

## MY WICKED FRIEND.

REGARDING myself as the average child, I speak, as Montaigne would say, "soundly of myself," as illustrating points in the experience of childhood from whence, perhaps, a lesson may be derived, which will help us better to understand this period of life. Be it remembered that in my infancy children were not unduly petted, indulged, or lionized. We had no pernicious child literature to foster imbecility or stimulate vanity. We were expected to be heroic to a certain degree—truth, absolute, unadulterated truth, was to be the law of our being. Perhaps the child of my day was not particularly bright—seeing how much was to be learned, and how little I knew, I had strong suspicions, when a child of five or six, that I *might be idiotic*, still I none the less sought improvement. I was savagely conscientious, as I believe children would generally be if not corrupted by the example of their guardians. I committed many faults, but owned up to them religiously, and found a comfort in confession, which most likely is the element that binds the masses to the Roman Catholic Church. Being vivacious and impulsive, I offended constantly my own taste as well as that of my mother, who believed in training little girls into ladydom.

In our day the people are demoralized by the universal tendency to wit and humor, by which an irreverence and levity are engendered, rapidly undermining wholesome morals. I don't think Pilgrim children understood readily turns of wit—facetiousness they did—irony, and the genialities of humor, but generally we were inclined to gravity, and a habit of thoughtfulness, not, perhaps, engaging, but very safe. I always grew funny with grave people, while funny people were apt to make me grave. I was not afraid of bad people; indeed, perhaps, was a little drawn to them—good people were all right, had a multitude of friends; but bad people, somehow, looked forlorn and deserted, which went right to

my poor little heart. I believe children often feel in this way, and good, pious souls look upon it as the sympathy of depravity, when it is only a sweet pity. Poor little owls were we children, staring out with great, round, half-blind eyes upon the outside world, which we took in most solemn wise!

On my way to school, when between five and six years old, I used to pass "Old Zeke" where he sat smoking a little stump of a pipe on a bench in front of a place where "tobacco, gin, rum, etc.," were to be had. He wore a red "bandanna" tied over his head, and was otherwise dressed in sailor style. My mother had told me that my dead father was commandant of a large vessel when but little over twenty, and hence my heart warmed to the sailor; but "Uncle Zeke" was a miserable reprobate, a drinking, red-eyed man, whom nobody much regarded. To me, a wicked sailor was a creature to be pitied, and prayed for, and helped to a better life. Had not my religious, gentle father been once a sailor, and how could anybody see one miserable and drunken and not take it to heart? I was naturally reticent upon my religious feelings, and seeing poor Zeke in this pitiable condition, I took him into my daily prayers, firmly believing that God would interfere and reclaim him.

One morning, as I passed by to school, Uncle Zeke was whistling a light, airy tune, to which my nimble feet at once responded. I paused, kept time to the music awhile, to the great delight of Uncle Zeke, and then passed on with a suddenly awakened sense of outraged decorum. All the way I blushed with shame at dancing in the street to the whistling of a "sot," as everybody called him. Often and often he tried to beguile me into a repetition of the dance, but I did not yield; I had felt too much shame.

At the turn of the road to the schoolhouse was a large pea-green painted house with a whole colonnade of poplars.

In front of this was a spit of land extending into the bay (Coreo), which was appropriated to a ship-yard. The green, inland view; the glittering waters of the bay; the granite rocks bulging from the soil gleaming with isinglass, and bright with the red cups of the moss; the broad leaves of the plantain and burdock harboring myriads of cheerful grasshoppers and crickets; the skeleton ship on the supporting timbers, with the busy click of chisel and hammer, created a scene perfectly fascinating to my young, buoyant nature, and I often stood gazing wistfully at the sea, lost in sweet, childish reverie; happy with a child's happiness, always dashed with the sadness of premature thought.

Old Zeke might here be seen hour after hour rolling his "quid of tobacco," and listlessly enjoying the sunshine and air. It was natural that a sailor should enjoy the building of a ship, I thought, as I paused on my way to school. Now, Old Zeke, though he sometimes called me "Golden-head," never touched my hand or attempted any liberty whatever. I knew he put himself in my way to greet me as I passed, and that the wicked old fellow was always whistling upon my approach, although a moment before his laugh and voice were loud and boisterous. One morning he said to me:

"Yesterday you ran over the timbers of the ship—I s'pose you don't want to do it again?"

"Oh! yes. I do it 'most every morning," I replied, jumping up the ladder and leaping from beam to beam, and then down and off to school. I noticed Uncle Zeke was very sober when I came down, and, indeed, it was a hazardous feat for any child of half a dozen years, however sure-footed. Word must have been carried to my mother anent these exploits, for I was summoned to her presence, where she seemed to have collected a whole catalogue of my misdemeanors.

"So you are quite intimate with Old Zeke, as I understand?" she began.

"Oh! ma, it isn't quite that."

"You run across the timbers of the

new ship at the ship-yard to please him, and have the workmen shout after you."

This was a version I had not thought of, and I colored, partly with shame and partly with indignation, but I replied, sturdily:

"I think, ma, I did it more to please myself—I like it."

"You do, eh? Well, don't let me ever know of your doing it again. Another thing, you dance for Old Zeke!"

Oh! how my sin had found me out! The whole placed me in such a low position, and, though true, made me appear to myself so outside of my caste, and so given over to something unlike those about me, that I burst into tears.

"Yes, ma. I did dance when Old Zeke whistled."

"A pretty sight! my daughter dancing in the street, while an old drunken man whistled the tune for her!"

"But he is a poor sailor, ma, and I pity him; pa was a sailor."

My mother never used unnecessary words; she saw the rebuke was sufficient and said no more. I obeyed to the letter, for in my day disobedience was unknown in any Pilgrim family; but somehow, in my heart I could not give up Old Zeke, and he a sailor, and a something so kind and worshipful about him. I had one more interview wrung out of my poor little prayerful heart, and then I was sent into the country to my grandma's, and never saw my wicked friend again. I only distinctly remember the perturbation and distress of mind he caused me. The kindly respect with which he treated me, and that he gave me a new word, the meaning of which I had to search out in the dictionary, and which I never hear in all these long years without its bringing up the last words and the tears of poor Old Zeke. The word was *convoyed*, and occurred in this way:

I was on my way to school again when I heard my wicked friend's voice, loud and profane, and at a glance I saw he was even more than his wont in a state of intoxication. Forgetful of all interdicts and of all the proprieties, I rushed up to

where he sat, in the midst of a group, each with pipe in mouth, and enjoying the unseemly language of Old Zeke, and I exclaimed, with trembling voice :

"Oh! Uncle Zeke, how can you drink rum and talk so wicked? I pray to God every day to make you good, and you only grow more wicked."

A dead silence followed my words, and then the poor old reprobate burst into tears; he was sobered at once, and turning to his companions, he cried out :

"Look a here, messmates. There isn't one of you cares what becomes of poor Ole Zeke—but I tell you he'll go straight into Heaven, *convoyed* by this *here* angel."

This was my first temperance lecture, and, as I have been told, Old Zeke grew a sober man, and died a good Christian; my child-heart was comforted with the hope that my earnest, little prayers were not uttered in vain.

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.

## FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

THE MAN AND THE POET.

FROM the year 1833 until 1835, when a mere stripling, it was our privilege often to meet with Mr. Halleck. We recall him as a handsome man, with benign features, illumined by a pair of sparkling eyes, and with the beauty of intelligence stamped on his countenance; courtly manners, quiet observation, and habitual reticence were his outward characteristics.

The best likeness of our poet, at this time of life, is an engraving copied from a painting by Inman, and published in the *New York Mirror* of 1836. This portrait reflects, admirably, the individual expression of his features. That he was modest of his abilities is well authenticated; and we may be certain he wrote with little regard for fame or profit. His purposes were swayed by high and noble aspiration.

Honors, such as fell to his share, he never sought; they came to him. One of the few modern paragons was he, who remained humble with dignity—a red-blooded philosopher, who relished the amenities of social existence—nor grubbed and plodded for material profit.

In the winter of his days Mr. Halleck, by outward attire, affected neither look of seer nor prophet; nor had he the preposterous vanity to exhibit himself, photographically, with hollow cheeks and shrunken limbs, among the pictured ballet-girls and prize-fighters that stare at us from shop-windows. Nor was our

author a trading *litterateur*, who, on the strength of his name, drives a "sharp" money-bargain with juvenile journals and milliners' magazines for the sale of scraps, lop-sided sonnets, and feeble translations.

From the first, Campbell's muse had for him an especial charm, and her influence endured to the end. Had there been more of Campbell, we would probably have had none of Halleck. Such poems as he admired he habitually copied, and committed to memory. Indeed, easy memorization of poetry was to him a test of merit.

More cosmopolitan than local, he believed not in the distinctiveness of "American" or "Australian" literature—little as he did in the future of Choctaw or Cherokee *belles-lettres* achievements—but wisely maintained that Anglo-Saxon writers, on both sides of the ocean, are equally English. To him both Shakespeare and Milton were literary countrymen.

And what is poets' fame? Illustrative of the mutability of reputations, when we look backward, dividing by-gone years into decimal periods, we discover a shifting record of the comparative rating of American minstrels. In the year

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