

Spirit of the Age.

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No. 1.

SELECTIONS

The Beggar Boy.

Get away with you, you dirty old beggar boy. I'd like to know what right you have to look over the fence at our flowers? The speaker was a little boy not more than eleven years old, and thought people sometimes called it handsome, his face looked very harsh and disagreeable just then.

He stood in a beautiful garden, just in the suburbs of the city; and it was June time, and the tulips were opening themselves on the sunshine. It was a great joy to look at them as they bowed gracefully to the light with their necks of crimson, of yellow, and carnation. The beds flanked either side of the path that curved around a small arbor, where the young grape clusters that lay hidden among the large leaves, wrote a beautiful prophecy for the autumn.

A white paling ran in front of the garden, and over this the little beggar boy, so rudely addressed, was leaning. He was very lean, very dirty, very ragged. I am afraid you would have turned away in disgust from so repulsive a spectacle, and yet God and the angels loved him!

He was looking with all his soul in his eyes on the beautiful blossoms, as they swayed to and fro in the summer wind, and his heart softened while he leaned his arm on the fence railing, and forgot every thing in that long absorbed gaze. Ah! it was seldom the beggar boy saw any thing that was either very good or beautiful, and it was sad his dream should have such a rude awakening.

The blood rushed up to his face, and a glance full of evil and defiance flashed into his eyes. But before the boy could retort, a little girl sprang out from the arbor and looked eagerly from one child to the other. She was very fair, with soft hazel eyes, over which drooped long, shining lashes. Rich curls hung over her almost bare, white shoulders, and her lips were the color of the crimson tulip blossoms.

"How could you speak so cross to the boy Hinton?" she asked with a tone of sad reproach, uttering through the sweetness of her voice. "I am sure it doesn't do us any harm to have him look at our flowers if he likes."

Well, Helen, urged her brother, slightly mollified and ashamed, "I didn't like to have beggars peeping over the fence. It looks so low."

"Now, that's a notion of yours, Hinton. I'm sure, if the flowers can do any body any good, we ought to be very glad. Little boy—and the child turned to the beggar boy—and addressed him as courteously as though he had been a prince—"I'll pick you some of the tulips if you'll wait a moment."

"Helen, I do believe you're the funniest girl that ever lived!" ejaculated the child's brother, as he turned away, and with a low whistle sauntered down the path, feeling very uncomfortable—for her conduct was a stronger reproof to him than any words could have been.

Helen plucked one of each specimen of the tulips, and there was a great variety of these, and gave them to the child. His face brightened as he received them and thanked her.

O! the little girl had dropped a "pearl of great price" into the black turbid billows of the boy's life, and the after years would bring it up, beautiful and fair again.

Twelve years had passed. The little blue-eyed girl had grown into a tall, graceful woman. One bright June afternoon she walked with her husband through the garden, for she was on a visit to her parents. The place was little changed, and the tulips had opened their lips of crimson and gold to the sunshine, just as they had twelve years before. Suddenly they observed a young man in a workman's blue overalls, leaning over the fence, his eyes following eagerly from the beautiful flowers to herself. He had a frank, pleasant countenance, and there was something in his manner that interested the gentleman and lady.

"Look here, Edward," said she, "I'll pluck some of the flowers. It always does me good to see people admiring them," and then releasing her husband's arms, she approached the paling, saying—and the smile round her lips was very like the old, child one—"Are you fond of flowers, sir? It will give me great pleasure to gather you some."

The young workman looked a moment very earnestly into the fair, sweet face.

"Twelve years ago this very month," he said, in a voice deep and yet tremulous with feeling, "I stood here, leaning on this railing, a dirty, ragged little beggar boy; and you asked me this very question. Twelve years ago you placed the bright flowers in my hands, and they made me a new 'o'-eye, and they made a man of me, too. Your face has been a light, ma'am, all along the dark hours of my life, and this day that little beggar boy can stand on the old place and say to you, though he's an humble and hard working man, yet, thank God, he's an honest one."

Tear-drops trembled like morning dew

down on the shining lashes of the lady, as she turned to her husband, who had joined her, and listened in absorbed astonishment to the workman's words. "God," said she, "put it into my child's heart to do that little deed of kindness, and see how very great is the reward he has given me."

And the setting sun poured a flood of rich purple light over the group that stood there—over the workman in his blue overalls, over the lady with her golden hair, and over the proud looking gentleman at her side. Although it was a picture for a painter, the angels who looked down on it from heaven saw something more than a picture there.

Men and Women at Home.

A lady of my acquaintance gives it as her *sine qua non* of domestic felicity, that the "men of the family" should always be absent at least six hours in the day. And truly a mistress of a family, however strong her affection for the male members of it, cannot but acknowledge that this is a great boon. A house where "papa" or "the boys" are always pottering about, popping in and out at all hours, everlastingly wanting something, or finding fault with something else, is a considerable trial to even feminine patience. And I beg to ask my sex generally—in confidence of course—if it is not the greatest comfort possible when, the masculine half of the family being cleared out for the day, the house settles down into regular work, and orderly quietness until evening? Also, it is good for them as well as for us, to have all the inevitable petty domestic bothers got over in their absence to effect which ought to be one of the principal aims of the mistress of a family. Let them, if possible, return to a quiet smiling home with all its small annoyances brushed away like dust and cinders from the grate—which, *en passant*, is one of the first requisites to make a fire-side look comfortable.

It might be as well, too, if the master himself could contrive to leave the worldly mud of the day at the scraper outside the door; however, as these chapters do not pretend to lecture the lords of creation, I have nothing more to say on that score.

But she who, the minute an unfortunate man comes home, fastens upon him with a long tale of domestic grievances, real or imagined—how the butcher will never bring the meat in time, and the baker keeps a false account of loaves—how she is sure cook is given to drink, and that Mary's "cousin" had his dinner off "our" mutton yesterday—why such a lady deserves all she gets; cold looks, sharp speeches, hasty plunges into the convenient newspaper; perhaps an angry cigar. Poor little woman! it is, crying over her lonely fire, and owning that she is wrong, but only that she is very unhappy and very much ill-used, might one recommend to her notice one golden rule—"Never pester a man with things that he cannot remedy and does not understand." And when he comes again, honest man! perhaps a little repentant too, there is but one course of conduct which I recommend to all sensible women—viz, to put her arms round his neck and hold her tongue.—*A Woman's Thoughts about Women.*

FIRE RAGING IN MAINE.—Northern papers state that the people of Maine are suffering terribly from the fires raging in that State. A correspondent says, "the State seems shrouded in a heavy pall of smoke. We are cut off from the light of the sun.—We hear that in our towns and cities the people are really preparing to flee before this force than rebel foe. Many houses have already been destroyed, many fruitful fields swept over by the flames. In one instance, where a member of the family had just died, the fire came so swiftly that there was not time to remove the dead to a place of safety, and the wretched family were forced to leave it to be burned."

A sun Picture.

What a pity children should ever grow up. The other day, passing through an entry of one of our public buildings, we saw two little boys, of the age of about six and eight, with their arms about each other's necks, exchanging kiss after kiss. It was such a pretty sight, in that noisy den of business, that one could but stop to look. The younger of the children, noticing this, looked up with such a heaven of love in his face, and said, in explanation, "He is my 'brother.' Pity they should ever grow up, thought we, as we passed along. Pity that the world, with its clashing interests of business, love, and politics, should ever come between them. Pity that they should ever exchange finger tips, or, more wretched still, even exchange glances. Pity that one should sorrow, and grieve, and hunger, and thirst, and yearn for sympathy, while the other should sleep, and eat, and drink, unmindful of his fate. Pity, that one with meek-folded hands should pass into the land of silence, and no tear of repentance and affection fall upon his marble face from the eyes of his 'brother.' Such things have been. That is why we thought, pity that they should ever grow up.

In the Rear.

She sat in her silent chamber, With her thoughtful, earnest eyes, And gazed through the open window, At the faint, far-off skies; Yet, she did not see the glories That decked the dying day, Nor the glimmer of the dancing waves, That glowed in the golden rays. She saw not the battle field, With its scenes of valor and pain, Where the heroes of the world were, Was struggling at home and here.

Above her the zephyrs murmured, Around her the birds did sing, And all the air was vocal, With the joyous notes of spring; But they were sounds of terror, Which, to her thoughts bore, The crash of the fatal bullet, And the cannon's deafening roar, Her mind was agitated with the tumult, And she seemed to startle ear, To catch the deadly strife, Where he was fighting for her.

Half in trust, and half in terror, She sat in the twilight glow, And she seemed to wait for something She did not dare to know; So up, with a doubtful anxious hope, To the solemn altar she gazed, [fear, While her fair form shook with a struggling As her pleading looks were raised. 'Twas longing for news of the battle, And dread to see her dear, Hi, as you on the field of the fallen, Who was battling for home and here.

Richmond Sentinel.

The Child's Answer.

Little Nellie had lost her father, and her mother was poor. Her temper and her winning ways gained her many friends.—Among these was an excellent lady, Miss N.—A glimpse of Nellie's bright face, peeping in at the door, always brought a smile of peculiar tenderness over Miss N.—'s placid features. She loved to sit by the child, softly stroking her hair, and while looking thoughtfully into her smiling eyes, would say, "Poor, poor Nellie!"

When Nellie shook her head, with a heart too full to speak, her friend would caress her still more fondly, and then say, "Poor, little Nellie!"

The child's heart seemed troubled by these pitying words, for she asked one day, "Why do you call me poor? Please don't Miss N.—I'm not poor—why, I've got twenty-five cents and a good mother!" "Rich little Nellie," said her friend, "A good mother!—Ah, how long I was in learning what this little one already knows." "A good mother"—could and earthly treasure have made her so truly rich?—*Children's Friend.*

SITTING CLOSE.—A second mother was introduced to her new home. Earnest desires to fill wisely this responsible station, especially as regarded the one little child committed to her care, inspired her heart, and gave life to her prayers. He was an intelligent boy full of thought, and love.—the new friend who sought his welfare, for there was none to solve justice in his innocent mind.

She was once speaking to him of that happy world, where the good are gathered.—He had been accustomed to hear it mentioned as the home of his departed mother.

"What will we do when we get up there?" said the sweet disciple. "I shall want to be with ma some, and with you some."

Then musing a moment, he seemed to find a happy thought as a solution of the difficulty, and asked with a radiant smile: "Can't we all sit close up together?" Recorder.

The following instance of singular optical illusion recently occurred in Brussels. The victim was a gentleman who being somewhat troubled by cobwebs, and spots in his eyes, rubbed them one night with a few drops of beladonna. In the morning the cobwebs were gone, but the old outer face of the world had changed. His newspaper, which had been placed by his bedside, was composed of type so small that he could hardly decipher it. Hearing the bell, and his stout servant wench had shrunk into a thin meek creature. He got up in a great fright and found after his clothes—they were the garments of a child, but, as his own limbs had diminished in proportion, he got into them. He found his wife and children at the table—the former a dwarf, and the latter a row of dolls. He hurried to his physician: the horses he met looked like dogs, the dogs like rats. Every thing was Lilliputian. Levisions were applied to the victim's eyes, and the next day Brobdignag returned, bringing back the cobwebs and spots.

SANCTIFIED.—Afflictions are among the most precious blessings of the Christian's present lot:—patience and submission to God's holy will are thus brought out and strengthened, and he is eminently glorified.

The colored men will hold a national convention in New York, commencing on the 4th of October.

The Japanese Embassy in Paris.

Several of the Paris journals tell the following story relating to the interpreter of the Japanese embassy now in Paris:—Frantz Blackman was a native of Holland, but being of a roving disposition embarked on board a vessel bound to Batavia to seek his fortune. Years passed by, and nothing being heard of him, his friends at last concluded that some accident must have befallen him, and that he was no longer living. His father remained in Holland, but being unsuccessful in business he came to Paris. Here his resources failed him and on writing to a friend to solicit a small loan, he received the following letter in reply:—"Send the money you ask for, and add to it the photographic portraits of the Japanese embassy. You will mark the face of one of these strangers for he is very image of your son." The father could not but perceive the resemblance; the features were certain the same but the closely-shaven head and the Oriental cootum greatly puzzled him. He, however, went to the court-yard of the hotel in which the embassy was staying, and was so fortunate as to arrive just as the Japanese were passing to go out. The original of the portrait he at once recognized and called, "Is that you Frantz? In a moment the son—for Frantz he really was—and the old man were locked in each other's arms.—The ambassadors, who witnessed the scene, were greatly amused; an old Blackman's troubles were now at an end, as the son is wealthy and prosperous.

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RELIGION OF SOVEREIGNS.—Of the 43 sovereigns in Europe, 17 are of the Lutheran creed, 11 of the Roman Catholic, 8 of the Evangelical, 4 of the Calvinist, 1 of the Episcopalian, 1 of the Greek, 1 of the Mohammedan.

THE Illustrated Mercury

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