The Human Auction.

Ho! here are lives by the score to sell;
Up to the platform, gents, and bid;
Make me an offer, they'll pay you well—
All of 'em ripe for the coffin lid.
Here is a woman, pinched and pale,
Plying her needle for daily bread;
Give me a shirt for her—more on sale,
Dying! gentlemen—dying!—dead!

A family, six in number, here,
Fresh from a cellar in Somers Town;
Mother her sixth confinement near,
Father and brats with fever down.
'Twas Pestilence spoke then, was it not?
"An open sewer," I think he said;
Well, his offer shall buy the lot,
Dying! gentlemen—dying!—dead!

Now, good customers, here's a chance:
A thousand men in the prime of life,
Wielders of musket, sword and lance,
Armed and drilled for the deadly strife.
General Warfare lifts his hand—
"A bullet for each," cries the gent in red,
No offer but his—fast flows the sand,
Dying! gentlemen—dying!—dead!

A body of toilers, worn and weak,
Clerk and curates and writing men—
Look at the flush on each sunken cheek,
Mark the fingers that grasp the pen!
Come, good gentlemen, can't we deal?
Has Drudgery's eye for bargains fled?
He offers, at last, the price of a meal—
Dying! gentlemen—dying! dead!

—George R. Sims.

SIR HUGH'S LOVES.

The letter was as follows:

"Madam,—I am directed by Mr Huntingdon to inform you that from this day he will hold no communication with you or your husband.

"He wishes me to add that he has sent all clothes, jewels, and personal effects belonging to his daughter Nea Huntingdon, now styling herself Nea Trafford, to the enclosed address, and he has directed his manager, Mr. Dobson, to strike Mr. Maurice Trafford's name off the list of clerks. Any attempts to open any further correspondence with Mr. Huntingdon will be useless, as all such letters will be returned or destroyed.—I remain, madam, your humble servant, Sister Teresa."

Enclosed was a cheque for two hundred pounds and a little slip of paper with a few pencilled lines in Sister Teresa's handwriting.

"For the love of heaven do not send or come—it would be worse than useless, he is nearly beside himself with anger; your maid interceded for you with tears, and has been sent away with her wages. No one dares to say a word."

Oh fathers! provoke not your children to wrath. It was that hard, cruel letter that changed Nea's repentance to unrelenting bitterness.

Instinctively she felt the iron of her father's will enter into her soul. In a moment she understood, as she had never done before, the hardness and coldness of his nature, the inflexibility of his purpose; as well might she dash herself against a rock as expect forgiveness. Well, she was his own child, her will was strong too, and in the anguish of her despair she called upon her pride to support her, she leant her fainting woman's heart upon that most rotten of reeds.

He had disinherited her, his only child, he had flung her away from him. Well, she would defy him; and then she remembered his ill-health, their projected trip to Pau, their happy schemes for the future, till her heart felt almost broken, but for all that she stood like a statue, crushing down the pain in the very stubbornness of her pride.

Ah, Nea, unhappy Nea! poor motherless, wilful girl; well may she look round her with that scared, hunted look.

Was this her future home, these poor rooms, this shabby furniture? Belgrave House closed to her for ever. But as she looked round with that fixed miserable glance, why did the tears suddenly dim her eyes?

Her glance had fallen on Maurice, still sitting motionless with his hands before his eyes—Maurice, her husband; yes, there he sat, the man whom her own wilfulness had dragged to the brink of ruin, whose faith and honor she had tempted, whose honest purpose she had shaken and destroyed, who was so crushed with remorse for his own weakness that he dare not look her in the face; and as she gazed at him, Nea's whole heart yearned with generous pity over the man who had brought her to poverty, but whom she had loved and would love to her life's end.

And Maurice, sitting crushed with that awful remorse, felt his hands drawn down from his face, and saw Nea's beautiful face smiling at him through her tears, felt the smooth brown head nestle to his breast, and heard the low sobbing words—

"For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, till death us do part, have I not promised, Maurice? take me to your heart and comfort me with your love, for in all the world I have no one but you—no one but you!"

CHAPTER X.

IN DEEP WATERS.

Let our unceasing, earnest prayer
Be, too, for light, for strength to bear
Our portion of the weight to care,
That crushes into dumb despair
One half the human race.

O suffering, sad humanity!
O ye afflicted ones, who lie
Steep'd to the lips in misery,
Longing and yet afraid to die,
Patient though sorely tried!
I pledge you in this cup of grief,
Where floats the fennel's bitter leaf!
The battle of your life is brief,
The alarm, the struggle, the relief;
Then sleep we side by side.

Longfellow.

Nea had to learn by bitter experience that the fruits of disobedience and deceit are like the apples of Sodom, fair to the sight, but mere ashes to the taste, and in her bitter mood she owned that her punishment was just.

Slowly and laboriously, with infinite care and pains, she set herself to unlearn the lessons of her life. For wealth she had poverty; for ease and luxury, privation and toil; but in all her troubles her strong will and pride sustained her; and though she suffered, and heaven only knew how she suffered! she never complained or murmured until the end came.

For her pride sustained her, and when that failed, her love came to her aid.

How she loved him, how she clung to him in those days, no one but Maurice knew; in her bitterest hours his words had power to comfort her and take the sting from her pain. When it was possible, she hid her troubles from him, and never added to his by vain repining and regrets.

But in spite of Nea's courage and Maurice's patience, they had a terrible hard life of it.

At first Maurice's efforts to find another clerkship were in vain, and they were compelled to live on the proceeds of the cheque; then Nea sold her jewels, that they might have something to fall back upon. But presently Mr. Dobson came to their aid.

He had a large family, and could not do much, as he told them, sorrowfully; but he found Maurice, with some trouble, a small clerkship at eighty pounds a year, advising him at the same time to eke out their scanty income by taking in copying work of an evening.

Indeed, as Maurice discovered many a time in his need, he did not want a friend as long as the good manager lived.

And so those two young creatures took up the heavy burden of their lives, and carried it with tolerable patience and courage; and as in the case of our first parents, exiled by a woman's weakness from the fair gardens of Paradise, so, though they reaped thorns and thistles, and earned their bread by the sweat of their brow, yet the bitter-sweet memories of their lost Eden abode with them, and in their poverty they tasted many an hour of pure unsullied love.

For they were young, and youth's courage is high, and the burden of those days was not yet too hard to be borne.

Nea longed to help Maurice, but her pride, always her chief fault, came as a stumbling-block in her way; she could not bear to go into the world and face strangers. And Maurice on his side could not endure the thought that his beautiful young wife should be exposed to slights and humiliations; so Nea's fine talents wasted by misuse.

Still, even these scruples would have faded under the pressure of severer needs, had not children come to weaken Nea's strength and keep her drudging at home.

Nea had never seen her father or heard anything from him all this time. Maurice, it was true, had humbled himself again and again, but his letters had all been returned unopened.

But when her boy was born, Nea's heart softened by the joys of maternity, yearned passionately for a reconciliation, and by her husband's advice, she stifled all feelings of resentment, and wrote as she had never written before, as she never could write again, but all in vain; the letter was returned, and in her weakened state Nea would have fretted herself to death over that unopened letter if it had not been for her husband's tenderness and her baby's innocent face.

How the young mother doted on her child! To her he was a miracle, a revelation. Nature had opened a fount of consolation in her troubles. She would lie, patiently for hours on her couch, watching her baby in his sleep. Maurice coming in jaded and weary from his work would pause on the threshold to admire the picture. He thought his wife never looked so beautiful as when she had the boy in her arms.

And so the years passed on. Maurice worked, and struggled, and pinched, till his face grew old and careworn, and the hard racking cough began to make itself heard, and Nea's fine color faded, for the children were coming fast now, and the days were growing darker and darker.

By and by there was a baby girl, with her father's eyes, and beautiful as a little angel; then twin boys whom Nea kissed and fondled for a few weeks, and then laid in their little coffins; then another boy who only lived two years; and lastly, after a long lapse of time, another girl.

But when this one was born the end was fast approaching. Mr. Huntingdon had been abroad for a year or two, and had just returned to Belgrave House—so Mr. Dobson informed Nea when he dropped in one evening on one of his brief visits—and he had brought with him a young widowed niece and her boy.

Nea remembered her cousin Erle Huntingdon and the dark-eyed girl whom he had married and taken with him to Naples; but she had never heard of his death.

Doubtless her father meant to put Beatrice in her place, and make the younger Erle his heir; and Nea sighed bitterly as she looked at her boy playing about the room. Mr. Dobson interpreted the sigh aright.

"Try again, Mrs. Trafford," he said, holding out his hand as he rose; "humble yourself in the dust, for the sake of your children." And Nea took his advice, but she never had any answer to her letter, and soon after that their kind old friend, Mr. Dobson, died, and then everything went wrong.

Maurice's employer gave up business, and his successor, a hard grasping man, found fault with Maurice's failing health, and dismissed him as an incompetent clerk; and this time Maurice found himself without friends.

For a little time longer he struggled on, though broken in heart and health.

They left their comfortable lodgings and took cheaper ones, and sold every article of furniture that was not absolutely necessary; and the day before the baby was born, Nea, weeping bitterly, took her last relic, her mother's portrait, from the locket set with pearls from her neck, and asked Maurice to sell the little ornament.

All through that long illness, though Heaven only knows how, Maurice struggled on.

Ill himself, he nursed his sick wife with patient care and tenderness.

Nea and her little ones had always plenty of nourishing food, though he himself often went without the comforts he needed; he kept the children quiet, he did all and more than all a woman would have done, before, worn out at last in body and mind, he laid himself down, never to rise again.

And Nea, going to him with her sickly baby in her arms, saw a look on his face that terrified her, and knelt down by his side, while he told her between his paroxysms of coughing what little there was to tell.

She knew it all now; she knew the poor, brave heart had been slowly breaking for years, and had given way at last; she knew what he had suffered to see the woman he loved dragged down to the level of his poverty, and made to endure such bitterness of humiliation; she knew, when it was too late, that the man was crushed under the consequences of his weakness, that his remorse was killing him; and that he would seal his repentance with his life. And then came from his pale lips a whispered entreaty that Nea shuddered to hear.

"Dearest," he had said, when she had implored him to say what she could do to comfort him, "there is one thing: go to your father. Yes, my darling," as she shivered at his words, "go to him yourself; let him see your dear face that has grown so thin and pale; perhaps he will see for himself, and have pity. Tell him I am dying, and that I cannot die in peace until he has promised to forgive you, and take care of you and the children. You will do this for me, Nea, will you not? you know how I have suffered, and will not refuse me."

Had she ever refused him anything? Nea kissed the drawn pallid face without a word, tied on her shabby bonnet, and took her baby in her arms—it was a puny, sickly creature, and wailed incessantly, and she could not leave it—then with the tears blinding her poor eyes, she walked rapidly through the dark streets, hardly feeling the cutting wind, and quite unconscious of the driving sleet that pelted her face with icy particles.

For her heart felt like a stone; Maurice was dying; but no! he should not die: with her own hands she would hold back her beloved from the entrance to the dark valley; she would minister to his fainting soul the cordial of a tardy forgiveness, though she should be forced to grovel for it at her father's feet. And then all at once she suddenly stopped, and found she was clinging, panting for breath, to some area railings, that the baby was crying miserably on her bosom, and that she was looking through the open door into her father's hall.

There was a carriage standing there, and a footman was shivering as he walked up and down the pavement. No one took notice of the beggar-woman as they thought her, and Nea, moved by a strange impulse and desire for warmth and comfort, crept a few steps nearer and looked in.

There was a boy in a velvet tunic sliding up and down the gilded balustrades; and a tall woman with dark hair, and a diamond cross on her white neck, swept through the hall in her velvet dress and rebuked him. The boy laughed merrily and went a few steps higher.

"Beatrice and the young Erle Huntingdon," said Nea to herself. And then a tall thin shadow fell across the doorway, and, uttering a half-stifled cry, Nea saw her father, saw his changed face, his gray hair and bowed figure, before she threw herself in his way.

And so, under the gas-light, with servants watching them curiously, Mr. Huntingdon and his daughter met again. One who stood near him says an awful pallor, like the pallor of death, came over his face for an instant when he saw her standing before him with her baby in her arms, but in the next he would have moved on had she not caught him by the arm.

"Father," she sobbed; "father, come with me. Maurice is dying. My husband is dying; but he says he cannot die until he has your forgiveness. Come home with me; come home with your own Nea, father," but he shook off her grasp, and began to descend the steps.

"Here, Stephen;" he said, taking some gold from his pocket; "give this to the woman and send her away. Come, Beatrice, I am ready."

Merciful Heaven! had this man a human heart, that he should disown his flesh and blood? Would it have been wonderful if she had spoken bitter scathing words to the unnatural parent who was driving her from his door? But Nea never spoke, she only turned away with a shudder from the sight of the proffered gold, and then drawing her thin cloak still closer round her child, turned wearily away.

True, she had sinned; but her punishment was a hundred times greater than her sin, she said to herself, and that was all. What a strange stunned quietness was over her; the pain and the fever seemed all burnt out. She did not suffer now. If something that felt like an iron claw would leave off gripping her heart, she could almost have felt comfortable. Maurice must die, she knew that, but something else had died before him. She wondered if it were this same heart of hers; and then she noticed her baby's hood was crooked, and stopped at the next lamp-post to put it straight, and felt a vague sort of pity for it, when she saw its face was pinched and blue with cold, and pressed it closer to her, though she rather hoped to find it dead when she reached home.

"One less to suffer and to starve," thought Nea.

Maurice's wistful eyes greeted her when she opened the door, but she only shook her head and said nothing; what had she to say? She gave her half-frozen infant into a neighbor's care, and then sat down and drew Maurice's face to her bosom, still speechless in that awful apathy.

And there she sat hour after hour, till he died peacefully in her arms, and his last words were, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

* * * * * *

When she had ceased to wish for them, friends came around her in her trouble and ministered to her wants.

Kind faces followed Maurice to his last resting-place, and saved him from a pauper's grave.

The widow and her children were clothed in decent mourning, and placed in comfortable lodgings.

Nea never roused from her silent apathy, never looked at them or thanked them.

Their kindness had come too late for her, she said to herself, and it was not until long afterwards that she knew that she owed all this consideration to the family of their kind old friend Mr. Dobson, secretly aided by the purse of her cousin Beatrice Huntingdon, who dare not come in person to see her. But by and by they spoke very firmly and kindly to her. They pointed to her children—they had placed her boy at an excellent school—and told her that for their sakes she must live and work. If she brooded longer in that sullen despair she would die or go mad; and they brought her baby to her, and watched its feeble arms trying to clasp her neck; saw the widow's passionate tears rain on its innocent face—the tears that saved the poor hot brain—and knew she was saved; and by and by, when they thought she had regained her strength, they asked her gently what she could do. Alas! she had suffered her fine talents to rust. They had nothing but impoverished material to use; but at last they found her a situation with two maiden ladies just setting up a school in the neighborhood, and here she gave daily lessons.

And so, as the years went on, things became a little brighter.

Nea found her work interesting, her little daughter Fern accompanied her to the school, and she taught her with her other pupils.

Presently the day's labor became light to her, and she could look forward to the evening when her son, fetching her on his way from school, would escort her home—a humble home it was true; but when she looked at her boy's handsome face, and Fern's innocent beauty, and felt her little one's caresses, as she climbed up into her lap, the widow owned that her lot had its compensations.

But the crowning trial was yet to come; the last drop of concentrated bitterness.

Not long after Maurice's death, Mr. Huntingdon made his first overture of reconciliation through his lawyer.

His niece, Beatrice, had died suddenly, and her boy was fretting sadly for his mother.

Some one had pointed out to Mr. Huntingdon one day a dark-eyed handsome boy in deep mourning, looking at the riders in Rotten Row, and had told him that it was his grandson, Percy Trafford.

Mr. Huntingdon had said nothing at the time, but the boy's face and noble bearing haunted him, he was so like his mother, when as a child she had played about the rooms at Belgrave House. Perhaps, stifle it as he might, the sobbing voice of his daughter rang in his ears, "Come home with your own Nea, father;" and in spite of his pride his conscience was beginning to torment him.

Nea smiled scornfully when she listened to the lawyer's overtures. Mr. Huntingdon was willing to condone the past with regard to her son Percy. He would take the boy, educate him, and provide for him most liberally, though she must understand that his nephew, Erle, would be his heir, still on every other point the boys should have equal advantages.

"And Belgrave House, the home where my boy is to live, will be closed to his mother," asked Nea, still with that delicate scorn on her face.

The lawyer looked uncomfortable.

"I have no instructions on that point, Mrs. Trafford; I was simply to guarantee that he should be allowed to see you from time to time, as you and he might wish it."

"I cannot entertain the proposal for a moment," she returned, decidedly; but at his strong remonstrance she at last consented that when her boy was a little older, the matter should be laid before him; but no doubt as to his choice crossed her mind. Percy had always been an affectionate child; nothing would induce him to give up his mother.

But she became less confident as the days went on; Percy grew a little selfish and headstrong, he wanted a man's will to dominate him; his narrow, confined life and the restraints that their poverty enforced on them made him discontented. One day he encountered the lawyer who had spoken to his mother—he was going to her again, with a letter that Mr. Huntingdon had written to his daughter—and as he looked at Percy, who was standing idly on the doorstep, he put his hand on his shoulder, and bade him show him the way.

Nea turned very pale as she read the letter. It was very curt and business-like; it repeated the offer he had before made with regard to her son Percy, only adding that for the boy's future prospects it would be well not to refuse his terms. This was the letter that, after a moment's hesitation, Nea placed in her boy's hands.

"Well, mother," he exclaimed, and his eyes sparkled with eagerness and excitement, "I call that splendid; I shall be a rich men one of these days, and then you will see what I shall do for you, and Fern, and Fluff."

"Do you mean that you wish to leave us, Percy, and to live in your grandfather's house?" she returned, trying to speak calmly. "You know what I told you—you were old enough to understand what your father suffered, and—and," with a curious faintness creeping over her, "you see for yourself there is no mention of me in that letter. Belgrave House is closed to your mother."

"Yes, I know, and it is an awful shame, but never mind, mother, I shall come and see you very often;" and then when the lawyer had left them to talk it over, he dilated with boyish eagerness on the advantage to them all if he accepted his grandfather's offer. His mother would be saved the expense of his education, she would not have to work so hard; he would be rich himself, and would be able to help them. But at this point she stopped him.

"Understand once for all, Percy," she said with a sternness that he had never seen in her, "that the advantage will be solely for yourself; neither I nor your sisters will ever accept help that comes from Belgrave House; your riches will be nothing to me, my son. Think again before you give up your mother."

He would never give her up, he said, with a rough boyish caress; he should see her often—often, and it was wicked, wrong to talk about refusing his help; he would talk to his grandfather and make him ashamed of himself—indeed there was no end to the glowing plans he made. Nea's heart sickened as she heard him, she knew his boyish selfishness and restlessness were leading him astray, and some of the bitterest tears she ever shed were shed that night.

But from that day she ceased to plead with him, and before many weeks were over Percy had left his mother's humble home, and, after a short stay at Belgrave House, was on his way to Eton with his cousin Erle Huntingdon.

Percy never owned in his secret heart that he had done a mean thing in giving up his mother for the splendors of Belgrave House, that the thought that her son was living in the home that was closed to her was adding gall and bitterness to the widow's life; he thought he was proving himself a dutiful son when he came to see her so often, though the visits were scarcely all he wished them to be.

True, his mother never reproached him, and always welcomed him kindly, but her lips were closed on all that related to his home life. She could speak of his schoolfellows and studies, but of his grandfather, and of his new pony and fine gun she would not speak, or even care to hear about them. When he took her his boyish gifts they were quietly but firmly returned to him. Even poor little Florence, or Fluff as they called her, was obliged to give back the blue-eyed doll that he had brought for her. Fluff had fretted so about the loss of the doll that her mother had bought her another.

Percy carried away his gifts, and did not come for a long time. His mother's white wistful face seemed to put him in the wrong. "Any other fellow would have done the same under the circumstances," thought Percy, sullenly; "I think my mother is too hard on me;" but even his conscience misgave him, when he would see her turn away sometimes with the tears in her eyes, after one of his boasting speeches. He was too young to be hardened. He knew, yes, surely he must have known? that he was grieving the tenderest heart in the world, and one day he would own that not all his grandfather's wealth could compensate him for being a traitor to his mother.

(To be continued.)

Care of Preserved Fruit.

Keeping fruit or any provision depends on three things. It must be sound to begin. A speck of decay or acid change will develop ferment in a kettle of fruit. Second, the jars or cans must be air-tight. The object of steaming the fruit is to expel the air and arrest the change in the juice, which would naturally proceed to ferment. Air penetrates in finer ways than we can discern, and needs much less than the crevice of a hair or pin's point to enter and spoil the contents. Glass that is free from cracks or air bubbles, well-glazed stoneware, free from flaws, yellow ware, or strong, dark earthen jars, will keep the fruit from the air, provided it is sealed with wax, putty, or bladder, soaked and left to shrink on the mouth of the jars. Cans with screw tops and rubber rings are apt to have slight defects, which prevent perfect sealing, and cannot be depended on without wax. Third, the jars must be kept in a dry, dark, cold place, very little above freezing. A shelf in a furnace-warmed cellar or store-room opening from a kitchen is not the place to preserve fruit. It may be put up in the best manner, and yet spoil through keeping in the light or where it is not cool. Glass cans should be wrapped in paper, buried in sand or sawdust or kept in a dark closet. Packed with plenty of chaff, oats, dry sand or sawdust, or dry sifted ashes, most preserves will stand freezing weather without injury, but each can needs at least six inches of non-conducting material about it on all sides, for protection. A pit on one side of the cellar, dug below the reach of frost, and lined with boards, with straw or ashes between them and its walls, will keep preserves from heat or freezing. A pit dug in the cellar, four feet below the level of its floor, well drained and lined as above, will prove the best place for keeping small quantities of preserves, enough for a single family.

Chicago Fifty-three Years Ago.

Capt. F. McCumber, of Burlington, Wis., who is said to be the oldest lake captain now living (he is 82), says in a recent letter to the Hon. John Wentworth, of Chicago: "I came to Chicago in July, 1834, in command of the schooner Thomas Hart, of Carthage, on the Genessee River; there was no harbor then, and we lay one mile from the mouth of the river and discharged our cargo with a scow at the forks of the river—mostly Indian goods. There were many Indians at Chicago at that time. We went from Chicago to St. Joseph; got into the river, and discharged the rest of our cargo there—Indian supplies—shovelled in sand for ballast, and left for Buffalo. I think the first shipment of wheat from Lake Michigan was made in that year. The wheat was stored at St Joseph. I tried to get it; went up the river to Cassopolis on the steamer David Crockett, to find the owner, but he had contracted with one of Oliver Newbeery's vessels, the Marengo, Capt Dingley, master, who died the same year of cholera at Detroit. This is about all the information I can give you. I am 82 years old and my memory is failing. I am here on a little farm quietly waiting the end."

A Very Cool Burglar.

A young woman of Portland, Me., awoke the other night to find a man ransacking her bureau. She screamed, but the burglar, with great coolness, said: "Keep cool, sis; I won't hurt you. All I want is the trinkets." Her scream, however, had alarmed the house, and the burglar fled. He left his hat behind in his flight, and the gentleman of the house, in hopes that it might serve as a clue to his detection, hung it on the hat rack in the hall. The family then retired again to rest. In the morning it was found that the hat was gone. The burglar had returned later in search of his head-gear, found it, and once more made off unmolested.

Nothing New Under the Sun.

Shakspeare seems to have been very well up in most of the slang phrases of the present day. In "Henry VIII." we have "too thin;" in "King John," "come off!" and "you are too green and fresh;" in "A Winter's Tale," "What, never?" and although he does not exactly use the exclamation rats! we have in "Hamlet," "A rat! a rat!" which is pretty near it. John Bunyan used the phrase, "it is a cold day" in connection with adversity, so it would seem that Solomon was not far from the truth when he said, "there is nothing new under the sun," or words to that effect.—*Boston Courier.*

The Syracuse *Standard* tells a pretty story of a little girl, who was recently reprimanded for conduct which her mother did not think became her. The little one, who took refuge in the nursery to shed her tears, was shortly afterward overheard indulging in a soliloquy. "Mamma is real mean," she said, "and I don't like her any more. No, I don't. If she didn't live here I"—[with emphasis on the first person, singular number]—"shouldn't invite her to come to my house."

In St. John County, Fla., a few days ago, while a little 2-year-old girl was playing in the yard the family heard piercing cries, and on running to investigate found the child lying on the ground, while on her breast stood a rooster crowing triumphantly. One of the little girl's eyes had been pecked out.

In Edinburgh a disused railroad tunnel is to be utilized for raising mushrooms.