



BEHIND THE BARS.

A prisoner lay within his dungeon small,
 And kept his eyes strained on one ray of light
 That sifted in. Through dreary day and night,
 He pressed his burning head against the wall.
 That he might hear God's merry rain drops fall;
 And ever, when the star-eyes faint and white
 Peeped in, he thrilled with exquisite delight—
 Until, remembering, darkness crept o'er all.

So I, condemned to touch thy lips no more,
 Turn yearning eyes to thy soul's high, pure light;
 Barred out from heav'n, with spirit faint and sore,
 I lean my ear to catch thy tones aright;
 And when thy glance meets mine, one moment I
 Feel hope leap forth—remembering, feel it die.

The lightest lip often hides the saddest heart; the weakest shoulder often bears the heaviest burden; and the gayest feet find the cruelest thorns.

Why should not Oregon and Washington each have her "state" flower, as well as other states? California is trying to decide between the snow-white poppy of Southern California, the butterfly-lily of the Sierras, and the flame-hued poppy of the valleys. Let us, too, have our own "state" flowers.

The vote for the *Critic's* twenty immortelles, those "twenty American women deemed the truest representatives of what is best in cultivated American womanhood," places at the head of the list Harriet Beecher Stowe; at the foot, Blanche Willis Howard. And far too near the foot to please many comes the name of her whose tender poems none can read without loving the writer—Louise Chandler Moulton.

There are few people, indeed, who are capable of criticising the work of a writer kindly, sensibly, and with reason; but the world is full of overflowing of unkind, cruel and malicious ones who are always eager to childishly attack the writer himself (or perhaps herself). Generous criticism, unmixed with personal prejudice of any kind, is helpful and encouraging, and welcome to any writer not over-burdened with conceit; but a malicious and personal assault upon the writer himself (or herself) works no good, benefits no one, and many and many a time lays one more bitterness upon a life which already holds enough of sadness and unshed tears to satisfy its bitterest enemy, did he but know.

"God bless you" should never be used lightly, but always with depth of feeling and reverence. A striking and amusing illustration of the abuse of the words was afforded the other day on a railway train. A little girl traveling alone for the first time displayed great nervousness and uneasiness until the train stopped at the first station and a woman with whom she was acquainted entered the car. The child rushed to meet her, and exclaimed breathlessly: "How far are you going?" "To 8—," was the reply. She drew a long breath of relief. "Oh, I am so glad," she said; "God bless you!" and then, evidently realizing that she had not yet fully expressed her gratitude, she added, emphatically: "And God bless God himself; because I know He just put you on this train because I was so lonesome and so scared."

Mr. Oscar Fay Adams is saying some very severe things about women in one of the leading reviews. His articles are more eloquent than reasonable, however; and in any other, or almost any other, magazine would not even be noticed. He declares that, while others may believe that woman supplies the restraining, softening influence at work in human society, he is convinced that woman, so far from being the refiner of manners, is disgracefully inconsiderate, superlatively selfish, and exasperatingly insolent. Mr. Adams has doubtless been unfortunate in making acquaintance with the class of women he describes with so much bitterness of spirit and severity of language. There are men who believe there is no such thing as virtue, simply because they have chosen to waste their lives in company with those who are not virtuous; there are men so narrow minded that they believe there is no such thing as a faithful woman, simply because they have known only faithless ones. But such men are rare. And between you and me, I believe Mr. Adams to be in his remarkable opinions as rare a

specimen of his sex as the women he so caustically describes and whom he met—where?

"You are ugly," said the blue-jay to the canary, poising on a limb outside and pluming her beautiful feathers; "you are only a common yellow color, and your body is ill-shaped."

"And you are caged," said the gay robin, turning her saucy head to one side with a superior air; "who would be shut up forever behind gilded wires?—not I"—and she flaunted away.

"You are passionless," said the love bird, cruel in her own happiness—even as women sometimes are—"you have no mate; you do not know how to love!"

"You are ungrateful," said her mistress; "I feed you and you do not sing!"

Then the poor canary fell to grieving silently, day by day. Ugly and passionless and ungrateful—and not even free! Was not that sad? Then one day they brought her a mate, and he abode with her. Yearning for love, she fancied for awhile that this was it; but one sweet morn a lark called to her from across the green meadows to come out, come out! for the skies were blue, and the waters were cool, and the very winds were perfumed of flowers, and here was love, love! And she longed to go. Her little heart panted for freedom, after all these years, and she beat her poor bosom against the cruel wires until it was bruised and bleeding. O, to be free, free! But all in vain the desire, so she sunk down, prone, suffering, crushed. Then, all in a moment, something leaped up within her little beating breast—something strong and sweet and passionate; and out of that swelling uncertain throat flowed such a lyrical gush of melody that the whole world stood still to listen. So, song was born in the canary's soul, and so it found its way to expression and cheered many a lonely heart, and comforted many a sorrowful one. And the mad world praised her, and those who had sneered at her were silent of envy. But she only said: "I am ugly, and I am passionless, and I am ungrateful—and I am not even free! Is it not sad?" And with the song still flowing from her lips, and with the hushed world still listening, she poured out her little heart to death.

The wives of the most prominent artists in Paris have given evidence of the small quantity of brains they possess—and of the quality of that possessed—by holding a meeting, at which it was unanimously resolved that hereafter no artist should have any nude model save his own wife. They claim that a large proportion of infelicitous marriages among artists are brought about by adventuresses taking advantage of such situations. The resolution, accompanied by its reasons, is so very droll that one must at first only see the ridiculous and smile a little. But in a moment deep thought comes up. Can it be possible that there are virtuous wives in the world who could stoop to do such a thing? I can understand a wife's heart breaking because she sees her husband's love—his real, true love, which she has not been able to hold—going out unconsciously to some other good woman, but I cannot understand her putting out one finger to prevent it, or giving him one look of pleading recall. And the wife, then, who could be jealous of, or make even the faintest effort to win her husband's fancy from a woman who would pose, nude, in an artist's studio, lowers herself in the first moment to that woman's animal level. If women would learn that marriage is desirable only with men who are worthy a pure woman's trust and full confidence, and that marriage under any other conditions is the vilest—I do not use the word thoughtlessly—wrong on earth, there would be fewer marriages, fewer divorces, fewer hysterical, unhappy women weeping to the whole world of their "wrongs"—and there would be more men who deserved trust. I may add right here that it would be an exceedingly wise idea, too, if each woman would so equip herself for the battle of life while she is yet young, that she may be able to feel independent of any man who may illuse her. Another wise idea would be that she never imagine—italics please—herself wronged; and still another, that she cast her mind's eye inward frequently and look frankly at her own shortcomings. Men and women, we are every one of us human; your sin is not my sin, perhaps, and mine is not yours, but the sin itself, like the poor, is always with us. And now I am going to make an assertion that may cast a little bomb of consternation into some camps at least. It is my firm belief that there is one thing which causes more marriages to turn out infelicitously than does immorality, and causes more husbands to go astray from wife and children and home than do all the bitter-sweet fascinations of forbidden pleasures—and that one thing is the wife who makes herself and her husband not only miserable, but ridiculous also, by (it is a coarse, ugly word, but none other will do) nagging! There. Now that I have said it I am a little bit scared, and I shall stop right here and give you time to think it over before you decide whether you ever knew or heard of a woman who did such a thing. Besides, I have wandered away from my text, which is: An errant fancy is not worth holding, or trying to hold. Be true to yourself, and in that way, alone, command truth. My sisters—would ye have a faith that must be held with bonds of steel—or with garlands of love?