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Poetry.

A Modern Financee.

She, with a milk pail on her arm
Turns aside with her young cheeks glowing,
And sees down the lane the slow, dull tread
Of the drove of cows that are homeward going.
"Bessie," he said; at the sound she turned,
Her blue eyes full of childish wonder;
"My mother is feeble, and lame, and old—
I need a wife at my farmhouse yonder,

"My heart is lonely, my home is drear,
I need your presence ever near me;
Will you be my guardian angel, dear,
Queen of my household, to guide and cheer me?"

"It has a pleasant sound," she said,
"A household queen, a guiding spirit,
To warm your heart and cheer your home,
And keep the sunshine ever near it.
But I am only a simple child
So my mother says in her daily chiding,
And what must a guardian angel do
When she first begins her work of guiding?"

"Well, first, dear Bessie, a smiling face
Is dearer far than the rarest beauty,
And my mother, fretful, lame, and old
Will require a daughter's loving duty.
You will see to her flannels, drops, and tea,
And talk with her of lungs and liver;
Give her your cheerful service dear,
'The Lord He loveth a cheerful giver.'

"You will see that my breakfast is piping hot,
And rub the clothes to a snowy whiteness;
Make golden butter and snowy rolls
And polish things to a shining brightness:
Willdarn my stockings and mend my coats,
And see that the buttons are sewed on tightly;
You will keep things cheerful, and neat, and sweet,
That home's altar fires may still burn brightly.

"You will read me at evening the daily news,
The tedious winter nights beguiling;
And never forget that the sweetest face
Is a cheerful face that is always smiling
In short, you'll arrange in a general way
For a sort of sublumary heaven;
For home, dear Bessie, say what we may,
Is the highest sphere to a woman given."

The lark sang out to the bending sky,
The bobolink piped in the nodding rushes,
And out of the tossing clover blooms
Come the sweet, clear songs of the meadow thrushes.
And Bessie, listening, paused awhile,
Then said, with a sly glance at her neighbour,
"But John—do you mean—that is to say,
What shall I get for all this labour?

"To be nurse, companion, and servant girl,
To make home's altar fires burn brightly;
To wash and iron and cook and sew,
And always be cheerful, neat, and sprightly;
To give up liberty, home, and friends;
Nay, even the name of a mother's giving;
To do all this for one's board and clothes;
Why, the life of an angel isn't worth living!"

And Bessie gaily went her way
Down through the fields of scented clover,
But never again since that summer day
Has she won a glance from her rustic lover.
The lark sings out to the bending sky,
The clouds sail on as white as ever;
The clovers toss in the summer wind.
But Bessie has lost that chance forever.

Literature.

The Widow's Story.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

"Better than too much," he muttered, and then he flung me harshly back on the sofa saying, "Tears and folly, and weakness! The same round—always the same! Why did I marry a mere pretty doll—a plaything—no wife!"

And then he seemed to think he had said too much, for he came down and kissed me, and said that he loved me. But, for the first time in our married life, his kisses did not soothe me, nor did I believe his assurances.

All that night I heard Ellen walk steadily and unresting through her room. She never hurried: but the the same slow measured thread went on; the firm foot, yet light, falling as if to music, her very step the same mixture of manliness and womanhood as her character.

After this burst of passion Harry's tenderness to me became unbounded; as is he wished to make up to me for some wrong. I need not not say how soon I forgave him, nor how much I loved him again. All my love came back in one full, boundless tide; and the current of my being set toward him again as before. If he had asked me for my life then, as his mere fancy to destroy I would have given it to him. I would have laid down and died, if he wished to see the flowers grow over my grave.

My husband and Ellen grew more estranged as his affection seemed to return to me. His manner to her defying; hers to him contemptuous. I heard her call him a villain once, in the garden below the windows; at which he laughed—his wicked laugh and said, "Tell her, and see if she will believe you!"

I was sitting in the window, working. It was a cold, damp day in the late autumn, when those chill fogs of November are just beginning; those fogs with the frost in them, that steal into one's very heart. It was a day when a visible blight is in the air, when death is abroad every where, and suffering and crime. I was alone in the drawing-room. Ellen was up-stairs, and my husband, as I believed, in the city. But I have remembered since, that I heard the hall door softly opened and a foot-step steal quietly by the drawing-room up the stairs. The evening was just beginning to close in—dull, gray, and ghost-like; the dying daylight melting into the long shadows that stalked like wandering ghosts about the fresh-made grave of nature. I sat working still at some of those small garments about which I dreamed such fond dreams, and wove such large hopes of happiness; and as I sat, while the evening fell heavy about me, a mysterious shadow of evil passed over me—a dread presentiment, a consciousness of ill, that made me tremble as if in ague—angry at myself though, for my foliy. But it was reality. It was no hysterical sinking of the spirits that I felt; no mere nervousness or cowardice; it was something that I had never known before a knowledge, a presence, a power, a warning word, a spirit's cry, that has swept by me as the fearful evil marched on to its conclusion.

I heard a scream up-stairs. It was so faint I could scarcely distinguish it from a sudden rush of wind through an opening door, or the chirp of a mouse behind the wainscot. Presently, I heard the same sound again; and then a dull, muffled noise overhead, as of some one walking heavily, or dragging a heavy weight across the floor. I sat petrified by fear. A nameless agony was upon me that deprived me of all power of action. I thought of Harry, and I thought of Helen, in an inextricable cipher of misery and agony; but I could not have explained what it was I feared. I only knew that it was sorrow that was to come; and sin. I listened, but all was still again; once only, I thought I heard a low moan, and once a muttering voice—which I know now to have been my husband's speaking passionately to himself.

And then his voice swept stormfully through the house, crying wildly, "Mary Mary! Quick here! Your sisfer! Ellen!"

I ran up-stairs. It seems to me now that I almost flew. I found Ellen lying on the floor of her own room, just inside the door; her feet toward the door of my husband's study, which was immediately opposite her room. She was fainting; at least I thought so then. We raised her up between us—my husband trembling more than I—I unfastened her gown, and threw water on her face, and pushed back her hair; but she did not revive. I told Harry to go for a doctor. A horrid thought was stealing over me; but he lingered, as I fancied, unaccountably and cruelly, though I twice asked him to go. Then I thought that he was too much overcome; so I went to him, and kissed him, and said, "She will soon be better, Harry," cheerfully, to cheer him. But I felt in my heart that she was no more.

At last, after many urgent entreaties, and after the servants had come up, clustering in a frightened way around the bed—but he sent them away again immediately—he put on his hat and went out, soon returning with a strange man, not our own doctor. This man was rude and course, and ordered me aside, as I stood bathing my sister's face, and pulled her arm and hand roughly, to see how dead they fell, stopped down close to her lips—I thought he touched them even—all in a violent and insolent way, that shocked me and bewildered me. My husband stood in the shadow, ghastly pale, but not interfering.

It was true what the strange man had said so coarsely. She was dead. Yes; the creature that an hour ago had been so full of life, so beautiful, so resolute, and young, was now a stiffening corpse, inanimate and dead, without life and without hope, Oh! that word had set my brain on fire! Dead! here in my house, under my roof—dead so mysteriously, so strangely—why! How? It was a fearful dream—it was no truth that lay there. I was in a nightmare: I was not sane; and thinking how ghastly it all was, I fainted softly on the bed, no one knowing, till some time after that I had fallen, and was not praying. When I recovered I was in my own room, alone. Crawling feebly to my sister's door, I found that she had been washed and dressed, and was now laid out on her bed. It struck me that all had been done in strange haste; Harry telling me the servants had done it while I fainted. I knew afterward that he had told them it was I, and that I would have no help. The mystery of it all was soon to be unraveled,

One thing I was decided on—to watch by my sister this night. It was in vain that my husband opposed me; in vain that he coaxed me by his caresses, or tried to terrify me with angary threats. Something of my sister's nature seemed to have passed into me; and unless he had positively prevented me by force, no other means would have had any effect.

He gave away to me at last—angrily—and the night came on and found me sitting by the bedside watching my dear sister.

How beautiful she looked! Her face, still with the gentle mark of sorrow on it that it had in life, looked so grand! She was so great, so pure; she was like a goddess sleeging; she was not like a mere woman of this earth. She did not seem to be dead,; there was life about her yet, for there was still the look of power and of human sympathy that she used to have when alive. The soul was there still, and love, and knowledge.

By degrees a strange feeling of her living presence in the room came over me. Alone in the still midnight, with no sound, no person near me, it seemed as if I had leisure and power to pass into the world beyond the grave. I felt my sister near me; I felt the passing of her life about me, as when one sleeps, but still is conscious that another life is weaving in with ours. It seemed as if her breath fell warm on my face; as if her shadowy arms held me in their clasp; as if her eyes were looking through the darkness at me; as if I held her hands in mine, and her long hair floated round my forehead. And then, to shake off these fancies, and convince myself that she was really dead, I looked again and again at her lying there; a marble corpse, ice-cold, with the lips set and rigid, and the death band beneath her chin. There she was, stiff in white shroud, the snowy linen pressing so lightly on her; no life within, no warmth about her, and all my fancies were vain dreams. Then I buried my face in my hands, and wept as if my heart was breaking. And when I turned away my eyes from her, the presence came around me again. So long as I watched her, it was not there; I saw the corpse only; but when I shut this out from me, then it seemed as if a barrier had been removed, and that my sister floated near me again.

I had been praying, sitting thus in these alternate feelings of her spiritual presence and her bodily death, when, raising my head and looking toward the farther corner of the room, I saw, standing at some little distance, my sister Ellen. I saw her distinctly, as distinctly as you may see that red fire blaze. Sadly and lovingly her dark eyes looked at me, sadly her gentle lips smiled, and by look and gesture too she showed me that she wished to speak to me. Strange, I was not frightened. It was so natural to see her there, that for the moment I forgot that she was dead.

"Ellen!" I said, "what is it?"

The figure smiled. It came nearer. Oh! do not say it was a fancy! I saw it advance; it came glidingly; I remembered afterward that it did not walk—but it came forward—to the light, and stood not ten paces from me. It looked at me still, in the same sad, gentle way, and somehow—I do not know whether with the hand or by the turning of the head—it showed me the throat, where were the distinct marks of two powerful hands. And then it pointed to its heart; and looking, I saw the broad stain of blood above it. And then I heard her voice—I swear I was not mad—I heard it, I say to you distinctly—whisper softly, "Mary!" and then it said, still more audibly, "Murdered!"

And then the figure vanished, and suddenly the whole room was vacant. That one dread word had sounded as if forced out by the pressure of some strong agony—like a man revealing his life's secret when dying. And when it had been spoken, or rather wailed forth, there was a sudden sweep and chilly rush through the air; and the life, the soul, the presence, fled. I was alone again with Death. The mission had been fulfilled; the warning had been given; and then my sister passed away—for her work with earth was done.

Brave and calm as the strongest man that ever fought on a battle-field, I stood up beside my sister's body. I unfastened her last dress, and threw it back from her chest and shoulders; I raised her head, and took off the bandage from around her face; and then I saw deep black bruises on her throat, the marks of hands that had grapled her from behind, and that had strangled her. And then I looked further, and I saw a small wound below the left breast, about which hung two or three clots of blood, that had coked up, despite all care and [illegible] edge in her manner of murder. I knew then she had first been suffocated, to prevent her screams, and then stabbed where the wound would bleed inwardly, and show no sign to the mere bystander.

I covered her up carefully again. I laid the pillow smooth and straight, and laid the heavy head gently down. I drew the shroud close above the dreadful mark of murder. And then—still as calm and resolute as I had been ever since the revelation had come to me—I left the room and passed into my husband's study. It was on me to discover all the truth.

His writing table was locked. Where my strength came from, I know not; but, with a chisel that was lying on the table, I prised the drawer and broke the lock. I opened it. There was a long and slender dagger lying there, red with blood; a handful of woman's hair rudely severed from the head, lay near it. It was my sister's hair!—that wavy, silken, uncurled auburn hair that I had always loved and admired so much! And near to these again were stamps, and dies, and moulds, and plates, and handwritings with fac-similes beneath, and bankers' checks, and a heap of leaden coin. and piles of incomplete bank-notes; and all the evidences of a coiner's and a forger's trade—the suspicion of which had caused those bitter quarelings between poor Ellen and my husband—the knowledge of which had caused her death.

With these things I saw also a letter addressed to Ellen in my husband's handwriting. It was an unfinished letter, as if it had displeased him, and he had made another copy, It began with these words—no fear that I should forget them; they are burnt into my brain—"I never really loved her, Ellen; she pleased me, only as as a doll would please a child; and I married her from pity, not from love. You, Ellen, you alone could fill my heart; you alone are my fit helpmate. Fly with me, Ellen"—Here, the letter was left unfinished; but it gave me enough to explain all the meaning of the first weeks of my sister's stay here, and why she called him villian, and why he had told her that she might tell me, and that I would not believe.

I saw it all now. I turned my head, to see my husband standing a few paces bihind me. Good Heaven! I have often thought, was that man the same man I had loved so long and fondly!

The strength of horror, not of courage, upheld me. I knew he meant to kill me, but that did not alarm me; I only dreaded least his hand should touch me. It was not death, it was he I shrank from. I believe if he had touched me then, I should have fallen at his feet. I stretched out my arms in horror, to thrust him back, uttering a piercing shriek; and while he made an effort to seize me, overreaching himself in the madness of his fury, I rushed by him, shrieking still, and so fled away into the darkness, where I lived, oh! for many, many months.

When I woke again, I found that my poor baby had died, and that my husband had gone, none knew where. But the fear of his return haunted me. I could get no rest day or night for dread of him; and I felt going mad with the one hard thought forever pitilessly pursuing me—that I should fall again into his hands. I put on widow's weeds—for indeed am I too truely widowed!—and then I began wandering in poverty and privation, expecting every moment to meet him face to face; wandering about, so that I may escape the more easily when the moment does come.

CAUSES OF COLLISIONS.

A Telegraph Man Tells a Tale for Railroad Magnates to Ponder.

The majority of railroad stations are what we call "one man stations;" that is to say, the operator acts as agent, express agent, baggage master, United States mail carrier, etc., handling at some stations thousands of pounds of freight unaided, and thousands of dollars per month for the railroad and express companies, for which he pays to the company, or some guarantee company, from $8 to $15 per year as a guarantee bond for faithful discharge of duty. Some night operators are obliged to pay a premium on a $1,000 or $2,000 bond at stations where they don't handle $200 a year. We are obliged to be on duty from 7 o'clock a. m. till 7 p. m. as regular hours, with perhaps no chance to go to dinner, and where there is no night operator the day operator frequently has to stay in the office until 8, 9 or 10 p. m. to report some stock train or officer's special, and in case of a wreck he is expected to stay up all night or perhaps two nights in case of a washout. For all this he gets $40 or $50 per month in the west and less in the eastern states, and not one cent for overtime.

The traveling public do not realize to what extent their lives are in the hands of the operators, unless they occasionally read in the papers of some accident caused by the neglect of some operator to deliver his orders to the conductor. Perhaps this operator may be so overworked that he hardly knows what he is doing. There may be a dozen passengers calling for tickets; half as many want baggage checked; another wants to send a message, and wants the operator to write it for him; another wants that jar of butter sent by express by this train to his son in the city, etc., and perhaps this operator has worked half or all the night before. But he ought to go to jail. We could stand all this without complaining if we only knew that when Sunday comes we could rest and enjoy the society of our families, for many of us are married, but we are obliged to work as steadily on Sunday as on any other day, perhaps harder, for many of the roads take Sunday as a general cleaning up day on divisions where they run no passenger trains on that day.

It is Sunday today, and I have not been able to get away long enough to go out to dinner, and by the time I go home to-night will have reported twenty trains. I have not had one Sunday home with my family for six months, not even a Thanksgiving or a Christmas day. While the different branches of my family were taking their Christmas dinner together, I was at the station eating mine out of a tin pail, and it was on a Sunday, too. I love my wife and little boys and girls as dearly as Jim Hill does his, but the only chance I have to visit them in the daytime is when they come to the depot Sundays to see papa, which I usually permit them to do. When I left home this morning my little girl was sick and she "did wish papa wouldn't go the depot today." I wished so, too, but I am obliged to. And what do we get for this Sunday work? Nothing; not a cent.—Cor. Cedar Rapids Gazette.

Characteristics of Good Timber.

There are certain appearances which are characteristic of strong and durable timber, to whatsoever class it belongs. 1. In the same species of timber that specimen will, in general, be the strongest and most durable which has grown the slowest, as shown by the narrowness of annual rings. 2. The cellular tissue, as seen in the medullary rays (when visible) should be hard and compact. 3. The viscular or fibrous tissues should adhere firmly together, and should show to woodiness at a freshly cut surface, nor should it clog the teeth of the saw with loose fibers. 4. If the wood is colored, darkness of color is in general a sign of strength and durability. 5. The freshly cut surface of the wood must be firm and shining, and should have somewhat of a translucent appearance. A dull chalky appearance is a sign of bad timber. 6. In wood of a given species, the heaviest specimens are in general the stronger and more lasting. 7. Among resinous woods, those which have least resin in their pores, and among non-resinous woods those which have least sap or gum in them, are in general the strongest and most lasting. 8. It is stated by some authors that in fir wood, that which has most wood, and in hard which has the least, is the most durable; but the universality of this law is doubtful. Timber should be free from such blemishes as clefts or cracks radiating from the centre, "cup shakes" or cracks which partially separate one annual layer from another; "up sets," where the fibres have been crippled by compression; "rindgalls" or wounds in a layer of the wood, which have been covered and concealed by the growth of subsequent layers over them, and hollow or spoony places in the centre or elsewhere, indicating the commencement of decay.

Mistaken Identity.

KINGSTON, June 13.—Judge Doran, coroner, who arrived here yesterday, reports the killing of Louis Lachieller on Friday at North Bay, in the C. P. R. yard. He was head cook on the dining car Buckingham and was walking down the track from his post when the shunting engine struck him, smashed in the top of his skull, cut off his left arm, and crushed him badly. The engine showed a light at both ends, and the deceased deliberately stepped on the track in advance of the locomotive, being confused by the lights. Next day the coroner, who found on the body $75 in cash but no clue to identity held a preliminary investigation, and received the evidence of a dozen witnesses that the dead man was one McDowall a resident of the district and brother of two Methodist ministers. An inquest was not considered necessary, and McDowall's brothers were telegraphed to. Just before the body was cofined, however, another pocket was found containing a Roman Catholic rosary and letter bearing Lachieller's name. Enquiry at the dining car disclosed to them that he had been missing since receiving his pay the night before, and his assistant and comrades then identified the body. His wife, living at Montreal, was telegarphed to, and as conclusive evidence McDowell arrived and denied emphatically that he was dead. The mistake in identity was all the more singular since the face of the deceased was uninjured.

Labour to keep a good conscience, for he that is disfurnished thereof hath fear for his bedfellow and sharp care for his companion.

In a town recently, where professional skating matches and Lent were being held, the elderly people of a household were discussing the latter, and the youngsters were talking of the sporting of the skaters on the last lap, &c. Mention was made that Mrs. So-and-So had been to church once every day since Lent commenced, but that now, on the last week, she was going twice a day. One of the listening dryly remarked that he thought she must be putting on an *extra spurt for the last lap.*