

this boy, there stretches out a Future, brighter than we ever looked on in our old romantic time, but bright with honor and with truth. Around this little head on which the sunny curls lie heaped, the graces sport, as prettily, as airily, as when there was no scythe within the reach of Time to shear away the curls of our first-love. Upon another girl's face near it—placider but smiling bright—a quiet and contented little face, we see Home fairly written. Shining from the word, as rays shine from a star, we see how, when our graves are old, other hopes than ours are young, other hearts than ours are moved; how other ways are smoothed; how other happiness blooms, ripens, and decays—no, not decays, for other homes and other bands of children, not yet in being nor for ages yet to be, arise, and bloom, and ripen to the end of all!

Welcome, every thing! Welcome, alike what has been, and what never was, and what we hope may be, to your shelter underneath the holly, to your places round the Christmas fire, where what is sits open-hearted! In yonder shadow, do we see obtruding furtively upon the blaze, an enemy's face! By Christmas-day we do forgive him! If the injury he has done us may admit of such companionship, let him come here and take his place. If otherwise, unhappily, let him go hence, assured that we will never injure nor accuse him.

On this day, we shut out nothing!

"Pause," says a low voice. "Nothing? Think!"

"On Christmas-day, we will shut out from our fireside, nothing."

"Not the shadow of a vast city where the withered leaves are lying deep!" the voice replies. "Not the shadow that darkens the whole globe! Not the shadow of the City of the Dead!"

Not even that. Of all days in the year, we will turn our faces toward that city upon Christmas-day, and from its silent hosts bring those we loved, among us. City of the Dead, in the blessed name wherein we are gathered together at this time, and in the Presence that is here among us according to the promise, we will receive, and not dismiss, thy people who are dear to us!

Yes. We can look upon these children-angels that alight, so solemnly, so beautifully, among the living children by the fire, and can bear to think how they departed from us. Entertaining angels unawares, as the Patriarchs did, the playful children are unconscious of their guests; but we can see them—can see a radiant arm around one favorite neck, as if there were a tempting of that child away. Among the celestial figures there is one, a poor mis-shapen boy on earth, of a glorious beauty now, of whom his dying mother said it grieved her much to leave him here, alone, for so many years as it was likely would elapse before he came to her—being such a little child. But he went quickly, and was laid upon her breast, and in her hand she leads him.

There was a gallant boy, who fell, far away, upon a burning sand beneath a burning sun, and said, "Tell them at home, with my last love, how

much I could have wished to kiss them once, but that I died contented and had done my duty!" Or there was another, over whom they read the words, "Therefore we commit his body to the dark!" and so consigned him to the lonely ocean, and sailed on. Or there was another who lay down to his rest in the dark shadow of great forests, and, on earth, awoke no more. O shall they not, from sand and sea and forest, be brought home at such a time!

There was a dear girl—almost a woman—never to be one—who made a mourning Christmas in a house of joy, and went her trackless way to the silent City. Do we recollect her, worn out, faintly whispering what could not be heard, and falling into that last sleep for weariness! O look upon her now! O look upon her beauty, her serenity, her changeless youth, her happiness! The daughter of Jairus was recalled to life, to die; but she, more blest, has heard the same voice, saying unto her, "Arise forever!"

We had a friend who was our friend from early days, with whom we often pictured the changes that were to come upon our lives, and merrily imagined how we would speak, and walk, and think, and talk, when we came to be old. His destined habitation in the City of the Dead received him in his prime. Shall he be shut out from our Christmas remembrance! Would his love have so excluded us! Lost friend, lost child, lost parent, sister, brother, husband, wife, we will not so discard you! You shall hold your cherished places in our Christmas hearts, and by our Christmas fires; and in the season of immortal hope, and on the birthday of immortal mercy, we will shut out nothing!

The winter sun goes down over town and village; on the sea it makes a rosy path, as if the Sacred tread were fresh upon the water. A few more moments, and it sinks, and night comes on, and lights begin to sparkle in the prospect. On the hill-side beyond the shapelessly diffused town, and in the quiet keeping of the trees that gird the village-steeple, remembrances are cut in stone, planted in common flowers, growing in grass, entwined with lowly brambles around many a mound of earth. In town and village, there are doors and windows closed against the weather, there are flaming logs heaped high, there are joyful faces, there is healthy music of voices. Be all ungentleness and harm excluded from the temples of the Household Gods, but be those remembrances admitted with tender encouragement! They are of the time and all its comforting and peaceful reassurances; and of the history that reunited even upon earth the living and the dead; and of the broad beneficence and goodness that too many men have tried to tear to narrow shreds.

HELEN CORRIE.—LEAVES FROM THE NOTE-BOOK OF A CURATE.

HAVING devoted myself to the service of Him who said unto the demoniac and the leper, "Be whole," I go forth daily, treading humbly in the pathway of my self-appointed mission,

through the dreary regions, the close and crowded streets, that exist like a plague ground in the very heart of the wealthy town of L——.

They have an atmosphere of their own, those dilapidated courts, those noisome alleys, those dark nooks where the tenements are green with damp, where the breath grows faint, and the head throbs with an oppressive pain; and yet, amid the horrors of such abodes, hundreds of our fellow-creatures act the sad tragedy of life, and the gay crowd beyond sweep onward, without a thought of those who perish daily for want of the bread of eternal life. Oh! cast it upon those darkened waters, and it shall be found again after many days. There we see human nature in all its unvailed and degraded nakedness—the vile passions, the brutal coarseness, the corroding malice, the undisguised licentiousness. Oh, ye who look on and abhor, who pass like the Pharisee, and condemn the wretch by the wayside, pause, and look within: education, circumstances, have refined and elevated your thoughts and actions; but blessed are those who shall never know by fearful experience how want and degradation can blunt the finest sympathies, and change, nay, brutalize the moral being.

How have I shuddered to hear the fearful mirth with whose wild laughter blasphemy and obscenity were mingled—that mockery of my sacred profession, which I knew too well lurked under the over-strained assumption of reverence for my words, when I was permitted to utter them, and the shout of derision that followed too often my departing steps, knowing that those immortal souls must one day render up their account; and humbly have I prayed, that my still unwearied zeal might yet be permitted to scatter forth the good seed which the cares and anxieties should not choke, nor the stony soil refuse!

Passing one evening through one of those dilapidated streets, to which the doors, half torn from their hinges, and the broken windows, admitting the raw, cold, gusty winds, gave so comfortless an aspect, I turned at a sudden angle into a district which I had never before visited. Through the low arch of a half-ruined bridge, a turbid stream rolled rapidly on, augmented by the late rains. A strange-looking building, partly formed of wood, black and decaying with age and damp, leaned heavily over the passing waters; it was composed of many stories, which were approached by a wooden stair and shed-like gallery without, and evidently occupied by many families. The lamenting wail of neglected children and the din of contention were heard within. Hesitating on the threshold, I leant over the bridge, and perceived an extensive area beneath the ancient tenement; many low-browed doors, over whose broken steps the water washed and rippled, became distinguishable. As I gazed, one of them suddenly opened, and a pale haggard woman appeared, shading a flickering light with her hand. I descended the few slippery wooden steps leading to the strange abodes, and approached her. As I advanced, she appeared to recognize me.

"Come in, sir," she said hurriedly; "there is one within will be glad to see you;" and, turning, she led me through a winding passage into a dreary room, whose blackened floor of stone bore strong evidence that the flood chafed and darkened beneath it.

In an old arm-chair beside the rusty and almost fireless grate, sat, or rather lay, a pale and fragile creature, a wreck of blighted loveliness.

"Helen," said the woman, placing the light on a rough table near her, "here is the minister come to see you."

The person she addressed attempted to rise, but the effort was too much, and she sank back, as if exhausted by it. A blush mantled over her cheek, and gave to her large dark eyes a faint and fading lustre. She had been beautiful, *very* beautiful; but the delicate features were sharpened and attenuated, the exquisite symmetry of her form worn by want and illness to a mere outline of its former graceful proportions; yet, even amid the squalid wretchedness that surrounded her, an air of by-gone superiority gave a nameless interest to her appearance, and I approached her with a respectful sympathy that seemed strange to my very self.

After a few explanatory sentences respecting my visit, to which she assented by a humble yet silent movement of acquiescence, I commenced reading the earnest prayers which the occasion called for. As I proceeded, the faint chorus of a drinking song came upon my ears from some far recesses of this mysterious abode; doors were suddenly opened and closed with a vault-like echo, and a hoarse voice called on the woman who had admitted me; she started suddenly from her knees, and, with the paleness of fear on her countenance, left the room. After a moment's hesitating pause, the invalid spoke in a voice whose low flute-like tones stole upon the heart like aerial music.

"I thank you," she said, "for this kind visit, those soothing prayers. Oh, how often in my wanderings have I longed to listen to such words! Cast out, like an Indian pariah, from the pale of human fellowship, I had almost forgotten how to pray; but you have shed the healing balm of religion once more upon my seared and blighted heart, and I can weep glad tears of penitence, and dare to hope for pardon."

After this burst of excitement, she grew more calm, and our conversation assumed a devotional yet placid tenor, until she drew from her bosom a small packet, and gave it to me with a trembling hand.

"Read it, sir," she said; "it is the sad history of a life of sorrow. Have pity as you trace the record of human frailty, and remember that you are the servant of the Merciful!"

She paused, and her cheek grew paler, as if her ear caught an unwelcome but well-known sound. A quick step was soon heard in the passage, and a man entered, bearing a light; he stood a moment on the threshold, as if surprised, and then hastily approached us. A model of manly beauty, his haughty features bore the prevailing charac-

teristics of the gipsy blood—the rich olive cheek, the lustrous eyes, the long silky raven hair, the light and flexible form, the step lithe and graceful as the leopard's; yet were all these perfections marred by an air of reckless licentiousness. His attire, which strangely mingled the rich and gaudy with the worn and faded, added to the ruffianism of his appearance; and as he cast a stern look on the pale girl, who shrank beneath his eye, I read at once the mournful secret of her despair. With rough words he bade me begone, and, as the beseeching eye of his victim glanced meaningly toward the door, I departed, with a silent prayer in my heart for the betrayer and the erring.

A cold drizzling rain was falling without, and I walked hastily homeward, musing on the strange scene in which I had so lately mingled. Seated in my little study, I drew my table near the fire, arranged my reading-lamp, and commenced the perusal of the manuscript confided to my charge. It was written in a delicate Italian hand upon uncouth and various scraps of paper, and appeared to have been transcribed with little attempt at arrangement, and at long intervals; but my curiosity added the links to the leading events, and I gradually entered with deeper interest into the mournful history.

"How happy was my childhood!" it began. "I can scarcely remember a grief through all that sunny lapse of years. I dwelt in a beautiful abode, uniting the verandas and vine-covered porticoes of southern climes with the substantial in-door comforts of English luxury. The country around was romantic, and I grew up in its sylvan solitudes almost as wild and happy as the birds and fawns that were my companions.

"I was motherless. My father, on her death, had retired from public life, and devoted himself to her child. Idolized by him, my wildest wishes were unrestrained; the common forms of knowledge were eagerly accepted by me, for I had an intuitive talent of acquiring any thing which contributed to my pleasure; and I early discovered that, without learning to read and write, the gilded books and enameled desks in my father's library would remain to me only as so many splendid baubles; but a regular education, a religious and intellectual course of study, I never pursued. I read as I liked, and when I liked. I was delicate in appearance, and my father feared to control my spirits, or to rob me of a moment's happiness. Fatal affection! How did I repay such misjudging love!

"Time flowed brightly on, and I had already seen sixteen summers, when the *little cloud* appeared in the sky that so fearfully darkened my future destiny. In one of our charitable visits to the neighboring cottages, we formed an acquaintance with a gentleman who had become an inhabitant of our village; a fall from his horse placed him under the care of our worthy doctor, and he had hired a small room attached to Ash-tree farm, until he recovered from the lingering effects of his accident. Handsome, graceful, and insinuating in his address, he captivated my ardent

imagination at once. Unaccustomed to the world, I looked upon him as the very 'mould of form;' a new and blissful enchantment seemed to pervade my being in his presence and my girlish fancy dignified the delusion with the name of love! My father was delighted with his society; he possessed an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes and strange adventures, was an excellent musician, and had the agreeable tact of accommodating himself to the mood of the moment. He was a constant visitor, and at length became almost domesticated in our household. Known to us by the name of Corrie, he spoke of himself as the son of a noble house, who, to indulge a poetic temperament, and a romantic passion for rural scenery, had come forth on a solitary pilgrimage, and cast aside for a while what he called the iron fetters of exclusive society. How sweet were our moonlight ramblings through the deep forest glens; how fondly we lingered by the Fairies' Well in the green hollow of the woods, watching the single star that glittered in its pellucid waters! And, oh, what passionate eloquence, what romantic adoration, was poured forth upon my willing ear, and thrilled my susceptible heart!

"Before my father's eye he appeared gracefully courteous to me, but not a word or glance betrayed the passion which in our secret interviews worshiped me as an idol, and enthralled my senses with the ardency of its homage. This, he told me, was necessary for my happiness, as my father might separate us if he suspected that another shared the heart hitherto exclusively his own. This was my first deception. Fatal transgression! I had departed from the path of truth, and my guardian angel grew pale in the presence of the tempter. Winter began to darken the valleys; our fireside circle was enlivened by the presence of our accomplished guest. On the eve of my natal day, he spoke of the birth-day fetes he had witnessed during his Continental and Oriental rambles, complimented my father on the antique beauty and massy richness of the gold and silver plate which, rarely used, decorated the sideboard in honor of the occasion; and, admiring the pearls adorning my hair and bosom, spoke so learnedly on the subject of jewels, that my father brought forth from his Indian cabinet my mother's bridal jewels, diamonds, and emeralds of exquisite lustre and beauty. I had never before seen these treasures, and our guest joined in the raptures of my admiration.

"*'They will adorn my daughter,'* said my father, with a sigh, as he closed the casket, and retired to place it in its safe receptacle.

"*'Yes, my Helen,'* said my lover, *'they shall glitter on that fair brow in a prouder scene, when thy beauty shall gladden the eyes of England's nobles, and create envy in her fairest daughters.'*

"I listened with a smile, and, on my father's return, passed another evening of happiness—my last!

"We retired early, and oh, how bright were the dreams that floated around my pillow, how sweet the sleep that stole upon me as I painted the future—an elysium of love and splendor!

I was awakened by a wild cry that rang with agonizing horror through the midnight stillness: it was the voice of my father. I sprang hastily from my couch, threw on a wrapper, seized the night-lamp, and hurried to his chamber. Rufians opposed my entrance; the Indian cabinet lay shattered on the floor, and I beheld my father struggling in the fierce grasp of a man, who had clasped his throat to choke the startling cry. With maniac force I reached the couch, and, seizing the murderous hand, called aloud for help. The robber started with a wild execration, the mask fell from his face, and I beheld the features of Gilbert Corrie!

"When I recovered consciousness, I found that I had suffered a long illness—a brain fever, caused, the strange nurse said, by some sudden shock. Alas, how dreadful had been that fatal cause! Sometimes I think my head has never been cool since; a dull throb of agony presses yet upon my brow; sometimes it passes away: my spirits mount lightly, and I can laugh, but it has a hollow sound—oh, how unlike the sweet laughter of by-gone days!

"We were in London. My apartments were sumptuous: all that wealth could supply was mine; but what a wretch was I amid that scene of splendor! The destroyer was now the arbiter of my destiny. I knew his wealth arose from his nefarious transactions at the gaming-table. I knew my father was dead; the severe injuries he had received on that fatal night and the mysterious disappearance of his daughter had laid him in his grave. Gilbert Corrie was virtually his murderer, yet still I loved him! A passion partaking of delirium bound me to his destiny. I shrank not from the caress of the felon gamester—the plague-stain of sin was upon me—the burning plow-shares of the world's scorn lay in my path, and how was the guilty one to dare the fearful ordeal? For fallen woman there is *no return*; no penitence can restore her sullied brightness; the angel-plumes of purity are scattered in the dust, and never can the lost one regain the Eden of her innocence. The world may pity, may pardon, but never more *respect*; and, oh, how dreadful to mingle with the pure, and feel the mark of Cain upon your brow! . . .

"A change came suddenly upon Gilbert. There was no longer the lavish expenditure, the careless profusion: his looks and tone were altered. A haggard expression sat upon his handsome features, and the words of endearment no longer flowed from his lips; a quick footstep beneath the window made him start, strange-looking men visited him, his absences were long, his garments often changed: the vail was about to be lifted from my *real* position.

"One night he entered hastily, snatched me from the luxurious fauteuil on which I rested, and led me, without answering my questions, to a hackney-coach. We were speedily whirled away, and I never again beheld that home of splendor. By by-paths we entered a close and murky street, the coach was discharged, I was hurried over a dark miry road, and, passing

through a court-yard, the gate of which closed behind us, was led without ceremony into a wretched apartment, thronged with fierce, ill-looking men, seated round a table well supplied with wines and ardent spirits. Our entrance was hailed with shouts. Gilbert was called by the name of 'noble captain' to the head of the table, and I was suffered disregarded to weep alone. I seated myself at length by the blazing fire, and then first knew the real horrors of my destiny.

"From their discourse I gathered that Gilbert had committed extensive forgeries, and had that night escaped the pursuit of justice. Bumpers of congratulation were drunk, plans of robberies discussed, and the gipsy captain chosen as the leader of the most daring exploits contemplated.

"Since that night, how fearful have been my vicissitudes! Sometimes, as the splendidly-dressed mistress of private gambling-rooms, I have received the selected dupes in a luxurious boudoir, decoying the victims by fascinating smiles into the snare laid for them by Gilbert and his associates. Sometimes, encamping with the wild gipsy tribe in some hidden dell or woodland haunt, where their varied spoils were in safe keeping. Anon, the painted and tinselled queen of an itinerant show, where Gilbert enacted the mountebank, and by the brilliance of his fascinating eloquence drew into his treasury the hard-earned savings of the rustic gazers.

"To all those degradations have I submitted, and now, oh, now, more than ever, has the iron entered into my soul! He has ceased to love me. I have become an encumbrance; my beauty has faded from exposure and neglect. I have sunk beneath his blows, have writhed beneath the bitterness of his sarcasms, his brutal jests, his scornful mockery of my penitence and tears. I have endured the agony of hunger while he rioted with his companions in profligate luxury; and yet, if the old smile lights up his countenance, the old look shines forth from his lustrous eyes, he is again to me the lover of my youth, and the past is a hideous dream. Oh, woman's heart, how unfathomable is thy mystery!"

The manuscript here ended abruptly. How sad a moral might be drawn from the history of this unfortunate! What rare gifts of mind and beauty had the want of religion marred and blighted! Had the Sun of Righteousness shone upon that ardent heart, its aspirations had been glorious, its course

"Upward! upward!
Through the doubt and the dismay
Upward! to the perfect day!"

What mournful tragedies are ever around us, flowing on with the perpetual under-current of human life, each hour laden with its mystery and sorrow, sweeping like dim phantoms through the arch of time, and burying the fearful records in the oblivion of the abyss beyond! How few of the floating wrecks are snatched from the darkening tide!

I returned the next day to the dwelling of Helen, but it was shut up, and in the day-time

appeared as if long deserted. To all inquiries, the neighbors answered reluctantly that it had long been uninhabited, and that its last occupants had been a gang of coiners, who were now suffering the penalty of transportation. I often visited the same district, but all my after-search was in vain, and the fate of Helen Corrie still remains an undiscovered mystery.

THE GOOD OLD TIMES IN PARIS.

THE world, since it was a world at all, has ever been fond of singing the praises of the good old times. It would seem a general rule, that so soon as we get beyond a certain age, whatever that may be, we acquire a high opinion of the past, and grumble at every thing new under the sun. One cause of this may be, that distance lends enchantment to the view, and that the history of the past, like a landscape traveled over, loses in review all the rugged and wearisome annoyances that rendered it scarcely bearable in the journey. But it is hardly worth while to speculate upon the causes of an absurdity which a little candid retrospection will do more to dissipate than whole folios of philosophy. We can easily understand a man who sighs that he was not born a thousand years hence instead of twenty or thirty years ago, but that any one should encourage a regret that his lot in life was not cast a few centuries back, seems inexplicable on any rational grounds. The utter folly of praising the good old times may be illustrated by a reference to the wretched condition of most European cities; but we shall confine ourselves to the single case of Paris, now one of the most beautiful capitals in the world.

In the thirteenth century the streets of Paris were not paved; they were muddy and filthy to a very horrible degree, and swine constantly loitered about and fed in them. At night there were no public lights, and assassinations and robberies were far from infrequent. At the beginning of the fourteenth century public lighting was begun on a limited scale; and at best only a few tallow candles were put up in prominent situations. The improvement, accordingly, did little good, and the numerous bands of thieves had it still pretty much their own way. Severity of punishment seldom compensates the want of precautionary measures. It was the general custom at this period to cut off the ears of a condemned thief after the term of his imprisonment had elapsed. This was done that offenders might be readily recognized should they dare again to enter the city, banishment from which was a part of the sentence of such as were destined to be cropped. But they often found it easier to fabricate false ears than to gain a livelihood away from the arena of their exploits; and this measure, severe and cruel as it was, was found inefficient to rid the capital of their presence.

Among the various adventures with thieves, detailed by an author contemporaneous with Louis XIII., the following affords a rich example of the organization of the domestic brigands

of the time, and of the wretched security which the capital afforded to its inhabitants:

A celebrated advocate named Polidamor had by his reputation for riches aroused the covetousness of some chiefs of a band of brigands, who flattered themselves that could they catch him they would obtain possession of an important sum. They placed upon his track three bold fellows, who, after many fruitless endeavors, encountered him one evening accompanied only by a single lackey. Seizing fast hold of himself and attendant, they rifled him in a twinkling; and as he had accidentally left his purse at home, they took his rich cloak of Spanish cloth and silk, which was quite new, and of great value. Polidamor, who at first resisted, found himself compelled to yield to force, but asked as a favor to be allowed to redeem his mantle. This was agreed to at the price of thirty pistoles; and the rogues appointed a rendezvous the next day, at six in the evening, on the same spot, for the purpose of effecting the exchange. They recommended him to come alone, assuring him that his life would be endangered should he appear accompanied with an escort. Polidamor repaired to the place at the appointed hour, and after a few moments of expectation he saw a carriage approaching in which were seated four persons in the garb of gentlemen. They descended from the vehicle, and one of them, advancing toward the advocate, asked him in a low voice if he were not in search of a cloak of Spanish cloth and silk. The victim replied in the affirmative, and declared himself prepared to redeem it at the sum at which it had been taxed. The thieves having assured themselves that he was alone, seized him, and made him get into the carriage; and one of them presenting a pistol to his breast, bade him hold his tongue under pain of instant death, while another blindfolded him. As the advocate trembled with fear, they assured him that no harm was intended, and bade the coachman drive on.

After a rapid flight, which was yet long enough to inspire the prisoner with deadly terror, the carriage stopped in front of a large mansion, the gate of which opened to receive them, and closed again as soon as they had passed the threshold. The robbers alighted with their captive, from whose eyes they now removed the bandage. He was led into an immense saloon, where were a number of tables, upon which the choicest viands were profusely spread, and seated at which was a company of gentlemanly-looking personages, who chatted familiarly together without the slightest demonstration of confusion or alarm. His guardians again enjoined him to lay aside all fear, informed him that he was in good society, and that they had brought him there solely that they might enjoy the pleasure of his company at supper. In the mean while water was served to the guests, that they might wash their hands before sitting at table. Every man took his place, and a seat was assigned to Polidamor at the upper and privileged end of the board. Astonished, or rather stupefied at the strange circumstances of his adventure, he would willingly