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Poetry.

DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

BY ALFRED TENNYSON.

Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing;
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.
Old Year, you must not die:
You name to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old Year, you shall not die.

He lieth still; he doth not move;
He will not see the dawn of day;
He hath no other life above.
He gave me a friend and a true true-love,
And the old year will take 'em away.
Old Year, you must not go:
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us,
Old Year, you shall not go.

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim;
A jollier year we shall not see.
But though his eyes are waxing dim,
And though his face speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.
Old Year, you shall not die:
We did so laugh and cry with you,
I've half a mind to die with you,
Old Year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o'er,
To see him die, across the waste.
His son and heir doth ride post haste,
But he'll be dead before.
Every one for his own,
The night is starry and cold, my friend,
And the New Year, blithe and bold, my friend,
Comes to take up his own.

How hard he breathes! over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The cricket chirps; the light burns low;
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.
Shake hands before you die,
Old Year, we'll dearly rue for you;
What is it we can do for you?
Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin,
Alack! our friend is gone.
Close up his eyes: tie up his chin;
Step from the corpse, and let him in
That standeth there alone,
And waiteth at the door.
There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,
And a new face at the door, my friend,
A new face at the door.

A JANUARY SONNET.

BY WILLIAM C. RICHARDS.

Now hail the first-born of the fruitful year
In the white lap of Winter cradled fast;
Around him pitifully howls the blast,
And on his pale cheek hangs a frozen tear.
Cold is his bed, and cheerless as the bier
On which the dead December breathed
his last.

No blossom-scented air hath by him passed,
No ray of Nature's beauty lingered near;
No voice of birds hath greeted him at morn,
Or sweetly sung, at eve, his lullaby;
Unlike his sisters of the Spring, forlorn,
His lot, in gloom alike to live and die.
Yet still we hail with joy the joyless one,
For with his birth, a New Year is begun.

Religious.

THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

A TRUE NARRATIVE.

Translated from the German by Mary Weibrecht.

CHAPTER VI.—THE NEIGHBOURS, AND OUR MOTHER'S WORK AMONG THEM.

The scene of our mother's most prolonged activity was the before-mentioned village of Thalheim, lying in a narrow valley of a district commonly called the "Baar," part of the mountainous Black Forest. Its inhabitants are distinguished by peculiarities both of costume and character. Their strong and handsome physical development is united to the free simple manners and marked individualities of race only observable among Highlanders. The power of custom exercises a singular force over the minds and actions of these primitive folks. It may indeed be described as the strongest moral or spiritual influence in the whole region.

In their eyes, it seems a great enormity to make light of their traditional notions of propriety, and the mighty law of "custom" is inconspicuously dragged forward upon all occasions, often even to pronounce upon matters of the most serious nature. Once, in remonstrating with a naughty maid, my mother asked her, how, in following her evil courses, could she expect to get to heaven? "Why not, I should like to know?" cried the girl in surprise. "Upon what do you found your hopes?" said my mother. "Oh, Frau Pfarrer!" rejoined the damsel with much assurance, "it is the custom with us for people to go to heaven! You see, heaven was made for us—not for the animals."

The dialect of the Baar is harsh and odd, somewhat resembling the Swiss patois, but possessing a quaint force and drollery of its own. The costume of the place is still more singular, and might seem almost to date back to primeval ages. A woman's head-gear consists of two caps, one black and tight fitting, drawn down in front to meet the eye-brows, the other of fur, which is worn the whole year round. Two long plaits of hair hang down the back, reaching far towards the ground. A black jacket, drawn back in front, exposes a lace vest surmounted by white. Round the waist is passed a thick, sausage-shaped roll, from under which emerges the skirt, starched stiffly into innumerable tiny folds. Broad, flat shoes, and red woollen hose complete this strange attire, which altogether weighs twenty pounds, and costs from £3 to £4. The wedding costume, or hippé as it is called, generally lasts a woman her lifetime. A very curious effect is produced in the village church, by the sight of the whole female population, down to the smallest girl, dressed in this way and ranged in long rows. Without this traditional costume, however, none of them would set foot in church.

On one occasion, my mother went round the whole village, vainly trying to hunt up such a dress for a poor unthrifty woman, who had confessed to her with shame and contrition, that she dared not show herself for want of a "hippé." In every house she was met by the contemptuous reply, "If she were not a lazy wench, she would have her dress all right enough."

At length, in the cottage of a charcoal burner, the quest proved successful, for his wife, though very poor, immediately discovered that she possessed an extra "hippé," which she freely offered. Deeply touched by this generous kindness, and in the name of him who said, "I was naked, and ye clothed me," our mother accepted the gift. She also formed a very hearty friendship with this charcoal burner's wife, who was a most interesting woman, and possessed mental capacity and refinement of a high order, together with a frank affectionate disposition. Her active sympathy and love were often found a source of real comfort to us.

It was on the New-Year's eve of 1820, that as our mother sat reviewing her past life, it occurred to her that the store of her father's sermons, hitherto read alone, might be made the means of wide-spread blessing, if a few of the neighbours could be assembled to listen to them in the parlour of her above-mentioned friend. The plan was promptly adopted, and henceforth a company of peasant women met regularly, and listened with much enjoyment. The spiritual life of her friend especially seemed to receive a marked impulse, so that our mother exclaimed in delight, "One actually sees her grow!" The good woman, on her part, seemed to become more glad hearted every day, as she sat mending the garments of her large family during the reading, and often declared, "It is only since 'the mother' came among us that I have found out what I really am and possess; the more I get to know God's word, the more I hunger and thirst after it." Her cordial affection to our mother increased in the meantime, and

*Throughout the whole village Madame Paulus was always called "the mother."

if ever she noticed the parsonage lights burning late at night, she would come running over and say, "I don't know how it is, madame, but I cannot sleep when I know that you are up and busy." And then, actively taking part in any business that was on hand, she remained till all was finished. Some years later, this faithful woman died in her mother's arms, and often, in speaking of her, she would declare that in the resurrection of the just, the charcoal burner's wife would be distinguished and honoured as the model of a Christian neighbour.

On leaving home, the ancient Greek colonists were always supplied with holy fire from their country's hearth, in order to keep up the glow of patriotism in their hearts, and show their connection with their native land. Surely we ought in the same way to supply our children—those colonists whom we send out in the far country of the future—with a holy flame of truth and light, such as is furnished for us in the word of God. This was an idea which forced itself very strongly upon our mother's mind, and caused her to adopt a plan originated by our grandmother. This was, to assemble the village children, and by the aid of a large coloured picture-book, to relate Scripture stories to them in a lively and impressive manner. Every Sunday afternoon she started out, the book under her arm, and going from house to house, gathered round her everywhere a crowd of eager listeners. When she quitted one cottage, the children, intent on hearing more of her attractive stories, ran along by her side into the next. It was a curious sight, this wandering Sunday-school, such as has rarely been seen; the shepherd in the midst of the flock, the crook being replaced by the famous picture book—her sign of office; and as she passed up the street, her narrative was often continued for the benefit of apt scholars. This method of teaching embraced one grand advantage, inasmuch as each visit gave opportunity of bearing the truth to the grown-up as well as the younger members of every family; and many a good seed was thus cast by the wayside, and we can see here how ingenious in its resources is the constraining love of Christ, the love that seeks and saves. But our mother's most practical and efficient labour was one unseen by others, for it was accomplished when all around her were at rest. By the time night had set in, and her daily household toil was ended, her great night work began. For then she entered into communion with a higher world, and like Jacob, wrestled with God in prayer, for special blessings upon her family and friends, our parish, and all her other interests. This was done with so much constancy and regularity, that at least two nights in each week were thus spent. When, in later days, we begged that she would allow herself more rest, she always said, "I will rest in eternity; now, I have no time. I have to pray so much for the king and prince, the ministers and counsellors, the consistency, universities, seminaries, and schools, besides my own family, that I seem never to have finished."

Her cabinet of business for this spiritual work was a little corner beside the stove in her room, and there she spent countless nights, kneeling or stretched upon the floor, yet never growing weary.

CHAPTER VII.—THE BROKEN HOME.

It is one thing when a ship is tossing on mid-ocean, and has all sorts of shoals, quicksands, and tempests before it; but it is quite another, when most of the weary way lies behind, and the shoals of the country whither it is bound begin to loom in view. This was the state of things in our house ten years after our mother had begun her task of educating us. Two of the elder ones were already at college, while another was supporting himself by his profession, and contributing part of his earnings to help the younger members.

Our father had at length reconciled himself to the order of things, and delighted in showing off the attainments of his three tall lads among our friendly neighbours. It gratified him for people

to notice the very apparent signs of chemical industry on William's "working hands," as he always called them; and whenever Philip, the theologian, came home, he had to preach, catechise, and visit; while Fritz, the medical student, tried his hand at writing prescriptions of medicines, which were to cure the various ailments of the villagers. Not our father alone, but all the people of the neighbourhood sympathised in our enterprises, and rejoiced at our culture and progress, for everyone knew that the pastor had no private property, and the facts of his sons receiving professional educations was a puzzle to many. Once, a kind professor expressed his surprise to me upon this point. So I told him our secret, which was, that our mother, who managed the whole affair, had the help and support of Some One who bears the wonderful key which fits and opens all the cash-boxes of earth.

But although our poor mother had struggled through many difficulties and sorrows, the worst still awaited her. The experience of life had greatly altered my father's opinions, and instead of holding his former rationalistic views, he now owned a lively Christian faith. About this time, the presentiment of his approaching removal to a higher life seemed forcibly impressed on his mind, so that one day, calling his daughter to him, he said, "Beate, my time for remaining with you is short; I shall be suddenly struck by the hand of death, and I wish you to promise, that when you see me lying at the last extremity, you will whisper in my ear the name of Jesus, for I want to go through the dark valley carrying that name within my soul." The child gave her word, little thinking how soon she would be called upon to fulfil it. Very shortly our father sickened, and at once sank into such weakness that all were greatly alarmed, and before his absent children could be summoned, he died. When Beate whispered the Saviour's name in his ear, during the last moments, his glazed eyes once more lighted up in grateful love, and then closed for ever. A large concourse of friends met to celebrate the funeral, among them many neighbouring clergymen. One of these had dreaded meeting our mother, for he thought that the ruin of all her hopes in this sudden stroke would have crushed her into despair. Throughout the mournful service he watched her closely, but to his surprise she appeared calm and at rest. At the close, he would not refrain from expressing his wonder. "What does it mean?" he asked; "all the plans and the joy of your life are swept away, and yet you are composed and cheerful." "Ah, dear friend," she replied, with a beaming face, "I certainly was almost distracted as I started to walk in that sad procession to-day, with my nine orphan children, especially when we stood in church, and I looked upon the coffin with which all my hopes for this life were to be buried. At that moment it was midnight in my soul. I saw no star in heaven, and no path on earth. Then I lifted up my eyes to him, who up to this time had been my only hope and refuge, and begged for one beam of his eternal love to shine into my beclouded heart. Suddenly, it was as if a voice cried in my ear, 'Be still, and take no care; henceforth God alone will provide for you and your children. I shall be just as it was when he took Moses away, and the children of Israel had scarcely reached the borders of the promised land. He saw fit to bring his people into Canaan without the help of their old leader, so that every one might see it was all his work. So he will now do with you.' In listening to these words my heart grew light, and I answered, 'If that is so, I am content, and even the dark path shall be a joyful way to me.' Do you see," she concluded, "it is this that strengthens me. I know he is faithful and keeps all his promises."

(To be continued.)

GREATNESS lies not in being strong, but in the right use of strength.

CASTE PREJUDICES IN INDIA.

A recent outbreak of the prisoners confined in the goal at Bareilly shows some of the difficulties attending British rule in India. The facts, as given by the correspondent of the London Times, are as follows:—

It seems that in September last the public goal at Bareilly contained eighty prisoners, and as more than half of these were under sentence of confinement for life, it may be reasonably inferred that they were criminals of the worst stamp. They included, however, a proportion of Brahmins, or Hindoos of the highest Caste, and these offenders still wore the sacred thread, or skein of cotton suspended from the left shoulder, by which the dignity of their extraction was traditionally denoted. For reasons to be presently stated, Dr. Eades, the Superintendent as well as medical officer of the prison, gave orders that these threads should be removed—in other words, that the men should lose the badge of their Caste, and suffer degradation accordingly. The result was a rebellion. A conspiracy was formed for breaking out of prison, and the attempt nearly succeeded. Towards midnight, forty-seven of the convicts rushed through a broken door into an outer court and endeavoured to force the gate or scale the wall. They were encountered, however, by the prison guard, and attacked with such courage that in the end they were driven back though not before thirty-seven of their number had been wounded more or less severely. But the Doctors order was not a merely capricious proceeding on his part, for he found that the possession of this sacred thread carried with it pretensions far more material than might be imagined. It actually exempted the wearer from the operation of the prison discipline, inasmuch that a warder was forbidden to report a Brahmin convict, be his behaviour what it might. A species of sanctuary was thus maintained inside the goal itself, and Caste was allowed to carry privileges overruling the ordinary authority of Government and its officers. It was to this result that Dr. Eades, not unnaturally took exception, and, as the goal rules gave him the power of removing the clothing of any prisoner at his discretion, he resolved to treat the sacred thread as clothing, and remove that also. The loss of Caste would follow of course, but with it would follow the loss of immunities which ought not to be tolerated in a convict prison. From that time forth the warders would be able to report all prisoners alike. The first impulse of the convicts thus degraded on losing their threads was to refuse all food, and, except far coercive measures on the part of the authorities, these men, criminals as they were, would have doomed themselves to death by starvation, rather than live without the badges of their dignified birth.

Rational as Dr. Eades' proceeding from a disciplinary point of view appears to have been, he has nevertheless, had to suffer the loss of his appointment in consequence; although this decision has been mitigated so far as possible from consideration for his ability and long services. The Lieutenant-Governor, in a minute on the subject, declared that in the course he had taken Dr. Eades had committed an error of judgment and forgotten the great principle of British Rule—prescribing the toleration of all native creeds and a due respect for all native prejudices.

The Christian Advocate says: "He who succeeds in placing an evangelical, thoroughly edited, and influential journal in the family home accomplishes a good work, the results of which can only be estimated in the eternal world." We subscribe to that doctrine, and so do many of our readers.

Thrust him little who praises all; him less who censures all; and him least who is indifferent about all.