

'Oh, I'm sure, my lady, she would be very proud. I'll go and tell her your ladyship has something to say to her.'

Oh no, not on any account. Thank you, that will do; and as the hostess retired cursing, Lady Helen returned through the porch, in which Hester still sat. Playing for a minute with the flowers which hung about the trellis, Lady Helen, addressing Hester, said, 'What lovely and enjoyable weather it is! will you have one of these?' offering her at the same time a sprig of jessamine.

'Thank you, miss.'

'You are going to London, are you not?—You must be sorry to leave the country while everything is so beautiful; I am so happy at finding myself in it again.'

Tears filled Hester's eyes. 'No place looks beautiful now to me, miss; and then she hesitated and stopped.

'How so? It is sad to hear one so young as you speak thus. I see by the ring you wear that you are married: is your husband in business in town?'

'I don't know, miss; I am going in search of him; he has left me these many months past, and I do not know whether he is dead or alive.'

'Poor thing, poor thing! have you friends in London?'

'None,' she replied in a faint voice.

'Have you ever been there before?'

'No,' in a voice still fainter.

Helen paused, and then bending down, said, 'My poor girl, are you well provided with money? I fear not: do take this.'

Hester's wan face flushed crimson as, gently putting aside Lady Helen's hand, she answered, 'You mean kindly, miss, I am sure, but I have never asked or received charity, and cannot accept it now.'

'I do not mean it as charity,' persisted Helen; 'you shall repay me when you can. See,' she said, taking a card from her reticule, 'when you find your husband, which God grant you may soon do, you can remit the little loan I have made to you; the address is written here. I wish I could assist you further,' and she placed a bank-note in Hester's trembling hand.

The carriage was by this time ready, and Lord Redland, seated in it, waited for his daughter. Hester had scarcely recovered sufficient composure to utter thanks, when her benefactress was gone.

It had not been Hester's intention, to take an inside place, but the beauty of the weather having tempted most of the passengers to travel outside, she found herself, as the mail drove up, compelled, against her will, to incur an expense too great for her scanty means; but a kind Providence was again watching over her, and providing another friend for the lonely girl.

An old lady, the only occupant of the coach with Hester, interested in her appearance, entered into conversation with her, and listened with the deepest commiseration to the story she presently unfolded.

A very discerning old lady she was, or one very unsuspecting, for neither doubt, nor fear of imposition, seemed to enter her mind to deter her from her charitable purpose, when, having reached London, she bade Hester enter the hackney-coach she had provided, and getting in beside her, took the poor wanderer to her own comfortable home.

'I shall call you 'Hester' at once; and remember, you pass for my cousin, and then the servants and neighbours need have nothing to gossip about: and by the by, my name is Morris—Miss Morris: thank goodness I never had a husband to control me. We must look into this business of yours, my poor child. It was providential that I met you in the coach to-day; London is a dangerous place for young and beau—I mean unprotected women. We shall find this husband of yours at last, I have no doubt—never fear.'

(To be continued.)

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal. THE SPAN OF LIFE.

THE fashion is to moralize on the speedy metamorphosis of the muling and puking child into the lean and slipped pantaloon. The swift and merciless approach of death, kicking at the floor of cottage and palace with impartial foot, and interrupting alike the plans of the governed and the governor, the ignorant and the scholar, is often dwelt upon with something like affectionate pathos, not infrequently in a tone of querulous reflection. Mr Growler, a very worthy and practical gentleman, embodies his sentiments somewhat in this fashion:—Threescore years and ten are equivalent to forty and odd years of self-consciousness, representing my twenty and odd years of activity. When this short period has elapsed, the spring of life has run itself completely down. If native centrifugal energy keep the machine moving yet a little while, it jerks and creaks like a rusty fly-wheel. A plaintive statistician perchance adds, that the term of life mentioned by the psalmist, and adopted by Mr Growler, is considerably over the average derived from the tables of mortality. The poets, with great parade of metaphor and rope, flourish of mournful trumpets, and wailing of Eolian lyres, follow humanity makes capital of the evanescence of life. It may be worth

while to enquire how far this reflection is philosophically correct, and practically useful.

Things temporal must ever shrink into nothingness in the presence of things eternal.—The solemn voice of religion warns us of the infinite expanse lying beyond finite time, and of the infinite possibilities folded in the breast of the future. Yet we may reasonably question whether the grave import of this warning would be lessened to contemplative minds though the span of mundane existence were lengthened to five hundred years. Let us imagine such an order of things to exist, and that our friend Mr Growler has reached his grand climacteric of four hundred years, and is engaged in meditation on the fleeting nature of sublunary things. Is it not likely that the decline of life would appear to him precipitous and sudden, and the slopes of memory terribly foreshortened in the mental review? Without much strain upon the fancy, we may suppose that Methuselah in his green old age sometimes mourned over the premature decease of a contemporary cut off in the flower of youth at the age of fifteen score years after a lingering illness of rather more than a century. Whatever the given term of human life might be, the boundless margin of darkness lying around it, and the doubtful eventualities of pestilence and disease, would still render needful the illumination and solace of religious faith.

In actual life, we do not find men much impressed with the brief duration of their probable career. The jubilant spirit of youth, and the calm strength of manhood, are tempered by the uncertainty rather than the brevity of existence; and trustfulness so moderates even this sense of uncertainty, that it does not interfere, in healthy minds, with the steady and laborious pursuits of earthly aims, although it is sufficient to furnish food for reflection, and stimulate to a holier purpose. The Supreme Will has thus ordained with beneficent intention, for history teaches us that the assurance or strong probability of untimely dissolution operating on large communities of men, is the reverse of beneficial to their moral and religious nature. The plague of Athens in the classic era, and that which desolated the cities of Europe in the middle ages, afford this lesson. In the pages of Thucydides and Boccaccio, is ample proof that the result of such a feeling is moral disorganisation and reckless despair. The wisdom of faith becomes supplanted by the shallow philosophy—'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.'—But in a normal state, such a presentiment does not predominate. The child regards life as of vague, indefinite extent; youth is confident of a sufficient career; and the patriarch, reposing on his honours, and receiving the reverence of a new generation, still hopes to add more years to the winter of his age. The uncertainty of life, and the certainty of death, operate independently of the rapid efflux of time, to teach humility to the human heart.

Strictly speaking, however, life is incommensurable with length of days and the flight of seasons. We do not sail over life's solemn main with the uniform velocity of an astronomical rotation. If the log be thrown over from time to time into the current of life, we shall observe great variation in the number of knots per hour that we make; and in order to determine the space traversed, we must calculate the rate of progress as well as the duration of the voyage. How much of our course do we pass over in half an hour? It may be, we float but lazily upon the sluggish waters; it may be, we bound along before the breeze of passion. Half an hour waiting for the train, half an hour in the society of a brilliant woman, half an hour on the eve of battle, half an hour with a guilty conscience, half an hour with the reward of virtue, half an hour with half a hundred other thoughts, persons, and things, cannot be reckoned as equal elements of what we call our life. We might as well estimate quantity of electricity by the duration of the lightning's flash, or the cubical contents of ocean by the beating of the surge. Days are but the ripples of the sea of life, and years its long heaving swells.

The astronomical clock does not mark the epochs of existence, else why should we count the gray barbarian less than the Christian child? The truth is, time is no more a correct measure of life than of light, heat, or magnetism. It measures the duration of an external phenomenon with reference to other phenomena also external, but not with reference to subjective feeling. Neither the quantity nor quality of our vitality can be estimated by the lapse of time. Life can only be rightly measured, in quantity, by the succession and number of ideas; in quality and intensity, by their nature and degree. Estimated by this rule, which of them shall we say has lived the most—Milton or Methuselah, Newton or Old Parr, Shakspeare or Jenkins, Alexander or Humboldt or the eldest of the last list of centenarians recorded by the Blankshire Chronicle? A modern writer has remarked on the immense amount of thought that soft pulpy mass we call the brain can secrete before its functions cease. Fancy how many folio volumes, double-columned, and in diamond type, would be filled, were we to note down—which Heaven forbid!—the rank and file of ideas, good strong lusty notions, too, that have passed through the cranium of John Smith for the last twenty years! We wish some servant, of an arithmetical turn, would calculate the number of years which would glide away in

a persevering endeavour to catalogue, according to the concisest method, the thoughts of an average octogenarian. The letter A of such an inventory would outrival its renowned namesake of the British Museum. All the labors of Hercules would be light as a lady's crochet work, compared with the enormous enterprise. It is the boast of sanitary reformers, and not without justice, that the average duration of human life in this country has been augmented of late years by better air, food, dwellings, and apparel. We may fairly congratulate ourselves on the fact, although the work of amelioration is as yet only half accomplished. The genius of disease, avoiding the light of science, skulks in our lanes and alleys, and, with God's help, shall be ultimately caught in a *cul de sac*, and restrained with the bounds of His divine authority. We ought to be thankful for what has been achieved, but, at the same time, not disguise from ourselves that the earthly sum of human life is enhanced infinitely more by better mental culture, ready access to hoarded wisdom, rapid and facile interchange of thought, than by the addition of a few uncertain and weary years to the lease of existence. Sanitary improvements supply, as it were, oil to the wheels of life and polish to their centres, or remove obstacles to their free motion, and the wear and tear of the material are thereby diminished; whereas improved culture may be likened to improved machinery. It is the spiritual power-loom by which ideas are fabricated and multiplied with wonderful speed and at inconsiderable cost, while a comely and tasteful pattern is woven into the web of life for the raiment of the soul.

'Art is long, and life is fleeting!' True, Mr Poet, and yet what a spacious edifice of art, science, and learning may be raised in this fleeting life! The mantle of his ancestors does not yet hang too loosely on the stalwart limbs of Prince Posterity. Genius in its hot youth is still able to foray beyond the frontiers of actual knowledge, and bring in spoils from the darkness. The vast amount of good or evil that a short-lived, evanescent mortal can achieve before he passes away, is a continual testimony against grumbling and discontent about the trivial duration of our pilgrimage. Those whose hours are cast away and bear no fruit, will certainly find the time allotted to them brief enough: but if any man labour with a true heart and high purpose, he will generally find whatever may be his vocation, ample opportunity to accomplish the beneficent ends of his being. Only prodigal and thriftless servants need be reminded how few are the hours of day that remain to them ere the night cometh. If we use a wise economy, thirty years of good energetic action are no mean appanage. There is space enough Heaven knows, for all industriously working in the walls of Time' to build for the indwelling of virtue a temple of good works, or, for its charnel-house, a pyramid of hideous iniquity.—What matters it if life be but for a moment when that moment can contain so much? Why, when a spirit has passed behind the curtain, do we enquire how many years did he wear his mortal coil? Let our question rather be, how much or how little did he live? After all, the heroes of history, thinkers and doers, are not remarkable for longevity. There is no time to waste, but plenty of time to labour, so let every man proceed cheerily on his journey of life, without hurry, without rest.'

A CALIFORNIAN LANDSCAPE.

OUT of sight of land, at sea, one experiences a certain feeling of isolation: there is nothing to connect one's idens with the habitable globe but the ship on which one stands; but there is also nothing to carry the imagination beyond what one does see, and the view is limited to a few miles. But here we were upon an ocean of grass-covered earth, dotted with trees, and sparkling in the sunshine with the gorgeous hues of the dense patches of wild flowers, while far beyond the horizon of the plains, there rose mountains beyond mountains, all so distinctly seen, as to leave no uncertainty as to the shape or the relative position of any one of them, and fading away in regular gradation till the most distinct, though clearly defined, seemed still to be the most natural and satisfactory point at which the view should terminate. It was as if the circumference of the earth had been lifted up to the utmost range of vision, and there melted into air. Such was the view ahead of us as we travelled towards the mines, where wavy outlines of mountains appeared, one above another, drawing together as they vanished, and at last indenting the sky with the snowy peaks of the Sierra Nevada. On either side of us the mountains appearing above the horizon were hundreds of miles distant, and the view behind us was more abruptly terminated by the coast range, which lies between the Sacramento river and the Pacific.—*Borthwick's Three years in California.*

AN AFRICAN MARKET.

IN the market there was a live lion for sale. He walked about with great unconcern, confined merely by a small rope round his neck held by the negro who had caught him when he was not two months old, and having had him for a period of three months, now wished to part with him. He was about the size of a donkey colt, with very large limbs, and the people seemed to go very close to him, without much alarm,

notwithstanding he struck with his foot the leg of one man who stood in his way, and made the blood flow copiously. They opened the ring which was formed round this noble animal as I approached; and, coming within two or three yards of him, he fixed his eye upon me in a way that excited sensations I cannot describe, from which I was awakened by the fellow calling to me to come nearer, at the same time laying his hand on the animal's back. A moment's recollection convinced me that there could be no more danger nearer than where I was, and I stepped boldly up beside the negro, and I believe should have laid my hand on the lion the next moment; but, after looking carelessly at me, he brushed past my legs, broke the ring, and pulled his conductor away with him, overturning several who stood before him, and bounded off to another part, where there were fewer people.

MOTHERS.

By the quiet fireside of home the true mother in the midst of her children is sowing as in vases of earth the seeds of plants that shall sometime give to heaven the fragrance of their blossoms and whose fruit be a rosary of angelic deeds, noblest offering that she can make through ever ascending and ever expanding souls of her children to her Maker. Every word that she utters goes from heart to heart with a power of which she little dreams. Solemn is the thought, but no more solemn to the Christian mother than the thought that every word that falls from her lips, every expression of her countenance, even in the sheltered walk and retirement, may leave an indelible impression upon the young souls around her, and form as it were the underlying strain of that education which peoples heaven with that celestial being, and gives to the white brow of the angel next to the grace of God its crown of glory.

CONTRADICTIONS OF LIFE.

MOST of us have heard from the poets, if we have not learned by experience, something about the malice of Fortune, how she crosses people in love, in work, and in war, puts them to business they have no mind to, plants them in places they are not fit for, flings down the glorious chance where nature has given no capacity, does all she can to hide the light under a bushel, and in short make a mess of the world. The caprices of the old lady with the wheel have called forth innumerable comments from all the ages, but there are contradictions among us still more unaccountable. Can any philosopher explain the motive power which makes so many of mankind act in direct opposition to their own mental tendencies, when neither parents nor guardians can be made responsible for the fact. What induces the man to whom a thriving shop in Cheapside seems the nearest approach to the golden age now practicable, to establish himself on a dairy farm in Gloucestershire. Wherefore does the youth to whom the newest tie and the best cigars are indispensable sigh for somebody whose face is their fortune, and why is the damsel who bows down in adoration to half a shade of rank, the first to go to Gretna-ward with the butler?—Yet things like these occur every day, and remain among the unsolvable problems of human life.

THE INTELLIGENCE OF ANIMALS.

ANIMALS are far more temperate in their appetite than men; they gratify their desires according to the laws of nature, without exciting themselves by factitious means to a disgraceful intemperance. In what republic, ancient or modern, did there ever reign a more beautiful regularity than amongst the ants? What kingdom is better organized than a hive, from which those high and powerful lords, the drones, are chased away, when they wish more than their share of the honey distilled by the laborious bees? Is it purely instinct which instructs swallows, and other birds of passage, when they ought to change their climates? What architect taught them to build their nests, so as to protect them from the wind and the rain?—The beavers, our first master in architecture, have they no other guides than instinct? Had the famous lion of Androcles, and the elephants who waked in the night to repeat their lessons in dancing, no other stimulus than instinct?—What web of cashmere, what muslin of India, is comparable to the fineness and smoothness of the spider's web? What shipwright ever launched upon the wave a more beautiful and secure vessel than the hairyon's nest? Animals have nothing but instinct! What power then acts upon them in their sleep, and when they dream, as well as we do? It is not material objects alone which strike their senses, but their imagination must be so disposed as to be able to represent imaginary beings; for, as the most philosophical and ingenious of your writers has observed—the hare which a greyhound fancies in his dreams, is a hare without coat and without bones. Animals have a force of mind not merely equal, but very superior to our own; we do not see them so often attacked by madness, and in their sufferings what patient resignation! They never descend to the foolish cowardice of suicide. The lever is the most beautiful discovery of Archimedes, and yet it is known to the ant, who uses a blade of grass to move a heavy burden over any little eminence.