

Not Knowing.

I know not what will befall me;
God hangs a mist o'er my eyes,
And at each step in my onward path
He makes new scenes to rise,
And every joy He sends me
Comes as a glad surprise.

I see not a step before me
As I tread the days of the year;
But the past is still in God's keeping,
The future His mercy shall clear,
And what looks dark in the distance
May brighten as I draw near.

For perhaps the dreariest future
Has less bitterness than I think;
The Lord may sweeten the waters
Before I stoop to drink;
Or, if Murth must be Marah,
He will stand beside its brink.

It may be he is waiting
For the coming of my feet;
Some gift of rare blessing
Smiles so strangely sweet,
That my lips can only tremble
With the thanks they cannot speak.

Oh, restless, blissful ignorance!
It is blessed not to know:
It keeps me quiet in the storms
Which will not tilt me so
And hushes my soul to rest
On the bosom that loves me so.

So I go on not knowing—
I would not if I might,
I would rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I would rather walk with him by faith
Than walk alone by sight.

My heart shrinks back from trials
Which the future may disclose;
Yet I never had a sorrow
But what the dear Lord chose;
So I smile the coming tears back
With the whispering word "He knows."

The Dwarfed Call Boy.

"Will you please have this part dead perfect at rehearsal to-morrow, Miss?"

The speaker was the call-boy of the only theatre of a western town.

The girl to whom he handed the part was tall and slight of physique. Her features were pale as marble, but transcendently lovely—one might almost risk the expression "lovely as an angel's."

The deep telling eyes scanned the manuscript of the part, and a look of dismay lit up their depths.

"Mercy!" she murmured. "It is impossible. Rehearsal is called at 10 o'clock sharp. Mother lies in a raging fever, which threatens her brain, and here are twenty lengths at least. It is a hard lot!" and a weary sigh followed, as the young girl took up her satchel and drew her threadbare shawl around her fragile figure. "Good night, Denny," she said, in return to the salutation of the old door-keeper as she quitted the theatre.

"Be careful, dear," he replied, "he's there again," and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder with a warning gesture.

A shawl crossed her features, and her mouth worked determinedly as her eyes flashed, and a slight flush tinged her white cheeks. The warning evidently disturbed her. Young as she was, hers had been the fate of so many on the stage. She had an admirer whom she scorned; but, having no brother, she was unprotected, save by that mother who now lay at the point of death.

The night was cold, and Bessie Darling (her stage name, the real one being withheld), was scantily clad. As she reached the street she looked up at the stars, which glittered in the sky like polished steel. She shivered and hastened on. The slight snow upon the pavement creaked crisply beneath her tread. At the corner a young man intercepted her and raised his hat.

"Good evening," he said, removing his cigar; "may I not have the pleasure of seeing you home?"

She made no reply but strove to pass on.

"Don't be foolish," he said, offering his arm; "You know I would not harm you."

"Your aid is not needed," she replied, "and your company is unpleasant. Let me pass. My mother is very ill—perhaps dying at this very moment."

"All the more reason why you should have help," he returned. "Allow me to offer any service in my power." He drew a roll of greenbacks from his pocket and held them toward her.

"I do not require your money, sir. I would not accept it to save my mother's life, much as I love her. Let me pass, or I shall call for aid."

He sneered.

"It is late," he said; "the streets are deserted; you are alone, and none will hear your appeal."

"Oh, yes they will!" It was the call-boy of the theatre who spoke.

The young man turned to the new comer. He was a singular personage—dwarfed in stature, with a head much too large for the diminutive body.

"Whom have I the honor to address?" inquired the young blood, scornfully.

"That's neither here nor there," was the reply. "But if Miss Darling will allow me, I will see that she is no longer detained by unpleasant meddlers."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the other; "a Quasimodo to protect his Esmeralda!"

The dwarf bit his lips and turned as pale as death.

"Look out that you do not meet the fate of the recreant priest."

"We are not in Paris," retorted the blood, "and there are no towers of Notre Dame at hand."

"Will Miss Darling accept my escort home? I will protect her from this sneaking bully."

"I'll thrash you within an inch of your life for this insolence you crooked-backed churl. Take that!"

He launched a heavy blow at the manikin's head, but the little fellow darted nimbly aside.

"I am no match for you at fisticuffs," he cried, "but I have not played the Sprite for nothing."

The next instant he started forward, and planting his head full in the stomach of his antagonist, hurled him over the embankment where they stood. The blood was unable to save himself. Down, down, he fell, and striking his head foremost on the bank of the river, lay insensible.

"My God! you have killed him," whispered Bessie.

"Not much loss, miss. But the devil aids such as he. He is worth a score of dead men yet. But let us hasten or he may recover, and he would make it as hot as Hades for me."

Half an hour later Bessie sat watching her delirious mother. As she removed and replaced the icy cloth upon the burning forehead, she ever and anon applied herself to learning the part that she must be perfect in on the morrow. Not a wink of sleep was hers that night, and when she appeared at rehearsal the red eyes and feverish cheeks told of that studious vigil by her mother's bed.

That night Bessie Darling took the town by storm.

The play was ended.

The curtain rang down on a heart that little reckoned the floral offerings or the loud applause that called her before the green scene; for as she returned to the prompter's box news reached Bessie that her mother was dead.

The reaction was terrible. The poor girl was stricken down herself, and when the mother was buried by the kind members of the company, the daughter was nearly a fit subject to occupy the same resting place.

Time passed, and slowly the young girl recovered. Each day during the interval the invalid found a fresh bouquet upon the table by her bed. At first she refused to look at them, thinking that they were but new importunities from him whom she so utterly detested. But this was not the case, as she shortly found. The timely lesson to the young libertine had proved favorable to her and useful to him. He never troubled Bessie again. Therefore the flowers were not from him.

"Who could it be?" she asked the nurse; but she professed ignorance, and stated that the bouquets were left on the doorstep early every morning.

Finally Bessie was able to attend to duty once more. What pleasure it was to meet the kindly greeting of her friends as she appeared at rehearsal. Each member of the company strove to outdo the other in attentions. One brought a seat near the wings; another drew her shawl closer around her shoulders, fearing that she would catch cold. Poor Jacken, the dwarfed call boy, insisted on bringing her a little warm wine (his panacea for every trouble). The manager greeted her, and told her that her fortune was assured; he was about to produce a new sensational drama in which she was cast as the heroine. In fact her cup of joy seemed full to the brim. (No relation that to Jacken's panacea, for that had been disposed of with many thanks, at which the poor fellow's face turned red to the tops of his ponderous ears.)

The day for the rehearsal of the new play arrived. In the last scene a telling effect was to be produced, where the heroine was thrown from a precipice by the villain of the piece. In falling she lodged in a pine tree, while he, losing his balance, topples from the cliff and is slain.

"I'll try that tree myself first, Miss Bessie," suggested the call boy, "to see that it is secure. Mr. Jones, will you go through the business with me?"

"Certainly; although I don't think that you make a charming substitute for the heroines," laughed the heavy man.

So up the scaffolding they went. The struggle ensued. The orchestra gave the chore, and with a heavy lunge the dwarf fell in the abyss.

A shriek ensued from the ladies, and the strong men sickened. The villain paused in horror, for the tree had broken, and poor Jacken had fallen, through the trap with a harsh thud.

Friends hastened to his aid, and he was borne to the stage stunned and bleeding. The doctor of the theatre who was present, shook his head.

"His spine is broken," he said, "human aid cannot save him."

"O, don't say so!" moaned Bessie, who was wiping the blood from a deep wound in the poor boy's head.

The closed eyes opened and a happy light lit their vision.

"It's all over, Miss Bessie," he murmured, "and I don't know but what I am glad of it."

"Poor boy, poor boy," she said, smoothing back his curly hair.

"Mother used to do that, and her touch was no gentler than yours. O, I am so glad!"

Bessie's tears rattled down upon the upturned face.

"Don't cry," he said, "it's better as it is. You never could have loved me as I have you, and I am more shapeless now than I should have been had I lived.

Would you kiss me once—once for the flowers left; you, too, must die."

Bessie pressed a kiss on the lips of the dying boy, and with that last benison the wandering spirit sought its God.

What it Costs to Write Well.

Excellence is not matured in a day, and the cost of it is an old story. The beginning of Plato's "Republic" it is said was found in his tablets written over and over in a variety of ways. Addison, we are told, wore out the patience of his printer; frequently when nearly a whole impression of a Spectator was worked off, he would stop the press to insert a new proposition. Lamb's most sportive essays were the result of most intense brain work; he used to spend a week at a time in elaborating a single humorous letter to a friend. Tennyson is reported to have written "Come into the Garden Maud," more than fifty times over before it pleased him; and "Locksley Hall," the first draft of which was written in two days, he spent the better part of six weeks, for eight hours a day, in altering and polishing. Dickens, when he intended to write a Christmas story, shut himself up for six weeks, lived the life of a hermit, and came out looking as haggard as a murderer. Balzac, after he had thought out thoroughly one of his philosophical romances, and amassed his materials in a most laborious manner, retired to his study, and from that time until his book had gone to press, society saw him no more. When he appeared again among his friends, he looked, said his publisher, in the popular phrase, like his own ghost. The manuscript was afterward altered and copied, when it passed into the hands of the printer, from whose slips the book was re-written for the third time. Again it went into the hands of the printer—two three, and sometimes four separate proofs being required before the author's leave could be got to send the perpetually rewritten book to press at last, and so be done with it. He was literally the terror of all printers and editors. Moore thought it queer work if he wrote seventy lines of "Lalla Rookh" in a week. Kinglake's "Eothen," we are told, was re-written five or six times, and was kept in the author's writing desk almost as long as Wordsworth kept the "White Doe of Rylstone," and kept, like that to be taken out for review and correction almost every day. Buffon's "Studies of Nature" cost him fifty years of labor, and he re-copied it eighteen times before he sent it to the printer. He composed in a singular manner, writing on large sized paper, in which, as in a ledger five distinct columns were ruled. In the first column he wrote down the first thoughts; in the second, he corrected, enlarged, and primed it; and so on, until he had reached the fifth column, within which he finally wrote the result of his labor. But even after this he would re-compose a sentence twenty times, and once devoted fourteen hours to finding the proper word with which to round off a period. John Foster often spent hours on a single sentence. Ten years elapsed between the first sketch of Goldsmith's "Traveler" and its completion. La Rochefoucauld spent fifteen years in preparing his little book of maxims, altering some of them. Segrais says, nearly thirty times. We all know how Sheridan polished his wit and finished his jokes, the same things being found on different bits of paper, differently expressed. Rogers showed Crabbe Robinson a note to his "Italy," which, he said, took him two weeks to write. It consists of a very few lines.—A. P. Russell.