

anything about us more earnest than that same thought and passion? Is there anything more real—more characteristic of that great and dim destiny to which we are born, and which may be written down in that terrible word—forever?

Let those who will, then, sneer at what in their wisdom they call untruth—at what is false, because it has no material presence; this does not create falsity; would to Heaven that it did!

And yet, if there was actual, material truth, super-added to Reverie, would such objectors sympathize the more? No, a thousand times, no; the heart that has no sympathy with thoughts and feelings that scorch the soul is dead also—whatever its mocking tears and gestures may say—to a coffin or a grave!

Let them pass and we will come back to these cherished letters.

A mother who has lost a child has, she says, shed a tear—not one, but many—over the dead boy's coldness. And another, who has not lost, but who trembles lest she lose, has found the words failing as she read, and a dim, sorrow-borne mist spreading over the page.

Another, yet rejoicing in all those family ties that make life a charm, has listened nervously to careful reading, until the husband is called home and the coffin is in the house. "Stop!" she says; and a gush of tears tells the rest.

Yet the cold critic will say, "It was artfully done." A curse on him! it was not art; it was nature.

Another, a young, fresh, healthful girl-mind, has seen something in the love-picture—albeit so weak—of truth, and has kindly believed that it must be earnest. Aye, indeed is it, fair and generous one, earnest as life and hope! Who, indeed, with a heart at all, that has not yet slipped away irreparably and forever from the shores of youth—from that fairy land which young enthusiasm creates and over which bright dreams hover—but knows it to be real? And so such things will be real till hopes are dashed and Death is come.

Another, a father, has laid down the book in tears.

God bless them all! How far better this than the cold praise of newspaper paragraphs or the critically contrived approval of colder friends!

Let me gather up these letters carefully, to be read when the heart is faint and sick of all that there is unreal and selfish in the world. Let me tie them together with a new and longer bit of ribbon; not by a love-knot, that is too hard; but by an easy slipping knot, that so I may get at them the better. And now they are all together, a snug packet, and we will label them, not sentimentally (I pity the one who thinks it) but earnestly, and in the best meaning of the term—*Souvenirs du Cœur*.

Thanks to my first Reverie, which has added to such a treasure!

And now to my Second Reverie.

I am no longer in the country. The fields, the trees, the brooks, are far away from me, and yet they are very present. A letter from my tenant—how different from those other letters!—lies upon my table, telling me what fields he has broken up for the autumn grain, and how many beeves he is fattening, and how the potatoes are turning out.

But I am in a garret of the city. From my window I look over a mass of crowded house-tops—moralizing often upon the scene, but in a strain too long and sombre to be set down here. In place of the wide country chimney, with its iron fire-dogs, is a snug grate, where the maid makes me a fire in the morning and rekindles it in the afternoon.

I am usually fairly seated in my chair—a cosily stuffed office chair—by five or six o'clock of the evening. The

fire has been newly made, perhaps an hour before; first, the maid drops a withe of paper in the bottom of the grate, then a stick or two of pine-wood, and after it a hod of Liverpool coal; so that by the time I am seated for the evening the sea-coal is fairly in a blaze.

When this has sunk to a level with the second bar of the grate, the maid replenishes it with a hod of anthracite; and I sit musing and reading, while the new coal warms and kindles; not leaving my place until it has sunk to the third bar of the grate, which marks my bedtime.

I love these accidental measures of the hours, which belong to you and your life, and not to the world. A watch is no more the measure of your time than of the time of your neighbors; a church clock is as public and vulgar as a church-warden. I would as soon think of hiring the parish sexton to make my bed as to regulate my time by the parish clock.

A shadow that the sun casts upon your carpet, or a streak of light on a slated roof yonder, or the burning of your fire, are pleasant time-keepers, full of presence, full of companionship and full of the warning—time is passing!

In the summer season I have even measured my reading and my night-watch by the burning of a taper; and I have scratched upon the handle to the little bronze taper holder that meaning passage of the New Testament—the night cometh!

But I must get upon my Reverie. It was a drizzly evening; I had worked hard during the day, and had drawn my boots, thrust my feet into slippers, thrown on a Turkish loose dress and Greek cap, souvenirs to me of other times and other places, and sat watching the lively, uncertain, yellow play of the bituminous flame.

I.

SEA-COAL.

It is like a flirt, mused I; lively, uncertain, bright, colored, waving here and there, melting the coal into black, shapeless mass; making foul, sooty smoke and pasty, trashy residuum! Yet withal, pleasantly sparkling, dancing, prettily waving, and leaping like a roebuck from point to point.

How like a flirt! And yet is not this tossing caprice of girlhood, to which I liken my sea-coal flame, a native play of life, and belonging by nature to the play-time of life? Is it not a sort of essential fire-kindling to the weightier and truer passions, even as Jenny puts the soft coal first, the better to kindle the anthracite? Is it not a sort of necessary consumption of young vapors, which float in the soul, and which is left thereafter the purer? Is there not a stage somewhere in every man's youth for just such waving, idle heart-blaze, which means nothing, yet which must be got over?

Lamartine says somewhere, very prettily, that there is more of quick running sap and floating shade in a young tree, but more of fire in the heart of a sturdy oak: "*Il y a plus de sève folle et d'ombre, flottante dans les jeunes plants de la forêt; il y a plus de feu dans le vieux cœur du chêne.*"

Is Lamartine playing off his prettiness of expression, dressing up with his poetry—making a good conscience against the ghost of some accusing Graziella—or is there truth in the matter?

A man who has seen sixty years, whether widower or bachelor, may well put such sentiment into words; it feeds his wasted heart with hope; it renews the exultation of youth by the pleasantest of equivocation and the most charming of self-confidence. But, after all, is it not true? Is not the heart like new blossoming field plants, whose