

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the Christian Treasury for November.
THE LITTLE CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

AN OLD STORY FOR YOUNG READERS.

IN London, on the 1st of May, 17—, the Countess of Belville and her son, aged eleven years, were sitting in a magnificent saloon, at the head of a long table; around this table, filled with cakes, sugar-plums, &c., fifty little chimney-sweeps were sitting, with clean hands and faces, and with joyful hearts, singing.

"Sweep ho! sweep ho!"

From the bottom to the top."

You are astonished, perhaps, my little friends, to see these little chimney-sweeps at the table of so great a lady, and in such a beautiful room. I am going to tell you how this happened.

Some years before this anniversary day, Lady Belville had a son about five years old. She was a widow, and this little boy was her only child. Upon her little Charles she had placed all her affections, and this little child had become the sole object of her thoughts and her cares. The great desire of the heart of the Countess was, that her son should become pious—truly converted to the Lord. She prayed without ceasing that God would touch the heart of her child, and turn it toward him. The more she prayed, and the more pains she took, the farther he seemed removed from the good end to which she wished to conduct him. He was idle, disobedient, and wilful; and but little disposed to attend to the subject of religion. Whenever the Bible was read to him, he became weary; thinking of other things, turning upon his seat, and gazing at the furniture of the room. When she required him to repeat his morning prayers, he said he wanted his breakfast first; and in the evening, that he was too sleepy, and wished to go to bed. He had no desire to be more wise, and he had no wish to ask God to teach him, and his mother could never be satisfied that he ever prayed from the abundance of the heart. She prayed often herself, and she greatly desired that her son should pray also. In the hope of encouraging him, she composed some prayers for him to recite each night; but Charles would never learn but one of them; after saying which he would quickly say "Amen," and go to bed. "Lord, convert me—change my heart; teach me to love thee, and to love my brethren as Jesus Christ loved us." The poor mother wept much, and prayed more; but we must say that she failed to correct him.

Her weakness emboldened Charles to disobedience, and he every day became more wicked. Lady Belville, seeing that her son changed not, began to doubt of the promises of God, and to her eyes he seemed to fail in his word; for he had said in many passages of the Bible: "Call upon me, and I will answer."

One day, as usual, she was plunged in tears. A servant came to tell her that for an hour they had sought for Charles all about the house without finding him, that the outer gate had been kept fastened, and that the child had been all the morning amusing himself alone in the garden.

You can imagine the anxiety of his mother; she ran through the house—the garden—the neighbourhood; but no person could give her any news of her son. She sent her servant to seek him through all the streets of the city—she sent notices to the authorities—she published in all the papers the disappearance of her child, and offered a large reward to those who would give her tidings of him.

Twenty different persons came within a few days to bring her intelligence of several children they had seen; but no one brought her any satisfactory information. One had seen a child resembling the description of him who departed in a post chaise; another had seen a person weeping in the streets, and asking for his mother; a third pretended to have seen a little boy of the same age, clothed exactly in the same manner, amusing himself alone, casting stones into the water, upon the bank of a river; and he affirmed, that having passed a few moments afterwards, he was not to be seen.

This last recital, either that it was more frightful, or the portrait given of the child had more resemblance to Charles, made a deep impression on the mind of the mother, who no longer doubted that it was her son, and that he had been drowned. She had, moreover, reason to believe it, as she learned, not long after, that the body of a child had been found upon the river, and buried in a little hamlet three leagues from the city. This time, well persuaded of the death of her son, the poor mother thought of nothing but to raise a tombstone to his memory, and to go there and weep and pray to God to console her. She would have wished to persuade herself that her child was not very wicked; and that he had at least some good qualities to redeem his defects. She tried to remember one time in his life when the little Charles had uttered one prayer from the heart; she repeated to herself that which she had taught him; but alas! what came to the remembrance of the poor mother was always the recollection of his disobedience to the orders of his mother, his impatience during her serious reading, and his weariness during prayer. Oh! if the little Charles could have known how much grief he afterwards caused to his mother, how he would have wept! Perhaps he would not have been so wicked and disobedient. But to console herself, Lady Belville wished to have before her eyes the sweetest recollection that remained to her of her Charles. She caused to be sculptured up-

on a tomb a young child kneeling, and had inscribed upon the black marble this prayer: "Lord, convert me—change my heart; and teach me to love my brethren as Jesus Christ loved us. Amen."

Now one year, two years, three years passed away, without bringing any solace to the grief of the Countess: her only happiness upon this earth (next to her religious duties) was, whenever she met a child of the age that Charles would have been had he lived, to say to herself, that perhaps it might be her son, and that she was falsely persuaded of his death. She approached every such child, and examined him with care, questioned him with eager curiosity, and always ended by discovering, with sorrow, that the child was not her son!

One day, on returning from the country (where she had been passing some weeks) unexpected by her domestics, who were occupied in cleaning the apartments, she saw, with surprise, on entering the saloon, a little chimney-sweep leaning against the jamb. He was very sorrowful; and, in spite of the soot which covered his face, might be seen his white skin and his extreme thinness. His head rested upon his breast; the poor child was weeping, and large tears rolled down his cheeks, leaving white traces upon his dark face.

"What is the matter, child?" said the Countess.

"Nothing, madam—it is nothing. We are come to sweep your chimney. My master is upon the roof—he is coming down."

"But why do you weep?"

"It is because," trying to restrain his tears, "it is because—"

"Take courage, my boy," said the good lady; "tell me thy troubles."

"It is because my master will beat me again."

"Again, you say—does he beat you often?"

"Almost every day, madam."

"And for what?"

"Because I don't earn money enough. When I return at night, after having cried out all the day without having obtained any work, he says I have been idle; but I assure you, madam, it is not my fault. I cry out as loud as I can, and nobody calls me. I can't force people to let me sweep their chimneys."

"But, then, every day does not pass without work, and then thy master does not whip thee?" said the Countess.

"Well, madam, then he says to me that I don't climb fast enough—that I do not scrape hard enough; and when I come down he strikes me again; and all the time I do all that I can. More than once I have run the risk of falling; yesterday I hurt my leg; you see, madam, my pantaloons are worn through at the knees, and the poor boy wept bitterly."

"But, then, when you work better?" said the good lady.

"Oh! when I work better he is content to scold me."

"And how much do you gain each day?"

"Nothing—only he gives me my food; but so little, that I very often go to bed hungry."

"Ah! well, I will speak to thy master."

"Ah, no, madam—he will beat me more yet. I complain to nobody, but in the evening to—"

"To whom?"

"To God."

"And what do you say to him?"

"I ask him to take me back to my mother."

"Thou hast then a mother?"

"O yes! and a very good mother; if I could go to her I should not be so unhappy."

"Do you know where she lives?"

"No: I recollect only one house—one garden. See! see! madam, it was like this. The trees of the garden were seen through the windows of the saloon, as you see these poplars in front. The chimney was on the right hand like this; the door in front; and my mother was like you—only she was handsome, and was not dressed in black as you are."

These words overcame Lady Belville. A shivering ran through her frame—her hands trembled—she could scarcely stand upon her feet. She sank upon the sofa, and taking the boy by one hand, she drew him near to her, and continued the conversation.

"And has the Lord never answered you, my child?"

"Not yet, madam; but he will hear me one day, I am sure."

"Sure! and why?"

"Because he has said so in his Word."

"You have confidence, then, in prayer?"

"Yes, madam; because I have already been heard."

"In what?"

"I have asked God to make me better, and it seems to me that I am not so bad as formerly. Now, I do almost all that my master tells me. When I can, I read a little in the New Testament, which a good gentleman gave me; and I pray every day with pleasure."

"With pleasure, do you say?"

"Yes, with pleasure; above all, when I repeat the prayer that my mother taught me by heart."

"And what is that prayer?—tell me, I beseech you."

The child knelt down, joined his hands, and shedding some tears, he said, with a trembling voice:

"Lord, convert me—change my heart; teach me to love thee, and to love my brethren as Jesus Christ loved us. Amen."

"My child! my child!" cried the Countess, pressing the boy in her arms; "thou art my son Charles!"

"My mother!" said the child, "where is she? It was thus that she used to call me—Charles! Charles!"

"I am thy mother, I tell thee," and sobs stopped the voices of the mother and child. They both wept, but they were tears of joy. The mother knelt by the side of her child, and exclaimed, in the fulness of her heart: "My God! my God! forgive me for having offended thee by my unbelief—pardon me for having doubted thy promises—forgive my impatience. I have prayed for his conversion, but I was unwilling to wait; and yet thou hast heard me, and answered my prayer. Teach me, O Lord, to confide in thee; teach me to remember that thou hearest always, but if thou deferrest to answer, it is in order to bless the better; but if thou dost not as we would wish, it is because thy ways are not as our ways, and thou knowest better than we what is for our good. Henceforth I will say, Let thy will, not mine, be done."

Here the master sweep entered the saloon, and was much surprised to find his apprentice and this great lady both upon their knees. She asked him how he had become possessor of the child. He answered that a man, calling himself his father, placed him in his hands for a sum of money; that this man for some time past had been ill at the hospital, and perhaps was now dead.

Lady Belville now hastened to the hospital, and found a dying man, who confessed to her that, about three years since, he had stolen a child who was jumping over a garden wall; and that he committed this crime in the hope of gaining some money, by letting him out as a sweep to one of that vocation. Lady Belville, too happy at this moment to reproach him, and thinking that God had permitted this event in order that Charles might be placed in circumstances more favorable for the good of his soul, freely pardoned the unhappy man; and she saw him die in the hope that God had pardoned him also.

From this time Charles was the joy of his mother; and she, to perpetuate this event in his history, assembled every year, on the 1st of May (the day on which she found her son) a large number of the sweeps of his age, to give them an entertainment, and to relate the history of Charles, to teach them that God always hears our prayers, and answers them; but oftentimes in a manner that we do not expect.

From Douglas Jerrold's Magazine for November.

A PARABLE.

THE untoward circumstances of the poor man's life were very wretched. When he rose early from his bed, it was to spend hours of weary, unelevating, ill-requited toil. His meals were unsavoury, and barely sufficient to support the exertion he was forced to undergo. He returned at night to a bleak, miserable hut, where a scanty fire rather tantalized him by its glimmering, than warmed him with its heat. The wind, with cheerless sound, shook his broken windows. Yet did the poor man not seek the ale-house parlour, with its crackling hearth and its loose companions, but remained in his dreary home, as though it had been a paradise, and the thought of returning to it cheered him through the hours of labour. What was the charm of this lonely—yes, it was lonely—and miserable dwelling?

A friend of the poor man had given him a talisman, made by a great magician, and this talisman gives the answer to our question. Truly a wondrous talisman, that could be set in force every evening. By its virtue, the dilapidated room assumed all sorts of beautiful forms. Sometimes it would change to a princely hall, and the holes in the walls would enlarge, and arch themselves into Gothic windows, through which the light cast gorgeous colours upon the mosaic floor. Then this would vanish, and the poor man would find himself in a fine country, through which streams flowed sparkling in the sun, while his view was bounded by tall hills, verdant with grass, and distinctly marked with wild flowers; or melting away, pale with distance, into the clear blue sky. Nor was the virtue of the talisman confined to exhibitions that might be found in actual life. Now the owner of it would seem to sink below the surface of the sea, where sea-nymphs would exhibit their wondrous treasures; now he would penetrate into the bowels of the mountain, and perceive the gnomes at their fantastic labours; now the hand of Time would for him be turned back, and he would converse with the sages and warriors of antiquity; and a song would swell upon his ears, such as might have been sung in old Hellas. What marvel was it that the poor man loved the dwelling in which such wonder and delight were revealed?

Thinkest thou, reader, that what we have written is a phantasm—a short fairy tale? Not at all: we have been narrating a fact of frequent occurrence. The talisman was a book—what is commonly called a 'book of fiction,' nothing more; and the imagination of the poor man, when he read it, was so stimulated, that a number of gorgeous creations concealed the miseries of actual life.

Ye who inveigh against 'fiction,' think ye that the world is so beautiful to all its inhabitants that the imagination must be chained and tied down, lest it adorn and beautify it more? Think you that the thing ye call 'fact' is so holy that it ought to engross all the faculties of man, and that he may not dream of aught beyond? Truly, it is but to a few that the real beauty of the world is revealed; and even they speak of these revelations either in what you call 'fiction,' or they are philosophers, such as you style dreamers.

A large class are these dreamers. To feel that one has a power within that can free itself from the power without—to stretch the pinions of the soul, and to shake off the earthy dust that cleaves to them—to assert one's right to be

a denizen of a fair country, that the tyrant cannot encircle with walls, nor the bigot defile with hatred;—this it is to be a dreamer.

We may mourn, now and then, that some of us are awake.

From the same Magazine.

THE MAN AND HIS AGE.

WHEN Rousseau introduced his *Heloise* with the statement, 'I have understood my age, and have written this book,' he made use of the most tremendous announcement of which man is capable.

There are few men who know their age; and the privilege of belonging to this select band is of very doubtful value, considered with reference to the happiness of the chosen one.

Those men who have their fixed party, their fixed set, who can regard the good and evil fortunes of their immediate circle, as all-important events,—in a word, the majority of a community, live in their age, are influenced by their age, act upon their age,—but they know nothing about it. They have an instinct that their state of mind is the right state, and all without is an eccentricity with which they have nought to do.

'Brown is a Swedenborgian,—how very odd of Brown!' exclaims Jones, though he has no notion of the reasons of Brown's preference for such a faith, and is ignorant whether the tenets of Emanuel Swedenborg be monotheistic—polytheistic—pantheistic. The oddness of Brown consists in being what Jones is not. And Jones goeth his ways, rejoicing exceedingly that he is not such as Brown. If he be a good-humoured man he is satisfied with his own great felicity. If he have a little gall in his composition, he occasionally regrets that the civil magistrate has not some power to check Brown from indulging in the monstrous theories whereof he, Jones, knows nothing.

Europeans are taught to laugh at the Chinese, because they make the Celestial Empire occupy the largest portion of the world, and indicate the other nations by little insignificant dots. There are moral regions in Europe, where moral Chinese are to be found in great abundance,—yea, even to the imitation of the cracked plate, if ancestral wisdom have made the precious faw.

They are happy people in their way, are these moral Chinese,—and those who have enlarged their moral geography may often envy them their Camberwell pagodas,—their Twickenham junks. But may not the moral Cook and Anson have their junk and Pagoda too? True; but to them, the Junk and Pagoda look so abominably small. Depend upon it, when the real Emperor of China discovers that he is not even a first-rate power (perhaps he has discovered it) the great wall will be grievously reduced in its dimensions.

The man who knows his age, cannot see an isolated domain. He sees the land, wherein many are settled so pleasantly,—but he sees too the border of that land, and what a narrow boundary it is; and moreover, he sees those who dwell beyond that boundary.

What a spectacle of collision presents itself—of faiths undermining faiths,—of interests warring against interests! What resting upon rotten foundations,—what repose upon stolid ignorance! And between this and the standard of excellence which he may have raised in his own mind, what an impassable gulf!

With certain temperaments there cannot be a greater misery than that of knowing one's age. The tendencies that are swaying millions cross and oppose each other in one weak bosom. It is as if the battle field were itself endowed with life, and felt the torture of the contest, which ever party gained the victory. Then come the bitter curses of affection being opposed to affection,—head being opposed to heart,—and we need not wonder if the unhappy seer is sometimes maddened by the visions which his over-discernment has raised.

Rousseau always stands before us as a martyr of this class. That inordinate sentimentality, with that rigid understanding—that hankering after the pleasures and vanities of an artificial age, with that deep longing after uneducated simplicity—that sighing after an unattainable faith—that falseness of position which penetrated into the very being of the man. Do they not tell us, that all the tendencies of a time become incarnate in an individual?

When a man like this says, 'I have understood my age,' we hear him with respect, not unmixed with awe. It is as if some one said in our presence, 'I know what is the rack—what is the sensation of red-hot pincers.' We are firmly convinced that the horrid drama that was visibly acted on a grand scale in the French Revolution was invisibly acted some years before in the heart of that one unhappy man.

The voice of the 'man that knows his age' may often be widely different from that of the age itself. The discontent that lies scattered about in different hearts may be without expression; it may not have gathered intensity enough to find a voice; and all that speak utter a sort of rapid contentment. But at last, perchance, that man lifts up his voice, and he utters the wail that startles far and near: yea, many are strangely moved at the sound, for the utterance is so much in accordance with their own feelings, that they almost doubt whether themselves are not the utterers. The man who thus speaks, as multitudes have dimly thought, is the poet of his age; but there are many by whom the sorrows of knowledge are felt, and to whom the power of expression has not been granted. To them is the revelation made obscurely, as through the dark responses of an oracle; they are silent, but they doubt and are restless. These will be foremost among the poet's auditors.