



→*SHE+IS+NOT+FAIR.*←

BY HARTLEY COLERIDGE.



HE is not fair to outward view,
As many maidens be;
Her loveliness I never knew
Until she smiled on me:
O, then I saw her eye was bright,—
A well of love, a spring of light.

But now her looks are coy and cold;
To mine they ne'er reply;
And yet I cease not to behold,
The love-light in her eye:
Her very frowns are better far
Than smiles of other maidens are!



→*THE+LITTLE+MILLINER.*←

BY ROBERT BUCHANAN.



Y girl hath violet eyes and yellow hair,
A soft hand, like a lady's, small and fair,
A sweet face pouting in a white straw
bonnet,
A tiny foot, and little boot upon it;
And all her finery to charm beholders
Is the gray shawl drawn tight around her
shoulders,
The plain stuff-gown and collar white as
snow,

And sweet red petticoat that peeps below.
But gladly in the busy town goes she,
Summer and winter, fearing nobody;
She pats the pavement with her fairy feet,
With fearless eyes she charms the crowded street;
And in her pockets lie, in lieu of gold,
A lucky sixpence and a thimble old.

We lodged in the same house a year ago:
She on the topmost floor, I just below,—
She, a poor milliner, content and wise,
I, a poor city clerk, with hopes to rise;

And, long ere we were friends, I learnt to love
 The little angel on the floor above.
 For, every morn, ere from my bed I stirred,
 Her chamber door would open, and I heard,—
 And listened, blushing to, her coming down,
 And palpitated with her rustling gown,
 And tingled while her foot went downward slow,
 Creaked like a cricket, passed, and died below;
 Then peeping from the window, pleased and sly,
 I saw the pretty shining face go by,
 Healthy and rosy, fresh from slumber sweet,—
 A sunbeam in the quiet morning street.

And every night, when in from work she tript,
 Red to the ears I from my chamber slipt,
 That I might hear upon the narrow stair
 Her low "Good evening," as she passed me there.
 And when her door was closed, below sat I,
 And hearkened stilly as she stirred on high,—
 Watched the red firelight shadows in the room,
 Fashioned her face before me in the gloom,
 And heard her close the window, lock the door,
 Moving about more lightly than before,
 And thought, "She is undressing now!" and O,
 My cheeks were hot, my heart was in a glow!
 And I made pictures of her,—standing bright
 Before the looking-glass in bed-gown white,
 Unbinding in a knot her yellow hair,
 Then kneeling timidly to say a prayer;
 Till, last, the floor creaked softly overhead,
 'Neath bare feet tripping to the little bed,—
 And all was hushed. Yet still I hearkened on,
 Till the faint sounds about the streets were gone;

And saw her slumbering with lips apart,
 One little hand upon her little heart,
 The other pillowing a face that smiled
 In slumber like the slumber of a child,
 The bright hair shining round the small white ear,
 The soft breath stealing visible and clear,
 And mixing with the moon's, whose frosty gleam
 Made round her rest a vaporous light of dream.

How free she wandered in the wicked place,
 Protected only by her gentle face!
 She saw bad things—how could she choose but see?
 She heard of wantonness and misery;
 The city closed around her night and day,
 But lightly, happily, she went her way.
 Nothing of evil that she saw or heard
 Could touch a heart so innocently stirred,—
 By simple hopes that cheered it through the storm,
 And little flutterings that kept it warm.
 No power had she to reason out her needs,
 To give the whence and wherefore of her deeds;
 But she was good and pure amid the strife,
 By virtue of the joy that was her life.
 Here, where a thousand spirits daily fall,
 Where heart and soul and senses turn to gall,
 She floated, pure as innocence could be,
 Like a small sea-bird on a stormy sea,
 Which breasts the billows, wafted to and fro,
 Fearless, uninjured, while the strong winds blow,
 While the clouds gather, and the waters roar,
 And mighty ships are broken on the shore.

'T was when the spring was coming, when the snow
 Had melted, and fresh winds began to blow,
 And girls were selling violets in the town,
 That suddenly a fever struck me down.
 The world was changed, the sense of life was pained,
 And nothing but a shadow-land remained;
 Death came in a dark mist and looked at me,
 I felt his breathing, though I could not see,
 But heavily I lay and did not stir,
 And had strange images and dreams of her.
 Then came a vacancy: with feeble breath
 I shivered under the cold touch of Death,
 And swooned among strange visions of the dead,
 When a voice called from heaven, and he fled;
 And suddenly I wakened, as it seemed
 From a deep sleep wherein I had not dreamed.

And it was night, and I could see and hear,
 And I was in the room I held so dear,
 And unaware, stretched out upon my bed,
 I hearkened for a footstep overhead.

But all was hushed. I looked around the room,
 And slowly made out shapes amid the gloom.
 The wall was reddened by a rosy light,
 A faint fire flickered, and I knew 't was night,
 Because below there was a sound of feet
 Dying away along the quiet street,—
 When, turning my pale face and sighing low,
 I saw a vision in the quiet glow:
 A little figure, in a cotton gown,
 Looking upon the fire and stooping down,

Her side to me, her face illumined, she eyed
 Two chestnuts burning slowly, side by side,—
 Her lips apart, her clear eyes strained to see,
 Her little hands clasped tight around her knee,
 The firelight gleaming on her golden head,
 And tinting her white neck to rosy red,
 Her features bright, and beautiful, and pure,
 With childish fear and yearning half demure.

O sweet, sweet dream! I thought, and strained mine eyes,
 Fearing to break the spell with words and sighs.
 Softly she stooped, her dear face sweetly fair,
 And sweeter since a light like love was there,
 Brightening, watching, more and more elate,
 As the nuts glowed together in the grate,
 Crackling with little jets of fiery light,
 Till side by side they turned to ashes white,—
 Then up she leapt, her face cast off its fear
 For rapture that itself was radiance clear,
 And would have clapped her little hands in glee,
 But, pausing, bit her lips and peeped at me,
 And met the face that yearned on her so whitely,
 And gave a cry and trembled, blushing brightly,
 While, raised on elbow, as she turned to flee,
 "Polly!" I cried,—and grew as red as she!

It was no dream! for soon my thoughts were clear,
 And she could tell me all, and I could hear:
 How in my sickness friendless I had lain,
 How the hard people pitied not my pain;
 How, in spite of what bad people said,
 She left her labors, stopped beside my bed,

And nursed me, thinking sadly I would die;
 How, in the end, the danger passed me by;
 How she had sought to steal away before
 The sickness passed, and I was strong once more.
 By fits she told the story in mine ear,
 And troubled all the telling with a fear
 Lest by my cold man's heart she should be chid,
 Lest I should think her bold in what she did;
 But, lying on my bed, I dared to say,
 How I had watched and loved her many a day,
 How dear she was to me, and dearer still
 For that strange kindness done while I was ill,
 And how I could but think that Heaven above
 Had done it all to bind our lives in love.
 And Polly cried, turning her face away,
 And seemed afraid, and answered "yea" nor "nay";
 Then stealing close, with little pants and sighs,
 Looked on my pale thin face and earnest eyes,
 And seemed in act to fling her arms about
 My neck, then, blushing, paused, in flattering doubt,
 Last, sprang upon my heart, sighing and sobbing,—
 That I might feel how gladly hers was throbbing!

Ah! ne'er shall I forget until I die
 How happily the dreamy days went by,
 While I grew well, and lay with soft heart-beats,
 Heark'ning the pleasant murmur from the streets,
 And Polly by me like a sunny beam,
 And life all changed, and love a drowsy dream!
 'T was happiness enough to lie and see
 The little golden head bent droopingly
 Over its sewing, while the still time flew,
 And my fond eyes were dim with happy dew!

And then, when I was nearly well and strong,
 And she went back to labor all day long,
 How sweet to lie alone with half-shut eyes,
 And hear the distant murmurs and the cries,
 And think how pure she was from pain and sin,—
 And how the summer days were coming in!
 Then, as the sunset faded from the room,
 To listen for her footstep in the gloom,
 To pant as it came stealing up the stair,
 To feel my whole life brighten unaware
 When the soft tap came to the door, and when
 The door was opened for her smile again!
 Best, the long evenings!—when, till late at night,
 She sat beside me in the quiet light,
 And happy things were said and kisses won,
 And serious gladness found its vent in fun.
 Sometimes I would draw close her shining head,
 And pour her bright hair out upon the bed,
 And she would laugh, and blush, and try to scold,
 While "Here," I cried, "I count my wealth in gold!"

Once, like a little sinner for transgression,
 She blushed upon my breast, and made confession:
 How, when that night I woke and looked around,
 I found her busy with a charm profound,—
 One chestnut was herself, my girl confessed,
 The other was the person she loved best,
 And if they burned together side by side,
 He loved her, and she would become his bride;
 And burn indeed they did, to her delight,—
 And had the pretty charm not proven right?
 Thus much, and more, with timorous joy, she said,
 While her confessor, too, grew rosy red,—

And close together pressed two blissful faces,
As I absolved the sinner, with embraces.

And here is winter come again, winds blow,
The houses and the streets are white with snow;
And in the long and pleasant eventide,
Why, what is Polly making at my side?
What but a silk gown, beautiful and grand,
We bought together lately in the Strand!
What but a dress to go to church in soon,
And wear right queenly 'neath a honey-moon!
And who shall match her with her new straw bonnet,
Her tiny foot and little boot upon it,
Embroidered petticoat and silk gown new,
And shawl she wears as few fine ladies do?
And she will keep, to charm away all ill,
The lucky sixpence in her pocket still;
And we will turn, come fair or cloudy weather,
To ashes, like the chestnuts, close together!



—*SMALL BEGINNINGS.*—

BY CHARLES MACKAY.

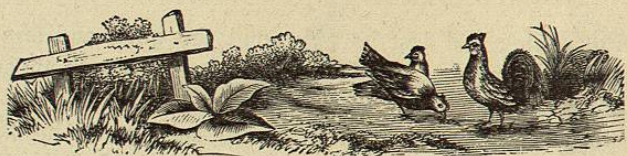


TRAVELER through a dusty road strewed
acorns on the lea;
And one took root and sprouted up, and
grew into a tree.
Love sought its shade, at evening time, to
breathe its early vows;
And age was pleased, in heats of noon, to
bask beneath its boughs;
The dormouse loved its dangling twigs, the
birds sweet music bore;
It stood a glory in its place, a blessing
evermore.

A little spring had lost its way amid the grass and fern,
A passing stranger scooped a well, where weary men might
turn;
He walled it in, and hung with care a ladle at the brink;
He thought not of the deed he did, but judged that toil
might drink.
He passed again, and lo! the well, by summers never dried,
Had cooled ten thousand parching tongues, and saved a
life beside.

A dreamer dropped a random thought; 't was old, and yet
't was new;
A simple fancy of the brain, but strong in being true.
It shone upon a genial mind, and lo! its light became
A lamp of life, a beacon ray, a monitory flame.
The thought was small; its issue great; a watch-fire on
the hill;
It sheds its radiance far adown, and cheers the valley
still!

A nameless man amid a crowd that thronged the daily
mart,
Let fall a word of Hope and Love, unstudied, from the
heart;
A whisper on the tumult thrown,—a transitory breath,—
It raised a brother from the dust; it saved a soul from
death.
O germ! O fount! O word of love! O thought at random
cast!
Ye were but little at the first, but mighty at the last.



→*MY MOTHER.*←

That was a thrilling scene in the old chivalric time—the wine circling
round the board, and the banquet-hall ringing with sentiment and song—
when the lady of each knightly heart having been pledged by name, St.
Leon arose in his turn, and, lifting the sparkling cup on high, said: “I
drink to one



HOSE image never may depart,
Deep graven on this grateful heart,
Till memory is dead;
To one whose love for me shall last
When lighter passions long have passed,
So holy 'tis, and true;

To one whose love hath longer dwelt,
More deeply fixed, more keenly felt,
Than any pledge to you.”

Each guest upstarted at the word,
And laid his hand upon his sword,
With fury-flashing eyes;

And Stanley said, “We crave the name,
Proud knight, of this most peerless dame,
Whose love you count so high.”

St. Leon paused, as if he would
Not breathe her name in careless mood
Thus lightly to another—

Then bent his noble head, as though
To give that word the reverence due,
And gently said, “My mother.”