

Literature, &c.

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From Douglas Jerrold's Magazine.

"CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME."

ALL the world, in the village of Sturton-le-Steeple, had said so, before the time of old Dorothy Pycroft; but Dorothy did not join all the world in saying so. Sturton is a homely little place, situate in the pleasant shire of Nottingham, and lying within a couple of miles of the Trent, and old Lincolnshire; and its church steeple forms a pretty object in the landscape which you view from the hills above Gainsboro'. Dorothy Pycroft, from the time that she was a child but the height of the table, went to Gainsboro'-market with butter, eggs, or poultry, as regularly as Tuesday returned in each week; for the hearty old dame used commonly to boast that she had never known what it was to have a day's illness in her life, although, at the season we are beginning to gossip about, she was full threescore and ten. It was a bonny sight to see the dame go tripping o'er the charming lea which spreads its flowery riches from Sturton-le-Steeple to the banks of noble Trent, by four of the clock on a gay summer's morning, with the clean milking pail under her arm, that was bare to the elbow. You would have thought at a distance, she had been some blithe maiden, in her teens. And then the cheerful and clear tone in which she summoned her cows, calling to them as kindly as if they were her children—"Come, my pretty creatures!" a call that was the signal for a treat of pleasing pastoral music to the enthusiastic early angler on the Trent: the rich, varied "low" of the cows,—alto, tenor, and bass—answered that call, in changeful echo across the stream; the angler's delighted ear caught a treble, heavenward, from the matin lark, to complete the "harmony;" and even the cackling of the geese, uttering their confused joy at the sound of the dame's voice, seemed to mingle no unpleasant "discord" with the natural chorus. By the time that her morning's milking was over, the spoilt maidens of the village were only beginning to open their kitchen window shutters; and she usually passed the whole train of them, loitering and chatting about their sweethearts, on their way to the lea, as she returned home, with the rich load upon her head, and her arms fixed as properly a kimbo as could be shown by the sprightliest lass that ever carried a milking-pail. Some little shame was commonly felt among the loiterers as they passed the exemplary old woman,—but it did not result in their reformation. Old Farmer Maxloe, who was always abroad at day-break, and usually chatted a few moments with the dame just at the point where the footpath crossed the bridle way over the lea, often commented in no very measured terms, on the decline of discipline among milk maids since the days when he was a lad.

"Ah, dame!" he used to say, "there have been sore changes since you and I used to take a turn around the maypole; I'm sure the world gets lazier and lazier, every day."

"Why, you see, neighbour, fashions change," the old dame would reply—for she ever loved to take the more charitable side of a question—"may be, things may change again, and folk may take to getting up earlier, after a few more years are over."

"Faith, I've little hope on't," the old farmer would reply, and shake his head, and smile; "but there's nobody like thee, Dolly, for taking the kindest side."

"Why, neighbour, I always think it the best," Dorothy would rejoin, with a benevolent smile; "I never saw things grow better by harsh words and harsh thinkings, in my time." And then the old farmer would smile again, and say, "Well, well, that's just like thee! God bless thee, Dolly, and good morning to thee!" and away he would turn Dobbin's head, and proceed on his usual morning's ride from field to field.

The work of her little dairy, added to the care of a humble household, composed of an infirm and helpless husband, and an equally infirm maiden sister,—with all and sundry, a stout house dog, two tabby cats, and a poultry yard,—usually occupied Dorothy Pycroft through the bustling forenoon of each day. And when there was no immediate call upon her skill and benevolence among sick neighbours,—for she was the cleverest herb woman in the village, and exercised her knowledge of the healing art without fee, or willing acceptance even of thanks,—she would sit in her polished high backed chair, and work through the live-long afternoon at her spinning wheel, drawing her two infirm companions into a salutary rest and forgetfulness with the humming monotony of her labour, but revolving within her own mind many a useful and solemn thought, meanwhile.

Dorothy sat absorbed in this her favourite employ, one afternoon in autumn, when an itinerant pedlar made his customary call at the cottage door. The dame's mind was so deeply involved in the contrivance of one of her little plans of benevolence, that she did not recognise the face of the traveller until he had addressed her twice.

"Any small wares for children? any needles, pins, or thimbles?" cried the pedlar, running through the list of his articles with the glibness of frequent repetition.

"No, Jonah: I want none," replied the dame kindly; "but, may be, you'll take a horn o' beer, and a crumb or two o' bread and cheese?"

The pedlar assented, well pleased; and low-

ered the pack from his shoulders, and set down the basket from his hand; next, seating himself in a chair without the ceremonial of asking, and in all the gladsome confidence of welcome.

"Thank you, thank you, dame," he said, and smacked his lips with pleasurable anticipation, as he took the horn of smiling beer and the piece of bread and cheese from the dame's hand.

"You're welcome, Jonah," replied the dame, heartily. "Have you walked far to-day, and what luck have you had?"

"I've come twenty miles and have never taken handsel yet, dame," answered Jonah, in a melancholy tone.

"So, poor heart!" said Dorothy, very pitifully; "I must buy a trifling dozen needles of thee, however, before thou goest. I fear times are hard, Jonah: I hear many a grievous complaint."

"Times are harder than ever I knew them to be, dame, I assure you," rejoined Jonah; "and they that have a little money hold it fast. Sore murmurings are made about this by poor folk; but I don't wonder at it, myself," concluded the worldly pedlar; "for, in such sore times as these, there's no knowing what a body may come to want; and as the old saying goes, you know, dame, 'Charity begins at home!'" and Jonah buried his nose in the alehorn, thinking he had said something so wisely conclusive that it could not be contradicted.

"They say it was a parson who first used that saying," observed Dorothy, glancing from her wheel, very keenly, towards the pedlar; "but, for my part, Jonah, I am very far from thinking it such a saying as a parson ought to use."

"Say you, dame?" said Jonah, opening his eyes very wide.

"Did charity begin at home with their master?" said Dorothy, by way of explanation.

"Ah, dame!" said the pedlar, quickly discerning Dorothy's meaning. "I fear but few parsons think of imitating their Master, now-a-days!"

"That's more than I like to say," observed the gentle Dorothy; "I think there is more good people in the world than some folk think for;—but I'm sure, Jonah, we all want a better understanding of our duty towards each other."

"Right, Dame Dorothy, right!—that's the best sort of religion; but there's the least of it in this world," rejoined the pedlar.

"Why, Jonah," continued the good dame, "I think there might easily be a great deal more good in the world than there is. Every body ought to remember how many little kindnesses it is in their power to perform for others, without any hurt to themselves."

"Yes, a sight o' good might be done in that way, dame," observed the pedlar, beginning very much to admire Dorothy's remarks; "and how much more happy the world would be then!"

"Just so!" exclaimed Dorothy,—her aged face beaming with benevolence,—"that is the true way of making the world happy; for all to be trying to do their fellow creatures some kindness. And then, you see, Jonah, when once the pleasure of this acting began to be felt, there would soon be a pretty general willingness to make greater efforts, and even sacrifices of self interest, as it is wrongly called, in order to experience greater pleasure, and likewise to increase the world's happiness."

"Truly, dame," said the pedlar, "you do me good to hear you talk. I'm but a poor scholar; yet I can tell, without book, that you must be right."

"But then, you see, Jonah," continued the dame, half unconscious of Jonah's last observation, "if everybody were to say, 'Charity begins at home,' this general happiness would never begin. I like best, Jonah, to think of the example of the Blessed Being who came into the world to do us all good. He went about pitying the miserable and afflicted, and healing and blessing them. Charity did not begin at home with him, Jonah!"

The tears were now hastening down Jonah's rough cheeks. How forcible are lessons of goodness! how irresistibly the heart owes their power! Jonah could not support the conversation further. Dorothy's plain and unaffected remarks sunk deep into his bosom; and when he rose up, and buckled on his pack once more and the aged dame gave him "handsel," or first money for the day, by purchasing a few pins and needles, the poor pedlar bade her farewell in an accent that showed he felt more than common thankfulness for her kindness.

Alas! this is a world where good impressions are, too often, speedily effaced by bad ones. Jonah called, next, at the gate of a wealthy squire, and, with hat in hand, asked for leave to go up to the kitchen door to expose his wares to the servants. The squire refused; and when Jonah pleaded his poverty, and ventured to remonstrate, the squire frowningly threatened to set the dogs upon him, if he did not instantly decamp. Jonah turned away, and bitterly cursed the unfeeling heart of the rich man,—avowing, internally, that Dorothy Pycroft was only a doating old fool,—for after all, "Charity begun at home!"

Scarcely had the pedlar taken twenty steps from Dame Dorothy's cottage, ere the village clergyman knocked at her door. The dame knew the young parson's "rap-rap-rap!" It was quick and consequential, and unlike the way of knocking at the door used by any one else in Sturton who thought it necessary to be so ceremonious as to give notice before they entered their neighbour's dwelling. Dame Dorothy ceased her spinning, and rose to open the door, courtesying with natural politeness, and inviting her visitor to be seated.

"Thank ye!" said the parson, raising his brows superciliously, putting the hook-end of his hunting whip to his mouth, and striding about the floor in his spurred boots; "sit you down, I beg, Dame Pycroft! sit you down—I'll not sit, thank ye!"

"I fear, sir, there is a great deal of suffering, at present," said Dorothy, sitting down, and fixing her mild blue eyes upon the thoughtless young coxcomb, and feeling too earnestly in love with goodness to lose any opportunity of recommending its glorious lessons.

"Oh!—suffering!—ay!" observed the young clergyman in a tone that showed he did not know what it was to think seriously; "you know there always was a difference between the rich and the poor."

"But, do you not think, sir, that the rich might lessen the difference between themselves and the poor, without injuring themselves?" asked Dorothy, in a tone of mild but firm expostulation.

"Why,—as to that,—I can't say, exactly," replied the parson, apparently brought to a halt in his thoughtlessness, and unable to extricate himself from the difficulty in which his ignorance placed him; "I can't say, exactly; but, you know, Dame Pycroft, the old proverb holds good that 'Charity begins at home.'"

"I am grieved to hear you quote that proverb, sir," said Dorothy; "I had just been exerting my poor wits to show that that saying was not a right one, in the hearing of poor Jonah the pedlar, before your reverence came in."

"Not a right saying, Dame Pycroft! Why, you know it is a very old established saying; and I think it a very shrewd one," rejoined the clergyman.

"But it is not so old as the New Testament, sir," replied Dorothy, with a winning smile; "and as shrewd as it is, do you think, sir, it was ever acted upon by your Great Master?"

The young clergyman took his hook whip from his mouth, laid it on the table, took out his pocket handkerchief, and, blushing up to the eyes, sat down before he attempted an answer to the good old dame's meek, but powerful question.

"You will remember, Dame Dorothy," he said, at length, "that the Saviour was in very different circumstances to all other human beings that ever lived."

"But you will remember, sir," rejoined Dorothy, in the same mildly pertinacious manner, "that that blessed Being said to his disciples, 'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you: if I have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet.'"

"Yes; that is very beautiful," said the young clergyman, feeling the irresistible force of goodness, and speaking as if he had never read the passage in the book, for himself; "the Saviour's example is very beautiful."

"And does not your reverence perceive how easy and delightful it would be for every one to begin to follow it?" immediately rejoined Dorothy, taking advantage of the good impression which she saw, was being made on the young parson; "how easily might all who have enough give even of their little superfluity; how easily might we all do each other kindnesses which would cost us nothing! What little pleasure this would bring back upon each of our hearts; and how surely it would lead us to make sacrifices in order to experience the richer pleasure of doing greater good! Oh, sir," concluded the good old creature with a tear that an angel might envy gliding down her aged and benevolent cheek, "I cannot think that any one knows the secret of true happiness who practices the precept—'Charity begins at home!'"

The young and inexperienced man gazed with a strange expression at his new and humble teacher. This was better preaching than he had ever heard or practised. His heart had been misled, but not thoroughly vitiated, by a selfish and falsely styled "respectable" education. He was too much affected to prolong the conversation then; but he became from that time, a pupil at the feet of the aged Dorothy. His fine manners were laid aside. He became a real pastor. He was from that day, more frequently in the cottages of the poor, twenty times over, than in the houses of the rich. He distributed of his substance to relieve the wants of others, and lived himself upon little. He forgot creeds, to preach goodness, and pity, and mercy, and love. His life was an embodiment of the virtues he inculcated. And when, in the course of five short years, he laid down his body in the grave,—a victim to the earnest conviction of his heart,—the Poor crowded around his hallowed resting place with streaming eyes, and loving, but afflicted hearts, wishing they might be where he was when they died, since they were sure his presence, they said, of itself would make a heaven!

The young clergyman interred Dorothy Pycroft but half a year before his own departure; and her last words were words of thankfulness that ever she had shown the young man the fallacy of the proverb—"Charity begins at home."

From Hogg's Instructor.

CERVANTES.

MICHEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, whose writings have illustrated Spain, amused Europe, and exercised an important influence upon his times, lived poor and miserable, and died obscure and neglected. For a considerable time the real place of his birth was unknown. Madrid, Seville, Lucena, Alcalá, have severally disputed this honor. Cervantes, like Homer and other eminent men, found many countries after death, and wanted the common necessities of existence during life.

Cervantes was a gentleman by birth—son of Rodrigo de Cervantes and of Blanca de Corti-

nas. He was born at Alcalá de Honares, a city of New Castle, on the 9th of October, 1547, in the reign of Charles V.

He was a lover of books from his infancy. He commenced his studies at Madrid, under a celebrated professor, where he soon surpassed his brother scholars, and evinced an extraordinary aptitude for learning. The parents of Cervantes wished him to study for the church or the medical profession; but, in common with many celebrated poets, he cultivated the muses in opposition to the wishes of his parents, and neglected the more important studies of theology and physics.

An elegy on the death of Isabella de Valois, numerous sonnets, a short poem called 'Fileas' were among his first attempts in verse: The cold reception given to these early efforts inspired him with chagrin and disgust. He quitted Spain and proceeded to Rome, where, reduced to extreme poverty, he accepted the situation of valet de chambre to the Cardinal Acquaviva. This humiliating position soon wearied Cervantes; he joined the army, and fought with great bravery at the battle of Lepanto, gained by Don John of Austria, in 1571, where he received a wound in the left hand, which lamed that arm for life. In consequence of this wound he was placed in the hospital of Messina.

On leaving this hospital, the condition of a disabled soldier appeared to him still preferable to that of a neglected poet. He enrolled himself anew in the garrison of Naples, where he remained three years. On his return to Spain in a galley of Philip II., he was taken prisoner and carried to Algiers, by Arnaut Mami, the most doubted corsair of the time.

Fortuna, who seemed to exhaust her rigour upon the unfortunate Cervantes, could not deprive him of that fortitude which was his distinguishing characteristic throughout life. The slave of a cruel master, certain death awaiting him if he made the slightest attempt to regain his liberty, he concerted the means of flight with fourteen Spanish captives. They agreed to purchase the freedom of one of their number, who, on arriving in Spain, was to return with a vessel and carry off his comrades from slavery. The execution of this project presented many difficulties. The money to ransom the prisoner was an obstacle all but insurmountable. This being accomplished, it was necessary to effect their escape from different masters, and meet together without being discovered at the exact time that the vessel arrived to carry them off. Such a host of difficulties threw them into a state of great dejection; but the love of liberty overcame all. One of the captives, a native of Navarre, employed by his master in a large garden close to the sea, agreed to dig a cave that would contain the fifteen Spaniards. This work occupied the Navarrese two years. During this time they gained, partly by alms, partly by labour, the ransom of a Majorcin, named Vian, upon whom they could depend, and who knew perfectly the coast of Barbary. Having accumulated the ransom money, and the cave being prepared for their reception, six months elapsed before they were all able to meet in their place of concealment. Meanwhile Vian purchased his freedom and departed, after having sworn to return in a short time.

Cervantes had been the soul of the enterprise. It was he that exposed himself during the night to seek provisions for his companions. When the morning appeared he entered the cave with the necessaries for the day. The gardener, who did not require to conceal himself, kept his eyes constantly on the sea, in order that he might discover the return of the barque so anxiously expected. Vian kept his word. Arrived at Majorca he found the viceroy, explained his situation, and requested his assistance. The viceroy entered heartily into the enterprise, and gave him a brigantine. Vian, with his heart full of hope, flew to the rescue of his less fortunate brethren.

He arrived on the coast of Algiers on the 23rd September, only one month after his departure. Vian had carefully marked the spot, and easily recognized it on his return, though it was night. He guided his little vessel towards the garden, where his arrival was awaited with great anxiety. The gardener, who was sentinel, perceived him, and flew to communicate the joyful tidings to his companions. Their misfortunes were all forgotten at this happy news. They embraced each other and hurried to the shore. They saw with tears of joy the bark of their deliverer. Alas! as the prow of the vessel touched the sands, a company of Moors passing recognized the Christians. They shouted "To arms; seize the Christian dogs!" Vian, trembling, pushed off, gained the open sea, and disappeared. The unfortunate captives with difficulty regained their place of concealment, overwhelmed with grief and disappointment.

Cervantes attempted to reanimate his companions. He encouraged them with the hope of Vian's return, but they saw him no more. Sorrow, and the damp and unhealthy place of their concealment, soon added disease of the most frightful description to their misfortunes. Cervantes, occupied in waiting on the sick, and encouraging the desponding, was unable to undertake his accustomed task of procuring food. He chose one of his companions for this purpose, who turned traitor. This villain became Messulman, and conducted a troop of soldiers to the cave, who seized and loaded with chains the thirteen Spaniards.

Dragged before the king this prince promised to spare their lives upon condition of declaring the author of the enterprise. "I am clear," said Cervantes to him; "save my brethren, and I am prepared to die." The king admired his courage and generosity; he delivered him up to his master, Arnaut Mami, who respected his bravery too much to punish him. The unfortunate gardener who constructed the