WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN!

BY L. E. LANDON.

We might have been—these are but common words,
And yet they have the sum of life's bewailing;
They are the echo of those finer chords
Whose tones reverberate, when unavailing—
We might have been!

We might have been so happy, says the child,
Pent in the dreary school-room's stifling heat;
When the green rushes, 'mid the marshes wild,
Recal past joys, and with vain hopes repeat—
We might have been!

It is the thought that darkens on our youth,
When first experience—sad experience—teaches
What fallacies we have believed for truth,
And what few truths our best endeavor reaches—
We might have been!

It is the motto of all human things—
The end of all that waits on mortals' seeing—
The weary weight upon Hope's flagging wings—
It is the cry of the worn heart, while breaking—
We might have been!

What in this bleak wide world can e'er restore us,
The feelings, hopes, and fancies, left?
Had we but known the bitter path before us,
Alas, how different from what we are—
We might have been!

A "CAT FISH" STORY.

Ben Snaggletree seated himself in our society the other day, overburdened with a Mississippi yarn, which embraced one of his hair breadth 'scapes, and which he had resolved on relieving his memory of by having it chronicled.

Ben was an old Mississip' *roarer*—none of your half and half, but just as native to the element as if he had been born in a *broad horn*. He said he had been *fotched* up on the river's brink, and "knew a snappin' *turtle* from a *snag* without larnin'."

"One night," says Ben, "about as dark as the face of Cain, and as unruly as if the elements had been untied and let loose from their great captain's command, I was on the old Mississippi. It was, in short, a night ugly enough to make any natural born Christian think of his prayers, and a few converted saints tremble. I walked out upon the steam-boat "guard" to cool off from the effects of considerable liquor doin's, participated in during the day, but had scarcely reached the side of the boat when she struck a snag, and made a lurch, throwing me about six feet into the *drink*. I was sufficiently cool, *stranger*, when I came to the surface, but I had nigh in a short time set the Mississippi a *bilin'*, my carcase grew so hot with wrath at observing the old boat wending her way up stream, unhurt, while I, solitary, unobserved, and alone, was floating on the old father of waters. I swam to the head of a small island some distance below where we struck, and no sooner touched ground than I made an effort to stand erect. You may judge of my horror on discovering my landing place to be a Mississippi *mud bar*, and about as firm as a quicksand, into which I sunk about three feet in a moment.

"All was dark as a stack of black cats—no object visible save the lights of the receding boat—no sound smote upon the ear but the lessening blow of the 'scape pipe and the plashing of the surrounding waters. The first sounded like the farewell voice of hope, while the latter, in its plashing and purling, was like to the jabbering of evil spirits, exulting over an entrapped victim.

"I attempted to struggle, but that sunk me faster. I cried out, but fancied that too, forced me deeper into my yielding grave. Ere daylight dawned I felt sure of being *out of sight*, and the horrid thought of thus sinking into eternity through a *mud-gate*, made every hair stand 'on its own hook,' and forced my heart to patter against my ribs like a trip-hammer. I had been in many a scrape, but I considered this the nastiest, and made up my mind that the ball of yarn allotted to me was about being spun out—my cake was all *mud!* I promised old Mississippi, if permitted to escape this time, I would *lick* anythin' human that said a word agin' her; but it was no use—she was sure of me now, and, like old 'barebones' to an expiring African, she held on, and deeper and deeper I sunk. In a short time I was forced to elevate my chin to keep out of my mouth an over supply of the temperance liquid, which was flowing so coaxingly about my lips, My eyeballs were starting, my teeth set, and hope had wasted to a misty shadow, when something touched me like a floating solid; I instantly grasped it—it slid through my hands—*all but the tail*—which I clung to with a grip of iron.

"I soon discovered I had made captive a mammoth *catty*, huge enough to be the patriarch of his tribe, and a set of resolutions was quickly adopted in my mind, that he could'nt travel further without company. A desperate start and vigorous wriggle to escape was made by my friend the catty, but there was six feet in length of *desperation* attached to his extremity that could neither be coaxed nor shook off. Soon succeeded another start, and out I came like a cork from a bottle. Off started the fish, like a comet, and after him I went, a *muddy spark*, at the end of his tail. By a dexterous twist of his rudder, I succeeded in keeping him on the surface, and steered him to a solid landing, where I set him loose, and we shook ourselves, mutually pleased at parting company."

"That will do, Ben," said we, "all but the *tail*."

"Tail and all, or none!" said Ben; so here you have it. Ben swears he'll father it himself.—*St. Louis Reveille.*

LABOR.

For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so Mammonish mean, *is* in communication with nature; the real desire to get work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth. * *

It has been written, 'an endless significance lies in work;' a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of labor, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, desire, sorrow, remorse, indignation, despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man; but he bends himself with free valor against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of labor in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame! * *

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it! How, as a free-flowing channel, dug and torn by noble force through the sour mud-swamp of one's existence, like an ever-deepening river there, it runs and flows; draining off the sour festering water, gradually from the root of the remotest grass-blade; making, instead of pestilential swamp, a green fruitful meadow with its clear-flowing stream. How blessed for the meadow itself, let the stream and *its* value be great or small! Labor is life: from the inmost heart of the worker rises his god-given force, the sacred celestial life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness—to all knowledge, 'self-knowledge' and much else, so soon as work fitly begins. Knowledge! The knowledge that will hold good in working, cleave thou to that; for nature herself accredits that, says yea to that. Properly thou hast no other knowledge but what thou hast got by working: the rest is yet all an hypothesis of knowledge; a thing to be argued of in schools, a thing floating in the clouds, in endless logic-vortices, till we try it and fix it. 'Doubt, of whatever kind, can be ended by action alone.'—*Carlyle.*

HOME EDUCATION.—Another important rule in home education is, that we should aim at evolving the nature of a child, not by suppression, but by expression. Bring forth all the good, and the evil will perish of itself. The patent modes of education all adopt the plan of taming down, checking, pruning; they all resolve themselves into the command—Do not; the undone in a crowd of petty particulars passes for the virtuous; and the soil is so exhaused, that it has not strength to put forth a fruitage of grand and generous actions. Most books on education are written by old maids who know as much about education as about horsedealing; and therefore those books abound with a thousand minute and silly details, which, if invariably and scrupulously observed, would crush the greatest genius that was ever sent by Heaven to brighten, or the divinest excellence that, ever was sent by Heaven to gladden the world. What would Newton and the whole host of English wortheis have been, if they had thus been educated? But, God be praised, human nature is stronger than books. Pedants, male and female, may speculate about it as they like; they may give a long catalogue of trifling maxims, and of tedious prescriptions, by which it is to be fitted for the company of decent, respectable, and twaddling people like themselves; it may submit to their lessons for a time, but anon it laughs at all their foolish formalisms, rises to its full height of glory, and rushes with invincible and luminous step toward its destined supremacy. Every child has a distinctive nature of its own; and that distinctive nature should be the law of its education. If we adopt the principle of educating children not by suppression, but by expression, not merely will it be found that no one family can be educated like any other family, but that no two children of the same family can be educated precisely in the same manner. All the children of the same family have a different character; why should they all be educated alike? If one child has a brilliant imagination, another the most exquisite sensibilities, another the most logical capacity—why should they all be educated in the same way, merely because they happen to dwell under the same roof? Not only would it be infinitely better for each to be educated according to his distinctive nature, but infinitely better for them all.—*Maccall.*

THE FEARFUL MALADY OF AMBITION.—Scott had some £2000 a year without writing books at all. Why should he manufacture, and not create to make more money; and rear mass on mass for a dwelling to himself, till the pile toppled, sank, and buried him in its ruins, when he had a safe, pleasant dwelling ready of its own accord? Alas! Scott, with all his health was infected; sick of the fearfulest malady, that of ambition! To such a length had the king's baronetcy, the world's favorite, and 'sixteen parties a day,' brought it with him. So the insane racket must be kept up, and rise even higher and higher. So masons labor, ditchers delve; and there is endless correspondence altogether about marble slabs for tables, wainscoting of rooms, curtains, with the trimmings of curtains' orange colored or fawn colored; Scott, one of the gifted of the world, whom his admirers call the most gifted, must kill himself that he may be a country gentleman, the founder of a race of country lairds. It is one of the strangest, most tragical histories. ever enacted under the sun, So poor a passion can lead a man into such mad extremes. Surely, were not a man a fool always, one might say there was something eminently distracting in this, end as it would, of a Walter Scott writing daily with the ardor of a steam-engine, that he might make £150,000 a year and buy upholstery with it. To cover the walls of a stone house in Selkirkshire with knicknacs, ancient armor, and genealogical shields, what can we name it, but a being bit with a delirium of a kind? That tract after tract of moorland in the shire of Selkirk should be joined together on parchment and by ring fence, and named after one's name, why it is a shabby small type of your vulgar Napoleans, Alexanders, and conquering heroes, not counted venerable by any teacher of men.—*Carlyle.*

A SECRET.—"How do you do, Mrs. Tome, have you heard that story about Mrs. Ludy?" "Why, no really, Mrs Gad, what is it—do tel' " "Oh, I promised not to tell it for all the world!—No, I must never tell on't. I'm afraid it will git out." "Why, I'll never tell on't as long as I live, just as true as the world; what is it, come, tell." "Now you won't say anything about it, will you?" "No, I'll never open my head about it—never. Hope to die this minute." "Well, if you'll believe me, Mrs. Fundy told me last night, that Mrs Trot told her that her sister's husband was told hy a person who dreamed it, that Mrs. Trouble's oldest daughter told Mrs. Nichens that her grandmother heard by a letter she got from her third sister's second husband's oldest brother's step-daughter, that it was reported by the captain of a clam boat just arrived from the Feejee Islands, that the mermaids about that section wore shark skin bustles stuffed with pickled eels' toes."

HUMAN LIFE—*A Parable.*—Two pilgrims were journeying together over the desert—one mounted on a camel, with a lofty padded cushion, and a canopy above his head. The other, with unsandled feet, lacerated and scorched by the burning sands, and unturbaned head, which throbbed almost to bursting with the sun's fierce rays.

'God is great!" ejaculated the poor wretch—"Oh! that he would relieve me from this dreadful agony! For what crime am I thus severely punished?"

"Poor brother, how I pity thee!" replied the well-mounted traveler, "but thou knowest that suffering is a necessary discipline for human beings. Be content with thy lot."

"Alas! if thou wouldst but let me mount thy beast, and ride one hour, my life might perhaps be saved. Thy sandals would protect thy feet, and turban shield thy head."

"My soul is grieved for thee," said his sympathetic friend with a deep sigh; but, verily, if a camel had been best for thee, the wise sovereign of the earth would not have withheld it. It is our duty to bow to the behests of Providence."

Onward they journeyed—one feeling as much compassion as a heart overflowing with gratitude could contain; the other trying to solve the problem, why such strange inequalities would exist.

Another hour—and the bleeding feet, and aching brow, and bursting heart, were at rest on the desert.

The favorite of Heaven—or Fortune, looked down from his comfortable seat and exclaimed,

"Unfortunate friend, would that Heaven had bestowed on thee a camel, that I might still enjoy thy companionship and not be obliged to cross the trackless desert alone; but the good God be praised that he has preserved me from so dreadful a fate as thine!"

STATISTICS WORTH KNOWING.—In Great Britain, the number of individuals in a state to bear arms from the age of sixteen to sixty, is 2,744,847. The number of marriages is about 93,030 yearly; and it has been reckoned that in sixty-three of these unions, there were only three which had no issue. The number of deaths is about 332,700 yearly, which makes nearly 25,592 monthly, 6,398 weekly, 914 daily, and 40 hourly. The deaths among the women are, in proportion to men, as fifty to forty-five. The married women live longer than those who continue in celibacy. In the country the mean term of the number of children produced by each marriage is four; in towns the proportion is seven for every two marriages. The number of married women is, to the general number of individuals of the sex, as one to three; and the number of married men to that of all the individuals of the male sex, as three to one; but the number of widows who marry again is, to that of widowers in the same case, as seven to four. The individuals who inhabit elevated stations live longer than those who reside in less elevated places. The half of the individuals die before attaining the age of seventeen. The number of twins is, to that of ordinary births, as one to sixty-five. According to calculations, founded upon the bills of mortality, one individual only in 3,126 attains the age of 100 years. The number of births of the male sex is, to that of the female sex, as ninety-six to ninety-five.—*Edinburgh Phil. Jour.*

FORMS OF INTEMPERANCE.—There is the intemperance of mirth, and then its victim is a silly buffoon.

The intemperance of seriousness, and then he is a gloomy ascetic.

The intemperance of ambition, and then he is the laureled hero of a hundred fights, a mad-cap poet, or mountebank statesman.

The intemperance of love, and then he is a good for nothing driveler.

The intemperance of anger, and then he is a frothing madman.

The intemperance of dress and manners, and then he is a glittering fop.

The intemperance of the purse, and then he is a sordid miser.

The intemperance of the plate, and then he is a filthy glutton.

WHO SWALLOWS?—A novel way of catching rabbits is practised on the southern coast of England. They scatter a quantity of snuff at the mouth of their holes, covering it with green parsley, of which the game is remarkably fond. On partaking of the delicious herbage, they are seized with such a fit of sneezing that they invariably *beat their brains out against the rocks.*