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Poetry.

THE EMPTY BIER.

BY HANNAH GOULD.

"Thou empty bier that standest here,
Alone by the churchyard gate,
Say, whose the door thou'lt pause before
Thy burden next to wait?"

The bier replied, "My range is wide,
And my hours of rest but few;
But to One alone can the way be known,
That I must hence pursue.

"I first may seek her form, whose cheek
Is fresh in its maiden bloom,
O'er me to lie with a rayless eye,
At the threshold of the tomb.

"The youth who last sped by so fast,
With the nerve and the glow of health,
He next may find, that close behind,
Death followed him by stealth.

"Or she, who smiled when the lovely child,
She was lately leading near,
With woe stopped, and his lilies dropped,
To gaze at the aëtic bier;

"That mother may be called to lay
That beautiful boy on me,
In his morning hour, like the dewy flower,
He lies, and so suddenly.

"Her own pale clay, to bear away,
It next may be my lot,
She may close her eyes on her infant ties,
And her prattler be forgot.

"And as I call in time for all,
From the babe to the silver haired,
Thy glance at me, perchance may be,
A hint to be prepared."

Literature.

THE MYSTERIOUS BOX.

Horace Flintwood sat alone in his scantily-furnished apartment. Outside the meagre windows the rough storm beat clamorously for admittance; and the wind whistling and moaning down the black-throated chimney, made bright, wavering phantoms of the flames which curled over the few bits of wood and coal in the grate.

There was but a little fire, yet that little lighted up the handsome face of young Flintwood with a pale, ghostly gleam; and in that face, by the light, you could read the fearful tale of utter poverty and threatening starvation! There was hunger in the wild expression of the hollow eyes, and upon the broad, white forehead, where the transparent skin failed to conceal the delicate vascularity wrought there.

Two years before, Horace Flintwood had left his pleasant home in the country and his aged parents to seek his fortune in a large town, where we find him at the commencement of our story.

The old homestead, the place where his childhood had been passed, was mortgaged, and it was to obtain money to save the home of his parents, from stranger hands, that young Flintwood had bid farewell to those he loved. His trade—that of a bricklayer—at first procured him ready money in flattering quantities; but there came a panic in trade, and the young mechanic soon found himself deprived of employment.

He would have removed elsewhere, but an attack of fever brought him to his bed, and he at length arose to find himself deprived of every shilling which he could once call his own. On the very verge of starvation, he thought of begging his way back to his parents, but his pride revolted. They were poor, and looked to him for the restoration of their dissipated fortune. Should they see him come back to them penniless and starving? No—he would rather die where he was, alone, and for the want of bread! He could not go back to them only to increase their cares, and be but an additional burden on their scanty means.

Horace Flintwood was thinking of this while sitting there by the waning fire that chill November night, and as he thought despair crept into his heart. Out on the muffled air boomed shrill and clear the bell upon a neighbouring tower pealing eleven.

As the last echoing ring ceased there came a short, quick rap at Horace's door. He answered the summons, and a figure, closely wrapped in a black cloak, strode into the room, and without a word sat down on the chair which Horace had vacated.

"A wild evening," remarked Horace, to break the awful silence.

"Very," was the reply. "Are you engaged for this evening?"

"The stranger's tone was quick and imperative.

"Engaged?"—Horace started at the question—certainly not at this time of night!

"Are you in want of money?" asked the unknown, and he bent a glance of piercing inquiry upon Horace from a pair of black, flashing eyes, set far back under cliff-like brows.

"Sir, I am not accustomed to answer questions concerning my private affairs," said Horace, as he drew himself up proudly, and something like a frown passed over his pale brow.

"I require a job of work done, said the stranger—done by a good, faithful hand—a discreet workman, I mean; and such is your reputation among those who best know you." Horace bowed. "It is a small job, but I wish it finished to-night—to-night!" said the stranger, repeating the words with startling emphasis, "and you must do it for me!"

"Well, Sir," said Horace, "work would be very acceptable to me—I need the money badly enough; but midnight is rather a singular time to call upon the services of a bricklayer."

"Granted," said the stranger, "but I ask it, nevertheless; and still further, you must be blindfolded, and conveyed in a close carriage to the place where you are to work, and return to your lodgings in the same way. Moreover, you must swear never to reveal to any living creature a single thing which may occur to you this night."

The unknown had risen to his feet, and stood silently and haughtily awaiting Horace's reply. The young bricklayer seemed much struck by the mysterious proposal of his strange visitor.

"Could I but know that there was nothing criminal—nothing—"

"It is enough that you have nothing to do but follow my directions," said the stranger. "All will be well with you, and the pay shall be yours in advance, if you require it." He flings down a purse, well filled with gold, upon the table. Horace's eyes glistened, but he was silent.

"There are one hundred sovereigns—these are yours, if you consent," said the stranger.

"One hundred!" exclaimed Horace, "impossible! I cannot accept—it looks too much like a bribe for committing some horrible crime—"

"Nonsense! my friend. I know your circumstances," said the stranger, "and your services to me will fully compensate me for the trifling sum. Do you consent?"

Horace threw on his well worn overcoat, and taking with him some small implements of his trade, followed the unknown to the waiting carriage. Once within the vehicle, a handkerchief was bound tightly over his eyes, and the night of blindness settled over every object.

"Up and on rolled the phaeton through the town, until at last the wheels revolved upon the hard tumpike road. By-and-bye the way became rough and stony, and Horace knew that they had left the town and its environs far behind them. Not a word had been exchanged between the young mechanic and the unknown; and the man who held the reins and guided the horse was silent as the grave.

At length the carriage stopped, and Horace was assisted to alight. He, was conducted up a grassy path, and into some sort of a building—he knew it by the confined air and the heavy clang of doors behind him. With the unknown holding fast to his arm, he ascended two flights of stairs, then passed through several mouldy, damp rooms, then down a flight of steps, through a long, empty corridor, and then successively descended four winding staircases—the last unlit stone. The air grew moist and dense, the odour oppressive.

"Where are you leading me?" Horace ventured to ask.

"It matters not," was the brief, stern reply.

They stopped before a massive iron door, strongly secured by bolts, fastening in groves cut far into the solid rock of the casting. Down into their niches fell the ponderous bars as the two passed through the entrance, and the door closed with a dull, heavy bang.

The unknown paused and drew off the bandage from Horace's eyes.

They stood in a long low apartment, the sides of which were of brick, and the arched roof of dingy grey stone. The dim light which the unknown carried in his hand only served to make more hideous the distant gloom of the place.

In the centre of the room there was an oblong box, of unpolished oak, screwed together by heavy iron screws, and in its general appearance horror passed through Horace's frame; he starts back a few paces, still regarding with distended eyes the object before him.

"Well!" he said, and he spoke inquiringly.

"That box," returned the un-

known, "contains a treasure—of what form it matters not to you; suffice it if placed there," and he pointed to a recess in an angle of the wall; "and then you are to build across the aperture a solid line of masonry—solid, mind you!—two tiers of bricks, breastwise, and a coat of strong plaster over the whole. You will find here all the materials necessary to do your work; and at precisely four o'clock I shall expect to have the job completed. Until that hour you will be alone; then I will come for you." Horace drew back. "I cannot, unless I know the contents of that chest," he said. "It may be that I am employed—made the instrument of some dreadful villainy! Indeed, I cannot go to work in this blind uncertainty."

"Choose between it and death!" came through the clenched teeth of the unknown, and drawing a revolver from his breast, he held it in frightful proximity to the young man's forehead.

"Your decision!" he said, and his voice was low, but awfully clear and distinct.

"I consent!" said Horace, and he spoke the words without a shadow of quivering.

"Enough!" returned the unknown; "and now I leave you to yourself. If your work is done to my satisfaction an additional hundred shall reward you for the fright I have given you!" He lighted an iron lamp which hung suspended from the roof of the cellar, and with a courteous "Good Night" the unknown withdrew, bolting the door behind him, and Horace was left alone in the silent and mysterious chamber.

A strange awe stole over him, and mingled with the overmastering curiosity he felt, he determined to examine the sealed box. Come what would, he determined to have a glimpse of "the treasure" concealed there, and Horace Flintwood, when once resolved upon anything, however perilous, was as impetuous as the Rock of Gibraltar.

Securing the great door upon the inside with a couple of rusty bars which had probably been unused from time immemorial, he drew from his pocket a mason's small chisel, and applied it to the screws upon the box. They yielded, one after another, and in a short time he drew off the oaken cover. A sight met his eyes which might well nigh paralyse him.

The body of a young girl, robed in white linen, lay before him—There was death upon her brow, and eternal slumber on her lips—Her long, chestnut hair swept bright and glistening down her wax white neck, and the lids, over her full half closed blue-eyes, seemed but drooping before the fixed gaze of him who bent over her. Entranced, enraptured, fascinated, Horace gazed upon the corpse! Speech, motion, everything seemed gone out from him; all his faculties were concentrated into one sense—that of seeing. A distant clock striking the hour of one aroused him to a sense of his condition. His thoughts came back, and rushed through his brain with the rapidity of lightning.

Wall up this beautiful creature in a cellar, amid the dampness and everlasting gloom! Who knew what fearful secret might be buried with her? Who could tell the story of her death? What might not those lips unsealed from their cold silence, reveal of foul crime and base villainy? Could he bury her up from sight for ever, with that dreadful mystery hanging around her? Would he do the deed? Never, never!

Horace immediately set about an examination of the walls of the cellar, and by careful sounding he was enabled to detect the outer wall—He brought some of his tools to the side of the masonry, and in fifteen minutes had made an aperture the size of a man's body through the brick work. Fresh air from the outer courts fanned his brow, and the heavy plunge of rushing water could be distinctly heard. Evidently the building into which he had been so strangely conveyed was situated in the vicinity of some river, if not upon its very banks.

A wild, romantic plan—possibly from its very impossibility—swept through his mind. Why not remove the body to the shores of the river, from whence he could, he felt convinced, subsequently dis-

cover and take it way to, at least, Christian burial. He could brick up the recess, as his employer required, and who would be the wiser.

This plan, once conceived, was carried into effect without hesitation. By diligent labour he soon enlarged the cavity in the wall sufficiently for his purpose, and, letting himself carefully out, he reconnoitred the premises. The night was "dark as Erebus," and he could ascertain but little beyond the fact that he stood in a deep ditch which surrounded the mansion. The ascent from this ditch was steep and precipitous, but Horace felt within himself the power to do great things, and he returned at once to the cellar.

Replacing the cover upon the box, and lightly fastening the screws, he sprang through the aperture and drew it after him. With the greatest difficulty he succeeded in raising the oaken box to the surface of the ground, for the sides of the ditch were wet and slippery. The gush of water could be very plainly distinguished at but a little distance off, and close upon the mansion, evidently between him and the river, rose a black copsewood of low alders. Into these he at once dashed, bearing his load, and in fifteen minutes he stood upon the borders of a great river—a river which he felt assured flowed towards the town he had left.

He deposited his burden, for he had not a moment's time to waste, in a dense thicket close to the river's edge, and marking the spot by suspending his pocket-handkerchief from an overhanging branch, he hastily retraced his way and arrived in safety at the vault. Drawing forth his watch—the little silver watch which had been his dead sister's, and which no earthly need could induce him to part with—he saw that it was near two o'clock. But a brief period remained for the performance of his task, and never did mortal man labour with greater assiduity than did Horace Flintwood. At the end of eighteen minutes the wall was mended in so skilful a manner that it would have defied the scrutiny of the closest observer. This done he commenced upon the recess. Tier after tier of brick rose up and at length the aperture was closed. It only remained to add another thickness of brick, and over all the thick coat of plaster, as the unknown had indicated; Flintwood was just putting the finishing touch to the plastering, when the great door (which he had previously fastened) swung slowly open, and his mysterious employer entered the room.

A sardonic smile glanced from his black, fiery eyes, for no other feature of his face was visible.

"So you are punctual to the time, my friend," said he, approaching, and laying his hand upon Flintwood's shoulder. "Well, I admire punctuality. And now, as we are about to go forth from hence, I require you to swear eternal silence on the events of this night—silence as unbroken as the darkness of the tomb!"

The wild eyes flashed savagely down into Horace's face, and though his voice did not tremble, his cheek became paler, as he replied—"I swear."

"Enough!" said the unknown—"A man like you will keep an oath! Your work is done well."

"I am happy to have pleased you," said Horace. "It was thoughtful in you to select such a place for your gold; the most cunning burglar would never discover it."

"You will lose nothing by your exceeding cleverness," said the unknown, as he was fixing the bandage over Horace's eyes; "here, my friend is a little present for you," and he placed a parcel in the mechanic's hand.

The same road was driven over, the same unearthly silence preserved in the phaeton, and near daybreak Horace was left blindfolded at the door of his lodgings. He tore off the handkerchief and looked wildly around him, but he saw only great crazy houses and smoky manufactories. The carriage and its mysterious occupants had vanished, he thought himself however, of the parcel given him by the unknown, and breaking it open he found simply a one hundred pound note enveloped in paper.

Early on the morning subsequent to the events chronicled, a boat containing two persons might have been seen proceeding up the river.

Arrived within half a mile of the first village, the way led through or between high banks, which were covered with a thick growth of scrubby maples and tangled witch-hazel. From the overhanging bough of a low tree a pocket-handkerchief fluttered in the breeze, and the signal did not long escape the anxious eye of the taller of the two persons.

"'Tis the very place! I knew it!" he exclaimed triumphantly; and in a few minutes the boat was resting in a little cove directly beneath the signal.

Flintwood—for the reader has probably recognized our old friend—sprang upon the shore followed closely by his companion, and after a brief search, the box containing the mysterious corpse was discovered. Immediately it was placed in the boat, the handkerchief was removed from the bough, and the little craft shot off like an arrow down the stream.

After a good two hours' sail they drew up the boat at an obscure village, and a carriage which was evidently waiting their arrival, took them and their freight to a large old house situated a little out of the village.

Flintwood had the box conveyed to an upper chamber of this building, and when left alone with it, he unscrewed the cover and looked upon the face sleeping within its shadow. As he gazed he saw that there was a warm perspiration upon the forehead of the seeming corpse, and a tinge of life like redness on the slightly-parted lips!

The young man sprang from the room, but shortly afterwards returned, accompanied by a physician. The man of science, after a brief examination of the body, reported—"Temporary suspension of animation, induced by some drug administered while in great bodily prostration." Furthermore, the physician asserted that the body was that of Gertrude Winchester, a belle and an heiress, whose disappearance had caused so great a sensation of grief and wonder in the fashionable circles some three months previous.

Dr. Wellman suggested the most rigid secrecy concerning the mysterious discovery of the body, and in the meantime, exerted himself to the utmost to restore the lady to life and consciousness. His efforts were successful, and in the evening Gertrude was able to converse. So soon as deemed practicable by the medical attendant, the story of her abduction from the dismal vault of the old country was told her, and at her request Horace Flintwood was called in, and she gave succinctly the following account:

"Fifteen months ago my father, Norton Winchester, died, and I, by his will, as well as by right, was made sole heir to his great property. I had neither brother nor sisters, and my mother being deceased some four years, I had no nearer relative than a maternal uncle, who is known as Colonel Glines. This man's envy was excited, it appears, towards me, and although he was careful to avoid arousing my suspicions, I soon came to know that he nursed against me the bitterest rancour. Probably this was, in some measure, increased by my refusal to form a matrimonial alliance with his son—a dissolute young man—whom I could regard with no other sentiment than the most sincere pity.

"I have ever been fond of equestrian sports, and I was in the habit of riding out every fine morning on a horse which my poor father purchased for my especial use. On the last day of August, as I was taking my accustomed ride into the country, and, as it happened, entirely unattended, I was seized by a violent hand, and drawn from my horse, and placed into a close carriage, which had driven hurriedly up. Half-dead with terror, yet I recognized in the countenance of the man who held me firmly in my seat the hated features of Colonel Glines! To all my cries and agonised inquiries as to what he intended to do with me, he made but one reply—a low, almost infernal laugh.

"At last, but all too soon, the carriage stopped at the gateway of a house rendered terrible by a murder committed there ten years ago, and more dead than alive, I was dragged within the shadow of its dreadful rooms. Words cannot express the agony I suffered for the next two months—persecuted, as I was, by Colonel Glines, tortured with the presence of his wretched son, and

confined a prisoner in the dwelling of my deadliest enemies! No tidings of the world beyond those high, black enclosures reached me, and I gave myself up for lost. Indeed, I little cared how soon death came and released me from this horrible bondage. Every day I was beset with arguments, entreaties, threats, and imprecations, all tending towards gaining my consent to a marriage with Harwell Glines. I remained firm to the last, and was placed, in return for my tenacity, in an apartment under ground, securely barred and bolted. The rigorous, unusual confinement brought on a lingering fever, and I could plainly see that my persecutors intended it should terminate in my death. I had taken no medicine throughout my illness, and therefore you may well believe I was surprised when Colonel Glines brought me one morning a dark liquid mixture which he said would make me well. I drank more from thirst than from the wish of recovering from my illness, and immediately a stumberous sensation benumbed every faculty. I heard voices in conversation—those of Colonel Glines and his son—I heard them arrange the disposition of my body when the sleeping potion should have taken effect, and with scarcely a thrill I learned that I was to be placed in the cellar, and enclosed within a solid pile of masonry, while yet alive! I remember no more. It was all a blank and void till now."

Gertrude Winchester fully recovered her health beneath the hospitable roof of the kind boatman, and in due time appeared again to her astonished household, who had mourned her dead.

Colonel Glines had applied for legal possession of her property, but owing to some delay he had not been able to assume formal occupancy.

Immediately on Gertrude's reappearance he fled with his son, and no subsequent tidings were ever heard of them. The colonel's house soon became a ruin, and one night it was reduced to ashes during a violent thunderstorm. Whether it was fired by a bolt from heaven, or by the hand of man, was never known.

Gertrude Winchester naturally felt very grateful to Horace for rescuing her from so dreadful a fate, and she displayed her gratitude in a somewhat singular manner.

It was quiet a little romance, the newspapers of the day said; and now it had all ended in that commonplace affair, a wedding, with eight bridesmaids, and a corresponding number of groomsmen.

With the full approbation of his bride, Horace Flintwood went home and returned, accompanied by his worthy parents, who through the remainder of their lives found a pleasant home in the luxurious residence of their son and his affectionate young wife.

amidst the crowd—when they are for a moment disheartened by that difficulty which is the rude and rocky cradle of every kind of excellence—and they are conscious of the pinch of poverty and self-denial, let them be conscious too, that a sleepless Eye is watching them from above, that their honest efforts are assisted, their humble prayers are heard, and all things are working together for their good. Is not this the life of faith, which walks by your side from your rising in the morning till your laying down at night—which lights up for you the cheerless world, and transfigures all that you encounter, whatever be its outward form, with hues brought down from heaven? These considerations are applicable to all of you. You are all in training here for educated life, for the highest forms of mental experience, for circles, limited, perhaps, but yet circles of social influence and leadership. Some of you may be chosen to greater distinctions and heavier trials, and may enter into that class of which each member while he lives is envied or admired.

"And when he dies he bears a lofty name,
A light, a landmark on the cliffs of fame."

HOW A MAN FEELS WHEN HE IS HUNG.

One would naturally suppose that a man who had suffered all the horrors, just short of actual death, would never risk the gallows again, but such, in one case at least, was not the result.

A house breaker named Smith was hanged at Tyburn, Dec. 25, 1706, and when he hung nearly fifteen minutes, the people shouted "A reprieve!" He was cut tied and recovered! When asked what his feelings had been, he replied in substance that "when he was turned off, he for some time was sensible of great pain, occasioned by the weight of his body, and left his spirits in a strange commotion, violently pressing upwards; that having forced their way to his head, he, as it were, saw a great blaze of glaring light, which seemed to go out of his eyes with a flash, and then he lost all sense of pain. That after he was cut down, and began to come to himself, the blood and spirits forcing themselves into their former channels, put him, by a sort of pricking or shooting, to such intolerable pain, that he could have wished those hanged who cut him down." Ever afterwards he went by the name of "half hanged Smith." This fellow soon returned to his former evil habits, and was again tried at the Old Bailey for house breaking; and jury brought in a special verdict, leaving the affair to the decision of the twelve judges who decided in favor of the prisoner. Even this second wonderful escape did not deter him from resuming his malpractices, and a third time he was to have been brought to trial, but the prosecutor died before the day appointed, and thus he once more got free. Nothing is known of his subsequent history.—*Chamber's Journal.*

EARLY INFLUENCES.

There can be no greater blessing than to be born in the light and air of a cheerful home. It not only insures a happy childhood—if there can be health and a good constitution—but it almost makes sure a virtuous and happy manhood, and a fresh young heart in old age. We think it every parent's duty to try to make their children's childhood full of love and of childhood's proper joyousness; and we never see children destitute of them though the poverty, faulty temper, or wrong notions of their parents, without a heartache. Not that all the appliances which wealth can buy are necessary to the free and happy unfolding of childhood in body, mind or heart—quite otherwise, God be thanked; but children must at least have love inside the house, and fresh air and good play, and some good companionship outside—otherwise young life runs the greatest danger in the world of withering or growing stunted, or sour and wrong, or at least prematurely old, and turned inward on itself.

THE ART OF THINKING.—To think clearly is among the first requirements of a public teacher. The faculty must be improved, like other faculties, of the mind and body. One of the best modes of improving in the art of thinking, is to think over some subject before you read upon it, and then to observe after what manner it has occurred to the mind of some great master; you will then observe whether you have been too rash or too timid, in what you have exceeded, and by this process you will uselessly catch a great manner of viewing questions. It is right to study, not only to think, but from time to time to review what has passed; to dwell upon it, and see what trains of thought voluntarily present themselves to your mind. It is a most superior habit of some minds to refer all the particular truths that strike them to other truths more general; so that their knowledge is beautifully methodized, and that the particular exemplification at once leads to the general truth. This kind of understanding has an immense and a decided superiority over those confused heads in which one fact is piled upon another without the least attempt at classification and arrangement.—*Sidney Smith.*