

Under the Violets.

The following is, we believe, acknowledged to be one of the tenderest poems ever written. Its author, as many of our readers perhaps already know, is that truest, wittiest, brightest of all American poets, the genial and delightful Oliver Wendell Holmes. There is not a line in "Under the Violets" that does not throb with the heart of the true poet:

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 warm'd 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 wither'd where the violets blow."

The Desert Island.

A rich charitable man being desirous to make one of his slaves happy, bestowed upon him freedom, and also a ship freighted with all kinds of costly wares.

"Go," said he, "and sail to a foreign country where you can trade with these goods and the profits shall be your own."

The slave set off on his voyage, but he had not been long upon the sea, when a violent storm arose, and his ship was cast on a rock and wrecked. His precious wares sank in the deep and his companions were lost and he alone escaped with great difficulty, and contrived to reach the shore of an island. Hungry, naked and helpless he wandered further inland and was weeping over his misfortunes when he observed in the distance a large town, where a number of inhabitants came toward him, and with loud shouts of joy hailed him as their king. Then surrounding him, with cries of welcome, they placed him in a splendid car and led him to the town. Arrived at the royal palace, they clothed him in a purple mantle, bound a diadem on his brow, and mounted him upon a golden throne. The nobles approached, knelt before him, and swore allegiance in the name of the whole people. The new king at first, believed all this splendor to be a wondrous dream, until the continuance of his good fortune no longer left any doubt that the extraordinary

occurrences were in truth, realities.

"I cannot understand," said he to himself, "what has bewitched the eyes of these people and induced them to make a forlorn stranger their king. They know not who I am, they ask not whence I came, but place me at once on their throne. This must be a strange country indeed, since such a strange custom prevails in it."

Thus he reflected and became so curious to know the cause of his elevation, that he determined to ask one of the nobles of his court, who appeared a clever man, to solve the riddle for him.

"Tell me, Vizier," said he, "why you have made me your king. How could you know of my arrival on your island, and what will be the end of all this?"

"Sire," answered the vizier, "this island is called the Island of Probation, and is inhabited by beings of a peculiar order. In times gone by they asked the Almighty to send them every year a son of Adam to rule over them. The Almighty has accepted their prayer and every year, at the same time, he causes a man to land upon this Island. The inhabitants hasten joyfully to meet him, as you have seen, and acknowledge him for their ruler; but his government lasts only for one year. When that period has elapsed, and when the appointed day comes round he is deprived of all authority. His royal attire is taken from him and he again puts on his mean clothing. His servants forcibly carry him to the shore and place him in a ship, built expressly for that purpose, which bears him on to another island. This island is a desert waste; he who was some days before a mighty king arrives there ragged and alone, and finds neither subjects nor friends. There is no one to participate in his misfortune; and if he has not turned his year to the best account, he will have to pass a sorrowful and melancholy life in this desert land. After the banishment of the old king, the people go forth to meet the new one, whom the providence of the Almighty sends in the usual manner, every year without exception, and they receive him with the same pleasure as the preceding ones. Such, sire, is the immutable law of this kingdom, which no sovereign can change during his reign."

"And were all my predecessors," pursued the king, "made acquainted with the short duration of their power?"

"To none of them," answered the vizier, "was this law of mutability unknown; but some allowed themselves to be dazzled by the brightness which surrounded their throne; they forgot their sorrowful future in the joyful present, and passed their year without acquiring wisdom. Others intoxicated by the sweetness of their fortune, did not dare to reflect upon the end of their reign, and the ensuing abode on the desert island, lest it should have embittered their present enjoyment; and thus they staggered like drunkards from one pleasure to another until their allotted time was fled, and they were cast into the vessel. When that unhappy day arrived, they all began to lament and bemoan their blindness, but it was too late; they were ruthlessly given over to the fate which awaited them, and from which they had not taken thought to defend themselves."

This narration of the vizier filled the king with alarm, he trembled at the fate of former monarchs, and earnestly wish-

ed to escape their fall. He saw with horror that some weeks of his short year were already gone, and that he must hasten to employ the remaining days better, and endeavor to atone for those already wasted.

"Wise vizier," he replied, "you have discovered to me my future lot and the short duration of my royal state. Tell me also, I pray you, what I must do to escape the misery of my predecessors."

"Bear in mind, sire," answered the vizier, "that you came naked to this island; for thus you will depart from it, never more to return. There is therefore, only one way to prevent the want with which your banishment threatens you; that is to cultivate the island and fill it with inhabitants. This our laws allow you to do; and your subjects are so perfectly obedient that they will go wherever you desire. Send, therefore a number of laborers over to the desert island, and let the waste grounds be converted into fruitful meadows; erect towns and storehouses, and provide them with all necessary means of existence. In a word—prepare for yourself a new kingdom, whose inhabitants, after your banishment, will receive you joyfully. Be vigilant, let not a moment pass unemployed; for the time is short, and the more you do toward the erection of your new dwelling the happier will be your abode there. Constantly figure to yourself that to-morrow your year is already passed and take advantage of to-day's freedom, like a fugitive, who knows that chains await him on the morrow. If you despise my counsel and give way to procrastination and idleness, you are lost, and eternal misery will be your lot."

The king was a sensible man and the speech of the minister gave wings to his decision. He at once sent off a number of his subjects, who went willingly and commenced the work with a zeal. The island soon began to improve and before six months had passed there stood fair cities on its blooming plains. But the king was yet unsatisfied. He sent over other inhabitants, and they were even more willing than the first, because they went to a pleasant land, inhabited by their friends and countrymen. In the meantime the year was drawing to a close. Former kings had trembled at the approach of the moment in which they were to lay aside their transient honors; but this one looked forward to it with eagerness, for he was bound to a land where by his well-directed exertions, he had prepared an enduring habitation. The appointed day at last arrived. The king was seized in his palace, despoiled of his diadem and royal attire and placed in that fatal vessel which was to bear him to his place of banishment. But hardly had he landed on the coast of the island when the inhabitants hastened joyfully to meet him, received him with great honor, and instead of decking his head with a diadem whose splendor lasted but one short year, bound a wreath of unfading flowers around his brow. The Almighty rewarded his wisdom. He gave him the immortality of his subjects, and made him their immortal king.

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The rich beneficent man represents God; the slave who is sent forth by his master is man at his birth. The island where he lands is the world; the inhabitants who receive him gladly, are the parents who provide for the naked, weep-

ing stranger. The vizier, who warns him of the sorrowful fate which awaits him is wisdom. The year of his reign is the course of human life; and the desert island for which he is destined, is the future world. The laborers whom he sends there are the good deeds he does during his life. But the kings who preceded him, and did not consider the misery that awaited them are the larger portion of mankind, who are occupied with the earthly pleasures and do not remember the life which follows after death—they were punished with want and misery, whilst the other appeared with full hands before the throne of the Almighty.—*Sunny South.*

A Peculiar Coffin.

In conversation the other day with our old friend Alexander Douglass, who has been a citizen of Missouri for 66 years, and of Boone county, for 56, he recalled some of the events of early times, and among them the following: In 1820 there lived in the neighborhood northwest of Smithton (now Columbia), an unmarried man by the name of Thomas Ashur. Being subject to fits, he died on the roadside of an attack, and on March 4, 1820, was buried in the woods which now form the north part of the pasture on the old farm of the late James King, three miles from Columbia. His grave is yet to be seen near the limekiln of Mr. Cromwell's. At that time there was not a public graveyard in Boone county, and no undertaker. Having no coffin, or materials out of which to make one, the neighbors—that is, Alex. Douglass, Richard Tiffie, James Mayo, Newberry Stockton and Matt Douglass, a colored man—felled a walnut tree, cut off a piece of it six or eight feet long, split it into two equal parts, and with axes and adzes made troughs of each, put poor Ashur in his shirt sleeves in it, placed the parts together, and in this rude coffin consigned the sleeper to a sleep that knows no waking till the judgement.—*Columbia (Mo.) Statesman.*

That Fetched Him.

When a Michigander was brought into court on a charge of assault and battery preferred by his wife his honor asked:

"What was the provocation?"

"She called me a worthless, lazy loafer; but that wasn't it."

"Well?"

"She said our hull family weren't fit for fish bait; but I didn't get mad at that."

"What was it, then?"

"She shook her fist under my nose, and said I was too lazy to die; but I knowed she was excited and I let that pass. She's got a fearful temper, your honor."

"I wish to know if you had sufficient cause of provocation," said the court.

"I guess I had, Mr. Judge! She come close up and spit in my face, and stuck up her noze and said I war measser than pizen; but I didn't hit her her for that."

"What, then?"

"I know'd her temper, and I sot there and whistled 'Carry Me Back,' and I was bearing and bearing with her, when she turned round and gin my coon dog the smashngest kick—lifted him right outer doors onto his head! That fetched me, judge. If there had been 40 lions and a camel in the road, I'd have walloped her or died a tryin'."

There is no female in the Vermont State Prison, and has not been for years.