

Poets' Conquer.

THE SISTERS.

BY ELEANOR C. DONNELLY.

She wrote, dear child, from London
To her Sister at Saint Luke—
The merry madcap, Alice,
To the novice at Saint Luke—
"I've just come from the palace
With a duchess and a duke.

"In your poor secluded cloister,
O my gentle Geraldine!
With its round of dreary penance
And its very dull routine—
What think you of the honor
Of an audience with the Queen?"

"A countess went before me,
And a marchioness behind,
And all the royal chamber
With noblemen was lined;
And the prince beside his mother
Looked upon me fair and kind.

"For I wore my snowy velvet,
And my set of precious pearls,
And a crown of whitest roses
Resting lightly on my curls:
Now was I not, sweet sister,
The happiest of girls!"

And Geraldine made answer
From her convent by the sea,
"God keep thee ever guileless
In thy gaiety and glee,
But bear with me, beloved,
While I tell my joys to thee.

"To day, my little Alice,
I, too, at court have been;
I have entered at a palace,
And held converse with a Queen,
A fairer and a dearer
Than any earthly Queen,

"With wreath of whitest roses
They crowned thy kneeling nun,
And when the Queen embraced me—
My darling little one—
Before the court of angels
She espoused me to her Son.

"The richest, rarest jewels
He hath brought me from the sky;
He hath clasped me in His bosom
With a love that cannot die.
Oh, tell me, happy Alice,
Art thou happier than I?"

MORITURI SALUTAMUS.

The poet Henry W. Longfellow recently delivered a poem at Bowdoin College, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the class of 1825, to which he belonged. We publish parts of it:—

MORITURI SALUTAMUS.
Tempora labuntur, tacitissime senescimus anni,
Et fugiant freno non remorantes dies.

QVINT, *Fæstorum*, Lib. vi.

"O Caesar, we who are about to die
Salute you!" was the gladiators cry
In the arena, standing face to face
With death and with the Roman populace.

O ye familiar scenes—ye groves of pine,
That once were mine and are no longer mine—
Thou river, widening through the meadows green
To the vast sea, so near and yet unseen—

Ye halls, in whose seclusion and repose
Phantoms of fame, like exhalations, rose
And vanished—we who are about to die
Salute you; earth and air and sea and sky,
And the Imperial Sun that scatters down
His sovereign splendors upon grove and town.

And ye, who fill the places we once filled,
And follow in the furrows that we filled,
Young men, whose generous hearts are beating high,
We who are old and about to die,
Salute you; hail you; take your hands in ours,
And crown you with our welcome as with flowers!

How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!
Book of Beginnings, Story without end,
Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!
Aladdin's Lamp, and Fortunatus' Purse,
That holds the treasure of the universe:
All possibilities are in its hands,
No danger darts it, and no foe withstands;
In its sublime audacity of faith,
"Be thou removed!" it to the mountain saith,
And with ambitious feet, secure and proud,
Ascends the ladder leaning on the cloud!

Let him not boast who puts his armour on

As he who puts it off, the battle done.
Study yourselves; and most of all note well
Wherein kind nature meant you to excel,
Not every blossom ripens into fruit.

Write on your doors, the saying wise and old,
"Be bold! be bold! and everywhere be bold;
But not too bold!" Yet better the excess
Than the defect; better the more than less;
Better like Hector in the field to die,
Than like a perfumed Paris turn and fly.

Ah me! the fifty years since last we met
Seem to me fifty folios bound and set
By Time, the great transcriber, on his shelves,
Wherein are writ the histories of ourselves.
What tragedies, what comedies are there;
What joy and grief, what rapture and despair!
What chronicles of triumph and defeat,
What records of regret, and doubts, and fears!
What pages blotted, blistered by our tears!
What lovely landscapes on the margin shine,
What sweet, angelic faces, what divine
And holy images of love and trust,
Undimmed by age, unsoiled by damp or dust!
Whose hand shall dare to open, and explore
These volumes, closed and clasped for evermore?
Not mine. With reverential feet I pass;
I hear a voice that cries, "Alas! alas!
Whatever hath been written shall remain,
Nor be erased, nor written o'er again;
The unwritten only still belongs to thee,
Take heed, and ponder well what that shall be."

As children frightened by a thunder cloud
Are reassured if some one reads aloud
A tale of wonder, with enchantment fraught,
Or wild adventure, that diverts their thought,
Let me endeavour with a tale to chase
The gathering shadows of the time and place,
And banish what we all too deeply feel
Wholly to say, or wholly to conceal.

The writer of this legend then records
Its ghostly application in these words:—
The image of the Adversary old,
Whose beckoning finger points to realms of gold;
Our lusts and passions are the downward stair
That leads the soul from a diviner air;
The archer, Death; the flaming jewel, Life;
Terrestrial goods, the goblet and the knife;
The knights and ladies, all whose flesh and bone
By avarice have been hardened into stone;
The clerk, the scholar whom the love of pelf
Tempt from his books and from his nobler self,
The scholar and the world! The endless strife,
The discord in the harmonies of life!
The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,
And all the sweet serenity of books;
The market-place, the eager love of gain,
Whose aim is vanity, and whose end is pain!

But why, you ask me, should this tale be told
To men grown old, or who are growing old?
It is too late! Ah, nothing is too late
Till the tired heart ceases to palpitate.
Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles
Wrote his grand *Œdipus*, and Simonides
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers,
When each had numbered more than fourscore years,
And Theophrastus, at fourscore and ten,
Had but begun his *Characters of Men*.
Chaucer, at Woodstock with the nightingale,
At sixty wrote the *Canterbury Tales*;
Goethe at Weimar, toiling to the last,
Completed *Faust* when eighty years were past.
These are indeed exceptions; but they show
How far the gulf-stream of your youth may flow
Into the arctic regions of our lives,
Where little else than life itself survives.

Whatever poet, orator, or sage
May say of it, old age is still old age.
It is the waning, not the crescent moon,
The dusk of evening, not the blaze of noon;
It is not strength, but weakness; not desire
But its surcease; not the fierce heat of fire,
The burning and consuming element,
But that of ashes and of embers spent,
In which some living sparks we still discern,
Enough to warm, but not enough to burn.

What then? Shall we sit idly down and say
The night hath come; it is no longer day?
The night hath not yet come; we are not quite
Get off from labor by the fading light;
Something remains for us to do or dare;
Even the olive tree some fruit may bear;
Not *Œdipus Coloneus*, or Greek Ode,
Or tales of pilgrims that one morning rode
Out of the gateway of the Tabard Inn,
But other something, would he but begin;
For age is opportunity no less
Than use itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.