## EPIGRAM BY WHITTIER.

Self-case is pain; the only rest Is labor for a worthy end—
A toll that gains with what it yields, And scatters to its own increas And hears, while sowing outward fields, The harvest song of inward peace.

## A MOST UNBUSINESSLIKE PROCEEDING.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER L.

ANTED—Young Ladies to fill the posts of invoice clerk, book-keeper, forwarding clerk and correspond clerk in a corn megciant's office, in which there is also receive for an apprentice. None but those possessing agreeptionable references need apply.

"I think that will do, Brother Joseph, I think that will do-eh?"

Do! Of course it will do; the very thing, Henry. The idea is a capital one; what made ou think of carrying it out?"

"I thought," remarked the senior partner of Middleton Brothers, corn merchants, Liverpool, cefully dividing his coat-tails, and leaning his k against the mantelpiece in the private office; I thought," he repeated, sustaining the coatalls with one hand, and gently waving the other, that we should establish a new era; that we uld emancipate woman from her galling thralldom; that our names should be handed down through succeeding ages as world-wide ben-efactors, and that we should considerably lessen our expenditure, Brother Joseph."

"There is something in that, Henry; there is cidedly something in that."
"Something in it! There is everything in it. isiness, my dear Joseph, especially in times like esc, is business."

oseph murmured assent, drew his chair nearer fire, took a pinch of snuff, and became lost in

Mr. Johnson !" cried Henry, opening the

A tall young man, with dark hair, dark eyes, d a black mustache, appeared in answer to the

"I wish you to make out three or four copies o his advertisement, and send them to the princi-al papers in time for insertion in to-morrow's

"Yes, sir. I'll see to it at once."
Mr. Johnson closed the door carefully behind im, proceeded to his desk, sat down, and preared to resume his perusal of that morning's ewspaper; but, happening to glance at the slip paper he had received, he caught sight of the ret few words, and became almost petrified with

"Why, what in the name of all that's wonderful! Why, good gracious! Jack, I say, Jack, here's about the queerest, rummlest start you sver heard of in your born days."

"What's up?" inquired an individual in another part of the office—a prepossessing individual, with curling brown hair, close-clipped beard, straight nose, and blue eyes.

"What's up? Why, look here."

"Well, this is a go," remarked Jack. "He must be getting softening of the brain. By Jove, shough, it'll be rather tough if it comes to anything."

And such influite delight filled the souls of these roung men that they were forced to retire out-ide in order to give vent to their feelings.

The advertisement was read next morning by the brothers in their daily paper.
"I scarcely think," said Henry, as they walked down to the office, "I scarcely think we shall have many applications, Joseph. I believe the careful wording of the advertisement will determine the process for a state of the same of the same

Joseph meekly assented. He always did to his brother's propositions—always had done so since the days of his infancy.

"Few, but select!" Oh, wise prognostications of man, how utterly ye come to naught! "Few, but select!"

If from ninety to one hundred applications in a

If from ninety to one hundred applications in a day are few; if a company composed largely of ex-bar-maids, ex-ballet-girls, ex-waiteresses, may be called select, then Henry Middleton's prophocy was verified—but certainly not unless.

All day long the stream poured in. All day long the steps outside were crowded with applicants, the pavement lined with spectators. Office-boys clung to the banisters, and shouted sarcastic encouragement to the in-goers, and yelled derisively at the out-goers. Rusiness, for the time, was at a stand-still. was at a stand-still.

The day remained a day of dread in the memory of Middleton Brothers. After many hours of intelegable discomfort; after being sneered at, scolded at, preached at; after being appealed to with tears, and denounced with scorn, they succeeded in securing four bona fide young ladies, and a respectable person of forty. The "respectable person" was installed as book-keeper; the invoice clerk was a slim little creature, with bright gray eyes, and rippling auburn hair; the forwarding clerk was dark and tall, with large brown syes; the corresponding clerk was short and fair,

syes; the corresponding clerk was short and fair, with a round, kindly, good-natured face; the apprentice was a saucy little mite of fifteen.

(I have said that it ever remained a day of dread in the memory of Middleton Brothers. To say so is to express the facts of the case in the mildest remained and the mildest remained. possible manner. That day haunted them. They brooded over it when awake, they dreamed of it when asleep. They were laughed at by their friends, they were jeered at by their enemies. Such, alas, is the fate of all leaders in the van of civilization and philanthropy.)

Henry stood with his back against the mantelpiece; Joseph sat by the fire. Henry spoke; Joseph listened.

Joseph listened.

"You see, Joseph," said the former, holding up
spiece of paper on which he had been making
calculations, and gathering up his coat-tails with calculations, and gathering up his cont-tails with the unoccupied hand, an action which from con-stant repetition during a quarter of a century had grown mechanical; "you see that by this arrange-ment we cut down our expenses very considera-bly, and shall be able at the end-of the year to make a pleasant addition to our banker's bal-

prospect of a rise—gain, one hundred and ten pounds. We paid our invoice clerk one hundred pounds; Miss Vernon accepts the position for fifty—gain, fifty pounds. Our forwarding clerk received one hundred and fifty pounds; Miss Warwick is content with eighty—gain revents. Warwick is content with eighty—gain, seventy pounds. Our corresponding clerk received one hundred and thirty pounds; Miss Lawson is quite satisfied with seventy—gain, sixty pounds. We gave our last apprentice one hundred pounds for five years; we give our present one, Miss Ramsay, eighty—gain, twenty pounds. Making a gain in all of three hundred and ten pounds, which is not exactly to be despised, and may come in handy for one or two little things—eh, Joseph?"

And Henry chuckled, actually chuckled, which was a rare thing with the senior partner of Mid-

dleton Brothers.

"I expect the work will be done in just as businesslike a manner—perhaps, if anything, more methodically, more neatly. Women, you see, Joseph, possess finer sensibilities than men, pay more attention to detail, and are more amenable to direction and authority; women don't smoke or drink—at least, the majority don't; and they come very much cheaper, Joseph, very much cheaper."

Joseph smiled acquiescence. He was acquies-cence itself. His poking of the fire was an affirmative; the way he sat seemed a respectful assent; the very blowing of his nose appeared to express complete deference to his brother's opinion and entire coincidence with it.

"I have no positive complaint to make against either Mr. Johnson or Mr. Harley, but, at the same time, I should not be sorry if they had left with the others. It was a most remarkable and most fortunate thing that we got so many off our hands at once. But the work must be sadly be-hind. I think we shall have to stay late for a

few nights, and see that it is got up."

They did not, however, stay late that night.

The labors they had undergone during the day would have prostrated a Samson, and they were

wearied out.

When they entered the office next morning, a transformation had taken place that amazed them. The air, so long a sea of dust in which sickly bluebottles and sticky fles swam feebly about, was now filled with fragrant perfumes. The hatrails were now, for the most part, occupied by dainty hats with flowing feathers, by graceful cloaks and coquettish little clouds. The stand beneath, so lately filled with ponderous rain-protectors, now held a row of tiny umbrellas, looking like grown-up parasols. And—greatest innova-tion of all—on one of the long desks upon which thousands of pounds had been counted, scores of ledgers balanced, stood a glassful of flowers. The whole place seemed changed. There was the soft rustle of women's dresses, the soft murmur of women's voices.

The brothers stood and gazed not altogether coldly on the wonderful transformation, and as they gazed their eyes rested unknowingly on the same spot. Near the window in a patch of sunlight—it was a bright Spring day—sat the lately engaged invoice clerk. The sunbeams fell lovingly on the small head, and the brown hair seemed to ripple joyously as if glad that in its folds there lurked tinges of color that could claim kindred with the golden sunlight. There was such a quaint air of preoccupation in the serious little face, such a pursing up of the red lips, such a busy turning over of mighty leaves, such a swift movement of the diligent pen, and at intervals such a wistful contemplation of a cruel ink spot on one of the tiny white hands, that Henry Middleton, the stern senior partner of Middleton they gazed their eyes rested unknowingly on the Brothers, smiled, and the rugged face beneath the influence of the smile became a pleasant thing to look upon. Turning round, he beheld Joseph smiling too, He put his hand kindly on his brother's shoulder, and they walked musingly into the private office, with who shall say what memories of a time when business was not all in all, and life was pleasant.

But after a quarter of an hour's perusal of the pile of business letters that lay awaiting the part-ners, the wrinkles came back deeper than before, the smiles faded away—Middleton Brothers were the smiles faded away—Middleton Brothers were corn merchants once more. From the letters Henry passed to a formidable list of names and figures headed "Accounts Due," and kept always by this detail-loving man in the recesses of his private desk. Copying a few of the names on a slip of paper, he turned to his brother, and broke

the silence for the first time:

"Would you just step into the office, Joseph, and see if there is any one not particularly engaged? I want a few accounts collected." Joseph complied, and after a few minutes' ab-

ence returned. "Miss Warwick is the only one at liberty. have told her to get ready, and come in to you."

Ten minutes passed, a quarter of an hour passed, and then Miss Warwick appeared.

Oh, stern business men, to whom business is business, and all else vanity and vexation of spirit, can you possibly imagine a clerk with a muff, a clerk with a dainty cloak, dainty shoes, and a daintier hat and feather?

Henry had fretted at the delay, but before this apparition, with its laughing eyes and dimpled cheeks, the rebuke died away on his lips. He rose, took up the slip of paper, got into his accus-tomed attitude by the fireplace, and spoke as fol-

"I have here the names of a few firms against which there are several outstanding accounts. Now, I wish you to call upon them and press for immediate settlement. We make it a rule never to allow accounts to become overdue without repeated application for them. We have learned the necessity of this from experience. We have known many instances in which a little promptiknown many instances in which a little promptitude and a little pressing have saved us from very
serious losses. When you have been with us
longer, Miss Warwick, you will learn that we are
above all things methodical; that we attend personally to little details which are generally left
entirely to subordinates. We do so because we
have some little respect for our reputation, some
little objection to throwing away our own and
other people's money, which cannot be said of
all Liverpool corn firms."

Henry Middleton sat down with a grim smile
on his face, and Miss Warwick bowed and retreated.

treated.

A little later on he entered the outer office and inquired for Mr. Harley. Mr. Harley had gone out. Where to? Mr. Harley had gone to show Miss Warwick the places at which she had to call. Miss Warwick had the addresses; was not that

may be I only say there may be some trifling

Henry Middleton proved to be right in his con-jecture. There were drawbacks. For instance, it was singular, and a little inconvenient, that neighboring firms became absurdly anxious about neighboring firms became absurdly anxious about the prompt forwarding and receiving of invoices; that junior clerks came flitting in two or three times a day, eagerly inquiring if such and such an invoice were ready, or bringing invoices for goods bought a few hours before. Miss Vernon was en-gaged in expostulating with these young persons half the day; and, really, the difficulty she had to make them comprehend her, and to get them to go away, was something overwhelming. It was singular, too, that forwarding clerks in all the neighboring offices became strangely modest and self-distrustful, and were perpetually dropping in to make inquiries as to certain stations and railways, the particulars regarding which appeared in the most inexplicable manner to have escaped their memories. Miss Warwick might have been specially engaged to give them information. There seemed to be more young men in the world than there used to be, as Joseph remarked to his brother; and, decidedly, they appeared to be growing very plentiful. There were always sev-eral in the outer office at all hours; there were always two or three ascending the stairs when the brothers went out; always a number on the pavament; and always a glimpse of coat-tails vanishing through the doorway, if Joseph or Henry turned at the top of the street to favor the promenaders with a second glance. The brothers at first grew puzzled, and then a little angry. From the multitude of callers, from the noise and bustle, business might have been exceedingly brisk, and yet the day-book showed no perceptible increase in sales, and the work was steadily falling behind.

Oppressed by these considerations, Henry the wise delivered himself thus unto Joseph the meek: "I can't say that I am exactly disappointed with the result of our scheme, but, at the same time, l must confess that it has, so far, scarcely realized my expectations. Things have not gone on ex-actly as I expected. Some of my ideas have been confirmed, and in some I fear I have been mistaken. I have lately bestowed the most minute observation upon the work, the manner of work and the amount of work done by the ladies and gentlemen we employ, and have come to the con-clusion that, provided they had both received the same training—that is, the same description of training, and occupied the same length of time over it—there would be no very essential differ-ence between the work done by the two sexes. But of course we, as practical men of business, have to do with what is, not with what, under other circumstances, might have been. And the fact remains that they have not received the same training, and that considerable difference does exist. For instance, I had really some consideraexist. For instance, I had really some considerable difficulty in impressing upon them the vital importance of every figure, in every book, being proved to be undeniably and undoubtedly correct. I certainly am unable to find that the attention to detail, with which some persons—generally of their own sex—are so ready to credit them, is carried to any great extent into business life. On the other hand, I find my opinion that they are more amounted to direction and authority—confirmed. amenable to direction and authority confirmed. Indeed, I find it hard, almost impossible, to rebuke them. They are so humble, and so penitent."

the thought entered your mind, if it rose not to your lips. Ah, Henry, Henry, have three-score years and a bitter world-fight not yet destroyed thy youthful inability to look sternly on a beautiful face?

"There is, at least, one good point about them, and that is that they are not so eager to get home at night. I suppose the fact arises from their having no particular hobbies, no cricket or football, or athletics. They are down rather earlier in the morning, and take no longer over their luncheon, except the time wasted in getting ready to go out, which is, of course, ridiculous. On the whole, as far as personal intercourse is concerned, they are much pleasanter to deal with, being quicker and brighter in many ways. The other drawbacks connected with them cannot, I suppose, be laid to their charge, and are no doubt unavoidable. Well, well, Joseph, we must take the good and bad together, and perhaps the balance will, after all, be in our favor. Three hundred and ten pounds is not to be despised, and a little training may make them all that we could desire."

CHAPTER II.

The Winter nights were drawing swiftly in, and the winter hights were drawing swiftly in, and it became necessary to light the gas long before the offices closed. Now, it was a singular thing that there existed a strange reluctance in the office of Middleton Brothers to comply with this necessity. Matches became mysteriously scarce, and a capacity for working in comparative darkness developed itself with surprising swiftness. This, along with many other little annovances. This, along with many other little annoyances, some of which have been previously mentioned, chafed the soul of Hanry Middleton almost beyond endurance. He became like a simmering volcano; an eruption might at any moment be expected. For a long time he remained in the simmering state, but at length the eruption came. Quietly ascending the stairs one dusky evening, he entered the office. The gas was unlit, and, pausing in the shadow of the door he beheld by

the dim light a strange scene.

Miss Vernon and Mr. Johnson were standing by the window close together—very close together—gazing on the crescent moon that was slowly surmounting the house-tops. Miss Warwick was bending over a desk in the shadiest corner of the room, and Mr. Harley was bending over her, talking in a low voice. Miss Smith was holding forth volubly to the warehouseman, and Miss Ramsay was waltzing over the floor with the office-boy. A moment's amazed contemplation of the scene, and then sharp and stern rang out the voice of the

enior partner. "Mr. Johnson!" The person addressed looked round with a start that would have "brought down the house" in a

melodrama. "Yes, sir." "May I ask what is the meaning of all this, and why you are not getting through with your work?" "I have been checking a calculation of Miss.

somebody else's work, and never attending to his or her own. Now, I have a great respect for such a spirit in the abstract, or in domestic or social life; but it doesn't do in business, ladies and gentlemen, it doesn't do in business; and I must dis-tinetly state that I can no longer allow things to go on as they have been doing. I place the mat-ter before you as it appears from a plain business point of view. You come to me engaging to do certain work, and for the doing of that work I agree to give you a certain amount of remunerayou are specially engaged, you are continually dabbling in other people's, you break your part of the engagement, and cannot, with any show of reason, expect me to keep mine, or retain you any longer in my employ. Please understand, therefore, that, unless you are prepared to adhere to the terms of the agreement made between us when I engaged you, I must look about for those who are willing to do so."
Having thus spoken, Mr. Middleton stalked into

the private office, leaving Mr. Harley stealing guiltily to his own desk, Miss Vernon checking invoices, Mr. Johnson balancing the cash, Miss Warwick looking over shipping notes, Miss Smith writing headings in the ledger, the warehouseman gazing thoughtfully into the fire, Miss Ramsay addressing circulars, and the office-boy

looking for matches

As Henry entered the private office, Joseph was dictating a letter to the corresponding clerk. But Joseph had no need to stand so close to her, no need to rest his hand on the back of her chair and almost whisper the words in her ear. Really, Joseph was becoming foolish in his old age. At forty-eight he should be growing more dignified, more conscious of the high position occupied by a partner in Middleton Brothers. Certainly he looked foolish enough, and far from dignified, when he caught sight of his brother; and little Miss Lawson looked rather foolish too.

Henry sat down in stern silence, and presently Miss Lawson left the room. Then Joseph, like alf quiet, shy people when laboring under embarrass-ment, could not be silent, and began to pester his brother with all kinds of irrelevant questions and remarks. He received the shortest of replies, and at length Henry looked up and remarked:

"Did you ever read the 'Legend of St. Anthony's Temptations, Joseph ?"

"I-I-fancy I have, Henry; but it is so long since that I almost forget it.' "I should advise you to refresh your memory," returned his brother, dryly; and the conversation

Presently at the door there came a timid knock,

and, on a summons to enter being given, Miss Vernon stepped shyly in.

As she came forward, it was noticeable that a certain sprightliness and sparrow-like sauciness that generally distinguished her had almost completely disappeared, and there was a flush on her cheeks and a light in her eyes that surely could have little to do with invoices. She stood by the table with downcast head, folding, unfolding and refolding a scrap of paper that lay before her, but seemingly unable to speak. Henry had been thoroughly vexed and annoyed, but as he looked at the shy, timid girl, he felt again the conscious-ness of his utter inability to be angry at her per-

"What is it, Miss Vernon?"
"I came to—to—give you notice, sir."
"Notice! Why, bless my soul and body, what for? Surely you are not so sensitive as to be offended by a rebuke which you cannot deny was

thoroughly well merited?" "Oh, no; I assure you it has nothing to do with nat, sir; but I'm—I'm—engaged."

That word had only one meaning for Henry Middleton; all other associations connected with had faded away many a weary year ago.

"By what firm, may I ask?" Miss Vernon grew confused.

"By Mr. Johnson, sir."
"Mr. Johnson! Is he setting up in business?" "Ob, no, sir; only in a house,"

"I see," said Henry, grimly, and thereupon ensued a long pause—a pause during which the little scrap of paper became the center of a series of circles traced by a small, unsteady finger, during which the red lips seemed unable to keep quite still, and bright eyes became clouded, and one hand made diligent search in a pocket. These

signs were too ominous to be disregarded, and Henry rose in great consternation.

"My dear Miss Vernon," he said, placing his hand on her shoulder in quite a fatherly way, "I'm a rough old business man, and I look at all matters from a business point of view, perhaps from a selfish point of view; and looked at in that way, you know, this engagement of yours seems what you know, this engagement of yours seems what one might call a somewhat unbusinesslike proceeding; but, at the same time, from what I have seen of you both, I believe you will get on exceedingly well together, and I am sure I wish you all possible joy and happiness."

And Mr. Middleton shook hands with her, and

conducted her to the door, and opened it for her, and was rewarded with a grateful, tear-bedimmed smile, that quite melted him.

A little sympathy is indispensable to women, and goes a long way with them.

"Beaten at all points," muttered Henry, going back to his desk. "It's a strange thing, a strange thing."
What is strange, Henry? Strange that you should have a little fellow-feeling with youthful

joy and youthful love—surely not.

For perhaps the first time in his life, the austere senior partner felt actually guilty in the presence of his meek brother; but giving a stealthy glance to discover in what manner the other's self-exaltation would display itself, he be-held that worthy gentleman vigorously blowing his nose, with his head turned in the opposite di-

rection. A long silence reigned, only broken by the scraping of the brothers' pens. Then another knock. This time the incomer was Miss Smith. She adyanced briskly. She stood about two yards off from the table, with half-folded arms. She wore mittens. She was eminently respectable. Mr. Middleton looked up coldly.

"Well ?". "I came, sir, under the impression that this was the day of the month on which you engaged me."

"I trust that my work has hitherto given you

satisfaction, sir."
Mr. Middleton bowed.

"I have always striven, I am sure, to do my Joseph smiled pensively; the prospect was not maked by the places at which she had to call.

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We paid our last book keeper," continued know the directions in which they lay. Hum?

With a singular thing, said Mr. Middleton.

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