *twenty-six years*, as dull people count time, even when they talk of poets.

I know enough to be prepared for an exceptional nature,—only this gift of the hand in rendering every thought in form and color, as well as in words, gives a richness to this young girl's alphabet of feeling and imagery that takes me by surprise. And then besides, and most of all, I am puzzled at her sudden and seemingly easy confidence in me. Perhaps I owe it to my — Well, no matter! How one must love the editor who first calls him the *venerable* So-and-So!

— I locked the book and sighed as I laid it down. The world is always ready to receive talent with open arms. Very often it does not know what to do with genius. Talent is a docile creature. It bows its head meekly while the world slips the collar over it. It backs into the shafts like a lamb. It draws its load cheer-



fully, and is patient of the bit and of the whip. But genius is always impatient of its harness; its wild blood makes it hard to train.

Talent seems, at first, in one sense, higher than genius,—namely, that it is more uniformly and absolutely submitted to the will, and therefore more distinctly human in its character. Genius, on the other hand, is much more like those instincts which govern the admirable movements of the lower creatures, and therefore seems to have something of the lower or animal character. A goose flies by a chart which the Royal Geographical Society could not mend. A poet, like the goose, sails without visible landmarks to unexplored regions of truth, which philosophy has yet to lay down on its atlas. The philosopher gets his track by observation; the poet trusts to his inner sense, and makes the straighter and swifter line.

And yet, to look at it in another light, is not even the lowest instinct more truly divine than any voluntary human act done by the suggestion of reason? What is a bee's architecture but an *unobstructed* divine thought?—what is a builder's approximative rule but an obstructed thought of the Creator, a mutilated and imperfect copy of some absolute rule Divine Wisdom has established, transmitted through a human soul as an image through clouded glass?

Talent is a very common family-trait; genius belongs rather to individuals;—just as you find one giant or one dwarf in a family, but rarely a whole brood of either. Talent is often to be envied, and genius very commonly to be pitied. It stands twice the chance of the other of dying in a hospital, in jail, in debt, in bad repute. It is a perpetual insult to mediocrity; its every word is a trespass against somebody's vested ideas,—blasphemy against somebody's *O'm*, or intangible private truth.

—What is the use of my weighing out antitheses in this way, like a rhetorical grocer?—You know twenty men of talent, who are making their way in the world; you may, perhaps, know one

man of genius, and very likely do not want to know any more. For a divine instinct, such as drives the goose southward and the poet heavenward, is a hard thing to manage, and proves too strong for many whom it possesses. It must have been a terrible thing to have a friend like Chatterton or Burns. And here is a being who certainly has more than talent, at once poet and artist in tendency, if not yet fairly developed,—a woman, too;—and genius grafted on womanhood is like to overgrow it and break its stem, as you may see a grafted fruit-tree spreading over the stock which cannot keep pace with its evolution.

I think now you know something of this young person. She wants nothing but an atmosphere to expand in. Now and then one meets with a nature for which our hard, practical New England life is obviously utterly incompetent. It comes up, as a Southern seed, dropped by accident in one of our gardens, finds itself trying to grow and blow into flower among the homely roots and the hardy shrubs that surround it. There is no question that certain persons who are born among us find themselves many degrees too far north. Tropical by organization, they cannot fight for life with our eastern and northwestern breezes without losing the color and fragrance into which their lives would have blossomed in the latitude of myrtles and oranges. Strange effects are produced by suffering any living thing to be developed under conditions such as Nature had not intended for it. A French physiologist confined some tadpoles under water in the dark. Removed from the natural stimulus of light, they did not develop legs and arms at the proper period of their growth, and so become frogs; they swelled and spread into gigantic tadpoles. I have seen a hundred colossal *human* tadpoles,—overgrown *larvæ* or embryos; nay, I am afraid we Protestants should look on a considerable proportion of the Holy Father's one hundred and thirty-nine millions as spiritual *larvæ*, sculling about in the dark by the aid of

their caudal extremities, instead of standing on their legs, and breathing by gills, instead of taking the free air of heaven into the lungs made to receive it. Of course *we* never try to keep young souls in the tadpole state, for fear they should get a pair or two of legs by-and-by and jump out of the pool where they have been bred and fed! Never! Never. Never?

Now to go back to our plant. You may know, that, for the earlier stages of development of almost any vegetable, you only want warmth, air, light, and water. But by-and-by, if it is to have special complex principles as a part of its organization, they must be supplied by the soil;—your pears will crack, if the root of the tree gets no iron,—your asparagus-bed wants salt as much as you do. Just at the period of adolescence, the mind often suddenly begins to come into flower and to set its fruit. Then it is that many young natures, having exhausted the spiritual soil round them of all it contains of the elements they demand, wither away, undeveloped and uncolored, unless they are transplanted.

Pray for these dear young souls! This is the second *natural* birth;—for I do not speak of those peculiar religious experiences which form the point of transition in many lives between the consciousness of a general relation to the Divine nature and a special personal relation. The litany should count a prayer for them in the list of its supplications; masses should be said for them as for souls in purgatory; all good Christians should remember them as they remember those in peril through travel or sickness or in warfare.

I would transport this child to Rome at once, if I had my will. She should ripen under an Italian sun. She should walk under the frescoed vaults of palaces, until her colors deepened to those of Venetian beauties, and her forms were perfected into rivalry with the Greek marbles, and the east wind was out of her soul. Has she not exhausted this lean soil of the elements her growing nature requires?

I do not know. The magnolia grows and comes into full flower on Cape Ann, many degrees out of its proper region. I was riding once along that delicious road between the hills and the sea, when we passed a thicket where there seemed to be a chance for finding it. In five minutes I had fallen on the trees in full blossom, and filled my arms with the sweet, resplendent flowers. I could not believe I was in our cold, northern Essex, which, in the dreary season when I pass its slate-colored, unpainted farm-houses, and huge, square, windy, 'squire-built "mansions," looks as brown and un-vegetating as an old rug with its patterns all trodden out and the colored fringe worn from all its border.

If the magnolia can bloom in northern New England, why should not a poet or a painter come to his full growth here just as well? Yes, but if the gorgeous tree-flower is rare, and only as if by a freak of Nature springs up in a single spot among the beeches and alders, is there not as much reason to think the perfumed flower of imaginative genius will find it hard to be born and harder to spread its leaves in the clear, cold atmosphere of our ultra-temperate zone of humanity?

Take the poet. On the one hand, I believe that a person with the poetical faculty finds material everywhere. The grandest objects of sense and thought are common to all climates and civilizations. The sky, the woods, the waters, the storms, life, death, love, the hope and vision of eternity,—these are images that write themselves in poetry in every soul which has anything of the divine gift.

On the other hand, there is such a thing as a lean, impoverished life, in distinction from a rich and suggestive one. Which our common New England life might be considered, I will not decide. But there are some things I think the poet misses in our western Eden. I trust it is not unpatriotic to mention them in this point of view, as they come before us in so many other aspects.



There is no sufficient flavor of humanity in the soil out of which we grow. At Cantabridge, near the sea, I have once or twice picked up an Indian arrowhead in a fresh furrow. At Canoe Meadow, in the Berkshire Mountains, I have found Indian arrowheads. So everywhere Indian arrowheads. Whether a hundred or a thousand years old, who knows? who cares? There is no history to the red race,—there is hardly an individual in it;—a few instincts on legs and holding a tomahawk,—there is the Indian of all time. The story of one red ant is the story of all red ants. So, the poet, in trying to wing his way back through the life that has kindled, flitted, and faded along our watercourses and on our southern hillsides for unknown generations, finds nothing to breathe; he “meets

A vast vacuity! all unawares,  
Fluttering his pennons vain, plumb down he  
drops  
Ten thousand fathom deep.”

But think of the Old World,—that part of it which is the seat of ancient civilization! The stakes of the Britons’ stockades are still standing in the bed of the Thames. The ploughman turns up an old Saxon’s bones, and beneath them is a tessellated pavement of the time of the Cæsars. In Italy, the works of mediæval Art seem to be of yesterday,—Rome, under her kings, is but an intruding new-comer, as we contemplate her in the shadow of the Cyclopean walls of Fiesole or Volterra. It makes a man human to live on these old humanized soils. He cannot help marching in step with his kind in the rear of such a procession. They say a dead man’s hand cures swellings, if laid on them. There is nothing like the dead cold hand of the Past to take down our tumid egotism and lead us into the solemn flow of the life of our race. Rousseau came out of one of his sad self-torturing fits, as he cast his eye on the arches of the old Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard.

I am far from denying that there is an attraction in a thriving railroad village.

The new “dépôt,” the smartly-painted pine houses, the spacious brick hotel, the white meeting-house, and the row of youthful and leggy trees before it, are exhilarating. They speak of progress, and the time when there shall be a city, with a His Honor the Mayor, in the place of their trim but transient architectural growths. Pardon me, if I prefer the pyramids. They seem to me crystals formed from a stronger solution of humanity than the steeple of the new meeting-house. I may be wrong, but the Tiber has a voice for me, as it whispers to the piers of the Pons Ælius, even more full of meaning than my well-beloved Charles eddying round the piles of West Boston Bridge.

Then, again, we Yankees are a kind of gypsies,—a mechanical and migratory race. A poet wants a home. He can dispense with an apple-parer and a reaping-machine. I feel this more for others than for myself, for the home of my birth and childhood has been as yet exempted from the change which has invaded almost everything around it.

—Pardon me a short digression. To what small things our memory and our affections attach themselves! I remember, when I was a child, that one of the girls planted some Star-of-Bethlehem bulbs in the southwest corner of our front-yard. Well, I left the paternal roof and wandered in other lands, and learned to think in the words of strange people. But after many years, as I looked on the little front-yard again, it occurred to me that there used to be some Stars-of-Bethlehem in the southwest corner. The grass was tall there, and the blade of the plant is very much like grass, only thicker and glossier. Even as Tully parted the briars and brambles when he hunted for the sphere-containing cylinder that marked the grave of Archimedes, so did I comb the grass with my fingers for my monumental memorial-flower. Nature had stored my keepsake tenderly in her bosom; the glossy, faintly streaked blades were there; they are there still, though they never flower, darkened as they are

by the shade of the elms and rooted in the matted turf.

Our hearts are held down to our homes by innumerable fibres, trivial as that I have just recalled; but Gulliver was fixed to the soil, you remember, by pinning his head a hair at a time. Even a stone with a white band crossing it, belonging to the pavement of the back-yard, insisted on becoming one of the talismans of memory. This intussusception of the ideas of inanimate objects, and their faithful storing away among the sentiments, are curiously prefigured in the material structure of the thinking centre itself. In the very core of the brain, in the part where Des Cartes placed the soul, is a small mineral deposit, consisting, as I have seen it in the microscope, of grape-like masses of crystalline matter.

But the plants that come up every year in the same place, like the Stars-of-Bethlehem, of all the lesser objects, give me the liveliest home-feeling. Close to our ancient gambrel-roofed house is the dwelling of pleasant old Neighbor Walrus. I remember the sweet honeysuckle that I saw in flower against the wall of his house a few months ago, as long as I remember the sky and stars. That clump of peonies, butting their purple heads through the soil every spring in just the same circle, and by-and-by unpacking their hard balls of buds in flowers big enough to make a double handful of leaves, has come up in just that place, Neighbor Walrus tells me, for more years than I have passed on this planet. It is a rare privilege in our nomadic state to find the home of one's childhood and its immediate neighborhood thus unchanged. Many born poets, I am afraid, flower poorly in song, or not at all, because they have been too often transplanted.

Then a good many of our race are very hard and unimaginative;—their voices have nothing caressing; their movements are as of machinery, without elasticity or oil. I wish it were fair to print a letter a young girl, about the age of our Iris, wrote a short time since.

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"I am \*\*\* \*\*," she says, and tells her whole name outright. Ah!—said I, when I read that first frank declaration,—you are one of the right sort!—She was. A winged creature among close-clipped barn-door fowl. How tired the poor girl was of the dull life about her,—the old woman's "skeleton hand" at the window opposite, drawing her curtains,—*"Ma'am——shooing away the hens,"*—the vacuous country eyes staring at her as only country eyes can stare,—a routine of mechanical duties,—and the soul's half-articulated cry for sympathy, without an answer! Yes,—pray for her, and for all such! Faith often cures their longings; but it is so hard to give a soul to heaven that has not first been trained in the fullest and sweetest human affections! Too often they fling their hearts away on unworthy objects. Too often they pine in a secret discontent, which spreads its leaden cloud over the morning of their youth. The immeasurable distance between one of these delicate natures and the average youths among whom is like to be her only choice makes one's heart ache. How many women are born too finely organized in sense and soul for the highway they must walk with feet unshod! Life is adjusted to the wants of the stronger sex. There are plenty of torrents to be crossed in its journey; but their stepping-stones are measured by the stride of man, and not of woman.

Women are more subject than men to *atrophy of the heart*. So says the great medical authority, Laennec. Incurable cases of this kind used to find their hospitals in convents. We have the disease in New England,—but not the hospitals. I don't like to think of it. I will not believe our young Iris is going to die out in this way. Providence will find her some great happiness, or affliction, or duty,—and which would be best for her, I cannot tell. One thing is sure: the interest she takes in her little neighbor is getting to be more engrossing than ever. Something is the matter with him, and she knows it, and I think worries herself about it.

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I wonder sometimes how so fragile and distorted a frame has kept the fiery spirit that inhabits it so long its tenant. He accounts for it in his own way.

The air of the Old World is good for nothing,—he said, one day.—Used up, Sir,—breathed over and over again. You must come to this side, Sir, for an atmosphere fit to breathe nowadays. Did not old Josselyn say that a breath of New England's air is better than a sup of Old England's ale? I ought to have died when I was a boy, Sir; but I couldn't die in this Boston air,—and I think I shall have to go to New York one of these days, when it's time for me to drop this bundle,—or to New Orleans, where they have the yellow fever,—or to Philadelphia, where they have so many doctors.

This was some time ago; but of late he has seemed, as I have before said, to be ailing. An experienced eye, such as I think I may call mine, can tell commonly whether a man is going to die, or not, long before he or his friends are alarmed about him. I don't like it.

Iris has told me that the Scottish gift of second-sight runs in her family, and that she is afraid she has it. Those who are so endowed look upon a well man and see a shroud wrapt about him. According to the degree to which it covers him, his death will be near or more remote. It is an awful faculty; but science gives one too much like it. Luckily for our friends, most of us who have the scientific second-sight school ourselves not to betray our knowledge by word or look.

Day by day, as the Little Gentleman comes to the table, it seems to me that the shadow of some approaching change falls darker and darker over his countenance. Nature is struggling with something, and I am afraid she is under in the wrestling-match. You do not care much, perhaps, for my particular conjectures as to the nature of his difficulty. I should say, however, from the sudden flushes to which he is subject, and certain other marks which, as an expert, I

know how to interpret, that his heart was in trouble; but then he presses his hand to the *right* side, as if there were the centre of his uneasiness.

When I say difficulty about the heart, I do not mean any of those sentimental maladies of that organ which figure more largely in romances than on the returns which furnish our Bills of Mortality. I mean some actual change in the organ itself, which may carry him off by slow and painful degrees, or strike him down with one huge pang and only time for a single shriek,—as when the shot broke through the brave Captain Nolan's breast, at the head of the Light Brigade at Bala-klava, and with a loud cry he dropped dead from his saddle.

I thought it only fair to say something of what I apprehended to some who were entitled to be warned. The landlady's face fell when I mentioned my fears.

Poor man!—she said.—And will leave the best room empty! Hasn't he got any sisters or nieces or anybody to see to his things, if he should be took away? Such a sight of cases, full of everything! Never thought of his failin' so suddin. A complication of diseases, she expected. Liver-complaint one of 'em?

After this first involuntary expression of the too natural selfish feelings, (which we must not judge very harshly, unless we happen to be poor widows ourselves, with children to keep filled, covered, and taught,—rents high,—beef eighteen to twenty cents per pound,)—after this first squeak of selfishness, followed by a brief movement of curiosity, so invariable in mature females, as to the nature of the complaint which threatens the life of a friend or any person who may happen to be mentioned as ill,—the worthy soul's better feelings struggled up to the surface, and she grieved for the doomed invalid, until a tear or two came forth and found their way down a channel worn for them since the early days of her widowhood.

Oh, this dreadful, dreadful business of being the prophet of evil! Of all the trials which those who take charge of

others' health and lives have to undergo, this is the most painful. It is all so plain to the practised eye!—and there is the poor wife, the doting mother, who has never suspected anything, or at least has clung always to the hope which you are just going to wrench away from her!—I must tell Iris that I think her poor friend is in a precarious state. She seems nearer to him than anybody.

I did tell her. Whatever emotion it produced, she kept a still face, except, perhaps, a little trembling of the lip.—Could I be certain that there was any mortal complaint?—Why, no, I could not be certain; but it looked alarming to me.—He shall have some of my life,—she said.

I suppose this to have been a fancy of hers, of a kind of magnetic power she could give out;—at any rate, I cannot help thinking she *wills* her strength away from herself, for she has lost vigor and color from that day. I have sometimes thought he gained the force she lost; but this may have been a whim, very probably.

One day she came suddenly to me, looking deadly pale. Her lips moved, as if she were speaking; but I could not hear a word. Her hair looked strangely, as if lifting itself, and her eyes were full of wild light. She sunk upon a chair, and I thought was falling into one of her trances. Something had frozen her blood with fear; I thought, from what she said, half audibly, that she believed she had seen a shrouded figure.

That night, at about eleven o'clock, I was sent for to see the Little Gentleman, who was taken suddenly ill. Bridget, the servant, went before me with a light. The doors were both unfastened, and I found myself ushered, without hindrance, into the dim light of the mysterious apartment I had so longed to enter.

I found these stanzas in the young

girl's book, among many others. I give them as characterizing the tone of her sadder moments.

#### UNDER THE VIOLETS.

HER hands are cold; her face is white;  
No more her pulses come and go;  
Her eyes are shut to life and light;—  
Fold the white vesture, snow on snow,  
And lay her where the violets blow.

But not beneath a graven stone,  
To plead for tears with alien eyes;  
A slender cross of wood alone  
Shall say, that here a maiden lies  
In peace beneath the peaceful skies.

And gray old trees of hugest limb  
Shall wheel their circling shadows round  
To make the scorching sunlight dim  
That drinks the greenness from the ground,  
And drop their dead leaves on her mound.

When o'er their boughs the squirrels run,  
And through their leaves the robins call,  
And, ripening in the autumn sun,  
The acorns and the chestnuts fall,  
Doubt not that she will heed them all.

For her the morning choir shall sing  
Its matins from the branches high,  
And every minstrel-voice of spring,  
That trills beneath the April sky,  
Shall greet her with its earliest cry.

When, turning round their dial-track,  
Eastward the lengthening shadows pass,  
Her little mourners, clad in black,  
The crickets, sliding through the grass,  
Shall pipe for her an evening mass.

At last the rootlets of the trees  
Shall find the prison where she lies,  
And bear the buried dust they seize  
In leaves and blossoms to the skies.  
So may the soul that warmed it rise!

If any, born of kindlier blood,  
Should ask, What maiden lies below?  
Say only this: A tender bud,  
That tried to blossom in the snow,  
Lies withered where the violets blow.

## REVIEWS AND LITERARY NOTICES.

*The Collier-folio Shakespeare.* Is it an imposture?

WHEN the Lady Bab of "High Life below Stairs," having laid the forgetfulness which causes her tardy appearance at the elegant entertainment given in Mr. Lovel's servant's hall to the fascination of her favorite author, "Shikspur," is asked, "Who wrote Shikspur?" she replies, with that promptness which shows complete mastery of a subject, "Ben Jonson." In later days, another lady has, with greater prolixity, it is true, but hardly less confidence, and, it must be confessed, equal reason, answered to the same query, "Francis Bacon." This question must, then, be regarded as still open to discussion; but, assuming, for the nonce, that the Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies in a certain folio volume published at London in 1623 were written by William Shakespeare, gentleman, sometime actor at the Black Friars Theatre and a principal proprietor therein, we apply ourselves to the brief examination of another, somewhat related to it, and at least as complicated:—the question as to the authorship of certain marginal manuscript readings in a copy of a later folio edition of the same works,—that published in 1632,—which readings Mr. Payne Collier discovered and brought before the world with all the weight of his reputation and influence in favor of their authority and value. We write for those who are somewhat interested in this subject, and must assume that our readers are not entirely without information upon it; but it is desirable, if not necessary, that in the beginning we should call to mind the following dates and circumstances.

According to Mr. Collier's account, this folio was bought by him "in the spring of 1849," of Mr. Thomas Rodd, an antiquarian bookseller, well known in London. For a year and more he hardly looked at it; but his attention being directed particularly to it as he was packing it away to be taken into the country, he found that "there was hardly a page which did not represent, in a handwriting of the time, some emendations in the pointing or in the text." He then subjected it to "a most

careful scrutiny," and became convinced of the great value of its manuscript readings. He talked about it to his literary friends, and took it to a meeting of the Council of the Shakespeare Society, and to two or three meetings of the Society of Antiquaries, as we know by the reports of those meetings in the London "Times." He wrote letters in the summer of 1852 to the London "Athenæum," setting forth the character of the volume, and giving some of its most noteworthy changes of Shakespeare's text. He published, at last, in 1853, his volume of "Notes and Emendations to the Text of Shakespeare's Plays from *Early Manuscript Corrections* in a Copy of the Folio of 1632," etc.; and in 1854, he published an edition of Shakespeare, in the text of which these manuscript readings were embodied. In 1856, he added to a Shakespearian volume a "List of all the Emendations" in his folio, remarking in the preface to the book, (p. lxxix.) that he had "*often gone over the thousands of marks of all kinds in its [the folio's] margins,*" and that, for the purpose of making the list in question, he had "*recently re-examined every line and letter of the folio.*" He had previously printed for private circulation a few fac-simile copies of eighteen corrected passages in the folio; and with the volume last mentioned, his publications, and, we believe, all others,—of which more anon,—upon the subject, ceased. Mr. Collier, it should be borne in mind, has been for forty years a professed student of Elizabethan literature, and is a man of hitherto unquestioned honor.

But he is now upon trial. Certain officers of the British Museum, among them men of high professional reputation and personal standing, men who occupy, and who confess that they occupy, "a judicial position" on such questions, charge, after careful investigation, that a great fraud has been committed in this folio; that its marginal readings, instead of being as old as they seem, and as Mr. Collier has asserted them to be, are modern fabrications, and that, consequently, Mr. Collier is either an impostor or a dupe. The charge is not a new one. The weight that it carries, and the impression that it has produced, are