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CARELESS WORDS.

BY MRS. L. F. MORGAN.

BEWARE, beware of careless words,
 They have a fearful power,
 And jar upon the spirit's chords,
 Through many a weary hour.

Though not design'd to give us pain,
 Though but at random spoken,—
 Remembrance brings them back again,—
 The past's most bitter token.

They haunt us through the toilsome day,
 And through the lonely night,
 And rise to cloud the spirit's ray,
 When all beside is bright.

Though from the mind, and with the breath,
 Which gave them, they have flown,
 Yet wormwood, gall, and even death,
 May dwell in every tone.

And burning tears can well attest
 A sentence lightly fram'd,
 May linger, cankering, in the breast,
 At which it first was aim'd.

Oh, could my prayer indeed be heard—
 Might I the past live o'er—
 I'd guard against a careless word,
 E'en though I spoke no more.

LORTON.

BY REV. T. B. BALCH.

And in the visions of romantic youth
 What years of endless bliss are yet to flow.

CAMPBELL.

MANY years since, the writer was on a peregrination along the margin of James River, and not far from the celebrated Peaks of Otter. He was looking for a farm house in which to domesticate, until he could read through the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* of Virgil. There were several havens along the river at which the writer could have put in: but his design was to find some domicil free from the noise of children. Children are pleasant affairs. We like their blue eyes and curly heads, but not at all times. Oliver Goldy in writing his works used to steal away from London, and avoid interruption among hamlets and cottages, hedged round after the fashion of the English. Being somewhat perplexed, we were fortunate enough to meet a man who was rustling by with a few sheep, and we engaged him in a short talk, when he remarked,

"If you did but know Captain Irving. He never had any children."

"And whereabouts does the captain live?" I replied.

"A piece down the river," he rejoined.

But by this time some disturbance among his flock had drawn him beyond the range of my voice.

There is surely some illusion or magic connected with a name. The bare mention of Captain Irving had set me to thinking about the author of *Salmagundi*—*Knickerbocker*—and other productions; nor did the reverie end 'til reaching my destination. The abode of the captain was plain. It stood off from the river among a caravan of evergreen oaks, and the oaks would have reminded Coleridge of the tents in which patriarchs lived. But we must forget the utilitarian house in the rich and perfect scenery by which it was environed. We can't describe it, but we'll try. In the distance lay the Peaks of Otter, whose crowns remain unimpaired by time, and about which nature had wrought out a series of wonders on an august scale of execution. But in proximity to the dwelling she had fallen off into some of her small, graceful pictures, consisting in part of a lawn which ran to the river's edge. The river expanded itself into a kind of horse shoe curve, and the curve was sprinkled over with glossy isles, among which the waters chimed as if engaged in a musical concert. These islets were covered with our indigenous trees, and the coloring of their foliage was in fine contrast with the grey and scattered rocks which seemed to burden the plats of earth on which they lay. The writer reached this retirement at what Shelley would have called the ebb tide of the day. The day was going out, but not without leaving a few of its beams among the gorges of the mountains, and many stains of light on the sky, which was full of beach-like clouds. The bees were on the wing to their sycamore homes, and the gold green humming birds were making for their nests; but in a few hours the speckled whippoorwill began to cross with its note the song of that warbler

Which all night long its amorous descant sung.

An intercourse of a few days gave me an insight into the character and peculiarities of my host. He was far stricken in age, but his person was still erect, and that glow which temperance gives was still visible in his countenance. His locks were perfectly white, but clubbed, instead of falling loosely on his shoulders. His tall and reverend figure inspired me with immediate veneration. He had never been a soldier by profession, but had borne arms at the siege of York, in 1781.

He was sedate in manner, and considerably taciturn; but he could be incited at times to a large conversation. In pecuniaries, the captain was just as easy as an old shoe; not so much from his possessions as from the way in which he managed his affairs. He made it a point to sleep every Saturday night square with the world; and when he opened his eyes on Sunday morning, he owed no debts, save to his Maker. In this particular he was like Oberlin, who lived in the Vosgian Alps.

He gave some portion of his time to the study of bees, and had a mode of taking the honey without killing the poor insects, by whose toils it was made. His wife, however, was sprightly and mercurial. She could speak at least two, if not five words, to his one; but, withal, she had a right milky heart. Her dairy—loom-house—wheel, and kirk took up her time

and attention. In short, Captain Irving was about as happy as the Pennsylvania Patriarch, before Wyoming was laid waste.

A valley from the river shore withdrawn
Was Albert's home; two quiet woods, between
Whose lofty verdure, overlooked his lawn,
And waters to their resting place, serene,
Came fresh'ning and reflecting all the scene.

The vernal season had now advanced to its acme, and though its summit did not yield the Persian nectarine or the American apricot, it gave us banks and knolls filled with sweet smelling plants. The moons which it curled over our cottage were delicious, and in the light of one of them the captain, his lady and the writer were seated on the porch.

The river in front was lighted up by the stars, and its waves were dashing on in melancholy sounds. There was just that repose in nature which inclines to pensive meditation, and my mind was turning over the fate to which early genius has so often been exposed.

My memory supplied quite a list of those whose names have been counted on the bead roll of fame, and we were obliged more than once to tell my good landlady not to talk. Chatterton, thought I, died at sixteen—Kirke White at twenty-one—Keats at twenty-four—Fergusson at twenty-two—Lucan at twenty-seven—Pollok at twenty-eight—Shelley at thirty—Byron and Burns at thirty-seven—Parnell at thirty-eight—Goldy at forty-five—Sir William Jones at forty-seven—and Grahame and Addison at forty-eight.

The thought then struck me whether the glen into which I had come to rusticate could tell any story of genius which had perished among its tangled violets;

And where with sound like many voices sweet,
The waters leap among wild islands green
Which framed for its slow boat a lone retreat.

My rumination had come to an end. "Did you ever know Dick Lorton?" said the landlady.

"Never saw or heard of him," I replied. "Who was he? and give me all the particulars."

This request opened quite a field, which was soon entered by the aged and affectionate pair, and after the talk of that night the writer was at no loss for information about a virtuous and talented youth, who would have been heard of in the world, had his life been prolonged. The sequel of this paper will be devoted to such particulars as we were able to glean touching his studies, habits and fate. Lorton was from Lower Virginia, but 'tis probable from the warmth of his heart that he was of Irish extraction. He had taken a notion to explore James River to its source, and it was a long distance from where he had started to where it rises in the Warm Spring Mountains. At times it crosses other mountains. It receives many streams in its course which tilt down from the hills. It flows at intervals with a pace lazier than the Scheld, and then presents a front bristled like the Rapids of the Rhine. In places its waters wear a light pea-green face, and then pass off into indigo lochs, as foliage of every variety predominates on its banks. Nor is it wanting in islands which,

had they been deposited among Caledonian rivers, would have received an additional coloring from the pencil of Sir Walter Scott. It seeks occasionally a kind of desert ambush but only that it may rush out into open beauty, and unfold its wreaths of water to the eye ere it glide down into wooded and romantic groves. We need not say that Leigh Hunt might have written his poem called *Foliage*, on its banks, for in spots the leaves are as dense as those of an African forest.

Such was the river which Lorton undertook to navigate in an open skiff. His attempt reminds us of Bruce—Mungo Park, and the Landers; but the predilections of his taste were different. His tastes were all simple. They did not turn with the ruby curves of the Nile. They did not lead him among the Pyramids or into lands where antiquity has spread its grey clouds over works of art; but his imagination revelled in the green and blue of his native land. His ambition was to sketch the scenery of the James—to fill his herbal with its plants; to note the hue of its birds and listen to their melody as he passed among its ranging and sylvan aisles on his way to interior altars in the round temple of nature. But he perished in the attempt, not by the cimeter of the Turk or the hatchet of the Indian, but by a natural death. The young artist carried along with himself the seeds of mortality, and in a few moons after reaching that link of the river, death tightened on him its boa constrictor folds, crushing the buds of taste, and dispersing its blossoms as an offering to that desert air which fills the horizon of genius.

"Just after nineteen years since he
Had in his cradle rode."

It gave me a melancholy pleasure to ask the old couple about the youthful artist; his appearance—his rambles—his views of future life, had life been spared, and to hunt up his pursuits. The aged pair were fond to answer. I asked if he were an orphan.

"He was," answered Captain Irving, "but we adopted him, and he would have owned this place.

"And at what time of the year did he reach your house?"

"It was on a moonlight night in August," replied the Captain. "I was seated at the door listening to the whippoorwill, when his skiff, as he used to call it, came in sight. His boat looked like a silver bowl, but he moored it, and came tottering to the house."

"And his look, his stature and dress."

"His stature was slender. He had flaxen hair which naturally curled and even now his blue eye seems to be looking at me. He wore a dark coat with a velvet cape. He often thought he would recover."

"No doubt," I replied, "he was of a sanguine temperament. Poets and Artists live on Hope, and Hope turns the brown heath into a kind of Turkey or Brussels carpet. Did he ever talk," said I, "of going abroad?"

"Once, and but once," answered the Captain, "and that was when braced up by our mountain air."

Poor Lorton, thought I, he never saw Italy, and yet many of inferior endowments have seen it, who have left the fruits of their pencils in its marble halls.

The story of Lorton is soon told. The trump of renown never took up his name, but still it chimed in with my sombre feelings to think of him and his haunts. There was his boat chained to a willow tree, but he was

not there who had so often set its helm and unfurled its sail. It had a mournful look and a melancholy sound as it fretted to and fro with the tide, and seemed to beg the weeping foliage for permission to go. We don't know the reason, but all imaginative men seem to love boats.—Pope used to be rowed about on the Thames, and Thompson always took water for London from the old palace of Kew, and if the reader will turn over the writings of Kirke White, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth, he will find that this declaration stands proved, so far as they may be concerned. They don't fancy the decks of ships; though we admit that the poet of Keswick wrote the life of Lord Nelson, and no man in England could have written it so well. It is equally clear that many of poetical temperament are fond of retired spots, such as Windsor Forest, Clifton Grove, the vale of Chamouni, or Rydal Mount, but a catalogue of such haunts would fill the balance of this paper. And then there are recesses within recesses which they are pleased to reconnoitre. As poets are haunted, they love haunts. Like Byron, they are fond of cutting into the bark of trees where trees present a smooth rind or surface. We don't like all that Shelley recorded in this way, but we fancied the little plaintive entries which were made by Lorton, among the woods adjacent to where he spent the few pale days which closed his brief career. We will give two or three, for we cannot give all. About four hundred yards from the house there was a spring which gushed from a rock. There was a good deal of moss about the place, and green sods, and the fountain was surmounted by a beach tree, on the bark of which he had enrolled some words from Coleridge.

Long may this Spring
Send up cold waters to the traveller,
With soft and even pulse.

And we loved to linger around his inscriptions. Napoleon is not one of my favourites. He was too much of a fierce and plundering Arab for my taste; but after getting through the deserts which his sword created, he used to muse by a spring in St. Helena. We could not but call to mind the fate of an artist of whom we had once read. He executed a picture, and having carried it to his patron, his patron paid him in solid crowns. He strung the burden over his shoulder, but fatigued by its weight he called at a fountain on his homeward way,

Then bowed and kissed the wave and died.

And musing thus, we revolved the fate of Lorton. The writer left the spring, but sauntering on he rose the declivity of a hill, and got into a glen. It was a charming spot, where the elves had often congregated. Several hillocks were scattered about the miniature valley, which was rimmed round or framed with verdure, and the hillocks bore some aspens, one of which held on it the lines—

" One little space prolong my mournful day
I am a youthful traveller in the way."

And these lines affected me to tears. Wandering on we came to a corner of the road about which many from time to time had turned, in going to church, and he had thus notched one of the trees.

“To walk together to the Kirk
And altogether pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay.”

And though we knew that no mortal was there, we could not help going on to the Kirk. All was silent round about as the cave of Macpelah, and we leaned over the wild flower wall of the grave-yard and numbered the mounds that lay in green rows. There was no curfew tolling at the time, but we thought of the Cambridge poet. Here Lorton had wreathed the waist of another tree, beneath which some pensive sheep were reclining.

“On to God’s house the people prest
Passing the place where all must rest,
And each went in a welcome guest.”

And on my return to the house we came to a clump of aged elms, one of which was inscribed as follows :

“And as they bow, their hoary tops relate,
In murmuring sounds, the dark decrees of fate;
While visions as poetic eyes avow,
Cling to each leaf, and swarm on every bough.

We have not given the foregoing entries with a view to eke out this paper, but because we think them in unison with the feelings of the artist. His melancholy anticipations are therein expressed. He entered them on secluded leaves in the book of Nature, not to excite applause, for it was done under the profound conviction that in a few weeks or months, he could be reached neither by censure nor admiration. To the deceased it is quite immaterial whether violets or brambles flourish on the grave, or whether it be overhung by quiet stars or fiery comets. In like manner we could not but examine a few other slight memorials of himself which Lorton had left. We turned over his sketch book, in which he had put several points of scenery which had struck his attention. The mountain mist—the river’s link—the lonely cloud—the quiet isle—the Alpine shamoy, and the Persian gazelle had been taken captive, and locked up among the clasps and cells of his imagination. We cannot say whether he would ever have made a grand Historical painter. That must ever remain a secret, for he died a self educated boy. He had no more instruction than Beattie’s minstrel. He felt and obeyed the inspiration of genius. It is impossible to say what excellence he might have attained had his pencil been guided by West, Rubens, or Sir Joshua Reynolds, or how many ripe pictures might have been the fruits of cultivation. His last effort was dictated by gratitude. It was a picture of the happy old pair with whom he had spent his last days, and executed when he was shaking hands with Death. It gave me also melancholy feelings to look over the few books he had brought along in his boat. The most of them we had read, but there were among them several volumes containing the lives of illustrious artists, which we had never before seen. The work appeared to embody a mass of information about a striking and captivating art, and we perused it with considerable zest.—On the margin, Lorton had entered many notes and pencil marks, and the state of his mind could often be gathered from his notes. Some of these

artists were Grecian, some Italian, some Flemish, and others were natives of our own country. In the last mentioned, we of course, felt the liveliest interest. These little relics were preserved with sacred care by the old couple. No other claim was ever set up to the schedule of his property, for it comprehended neither flock, nor herds, nor guineas, dollars or cents.

I asked Captain Irving if Lorton were fond of a gun.

"Never saw him with one in my life," replied my host. "He could not bear the sight of a dying bird."

The writer confesses that this piece of information elevated the young artist in his estimation. We cannot think that Cowper's sensibility or sensitiveness about worms was affected, and if worms be entitled to our protection, how much more are birds, that delight us with their plumage and gladden our feelings by their melody. Such is the economy of this world that men are sometimes obliged to subsist on that which they most admire. Thus Wilson and Audubon took the life of birds, though enthusiastic ornithologists; and McKenzie, the author of the *Man of Feeling*, was famous at catching trout; but it is against cruelty and wantonness that we protest.

Young men of talents seem often destined to an early grave. They die soonest whom the Creator loves. Instances may be brought from our own country such as Eastburn, Sands, Griffin, Lynch, Brainard, and others who might be mentioned, and their aspirations after moral and mental excellence ought to be held in remembrance. It is at least amiable to have called to mind the early fate of a youthful painter. One of my last acts during my sojourn with Captain Irving, was to visit the grave of Lorton.—He had requested to be buried in one of the islets of the river.

The old man took the oars, and soon the bark
Smote on the beach, beside a grassy mound,

and we landed. We re-embellished the grave in which the artist was asleep. There were two trees which stood one at the head and the other at the foot of the mound. On one we cut the lines of Kirke White :

"Here Lorton hung
The lyre of Judah, on the cypress dark."

And on the other those plaintive words of Beattie :

"Mine be the breezy hill that skirts the down
Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,
With here and there a violet bestrewn,
Fast by a brook or fountain's murmuring wave
May many a sun shine sweetly on his grave."

Many would serve a friend in need,
Could they perform some mighty deed;
But ask a little thing, and they
Will twist the heel and walk away.