

The Leisure Hour.

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To Who? To Who!

The following very clever ditty was written by Percy Howe, Editor of the "Pine Knot."

"'Twas on a cold autumn night,
A dismal one to view,
Dark clouds obscured fair Venus' light,
And not a star appeared in sight,
As the thick forests through
Muggins, as usual, 'bino,
Bent homeward, 'tacking' left and right;
When all at once he 'brought up' right
Against an old dead yew;
At which he 'rounded to,'
And 'squaring off,' as if to fight,
Said with an oath I shan't indite;
—Internal scoundrel, you!
Light—'an' I'll lick you, black or white!
Just then above him flew
An owl, which on a branch did light,
A few feet 'er the booby right,
And then commenced, 'To who—
To who—to who—to who!
Quoth Muggins, 'Don't you think to fright
A fellow of my weight and height
With your 'er who, 'er who,
You cursed bagaboo!
An' if you're Belzebub, 't's quite
Unnecessary you should light—
For Muggins' ain't your 'due!
For money matters are all right!
The 'Tranter' paid up—'donor bright!
Threats the Owl withdrew,
And Muggins' minded too,
But there are other chaps who might
Be caught out some dismal night,
Who have n't paid what's due!
They know—to who—to who!"

From Chambers' Miscellany.

The Husband's Secret.

One day, a good many years ago, a young woman knocked at the door of a little cottage, in the suburbs of a little town of Newcastle upon Tyne. The knock was immediately responded to, by the opening of the door within. An aged woman, neatly dressed, and who had evidently risen from her wheel, was the sole inmate of the little cot.

"Bless your heart, girl, said the dame, as she entered with her visitor, and sat down to the wheel again, "there must surely be something particular about you to-day, for you did not use to knock."

"I was afraid some one might be with you, mother," said the girl, who had taken a seat opposite the spinner.

"And though a neighbor had been here," replied the dame, "this, surely, wouldn't have frightened you away. But the truth is, you have something to say to me, Catharine," continued the speaker, kindly; "out with it, my dear, and depend upon the best counsel all Hannah can give."

The young woman blushed deeply, and did not speak.

"Has William Hutton asked you to become his wife, Catharine?" said the dame, who easily and rightly anticipated the matter that was in the thoughts of her youthful visitor.

"He has, mother," was the reply.

"Well, my dear, said she, after a short pause, "is not this what you have long expected, ay, and wished? He has your heart, and, I suppose, it needs no witch to tell what will be the end on't."

This might all be very true, but there was something on Catharine's mind which struggled to be out, and out it came.

"Dear Hannah," said she, seating herself close by the dame, and taking hold of her hand, "you have been a kind friend—a parent—to me since my poor mother died, and I have no one to look to for advice but yourself. I have not given William an answer, and I would not until I had spoken to you; more especially, as something—as you once said—"

"What did I say, Catharine?" interrupted the old woman; "nothing against the man you love, surely. He is, from all I have seen and heard, kind-hearted, industrious, and every way well-behaved."

"Yes, Hannah," replied the woman; "but you once said, after I had brought him once or twice to see you, that you did not like those—those sort of low fits that sometimes fall upon him, even while in your company. I have often noticed them since, Hannah," continued Catharine, with a sigh.

"Plague on my thoughtless tongue for saying such a thing to vex you, my dear child! He was a soldier, you know, a good many years ago—before he was twenty—and fought for his country. Perhaps he may have seen sights then that made him grieve to think upon, without blaming himself. But, whatever it may be, I meant not, Catharine, that you should take such a passing word to heart. If he has some little cares, you will easily soothe him and make him happy."

As the worthy dame spoke, her visitor's brow gradually cleared, and, after some further conversation, she left the cottage, lightened at heart with the thought that her old friend approved of her following the course to which her inclination led her.

Catharine Smith was indeed well entitled to pay respect to the counsels of Hannah. The latter had never married, and had spent the greater part of her life in the service of a wealthy family at Morpeth. When she was there, the widowed mother of Catharine had died at Newcastle; and, on learning of the circumstances, Hannah, though a friend merely, and no relation, had sent for the orphan girl, then

ten years of age, and had taken care of her until she grew fit to maintain herself by service. On finding herself unable to continue a working life longer, Hannah retired to Newcastle, and immediately entered into service there.—Hannah and Catharine had been two years in these respective situations, when the dialogue which has just been recorded took place.

On the succeeding expiration of her term of service, Catharine was married to the young man whose name had been stated as being William Hutton. He was joiner by trade, and bore, as Hannah had said, an excellent character. The first visit paid by the new married pair was to the cottage of the old woman, who gazed on them with a truly maternal pride, thinking she had never seen so handsome a couple. The few years spent by Hutton in the army had given to his naturally good figure an erect manliness, which looked as well in one of his sex as the light, graceful figure, and fair, ingenious countenance of Catharine was calculated to adorn one of womankind. Something of this kind, at least, was in the thoughts of Hannah, when Catharine and her husband visited the dame's dwelling.

Many a future visit was paid by the same parties to Hannah, and on each successive occasion the old woman looked narrowly, though as unobtrusively as possible, into the state of the wife's feelings, with a motherly anxiety to know if she was happy. For though Hannah, seeing Catharine's affections deeply engaged, had made light of her own early remark upon the strange and most unpleasant gloom occasionally, if not frequently, observable in the look and manner of William Hutton, the old woman was never able to rid her own mind altogether of misgivings on the subject. For many months after Catharine's marriage, however, Hannah could never discover anything but open, unalloyed happiness in the air and conversation of the youthful wife. But at length Hannah's anxious eye did perceive something like a change. Catharine seemed sometimes to fall, when visiting the cottage, into fits of abstraction, not unlike those which had been observed in her husband. The aged dame had felt greatly distressed at the thought of her dear Catharine being unhappy, but for a long time she had held her peace upon the subject, trusting that the cloud might be a temporary one, and would disappear.

It was not so, unfortunately. Though in their manner to each other, when together, nothing but the most cordial affection was observable. Catharine, when she came alone to see Hannah, always seemed a prey to some uneasiness, which all her efforts could not conceal from her old friend. Even when she became for the first time a mother, and, with all the beautiful pride of a young mother's love, presented her babe to Hannah, the latter could see signs of a secret grief imprinted on Catharine's brow.

Hoping by her counsel to bring relief, Hannah took an opportunity to tell the young wife what she had observed, and earnestly besought her confidence.

At first Catharine stammered forth a hurried assurance that she was perfectly happy, and in a few seconds belted her words by bursting into tears, and owning that she was very unhappy.

"But I cannot, Hannah," she exclaimed, "I cannot tell the cause—even to you."

"Don't say so, my poor Catharine," replied Hannah; "it is not curiosity that prompts me to interfere."

"Oh, no, Hannah," replied the young wife; "I know you speak from love to me."

"Well, then," continued the dame, "open your heart to me. Age is a good adviser."

Catharine was silent.

"Is your husband harsh to you?" asked Hannah.

"No, no, Hannah," replied the young wife; "I know you speak from love to me."

"Well, then," continued the dame, "open your heart to me. Age is a good adviser."

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appears to be—good as he is—there is some dreadful weight pressing upon his mind which destroys his peace—and mine, too. Alas! the gloomy fits, which you as well as I have noticed in him, are not, I fear, without cause.—Catharine wept in silence a moment, and then continued:—"All that I know of this cause arises from his expressions—his dreadful expressions—while he is asleep at my side. Hannah he speaks in broken language of murder—of having committed murder, Hannah! perhaps a woman deceived and killed by him." As Catharine said this, she shuddered, and buried her face in that of her babe, which she carried in her arms.

Hannah was shocked to hear of this, but her good sense led her to suggest for the poor wife that it was possible for her husband to consider himself a murderer in his sleep, and speak of it, without the slightest reality in the whole affair.

"Ah, Hannah," said Catharine, sadly, "these dreadful sayings are not the result of one nightmare slumber. They occur often—too often. Besides, when I first heard him mutter in his sleep these horrible things, I mentioned the matter to him in the morning, at our breakfast, and laughed at it; but he grew agitated, and telling me to pay no attention to such things, as he sometimes talked nonsense, he knew, in his sleep, he arose and went away, leaving his meal unfinished, indeed, scarcely touched. I am sure he does not know how often he speaks in his sleep, for I have never mentioned the subject again, though my rest is destroyed by it. And then his fits of sadness at ordinary moments!—Hannah, Hannah! there is some mystery—some terrible mystery under it!—"

"Yet," continued the young wife, "he is so good—so kind—so dutiful to God and to man! He has too much tenderness and feeling to harm a fly! Hannah, what am I to think or do, for I am wretched at present?"

It was long ere the old dame replied to this question. She mused greatly on what had been told her, and in the end said to Catharine, "My poor child, I cannot believe that William is guilty of what these circumstances lay seeming, if at his door. But if the worst be true, it is better for you to know it than to be in this killing suspense forever. Go and gain his confidence, Catharine; tell him all that has come to your ear, and say that you did so by my advice. Hannah continued to use persuasions of the same kind for some time longer, and at length sent Catharine home, firmly resolved to follow the counsels given.

On the following day, Catharine once more, presented herself at the abode of Hannah, and as soon as she entered exclaimed, "Dear mother, I have told him all! He will be here soon to explain everything to us both."

The old woman did not exactly comprehend this. "Has he not," said she, "given any explanation to you?"

"No, Hannah," said Catharine; "but oh, he is not guilty. When I had spoken to you as desired, he was silent a long time, and he then took me in his arms, Hannah, and kissed me, saying, 'My darling Catharine, I ought to have confided in you long before. I have been unfortunate, not guilty. Go to kind Hannah's, and I will soon follow you, and set your mind at ease, as far as it can be done. Had I known how much you have been suffering, I would have done this long before. These are his words, Hannah. Oh, he may be unfortunate, but not guilty!'"

Hannah and Catharine said little to each other, until William came to the cottage. He sat down gravely by the side of his wife, and after kindly inquiring for the old woman, at once commenced to tell his story.

"The reasons of my unhappy exclamations in my sleep, which have weighed so much upon my mind, dear Catharine, may be very soon told. They arose from a circumstance which has much embittered my own peace, but which I hope to be regarded as a sad calamity rather than a crime. When I entered the army, which I did at the age of nineteen, the recruiting party to which I attached myself was sent to Scotland, where we remained but a few days, being ordered again to England, in order to be transported again to the continent. One unhappy morning, as we were passing out of the town where we had rested on our march southward, my companions and I chanced to see a girl, apparently about fifteen years of age, washing clothes in a tub. Being the most light-hearted among the light-hearted, I took up a large stone, with the intention of splashing the water against the girl. She stooped hastily, and, shocking to tell, when I threw the stone, it struck her on the head, and she fell to the ground, with, I fear, her skull fractured.—Stupified at what I had done, I stood gazing on the stream of blood rushing from my poor victim's head, when my companions, observing that no one had seen us, for it was then early in the morning, hurried me off. We were not pursued, and we were in a few weeks on the continent. But the image of that bleeding girl followed me everywhere; and since I came home, I have never dared to inquire the result, lest I should be hung for murder. For I fear, from the dreadful nature of the blow, that the death of that poor creature lies at my door!"

While Hutton was relating his story, he had turned his eyes to the window; but what was his astonishment, as he was concluding, to hear old Hannah cry aloud, "Thank God!" while his wife broke out into a hysterical passion of tears and smiles, and threw herself into his arms.

"My dear husband," cried she, as soon as her voice found utterance, "that town was Morpeth!"

"It was," said he.

"Dear William," the wife then cried, "I am that girl!"

"You, Catharine?" cried the amazed and enraptured husband, as he pressed her to his breast.

"Yes," said old Hannah, from whose eyes tears were fast dropping, "the girl whom you unfortunately struck, was she who is now the wife of your bosom. But, your fears had magnified the blow. Catharine was found by myself soon after the accident; and, though she lost a little blood, and was stunned for a time, she soon roused again. Praised be heaven for bringing about this blessed explanation!"

"Amen!" cried Catharine and her husband. Peace and happiness, as much as usually falls to the lot of mortals, were the lot of Catharine and her husband, from this time forward, their great source of disquietude being thus taken away. The wife even loved the husband more, from the discovery that the circumstances which had caused her distress were but a proof of his extreme tenderness of heart and conscience; and William was attached the more strongly to Catharine, after finding her to be the person whom he unwittingly injured. A new tie, as it were, had been formed between them.

From Tait's Edinburgh Magazine.

The Spirit and the Sunbeam.

FRAGMENT.

It was a fast day in heaven; for summer had begun, and the monarch of the sky rose with increased splendor, to celebrate this his season of beauty and luxuriance.

Aurora, to whom the ceremony of his rising was intrusted, exhausted all her resources to do honor to the occasion. She decked her handmaidens, the clouds, in their brightest attire, bordering their fleecy garments of the purest white with a golden rim, and casting a roseate veil over all. Then she paved their aerial path with orange, graduated to the palest primrose, and studded this, also, with golden sponges, which shone refulgent on the deep-blue vault of Heaven.

The potent monarch of the sky was well pleased with these arrangements, and he consequently rose in the very best of tempers, and shone benignantly on the children of Earth.

First the great towering mountains received his smile—and a glow of ruddy pleasure lit up their snowy heads, creeping from them gradually down, until it reached their base, where sat a crowd of furious, malicious vapors, enemies of man, artificers of disease, to him in the shape of rheumatism, consumptions, and many other ills.

The smile of the great heavenly potentate just touched them, and it acted like a charm; for off they all flew in dudgeon, crowding together in a dark and sultry mass, sitting half way up the mountain, sulking and lowering, and threatening to come down again as soon as ever King Sol (for so this great monarch was named) had gone away again.

How glorious all nature looked! Millions of spirits, unlost to mortal eyes, danced joyously in the pure morning air, chanting their heaven-born songs of praise and joy. All nature was happy—all, save one ethereal being, who, with drooping wings and broken harp, stood in the pathway of the monarch of the sky.

"Iris, mine own loved messenger, wherefore so sad?"

But the wings drooped still, and the harp fell lower in her hands.

Then there arose a chorus of heavenly music. 'Twas the morning hymn. Its melody stole over the sorrowing spirit, and, as it ceased, her voice was heard, like the last tone of an Eolian harp.

"I sorrow that this glory which I share, these sunbeams on which I dance, should be denied to some of those who pine in misery. I would crave a boon, great monarch!—and she knelt before him: "Grant me one warm sunbeam to carry where I will."

Then the voice of heaven's children broke forth again in a rejoicing song of grateful praise, as the spirit's request was complied with.

Now, her drooping pinions were spread in rapid flight, as, folding a sunbeam to her bosom, she took her way from heaven to earth.

On she flew—and she hugged her treasure yet more closely, for she feared it would be stolen from her. Down her colored way she sped—down, and down—until she alighted on a glittering dais of gold.

It was an eastern palace, a monument of magnificence. Gems of rare value adorned its marble walls; the treasures of the earth had been ransacked to provide for its embellishment.

"Shall I leave thee here, mine own sunbeam?" asked the spirit—"shall I make this thine home?" and she just peeped into her bosom at her treasure; and there it lay, so pure and bright

Then she looked at the magnificent work of man, the palace; but its glory had departed, its luster had faded before the beauty of nature's handiwork, before the brilliancy of the warm sunbeam; and Iris then knew that this was no place for her treasured gift. So, on she flew with it for many a long and weary mile, over both sea and land. At last she came to a city—a great noisy, dirty, bustling city, with its smoke and filth of every kind.

"Here art thou wanted! here art thou wanted, my treasure!" said the gentle spirit; "but how can I leave thee in this human den with naught worthy of thee?"

"Naught worthy?" said a still, small voice. "Presumptuous spirit! fold thy wing, tarry in thy course, and see whether thou can'st not bestow thy gifts worthily here. Behold!"

The spirit closed her half spread wings. Before her stood one with heavy eyes and famine-pinched face—a child in years, a woman in sorrow and experience. Her clothes hung in rags about her, and displayed her delicate limbs of marble whiteness. How that loving spirit longed for a mortal tongue, to whisper words of comfort to that friendless being!

A stranger passed, and gave her alms. They were seized with avidity, and the wild eyes looked an intensity of joy. How swiftly the bare feet sped on! in quest of bread, perchance? No, she entered a fruiterer's shop, and spent the whole of this, her fortune, in a few strawberries. On again, until she had traversed the length of the dirty street, and turned into a narrow alley, swarming with riotous children.

The spirit hovered over her, and, with her zephyr wings, fanned each noisome air from the poor child's heated brows.

On again, until she reached a court leading from this alley, and looking still more wretched and uninhabitable. She entered a miserable abode, and, with a quick and happy step, ascended the stairs. With a gentle hand she unlocked a door. The room she entered contained a miserable bed, one chair, and a deal table.

A lad of about sixteen was lying on the bed. How his eyes beamed with affection as he saw the girl approach!

She placed her hand on his head; alas! there was no abatement of the fever.

She held up a strawberry to him—another, and another.

The eager eyes of the suffering boy proclaimed his delight at so unexpected a treat. The girl raised a strawberry to his lips.

"No Ruth, not one morsel, unless you taste it first."

To please him, she consented. There they sat, those two friendless beings—he, so soon to be in a happier world, she—

The boy's eyes suddenly rested on the window.

"Look, dear sister," he said; "look!—a gentle radiance seems to come even from those dull clouds, and a balmy fragrance spreads around, reminding me of other days, before we came to the smoky town, when we lived 'mid green fields and glorious valleys, when the lark, with her wild melody, roused us from our morning slumbers, and the nightingale's plaintive note lulled us to our evening rest! Ah! Ruth—that was a happy time!"

For some moments his mind seemed to be absorbed in the past.

"Ruth," he at length said, "what will you do when I am gone? Who will love you then, my sister? Who—who be kind to you and speak the word of sympathy to your heart?"

He bent his dying eyes sadly on her. She took his wasted hands in hers, and pressed them to her lips, then in an attitude of prayer. The gesture alone was an answer; but her words also replied to his question.

"The same God," she said, "who has loved me for sixteen long years, will love me still—still show me His loving kindness. In mercy has He afflicted, to make me turn to Him; even in this poor place, amid our past and present wretchedness. He has thrown over my trembling soul the balm of His heavenly comfort. He, my brother, will be my support when you are gone—my stay, my comfort, my hope, my all!"

There was a bright glow on that bed of death; a sunbeam fell on the pallid face, as the wings of the hovering spirit lulled the dying boy to his last slumber.

Hour after hour passed—daylight faded.

"Die ye together, ye things of earth and heaven!" sighed the gentle Iris; "die, my treasured sunbeam, even as the spirit of that sufferer fades from earthly woe!"

The fragile girl had laid her head beside her brother; one hand pillowed her head, the other was clasped in his. Gradually, she lost the consciousness of all external things; she slept; and then—a murmur, like music, but still not music—only a tone, like the south wind singing its own sad requiem, stole over her senses.

discovered two forms of heavenly radiance. The one looked down on the dim earth beneath, and its tears fell fast on the distant land; the face of the other was raised to heaven; and there was seen joy, worship, gladness, adoration. Carried between these two, as in a coach, resting peacefully in their arms, was a form of angel brightness, bearing a semblance to humanity, but beatified—changed; the mortal, clothed with immortality—the imperfect, perfected by the reunion with its God.

Ruth's eyes were fixed on the recumbent figure; in it she recognized her brother's soul!

It was now twilight, but the spirit's wings were playing still, fanning away the soul of the lingering girl to those realms of bliss whither her brother had passed before her!

Wail! wail! as the pale cold moon-light streamed into the room, and a sigh—the last vestige of earth—sent that girl's imprisoned soul to heaven!

Earth, ye have their bodies—the poor corruptible bodies—the empty, useless casket. Heaven!—their soul—their incorruptible, imperishable souls—are yours.

Mortal, who readest this, pause and think; thou livest for the one—dost thou live for the other also?

Does earth absorb your love, your thought, your care? Take heed, lest earth swallow up heaven in your heart!

Earth and Heaven!
Earth for all now—Heaven hereafter, for those alone who live on earth for heaven.

From the Times.

Musings.

The rushing winds of the new-born year, sweep with a hollow moan through the darkness of approaching night. The pale night queen gluts in her "hour of light," and the quick twinklings of star-light, seem but the glimmings of spirit eyes.

Again the night winds hurry past, and again slip my chair nearer the cheerful hearth-stone. A thousand images dance and disappear upon the live coals; a thousand visions of love and beauty crowd my mind, and a thousand memories of "langsyne" fill my spirit with sweetest anguish. Images, visions, and memories, all all worth a quaff from the life-chalice; all fraught with interest and life coloring. Come here not such moments to all? Come there not recollections of holiest meaning from the ten thousand voices that swell the home lullulushah? Come there not memories of a fond mother's yearning breast—a kind father's earnest wishes? Come there not memories of the quiet little bedroom, and the simple prayer of childhood, offered when no eye was upon us save that of God? Yes, they do come. Blessed memories! Heaven help me to cherish you right!

But, another year is gone now, and fresh remembrances are added to the store of treasures. The scenes of eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, though swept away into the great Past, will come stealing back to us—some to sadden—some to cheer.

Since the dawn of the past year how varied have been the life scenes! How often has man's pathway been turned through rosy bowers and smiling streamlets! How oft eyes looked tender to eyes—ears caught the lipings of the heart's purest offering, "first love,"—and bosoms been stilled with ecstasy of bliss. How oft have homes been gladdened, and hearts been lightened; how oft griefs been turned to joys; tears to hopes, and despondencies to brighter anticipations! Alas! too, oft times sin has entered the young and tender heart, and done its first blightings; while spirit voices have cried, "Beware!" How oft man's faith to woman proved worse than a trifle, "Dying upon the very breath that gave it birth."

How oft has the glitter of wealth led men from the path of true manliness; how oft the lure of wealthy dames fallen on the features of a gizzard poverty, "neglected worth," and dying mendicant! Oh, too, has the dark winged Death angel hovered over our own beloved friends and torn them ruthlessly from our arms. A pain has his power been stayed, and a merciful God restored to our embrace those whose harps had been strung and whose place had been prepared in the beautiful New Jerusalem.

But, the Past is gone, the Old Year, "like a blood-stained warrior Crowned weary of renown, Has yielded to the new-born year His sceptre and his crown."

"What now?" Shall we sully the fair page—fifty-eight with deeds of vice, with bloody slaughter and dreadful crimes? Shall man's heart be hardened and woman's soul be stained with sin? Shall wars and fightings spread, through this free and fair America, and drink up her honest earnings? God forbid! Rather let the New Year set our firm resolve to be better men and better women. Let our hearts be raised in humble prayer to the Wise for wisdom, the Strong, for strength. Let every voice