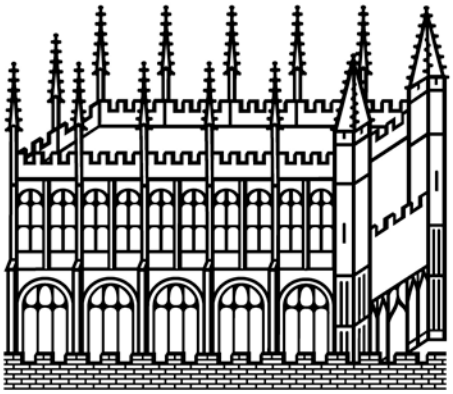

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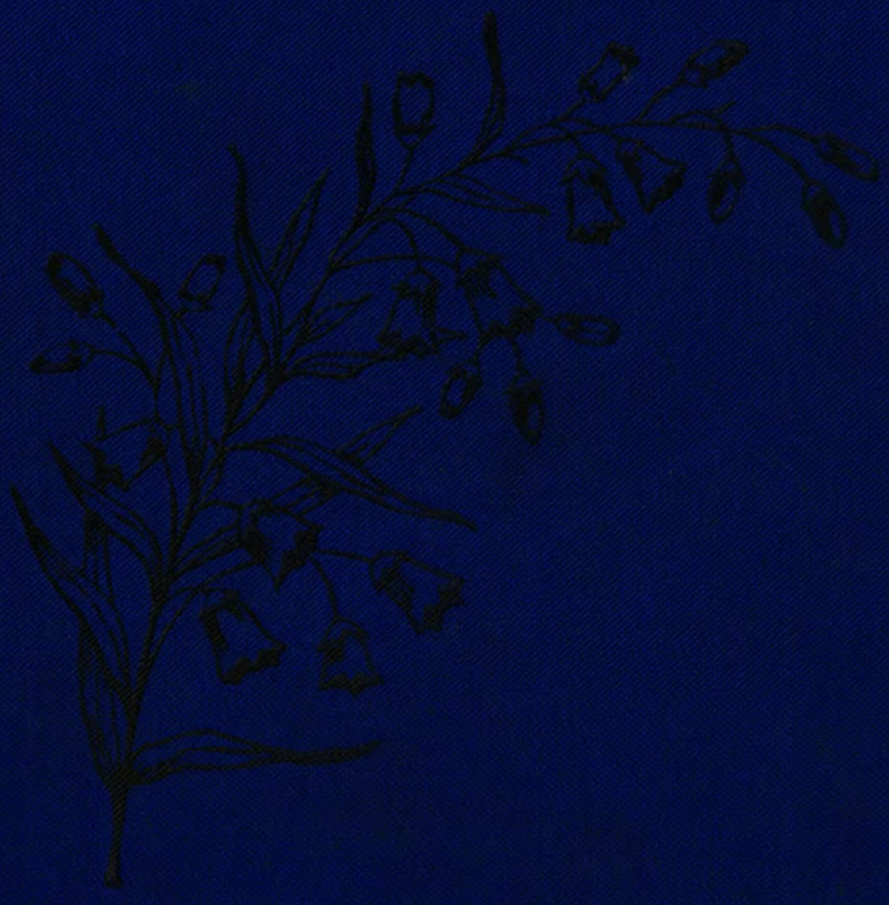
OFF DUTY

STORIES OF A PARSON ON LEAVE



CHARLES WRIGHT.

OFF DUTY.


VITA · SINE · LITERIS · MORS · EST

OFF DUTY

Stories of a Parson on Leave

BY

CHARLES WRIGHT

London
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CONTENTS.

PREFACE IN PROSE.

THE authority of the schools is on the Author's side—namely, that "Prefaces must be read." But the disposition of the schools is on the reader's side, specially retained. Who, then, will hold the Author's brief? Clearly we must hold our own, briefly.

Briefly. These lines are the result of hours of leisure, during recess from ministerial labours, and were mainly composed for the enlivenment and culture of the family circle. Friends occasionally having heard some pieces, the Author has been induced to send them forth, not as a poet, but as a parent, anxious to do good amongst old and young, and thus glorify Christ. The prose pieces were written in view of passing events during the thick of ministerial work, and, with a few exceptions, have never been published.

Hoping tenderest mercies from critical readers, the writer subscribes himself, as in duty bound,

His reader's most obedient

AUTHOR.

GUILDFORD, 1884.

PREFACE IN VERSE.

"BUT governess commands us the Preface to read;
We pupils object, and with pouts cry 'What need?'"
Let's be wise, suit each taste, make our Preface be brief,
Then the teacher is happy, the pupil spared grief.

These lines are the fruit of some holiday hours,
Not the proof that their writer has poetic powers;
They are given, as they came, just to pass a dull time,
To save from despair by the reading of rhyme.

But 'tis hoped when the book you lay down, as you must,
The truths may be gathered of hope, joy, and trust;
And writer and reader, done playing their part,
Bid adieu in the joyaunce of Christ in the heart.

PREFACE IN FICTION.

HAVING introduced himself in prose, and likewise in verse, nothing remains but for the Author to complete the ceremony in fiction. Fiction is the fashion; and if the reader will permit the waving of that magic wand—

Lo! Travellers! They are wandering by the sad sea waves, a sad sea party, seeking rest but finding none. The Fates, till now propitious, seem to have deserted them in their hour of direst need, and the gloaming draws on without prospect of home. But the good Fairy, always stronger in the end than the bad, draws near in the shape of one of those "most potent, grave, and reverend signiors," in England translated "ministers"; who directs the ill-fated Traveller's family to their desired haven, and the Saturday sun finally sets on a family at rest. Day by day, through our "minister's month," this happy intercourse is resumed—on the rocks, sands, reefs, cliffs; on the piers, decks, boats, walks; in the garden, lighthouse, study, kirk; in the storm, calm, darkness, light. Day by day mind mutually cheers mind, and store is mutually added to store, till the Traveller returns with the treasures of his book gleaned from Hermit, Poet, Friend, of course with "all rights reserved."

Now for his secrets! Advance!

OFF DUTY.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE VOICES OF MORTHOE.

IT was Monday evening when the party were assembled on the cliffs to watch the sunset, which promised, after a day of exceeding loveliness, to be one of surpassing grandeur. The bold, rocky scenery amongst which they sat called to mind descriptions and legends, which Kingsley has made famous, of the coast of the West.

"The coast of Devon," said the Hermit, "is rugged, stormy, dangerous. The navigation has to be conducted by pilots up and down the Channel. The whole coast, described by Kingsley as 'rocks like a vast forest of shark's teeth,' utterly forbids landing or anchorage for many miles."

"Yes," replied the Traveller; "but the coast is well protected now by a splendid series of lighthouses, with all the most approved apparatus for saving life."

"Strange traditions those," murmured the Hermit. "Tradition, ever busy, still peoples those stormy steeps

with the spirits of the wreckers; and in foul weather the simple inhabitants are loath to stir abroad lest they meet the uncanny dead."

"Has not history some associations there?" asked the Traveller.

"Very many," replied the Hermit. "Tracey, who was one of the knights who murdered Becket, sought refuge at Woollacombe Tracey, near Ilfracombe, where they say the Fates doomed him to bind those wide-stretching sands in sheaves. Fancy still sees him in the gloaming at his fruitless toil, or imploring pity from the sun, just set, speedily to return and release him from his task."

"Oh! I remember that," said the Traveller.

"A wandering Jew," resumed the Hermit, "was there once murdered for the sake of booty; and the rustics still fancy his trunkless head roams through the bushes at large."

"The spectre boat!" croaked our Muse, pointing with his bony finger to the setting sun, where a ship crossing his disc aptly enough recalled the spectre boat, in which the living were convoyed by the dead.

All eyes were now fixed upon the splendid sight, as amid curtains of crimson and saffron the king of day descended to his rest, while a path of glittering stars and gold stretched across the deep to every spectator's eye—and, let us hope, their teaching up to every heart.

And as we watched, the Muse, pensively, and at times excitedly, with his gaze fixed upon the west, rehearsed—

The Three Voices of Morthoe.

I. NATURE.

SEEST thou these towering crags and steeps,
  These skies so blue and fair;
This mighty sea, this surging foam,
  These caverns dark and rare?

Seest thou a change, how soon 'tis made,
From storm to sweetest calm ;
These sea-mists, how they fall and fade,
That none may come to harm ?

Seest thou these rocks, whose giddy heights
With fern and flower are drest ;
This gorse and purple heather-bloom,
That speak of peace and rest ?

Seest thou these ships, both small and great,
That spread the sunny sail,
r reef and steer with trembling keel
When stormy scenes prevail ?

The thousand sounds that meet thine ear,
In heaven, or earth, or sea ;
The thousand sights that greet thine eye,
Tell of MY GOD and ME.

II. LEGEND.

SEEST thou yon point, where boiling surge
Is mixed with shark's-tooth rock ;
Where wave is shattered into spray,
With heaving, throbbing shock ?

Around these vast and seamy teeth,
The wrecker's form still floats ;
And syren voice, that sings of love,
Allures the passing boats.

Seest thou yon hill, with purple crown ?
Yon weird and lonely spot,
Fit scene for sin, or deed of blood,
Has had its hapless lot.

A wandering Jew, with treasure full,
Was here allured to doom ;
And round these gloomy bushes brown,
The trunkless head will roam.

And when has sunk the bright red sun,
  And night-winds groan and sigh,
The simple swain avoids with fear,
  Nor dare he venture nigh.

Seest thou these sands, mile after mile,
  And Tracey's farmhouse wild,—
Now sweet in its simplicity,
  But once by evil spoiled?

The hand was red with Becket's blood,
  That once sought here a rest,
Once doomed the sand to bind in sheaves,
  Once lifted to the west.

But all in vain, the Fates forbid,
  The task is still undone;
The restless spirit gloams and glides,
  From eve till morning sun.

The wreckers now have passed away,
  And better thoughts prevail;
That murder, too, for greed of gain,
  That makes the face grow pale.

The deed of blood for love of king,
  That once stained Cantuar's fane;
The deed of blood for love of gold,
  We scarce shall hear again.

Seest thou yon sea within a sea,
  The gold within the blue;
The phantom-ship with full-set sail,
  Telling of heaven for you?

Traditions dark may stain the page,
  Traditions hide the light;
But may these Devon legends lead
  To other scenes and bright.

III. GOD.

Seest thou this broad and shining sea,
  Sleeping so calm and clear?
This is My work and Mine alone;
  No human hand is here.

The raging wave, the tossing foam?
  They know no human lord:
My voice, and Mine it is alone,
  Can still them with a word.

Seest thou these rocks, with grim set teeth?
  The ribs of Earth they be;
I formed them, ere from dust man came,
  Beneath yon deep blue sea.

My power, and Mine alone, has made
  Old Earth's huge frame to shake;
Till from their lowly-lying bed,
  I did these giants take.

Yon glorious sun, yon sea of gold,
  No human hand have seen;
But Mine and Mine alone the touch
  That gives their golden sheen.

That sun, too bright for mortal eye,
  And mirrored in the sea,
A path of gold and stars it leaves
  To lead thy thoughts to Me.

The noonday blaze that fills the sky,
  A thousand starlets makes;
And ocean's azure glints and glows,
  As Heaven's path it takes.

But when it finds the western sky,
  A path of burnished gold
Reaches from yonder shining orb,
  To thrill thy human soul.

It speaks of God and things divine,
Of earth unmarred by sin ;
Of heaven, and all the matchless good
For those who enter in.

* * * * *

Oh ! matchless sights, oh ! matchless sounds,
Whose beauty all is God's ;
Sad that poor erring man should stain
With tears and sin these sods.

Walk in the Light that leads to light,
Walk in Christ's glowing sun ;
Then shalt thou find the light of life,
When this life's gleam is done.

CHAPTER II.

A STORY OF A GREAT SNOW.

THE next day was gloomy; indeed it became so gloomy towards sundown, that the Hermit invited the party into his cozy study, where, around the hissing and not unwelcome urn, the Travellers were most hospitably entertained. Conversation having turned upon the great Temperance question, our host undertook to interest us for the evening by the recital of a fact and its moral that had come under his own notice; and taking from his desk a paper, he read—happily now with closed curtains and a beaming lamp—

Vested Interests;

OR, A STORY OF A GREAT SNOW.

IT was the world's fourteenth, though it came on the nineteenth. It was not the lady's fourteenth, for that came a month later, but our own. Nor was it St. Valentine's, nor even St. Crispin's; and yet the world that morning had a crisp snowy valentine of its own to open, and all impatient it was to break the seal. Nor was there any respect of persons this morning; for master and servant, mistress and

maid, had each their share. The farmer, the tradesman, the mechanic, the labourer, nay, don't be shocked, even the vicar and the "pairson," had a valentine that day; and such was the interest of the whole village in these most reverend worthies, that a relief party was speedily organized, first of all to "let the poor pairsons out."

There now, I have divulged my secret! The simple truth is, we were all snowed up. While men slept the enemy had sowed—some said ice and some said rice, and had invested the world as completely as in a siege, burying our poor carrier's van bodily for many a day, and many a poor fellow whose duties or whose delights that night had taken him abroad. Thus besieged, there was nothing to be done but shorten rations and await relief.

We had inspected the larder, we had gauged the coal-scuttle, we had partaken of a frugal breakfast, when an ominous sound reached our ears. It was like spade and shovel hard at work; could it be friends or—foes? The unseen party were working near us, had fairly surrounded us; they had already stormed our coal-shed; now they were storming our portal in the rear. At length a cheery voice was heard telling us we were free; and on opening, what a scene met our astonished gaze!

There was the animated relief party, all aglow with their exertions, and all rejoicing at their success—their costumes, like their countenances, defying all description; but all so hearty and so demonstrative were they, that we first handed them "something hot and strong" (not your chimney-corner sort, Mr. Churchwarden, to wet a yard of clay), then sent them off all jubilant because "pairson" was free.

But the still life—enveloped like some giant form in snowy coverlid, whose limbs could faintly be made out beneath the swelling mound, fantastic wraith, or glistening drift—how can I describe it! That scene, till now hidden by the fairy

fretwork of our frozen windows, baffles all the painting of human words. Mimic Andes, glittering Alps; forests of pearl, pathways of diamond; all was beautiful—gorgeously, dazzlingly beautiful—but cold, cold as death.

But, being relieved, we must stir abroad.

Parties, large parties, are everywhere at work *pro bono publico*, for our village is likely to be on short allowance soon. The highway past the manse lay exactly athwart that cutting nor'-easter, and had received the blinding drift as completely as a well-filled ditch its water, so that breast-high, wall-high, hedge-high had this new road metal fallen, till truly all things were new.

Our party continued vigorously digging their way *for bread*, and towards sundown they met an opposite party from a neighbouring village, who were digging their way *for work*—threshing wheat, "to be taken off," as the sale bills said.

But between these two parties there lay for several hundred yards a huge six-foot drift, effectually preventing union that night. The bend in the road permitted them to see each other, but many hours of work must pass ere that road could be cleared.

What must be done? To their right, to our left, was a bleak bare field, which having shirked its own burden of snow for that poor road to bear, lay rejoicing in its unjust freedom. At their right was one gate, to our left was another gate, clearly inviting a road between them.

A legal consultation now took place. The "pairson" was called, but knowing less of law than gospel, clearly he was out of court.

"But here's Old Steevie," said one.

Now Steevie was our parish surveyor, and an authority; he could preach the road to heaven, and he could mend the roads of earth.

"Law," said Steevie, "law—why the law compels the *tenant* to clear to the crown of the road, and we be compelled to go on the land till it be done!"

No sooner said than done. Instantly we diverged to our left, our friends deployed to their right, and the parties met ere sunset in the midst of the field.

Loud huzzas rent the wintry air as some passed on for bread, and some passed on for work, and we were saved. Through that evening and part of next day the traffic lay through those open gates and over that inviting field, whilst an army of workers attacked that big drift. They worked with implements perhaps never so employed before, the malt shovel vying with the coal shovel till the work was done—perhaps the former was never in better company, or found at better work.

As the next evening closed in, a passage like a cutting through a chalk cliff had been made, sufficient for the Indian file of butcher, baker, and miller to resume the road for our relief. Bread and work were free, and each hour of traffic made that way broader, and the bread and the work more easy, more secure, and more free.

May I "point a moral" to "adorn this tale?"

The "pairsons" are being rapidly freed from the trammels of the Drink, and the growing numbers of clergymen, ministers, and students are clearly traceable to the strong pressure of the world without. They *must* do good, and not evil. The Drink-fiend, having shirked its burdens, and rejoicing in "protection," has "vested interests" to plead (as who has not?); but *pro bono publico* demands a right of way, and the sense and soon the law of the land will demand the same.

"Vested interests!"—of course there are vested interests! King John had them when he had to sign the Charter; and King James had them when he had to lose his crown.

Aristocracy had them when it passed the Reform Bill; Trade had them when it repealed the Corn Laws.

"Vested interests!" Do they not cling to vice as easily as to virtue? Slavery had them, but they were no hindrance to its abolition. Pugilism had them, but they must be no bar to the banishment of its brutalities. Prostitution has them, but they must not prevent the cleansing of our scutcheon from this Moloch-mark of sin. The Drink has its "vested interests"—vast ones, mighty ones; but the land must be free—free for *work* and free for *bread*.

And just as that farmer's field was none the worse, but all the better, for its temporary purpose of traffic, and the way was soon made broad and big enough for all need, so "the trade" will soon right itself, and find out other channels of business more legitimate and lucrative (if "the trade" advertisements speak truly); whilst the country will get its rightful bread for its labour, work for its willing hands, and blessing for its perishing poor.

"The trade" will not clear the way; the Gospel Temperance Mission must. This Mission holds God as its Head, Christ as its King, the Spirit as its Guide; and it may not, must not, stay its work for the "vested interests" of "the trade." "Vested interests!"—hark!

> "The streets of the city are full
> Of poor little perishing souls."

The death-cry of 60,000 drunkards, the moans of 60,000 mothers, wives, or sisters, the wails of 100,000 orphans, are in our ears—these are the true "vested interests." Think of the blackened hearth, the ruined home; the wearied flesh, the avenging blood; the cheerless life, the hopeless death—these are the only "vested interests" we must regard. And till these cries cease, till their cause is gone—over all obstacles, over all interests, past all prejudice, past all power—we will, we must, go forward.

CHAPTER III.

THE SILENT POOL.

A SUNNY afternoon next day drew all forth with its summer beauties, and the Travellers were fain to seek the cool shelter of a little copse, whose southern aspect permitted its gentler children of birch and lime, or stronger ones of oak and elm, to thrive. Reclining at full length beneath their grateful shade, conversation turned upon local legend, always an absorbing topic to the Muse, who volunteered the most astonishing traditions of the Silent Pool, Albury, which Martin Tupper, he said, had made immortal in a history of Stephan Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury.

"The Silent Pool," said the Muse, "is beautifully embosomed amidst tall towering beeches; its waters are marvellously clear, and surround with a faint opal tint the most vulgar objects cast into them; while tradition asserts that here a fair girl was drowned in her efforts to frustrate John's tyranny, and her brother was lost for the same cause."

"Oh! Mr. Poet," said the children, "do prose for us"—"pose" they meant, referring to the Muse's attitudes.

And the Muse rose and frowningly began—

The Silent Pool, Albury.

THE town was so full of its holiday gay,
The town was too hot for the children to stay ;
The country they sought in their holiday glee,
The country, whose fields were so fresh and so free.

The rush of the rail has conveyed us thus far,
And now for a tramp through the dust-laden air ;
The sights and the sounds of each rural abode
Are marred by the heat and the toil of the road.

But stay ! what is this ? this tree-shadowed way,
This wilderness-lodge, with embosoming spray,
These tables inviting, these porches so cool ?
Oh ! here is the legend—" Key kept of the Pool."

A coy rustic maiden now answers our call,
And informs us with blushes this key opens all ;
And the small iron wicket swings back at our will,
With fair vistas of shade-walk inviting and still.

But what breaks the silence, while insects' soft hum
Scarce seems to disturb Nature's slumber so dumb ?
'Tis loud, ringing laughter, sweet, hearty, and clear,
Telling the pilgrims—" Ye are not first here ! "

An acre of woodland with maze-walk entwined,
A sheet of clear water by wood-slope confined ;
With sky, fall, and arbour, all playing their part,
To complete this fair union of Nature with Art.

And now have we twice well encircled the Pool,
Through its dim-shaded alleys sequestered and cool ;
We have passed those fair merry ones high on the hill—
But what of these waters : why silent and still ?

Have ye no history? Great is your age,
Tradition and rumour have filled your full page;
Of the fair one here sacrificed, strong one laid low,
And deep vows of vengeance 'gainst Tyranny's brow?

But have ye no lesson, ye clear, shining deeps?
No truths to enforce, ye wild tree-shaded steeps?
Your trees may grow high, may stand long, yet must fall;
"Surely so must the pleasures of earth-joys soon pall."

Your fair opal hue, is it floor, sky, or mead,
Encircling with rainbows each stone, stick, or weed:
Giving your finny ones nimbus and bow,
That the sky and the earth appear blended below?

That hue is the light thou dost drink from the sun,
But canst not confine, nor its mission canst shun;
So may I drink deeply the "Light of the Word,"
And make even rude things to shine for my Lord.

But how shallow ye seem, and how near is your floor,
As though 'twere not feet, but mere inches before!
"That depth is deceptive, those deeps are as death,
The shallowest of pleasures has pain in its breath."

But why are ye motionless, where is your tide?
"Witness vanguard and rearguard, my hills on each side."
Why move not your water-weeds, wave not your plumes?
"Ah! that would raise foulness fair breast scarce assumes."

Is it so, then—that stillness, seclusion, and peace,
Can only be bought when our life-duties cease?
Nay! Surround me, O God, with Thine own loving charms,
Give me moments of peace in the midst of alarms.

Is it so, then—disturbance would open the lie,
And show, not as yet am I saint for the sky?
Oh! root out the foulness; oh! pluck out the sin;
Oh! grant me Thine own gift, a pure heart within.

O waters, I see through thy clear depths beneath,
There is refuse, impurity, foulness, and death !
So my God sees my poor heart, though hidden to me,
He sees what the world's keenest eye may not see.

O waters, I thank you for lessons here learnt ;
O sun, may those truths in my dark heart be burnt ;
O trees, may I grow till my Lord give the word ;
O sky, may I enter the joy of my Lord !

* * * * *

Come, shake off thy reveries. Duties do call,
There is work, there is conflict, for thee and for all ;
Take, then, thy duty-track ; back to thy road ;
Resting sure that Christ's way leads thee safely to God.

CHAPTER IV.

ON PASTORAL VISITING.

THEY were all snugly ensconced on the end of the pier, whence the many promenaders were distinctly visible; nay, more, gentle reader, and were distinctly audible. The children were busy with their nets searching for finny treasures—fishers in God's sea; and the friends were reminded of their work in God's world as fishers of men. The elders became sad and pensive as memory hastily conducted them over past failures, with an encouraging finger here and there for bright gleamings of partial success. Each one busy with his own thoughts, they were almost startled as the familiar salute broke upon their ears, "What a number of visitors to-day!"

"Ah! Mr. Hermit," said one, "that reminds me of some sentiments in your Sabbath morning's discourse. It was very paradoxical, surely—but I think it was true—that visiting is at once a cause of a minister's failure or a secret of a minister's success.'"

"The point is this," replied the reverend gentleman thus irreverently addressed: "right visiting helps a pastor's work, but wrong visiting hinders a pastor's work."

"But do not some eminent authorities assert that the minister's place is in the pulpit, and not in the parlour at all?" inquired the Traveller.

"Yes; and not without very grave cause," was the answer. "They have seen the Christian teacher quite lost in the gossip of the parlour; and the Christian leader lost amid the scandal of society."

"But, surely, such advice is very dangerous to a young minister of Jesus Christ. Surely there must be visiting, or how can men properly feed the flock over which God hath made them overseers?"

"Better not visit at all," said the Muse, "than pay such visits as memory paints for me," mournfully shaking his head at the very thought.

A chorus of voices at once chimed in, "Oh! do tell us about them, please."

Our melancholy friend, ever taciturn till the right chord was touched, looked inquiringly round, as if to test the seriousness of his audience. Apparently feeling satisfied, yet sorry to have opened such a subject, he said, "One only shall suffice."

"I was only a boy," he said, "when my poor father suddenly died, leaving my mother with the great care of our education and support. We had buried my father but a few days, when our minister called. We had only seen him in the pulpit at kirk, when he seemed to us lofty as an angel, and at the grave side, when he seemed scarcely less so.

"On the occasion of this visit, the alarming news was conveyed to the nursery by that system of dumb telegraphy so well understood by boys; and the childish game in which we were trying to forget our big trouble was instantly stayed. With our hearts in our throats, we waited the turn of this most mysterious tide; when at last we had the summons—we were wanted downstairs.

"In a mournful procession, sad as if at another funeral, in solemn single file we passed down the stairs. But the courage of our leader failed at the parlour door, and by bringing our column suddenly to a halt, he threw our whole army into direst confusion. In the *mêlée* some of us fell, and in the fun of the moment all gloom vanished, and with one consent we burst into a merry peal of laughter.

"In a moment the parlour-door was opened, and two awe-struck faces looked out upon us. One was that of our mother, ready to laugh with us, but that tears still glistened on her cheeks; the other was that of our minister, whose countenance had long since forgotten to obey the impulse to laugh. Motioning us into the room, he treated us as a text upon which to hang a long pastoral homily—concerning the sin of laughter, to wit.

"My poor mother, in more than hints, was admonished how to treat so untamed a set of savages; and by way of example he proceeded to exercise us in the Assembly's Catechism, wherein our grave defects became more and more apparent, till the perplexed minister finally gave up the task in sheer despair. A second homily followed on the sin of a bad memory. Thus doubly convicted of sin—sin of commission in laughter, sin of omission in forgetfulness—there seemed no hope. And now in solemn language he prayed for us all in turn, finishing at last with the Church militant of which we were such unworthy children, and the wicked world of which we were so guilty a part.

"And we were dismissed," sighed the Muse, "hoping to see his face—no more."

"No wonder" said the Hermit. "But that style of visitation has had its day, and ceased to be" (unconsciously quoting Tennyson)—"at least I hope so. I think the danger lies now in the other extreme. Worldliness has

set its seal upon the ministry, and a minister's visits now are treated as the visits of the world.

"May I give an instance?" he inquired. "A young minister—and the danger is specially a young minister's—called recently upon one of his leading families. Interviewed by the lady of the house, the usual subjects engrossed their attention—namely, the weather, the prospects, the fashions; literature, science, art; society, scandal, surmise—till tea was announced.

"The head of the family appearing at this meal diverted the talk into other channels, politics, trade, the drama. After tea, the young ladies of the family took the lead, introducing numberless questions on fancy work and kindred topics, interspersed with music, singing, and gossip.

"At last, our young friend, conscious of an utter failure in his mission, as well as the fault of 'having lost a day,' confusedly withdrew. Ignominiously he felt he had better have stayed in his study, than have permitted himself to be carried helplessly away on that worldly tide.

"We want such a grasp of all these subjects as shall enable us to bring our great Christian principles to bear upon them, thus making the world to serve *our* purpose, rather than we should serve the world's."

The ladies, notably Mrs. Hermit and Mrs. Traveller, during these recitals, had been exchanging glances of the most confidential nature.

At last, Mrs. Traveller broke silence.

"Well, as we mothers have more of such visits to receive than any other members of the family, it seems likely we should know what sort of visits ought to be paid, and when we would like them paid."

"Hear, hear!" most gallantly supported the Muse. "I propose, ladies and gentlemen, I propose that the conditions of pastoral visitation be laid down by the ladies at

the bar"—in mock allusion to the rail over which in our excitement we had all risen to lean.

"Carried unanimously," said the Hermit.

"By way of staying execution for a moment," gasped the Traveller, "may I suggest that right visitation is happily not extinct? There still are men, young men as well as old, who make the pulpit their public meeting, and the visit their class-meeting; men who conscientiously go the round of the flock, simply to enforce the truth of the Sabbath on the practice of the week, to be the friend and adviser of old and young; men who can rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep; men who go into home-life to learn what is real life, and there get such teaching for themselves which makes them the true teachers and true friends of their flocks; men who——"

"Stop, my dear," said his wife, "or all the men will be angels, and all the angels will want to be men."

"Let the angels now instruct the men," said the ever gallant Muse.

"Our verdict is," said Mrs. Hermit, "that visits shall be paid as a matter of pastoral duty, for the more efficient performance of the pastoral work; that such visits shall ever have more in them of the Christian friend than they shall have of the priestly inquisitor; that such visits shall always lead our thoughts higher, and leave our motives purer than they were before; that such visits shall have so much in them of a sense of infirmity and weakness, that, wherever practicable, they shall be closed with brief, pointed, homely prayer."

"And in order that they may be practical," said the motherly Mrs. Traveller, as her weary little ones began to nestle to her side, "never let them be on washing-day, if you can help it."

"Hear, hear," said the Muse.

"Nor on ironing-day, which is worse."

"Hear, hear," repeated the Poet.

"Nor on baking-day."

"Oh! oh!" gasped the Muse.

"Nor at bed-time," bravely concluded the little woman.

"Hear, hear," echoed the solitary man.

"No, not here, thank you, Mr. Muse; these little ones want a softer couch than 'here, here.' Here, let your strong arms take one up; and yours, sir, another; and yours, dear, a third," said Mrs. Hermit.

And thus it was, with solemn step and slow, that the party left the pier, tired with the day's pleasure, but glad in the thought of what splendid visits would be paid by such nurse-men as these in the way of pastoral visitation.

CHAPTER V.

ST. CATHARINE'S AND ST. MARTHA'S.

THE last local lucubration of the Poet left such an impression on the party, that with one consent they felt there was more to follow. All the morning they missed him, and it was only in the afternoon, when they were lounging in the garden of the manse, with the chatty talk of the crowd just reaching it like a gentle ripple, and the hoarse murmur of the restless tide fitfully breaking on their ears, in sound but not in sight of the sea, that he made his appearance. Even the little ones left tennis and croquet to gather round him with their cry, "Oh, please Mr. Poet, do prose."

"What about St. Martha's and St. Catharine's?" said Mrs. Hermit, slyly, evidently seeking the right chord.

"Ah! yes; grand history, strange mystery," rhymed the Muse. "It is said that Stephan Langton and Alice were buried at St. Martha's."

"But who *was* Alice?" pleaded his tormentor.

"Alice was the betrothed (here he winced) of Stephan; was nearly burned to death at Tangley; and in ignorance that her lover lived, became a nun at St. Catharine's. Stephan became a great monk, and finally the great archbishop who dared the tyrant John, you know."

"Oh! prose it, prose it," cried the children.

"Verse is worse," he replied, as sinking on a seat—them clinging at his feet, like another Long-fellow, as he literally was, he began:

St. Catharine's and St. Martha's.

I. ST. CATHARINE'S.

OH! thanks to the masters of widespreading local historical knowledge,
From out of whose generous storehouses the stranger rich treasures goes gleaning;
Let us take, this fine evening, the guidance of one of tradition's enthusiasts,
And sally forth searching and seeing, and gathering truth by the heartful.

Taking the road called the "Portsmouth," with its contrasted vistas on each hand,
The deep-wooded slope of Mount Pleasant, the meadows, and rivers, and quarries;
Passing alike modern villa, and almshouse, and cottage, and hostel,
We reach the foot of a green slope, by the natives ycleped "St. Catharine's."

The trains rushing past it and under, like some monster retreating to darkness,
Warn us to wander more silent between these precipitous sand-hills;
The martins have made them a colony, and fly in and out to their nestlings,
The children, too, gladly are playing in the fern-shaded nooks of their caverns.

Encompass the hill as we may do, yet surely we mean to surmount it,
Where father, and mother, and children, and nurseling are happily playing;

The pinnacled walls of the chapel, the crumbling gray arches and windows,
To them are a calm shady playground, but to us full of historic memories.

These old roofless walls one time echoed the songs and the sighs of the sisters,
Who at matins and evensong worshipped, with reverent spirits assembled;
The cloister and cell of their home-life, the hall and refectory, have perished,
While the shrine, where their souls often feasted, is standing to teach us to worship.

The portals unguarded now teach me the way to my Father is open,
That the service desired is not bondage, but of heart, and of love, and of free will;
The windows, once dim with their paintings, now open to calm or to storm time,
Teach me my soul must be open to meet all the changes of fortune.

The timbers long fallen and ruined, leaving God's fair blue sky for a ceiling,
Show me that nothing may hinder the ascent of my prayers to my Father;
The altar, too, downfallen long since, as are also those sable-draped sisters,
Tell how I need a heart-altar, an undying priesthood, a Saviour.

But why muse I thus in my sadness, while God's sun-lighted world loud invites me?
Let me look at this wide-spreading prospect, with meadow-land, woodland, and highland;
Turn I southward, or westward, or eastward, the pleasing picture but varies,
While northward is townward and homeward, where my path should be, worldward to bless it.

* * * * * *

I must live in the present, then, always, but may muse in the past for my profit,
Gleaning arrows of knowledge and truth from the long-fallen quivers of history ;
Then, falling and dying, as one day must happen to noblest and truest,
I shall leave in my track some deep footprints of peace, and of power, and of pleasure.

II. ST. MARTHA'S.

Oh ! vanish, ye villas, a moment, with your stretches of gay terra-cotta,
Let the picture arise to my fancy, as four centuries since Langton saw it ;
Past cottage and moss-well of peasant, past bright healing spring to the Ferry—
Not ferry then, ford for the brothers, with perhaps a frail raft for the sisters—

Through meadowy morass, by pathway once worn by the sandals of pilgrims,
Crossing the roadway, now skirting the face of the weather-worn chalk cliffs,
There opens a gentle ascending, embowered with trees and with bushes,
Rising higher, and higher, and higher, above chimney, and tree-top—the Chantry.

The moan of the pine woods, so soothing, resembles the psalm of the brethren,
As they traversed this way to St. Martha's, to offer their worship together ;
Through underwood, bracken, and furze-bush, at last we ascend to the open,
Where bleakly upstands with sharp outline, St. Martha's, commanding the prospect.

The grass at my feet now grows finer, and the gorse has made way for blue heather ;
The dizzy high-flying swallows now flit swift as lightning beneath me ;

Now here is the spot called God's acre, with a broken oak fencing
around it,
With the mounds of the dead, and the names of the living ones
cut in its turf breast.

Now for the local enthusiast to tell me the number of counties,
To point me, both landward and seaward, the spots to be seen
from my eerie ;
Where I may see the "big city," and the glistering "Palace of
Crystal" ;
Where I may fancy I see the horizon just faintly betipped with
the sea-glints.

Here at my feet is the farmhouse familiarly known as Great
Tangley,
Built since the fire at the hunting-box once occupied by the
tyrant ;
Here is the hamlet of Chilworth, now famous for powder and
type-craft,
Redeemed from the forest where, one time, John hunted the
deer and the maiden.

No ! let me kneel at this portal, that opes in the great western
gable,
And list to the aves and the paters, as they echo so weirdly
about me.
There is the mitred archbishop, the peasant who came to be
primate ;
There is the closely veiled Alice, once laid on this altar in
death-trance.

And now the long gorgeous procession returns with its incense
and banners,
I see them retreating before me till their forms are all lost in
the woodland—

* * * * * *

But lo ! a rude hand is laid on me, with a loud merry voice
thus accosting,
"What, dreaming again ! 'You have heard, you have seen'—
yes, the wind and the bushes.

"The church where you have been musing has not seen the same years that you have ;
The scenes of your fanciful vision have been shadowy vain cogitation.
Oh ! live in the present, and act for to-day, and well heed my warning,
The times are not so much to blame as earth's supine and slumbering children."

* * * * * *

* * * * * *

On the one side was gray Newark Abbey, the home of the self-banished Stephan ;
On the other, St. Catharine's Abbey, the abode of the vow-fettered Alice :
The flames of love's fires scorched the brother, the flaming of Tangley the sister,
But here, on the summit, St. Martha's, was the calm, happy tryst of the lovers.

Oh ! blessed am I if my spirit has been roused from its sin-swoon and slumber ;
Thrice blest, in my loving Lord's temple, to have waked to the light of love's dawning.
Oh ! happy indeed shall my life be, whatever the crosses that shadow,
Thrice happy that life, when my Saviour redeems it, ordains it, and shares it.

Farewell, ye fair visions of beauty ; farewell, ye fond pictures of fancy !
Many thanks for the pleasure imparted, greater thanks for the truths you have taught me.
Let my life be fresh, moss-like, and living, though the cross may be deeply cut in it,
Let my grave be a mound raised above it, facing heaven and a morning unending.

CHAPTER VI.

ON CLASS-MEETINGS.

LET me tell you how it happened. They were "walking to the mail" on the Saturday evening, when the conversation turned on the class-meeting. But before I touch upon this big subject, may I move a previous question? A sad trouble had befallen one of the children during the day, which was the reason why the Traveller was not accompanied by the little Travellers; and the Hermit, having finished his Sabbath preparation, was found quite willing for a stroll. Mrs. Traveller's brother, irreverently styled Jack, was expected down for a Sunday rest; and the Traveller formed the convoy or relief party told off for Jack's assistance.

It had been arranged, moreover, that Jack (oh! this bad fashion of doing as Rome does) should alight at the last station but one, leaving his luggage to be forwarded, and thus allow of a good stroll home by a picturesque cliff road, at times beautifully overlooking the sea.

"But who," you say, "was Jack?"

Do be patient, gentle reader, and I really will try and explain. Of course Jack originally was a romping brother

of a no less romping sister (I daren't have said that in Mrs. T.'s hearing, but it's true); but daily increasing in length and breadth, in wisdom and stature, he has now "developed" into the Reverend John Method of many years' standing. Still, as to some parties he will be Jack to the end of the chapter, so shall he be to the end of this.

At present the company consisted of a "duo," representing two sections of the church, and seemed in very good humour with itself.

"By the way, Traveller," broke in the Hermit, as they walked and were still, "how did you get hold of that idea about visitation being made into a class-meeting? I thought class-meetings were as inquisitorial as confession, and equally as bad."

"Well, I dare say previous experience and association have something to do with it; but the fact is, Jack is a Methodist, and I learnt a great deal from him, I suppose."

The sly rogue—he didn't say he knew somebody else before he knew Jack at all, and that she had been the principal exponent of the advantages of the class-meeting.

"Well, then, my experience and association have been of a different character, I suppose; and my opinion doesn't seem to run much in that direction. You see religion is such a sacred thing for the individual soul, that I shrink from anything like interference on the part of man."

"Yes; and that feeling needs to be fostered still. Yet you would acknowledge the help you get occasionally from communion with a wise Christian friend?"

"But I would prefer that friend to be of my own choosing."

"Well, brother, of course there are organic differences between your church and mine; but I can hardly resist the conviction we both want something more in the shape of brotherly love in our churches. There are some very grave

defects in the class-meeting, when it becomes exalted into a standard of orthodoxy or a gauge of spiritual life; when it becomes debased into sentimental gossip, or is made the vehicle of an unwholesome confession. But, wisely ordered, I confidently believe it would be found very helpful to many Christians—in giving a decided tone to a Christian life, in giving scope to the practice of brotherly love, and in the promotion of a very desirable unity——I thought I was preaching," he abruptly concluded.

"I am glad the matter has been mooted, for it is clear my impressions of class-meetings are somewhat hazy. Doesn't the leader cross-examine the members as to their daily lives? and except a man opens up his secrets, can he be looked upon as a member in good standing?"

"Of course, you know, brother, it is a Methodist institution, and is confined to the members of the society; and consequently it is strictly a secret organization. But still, by a little strategy, perfectly honest, too (by means I needn't mention now), I have been permitted to attend one or two, both of the male and female classes. I can say certainly there is no cross-examination; but not so certainly there is no confession. Some natures unfortunately rejoice in the baring of the breast, and will confess in their own way; and to my thinking this is no small danger."

"I think I begin to see some of the advantages of the system; but how shall we obviate its dangers?"

"Much, if not everything, depends on the tact and spirituality of the leader, as is very frequently the case elsewhere. But I can very readily see how some modification of such a system—embodying its banishment of social distinction and its promotion of brotherly love, its comparing of religious experience and seeking of spiritual power—under efficient control, would very much help the individual life of our churches, and serve to render us more powerful as a people."

"Isn't this a quaint little place?" said the Hermit, as they reached the tiny station. "Shall I show you round, sir?" This was said with the mock air of one who shows the lions of the place.

"No, thanks. Here's Jack's train."

"Draw him out on this theme," wickedly whispered the Hermit.

Jack, having freed himself from the Traveller's grip, the Hermit could now see that if he could not be denominated as "of the straitest sect of the Pharisees," certainly not of the weeping class, he might be correctly described as "of the weightiest class of the Wesleyans, and most massive order of Methodists."

Brotherly greetings having passed, the "trio"—it was a trio now, and no company according to the adage—started for home. They soon linked arms, jolly companions every one; and hearty laughter soon proved them at home already in soul.

It was a pretty sight—perhaps it was prophetic of a time when the sects will be drawn much nearer to each other for mutual comfort and mutual work; when, as we are already beginning to do, they will learn from each other things to seek and things to shun. Some with advantage might possess more liberty, and others more system; some might have less creed, and some profit with more. Monopoly of truth, of perfection, of method, at present must be claimed by none.

On entering on a part of the road where the view was confined to the tall banks on either side, the conversation flagged for a moment.

"Will they abolish the class-meeting, Jack?" abruptly asked the Traveller.

"Not while I can help it!" was the warm reply.

"I mean as a test of membership," continued Mr. T.

"Well, that's another question," he answered. "There

may be wisdom in making it optional rather than compulsory. What injury can be done to a soul when it voluntarily seeks the fellowship of kindred souls, I cannot see."

"I have read a book called 'Daniel Quorm,' where pictures are given of the class-meeting. Are those pictures real?" inquired the somewhat stately Hermit.

"Undoubtedly, most real pictures of Cornish class-meetings. The picture will vary, of course, according to the class of people—rural, manufacturing, commercial."

"But you have met men as wise as Daniel?" said the Traveller.

"Oh yes, many! We want men of large experience, wise method, loving heart; men of one Book, one purpose, one love. We want members who shall lose pride of position in love to souls, and self-importance in the glory of Christ. Methodism has always had some such members and some such men; and those were the days of Methodist power, when their number was legion. The leader of a class wants discrimination, so that he may sympathize with the reticent and ignore the arrogant, encourage the humble, discourage the proud. He needs a large knowledge of character, and moral power in the proper control of men."

"Well, we needn't vote on the question, I'm sure," said the Hermit; "but I am quite hopeful that the best methods will more and more permeate all our churches, and more and more become universal power."

"To put it as a prayer, brother, we can all say heartily, 'Amen!'" responded the Traveller.

Beneath a rising moon the Hermit departed, leaving the brothers to wend their homeward way. And surely that rising moon, with her holy usefulness of light and power, might not unfairly picture that Divine influence that shall give light in the darkness, and the rising tide of a Christian life to the drooping energies of the Christian Church.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GLOW-WORM.

IT was a beautiful evening on Monday, when the party in all its completeness sat on the edge of the cliffs overlooking the sea. Even before the sun went down they saw the fitful gleam of a lightship over the waves; and when the sun had really gone, and the twilight deepened into night, their attention was arrested by a cry of delight from one of the girls who had secured a live glow-worm, which she was carefully bringing for the general inspection. Boys, ever envious, started for a prize of their own; girls, ever curious, gathered round in wonder; but the Muse, ever mysterious, seemed interested, if not excited, by the event.

"Wonderful creatures," he said; "and wonderfully suggestive, too."

"How do you mean?" asked Jack's sister.

"Oh! well, I mean they taught me much once," replied the Poet.

"Which 'much' you must turn into more," drily observed Jack.

"Children all.
Come at call."

This was Jack's way of ringing the bells for the congregation; and this was the Poet's way of improving

The Glow-worm.

("*After*" TENNYSON).

"I waited for the train at Coventry;
I hung with grooms and porters on the bridge,
To watch the three tall spires; and there I framed
The city's ancient legend into this."

'Tis thus my neighbour, Tennyson the bard,
Inscribes the lines which give a legend life;
Teaching, perchance, a needed well-worn truth,
Tradition circling with eternal fame.

At Weybridge 'twas I waited for a train,
And stood with whips and porters on its bridge
To watch my forlorn hope; but on its heath
I shaped a glow-worm's teaching into this.

* * * * *

By lamplight pencilling a tiny card,
To warn of my mishap one whom I loved,
I sought the nearest spot for G.P.O.
Directed o'er a heath, now dark and wild,
Weird with the shadows of a gloomy night,
Taking a road my feet scarce liked to tread,
Amid a gloom like darkness visible,
At last found what I sought. This duty done,
With lighter heart retraced my tardy steps
Full stationward, till Fate should give me rest.

Around the heath, where but the faintest spark
Told of the snug and cosy curtained home,
I knew there dwelt the great in mind or wealth—
Men who rule fashion, men whose words are power.
Near where I stood lived one of mind profound,
Of fancy rare, imagination pure.

He once erewhile the pulpit's sacred floor
His rostrum made, to win the souls of men.
Anon the desk became his throne of power,
And print and books his willing slaves for good.
But now, strange path, the stage his pulpit is,
And in a drama pure he acts and lives.
One well has said, "To pure all things are pure."
May we well add, "To pure all things are power?"

But on this dark and lonesome wilderness,
'Mid furze and gorse, their golden days gone by,
And prickly aftermath to warn mankind
How much of pain must follow golden sins—
'Mid heather-flower, its fragrance felt in gloom,
Its unseen blossom telling forth the sweets
That mingle in the path of just and true—
'Mid fern and bracken, feathery, flakey greens,
Their tables seen, spread in the wilderness,
Inviting men to eat the good and live—
'Twas 'mid such unseen glories as I walked,
I met a teacher sent to me from God.

Averting upturned gaze from 'mongst God's stars,
I saw on earth a thousand glittering gems,
Shining, like prostrate fireflies, 'mid the gloom,
As if to say, "God dwells indeed with men."
The fabled sacred fire which came from heaven
Was, surely, not more sacred than the glint
Of these earth's night-stars, as they shone among
The darks and glooms of human mist and sin.
The morning stars, that sang creation's birth,
Sure never sang a simpler, sweeter strain
Than these prone glowing orbs men have called worms.

By day, I know, this heath's a copious field
For man's research in man's philosophies;
And here, I know, fair Nature's baffling skirts
Elude the prying eyes of Nature's sons.

By day, I know, the entomologist,
Geologist, and chemist, botanist,
Those men of "isms"—with wings and stings—with stones
And bones—with obscure acids, bases, salts—
With tree, and grass, and stem, and flower, and fruit—
Wrapping in learned verbiage all their terms,
Find school enough for—scandal?—nay, for thought.

By night, I, crouching down amongst the bush,
A thousand sparklets shining round my feet,
Might pass with men for some incendiary,
Whose business 'twas to injure other men,
And set the heath on fire. Not so, my friend.
Let God's pure fires shine on, they seldom hurt
Or, in His holy mountain, men destroy.
For is not earth, prone at His feet, His mount?

Thinking, perchance, a little one at home
Might wonder at a sight she had not seen,
Methought, I will secure one little star,
And thus let others learn my lesson well.
Men say, I think, the female lights her lamp
To guide her mate, that he may ever guard,
Defend her helpless path from foes around.
I know not this; but this I know full well:
Men want a light in human darkness deep,
Which God, in mercy great, has shown to me.
And, surely, I must light with beams my world,
That loved and dear, and near and far, may know
Jesus, the world's true Light, dwells in my soul,
To cheer my own dense sorrow, give men hope—
The hope that lives by faith in Jesu's name.

Securing, after many a prickly thrust,
Which Nature's watchmen made to guard their own—
By thorn, and briar, and prickle, and lance, and spine,
Those sad reminders of our human sin—
My little captive, now I keenly watched,
And wondered as I saw God's handiwork,
Shown, surely, whether in a worm or world.

But ah ! methought, when Christ my Master comes,
When the last warning note, in mind or nerve,
Tells me of Death drawn near—when Jesus comes,
My lamp, will it be trimmed, my light in flame ?
I found the spot where, 'mid the thicket dense,
That little worm in darkness long had slept ;
But with the spark which Nature wisely gives,
'Twas like a city which could not be hid.
So may my life a witness be to men,
My light a beacon when my Lord shall come,
And all my doings glorify His name.

My foolish, roadside pranks attracting men,
I " moved on," as in duty bound to do—
My little captive, on a piece of bark,
Lighting my way. Thence hurrying on in haste,
I missed the path, and took a glaring beam
As beacon of the station-bourne I sought.
But roysterous revelry reminded of my fault,
When, bursting from the gaudy, glaring porch,
Bean-feasters, " flown with insolence and " beer,
Made fair night hideous with their Belial-cries.

Fleeing, for very fear, I found a way
That led me to the port of peace I sought,
Past all the grooms and porters on the bridge.
Then, safely landed on the " down " -ward side,
I watched again my little captive light ;
Read by its beams a page of Holy Writ,
Put it in place of safety, and then sat
To wait my train at Weybridge.

Much that night
Occurred to hinder sweetest truth from power
O'er my poor soul ; but not entirely could
The evil, through my Master's love, o'ermatch the good.
Those roysterous revellers came upon the scene,
And made the station ring with oath and jest,
Conjuring scenes of woe and misery

That would be seen the coming Sabbath-day,
When, having worshipped long at Bacchus' shrine,
Men could not worship at the shrine of God.
Back at last to town Drink's bond-slaves went,
And all was still.

But worse was yet to come.
Taking at length the train of "forlorn hope,"
This was invaded by another crew
Of British workmen out for holiday.
And as we saw (alas! compelled to see)
The coarse, indecent, gross brutality
By which the British workman shows his sense
Of power, authority, and righteous wrath,
We could not help in fancied thought to ask—
Would Greece or Sparta bear such shame as this
Without a murmur? Would Solon or Lycurgus
Give to men the permit to embeast themselves,
And then afflict the state with thousand ills,
Which generations long must wait to lose?

It wanted but a stroke or so of eleven,
The tardy train had reached its bourne at last,
When stone-jars were produced: the least unmanned
Were chartered by their mates to run a race
To get a fresh supply for night's carouse,
And show God's dawning Sabbath-day a scene
O'er which the country-town's folk well might mourn,
O'er which God's holy angels well might weep.

But not e'en this, sad, sad as all this be,
Could burn from my poor heart the glow-worm's truth—
Nay, more, the thought it did intensify:

That I must live as fits the grace of Christ,
A living witness be to His most gracoius Name;
That I must ready be when He shall call,
A willing servant waiting to go home;
That I must have my light in fairest trim,
A guidance to my Saviour's loving hand;

That I shall one day be amongst God's stars,
To give my Master everlasting praise.

* * * * * *

"With twelve great shocks of sound, the shameless noon
Was clashed and hammered from a hundred towers,
One after one . . . . She took the tax away,
And built herself an everlasting name."

'Tis thus our laureate, noble, pure, and true,
Closes the page which gives Godiva fame:
My closing lines, though halting as they go,
Would fain give Christ the Lord undying praise.

Then twelve great booming time-beats in the gloom
Told forth "Man's night is past, God's morning come,"
One after one. . . . My glow-worm spoke God's truth,
And built her Lord an everlasting name.

CHAPTER VIII.

LESSONS FROM A GREAT FLOOD.

OH dear! There had been such crying all the morning, and such sulking all the afternoon, that all the bodies were wishing themselves at home again. The secret of all this was, it had been a rainy day; and in order to find indoor amusement, Harold, a hare-brained boy of nine, had contrived to turn on the bath-tap without due notice of the event, and now it was floods, overwhelming floods. There were floods of waters, and floods of tears, and floods of sorrow, and floods of repentance—and outside there were tide-floods, and rain-floods, and word-floods, and temper-floods. Oh! it was

> "Water, water, everywhere,
> But not a drop to drink."

Towards tea-time, clouds began to clear a little indoors and out. Rubbing for the five-hundredth time the misty window, the children saw a well-known form approaching, happily without his umbrella.

Mother's pride, Marian, such is the unhappy effect of

nursery companionship, followed Harold's bad example, and down the stairs came the following musical effect:

Solo. "Here's-the-Hermit!" . . . . MASTER HAROLD.

Duett. "Here's—the—Her—mit!!". . . { MASTER HAROLD AND MISS MARIAN.

Chorus. "Here's—THE—Her-r-r-r-r-r-mit!" { ENTIRE STRENGTH OF UPPER COMPANY.

Mother blushingly called for order, statelily received her visitor, courteously invited him to tea, and went upstairs to gauge the flood. Finding things better than she hoped, Mercy conquered Justice, and shortly witness the little transgressors, like a row of penitent prodigals, at tea with the Hermit at their parents' board.

Of course, mother told him of the escapade, when he burst into an uproarious fit of most unministerial laughter. Then slapping his knee, he said, "Just the very thing, I declare!"

"What?" asked the abashed Traveller.

"Oh! I know a story; just the very thing," he repeated.

And without more ado, while Mary cleared away one equipage, we constructed another, a kind of coach with outriders, like this—

Hermit, carrying Frank .. Mother, carrying Baby .. { Family
Traveller, carrying Fred .. Marian, carrying May .. { Coach.

Thus settled in our places, without whip but not without many a spur, our Hermit began—

Who is Safe?

OR, LESSONS FROM A GREAT FLOOD.

IT was a beautiful spring morning, and the poor dominie knew it to his cost. For not only had he spent those bright morning hours in the dust, and noise, and heat of his rural schoolroom, but, on emerging from his little study to pace

that tiny lawn for a few brief moments of rest, he was instantly surrounded by a group of little ones, with eyes bright as the morning sun, and cheeks rosy as the early dawn; and as instantly was he welcomed with a deafening chorus—

"Oh, papa, it is Spring morning; you must take us to-day!"

And the poor dominie's fate was sealed; while with more graciousness than could have been expected, he donned a coat and hat that *might* appear in the village street, and led the van of that happy little army of conquering heroes on the way to the Spring.

Each yard of travel made each foot lighter, each breath of breeze fanned each cheek ruddier, each new prospect made each face brighter, while with cloudless countenance the merry party moved on to the Spring. Through the village street, past cottage, manse, and farm; along the road, past pool, and fold, and barn.

Now the path lay between hedges almost clothed in newborn green; now between ancient "planks," which, like a mystic Druid circle or miniature Stonehenge, spoke loudly of days that were gone; now between high banks, where the rabbit family shyly peeped, then hasted merrily away; now past a little mill, with the merry click-a-clack of its somewhat primitive machinery; now on the breezy common, where the matronly cows gave sidelong glances of surprise; now through the fringe of another village, where hostel and smithy, meeting and kirk, dwelt almost side by side; and now to bare higher land, the children running till out of breath, and the sober dominie entering fully into the fun, knowing too well the difficulty of running on a level way, much more of running on an uphill path.

But now all start in the race, "Who will be first at the Spring?"

It was a very insignificant little pool, just edged by a few

loose stones on one margin and a green bank on another, whilst at one corner a tiny outlet with its babbling passengers said, as plainly as any railway porter, "This way out."

"Men may come, and men may go,
But I go on for ever."

And whither did it go?

Merrily down the hillside, sleepily through the sedges noisily over the pebbles; till, meeting a full check at a tiny mill, it effected a compromise, and gave part to turn its wheels, and part to have its own sweet will.

Proudly under the alders, solemnly through the meadows, mysteriously through the copses; till another check, another mill, another compromise.

Curvingily past the poor's lot, loftily past the parsonage, angrily past the bridges; till another check, another mill, another compromise: and so on, deepening, broadening, intensifying to the end.

Our merry party had made their circuit from the Spring to a little low-arched bridge, within sight of both schoolhouse and manse, when the dominie met the parson. With a wave of the hand he motioned his little group homeward, while the friends entered into earnest conversation. Listen!

"Sad flood last week," said the schoolmaster; "and all through the mills, they say."

"Yes," replied the minister, "and the jury were nearly adding that rider to their verdict."

"Any compensation for the allotments?" inquired the dominie.

"None whatever," was the answer; "nor can I get a farthing for poor Jones's furniture either."

"Those two little graves are more than I can bear to see," said the tutor. "I always have the churchyard blind down now."

"Well you may," answered the parson, with a movement of the head to a brook-side cottage; "the poor old folks are nearly beside themselves, while the child's parents went home only this morning broken-hearted."

"How sad about that poor youth. Mrs. Yarrell has seen the mother, has she not?"

"Yes; but nothing could comfort her till his body was found; she seemed calmer then. But, really, I am perplexed how to help these sad cases. The youth's mother has lost a good son; but the carter's widow has lost an indifferent husband, and his poor children will miss little but their father's company."

"Ah, that was a cruel death; and yet I don't know which to blame most—the flood or the drink."

Into the secrets of which conversation, gentle hearers, it is now time you were introduced.

That smiling Spring was wont to be treacherous at times, and if checked, like many other more rational creatures, did damage. It had suddenly risen at a time when water was scarce, and one miller with an over anxiety to husband his supply and run his mill night and day, had backed up the stream to most serious proportions.

The brook-side allotment crops had been utterly ruined by the flood, and their poor tenants left with a "poor's lot" indeed. But no compensation—it was all fair trade!

The cottage of a family named Jones had been inundated, several articles of furniture were missing, several more were damaged, and very serious indeed was the loss. But no compensation—it was all fair trade!

The little cottage near which the two friends stood had a garden path running down to the brook. Two years before a grandchild had run in play down the path, fallen into the swollen stream, and been drowned. The week before another little grandchild, with its parents all ready to return

to their own home, was taking its last little good-bye run in the garden, and before a faithful mother or a frantic father could save it, had been lost before their very eyes. There was a pair of troubled aged hearts in that cottage, and a pair of broken childless hearts in another cottage, and two tiny graves in the quiet churchyard. But there was no compensation—it was all legitimate trade!

A few days before, a manly youth of seventeen summers, just taking his father's place in the family, and becoming the widow's comfort after struggling years, had been bathing while man and beast took their midday rest. He had easily missed his reckoning because of the flood, and was hopelessly lost, while his companions rushed away for help. Days had passed before his body was recovered, when it was taken to the village club-room, the scene of many a revel and of many a sin; a subsequent inquest terminating with a verdict of "accidental death." One widow comfortless, six children brotherless, and all well-nigh penniless. But no compensation—it was all fair trade!

Perhaps the last calamity was the worst. A carter was returning from the neighbouring market town with an empty waggon, but not with an empty person; for what with carter's perquisites at the corn factor's, and carter's friends at the "Swan Tap," and carter's horse-baits on the road home, upon reaching the little bridge on which the friends stood, it were hard to say if man had charge of horse or horse had charge of man. It was late at night when the carter reached the spot, and, sitting on the shafts, he did not notice that the flood had covered the road. Not checking his horses in the descent, he had fallen heavily from his dangerous seat, the ponderous wheels had passed over him, and the horses, being near home, quietly reached their destination. Search next day discovered the poor carter dead in the flood, a widow frantic with grief, and five small children

who would soon be crying for bread. But no compensation —it was all fair trade!

The miller, they said, had too many restrictions already; the public felt he had at least one too few.

"The trade" say there are too many restrictions; the public feel there is at least one more to come—that one is Prohibition. When a trade is so inimical to the public welfare as to damage growing crops or household goods, to snatch smiling childhood or blooming youth in haste away, to bereave widows or leave the home fatherless at a stroke, justice demands restrictions to that trade, necessary though it be.

But what of that giant protected monopoly in our midst, meeting the stream of life at each corner, too often compelling a compromise between a virtue and a sin? Shall these mills—these soul and body mills—be permitted to dam up human life? Why, the man I love most is the man I fear most—his slavery has trained him into a lure, and the victim has become the decoy.

When a man will sell his very crops for drink, or swallow household furniture at a draught; when aged hearts are daily made comfortless, and parents' homes are hourly made childless; when the manly youth is wrecked and lost, and the father-husband mangled and destroyed, the country demands restriction.

The true Gospel Temperance Mission cries, "In Christ's name: for man's sake." Let every man shun the mills, and thus show them to be blocks in the way of human progress. Let every man pray to his God for strength and blessing in his soul, then pray by petition both his rulers and his Queen for restrictions on the death-mills of the land; and soon will the cry be not "Who is safe?" but "All are safe, through the Blood of the Lamb."

CHAPTER IX.

CLOUDS AND CROWNS.

NATURE is a splendid housekeeper; and not least because she so fully, so regularly, balances her weather accounts.

The next day (it was Wednesday, I think) they had been out all day long. They had even had a picnic on the rocks. The children, some old enough to know better, had risked their necks in gathering drift-wood; the fathers, very clumsily, had "kindled the fire"; and the mothers, very handily, had "kneaded the dough" (no, no! that's the text in the Bible I was thinking about: can you find it, children? Try!) had prepared the tea, and a splendid time they had, all of them. The Muse, when the children had gone again, seemed sad and indisposed for talk.

But Mrs. T. and Mrs. H., with that womanly pertinacity of theirs—not always unwise either—were equally indisposed to knit in silence.

"Mr. Muse," began Mrs. Hermit, "you must be very soft, I think." And then, discovering her blunder, confusedly made matters worse by saying, "No, I mean tender, im-

pressible, susceptible," and then, in despair, "what is it? —you know what I mean—good-natured."

"Yes," replied our melancholy friend, "I hope it is all true. I do want to weep with those who weep."

"I was only thinking," he continued, looking at the children at their happy play, "of a brother minister who had a long, long trial for many months, and in some form for many years. He seemed to lose all his dear ones, and doomed to bear sorrow. Yet he saw the bright edging of the cloud, where he knew there must be bright lining; the edge was always to him a pledge of light in the 'regions beyond.'"

A system of flag signalling had been going on behind the Poet's back during these remarks; and now at the waving of papa's red bandana the whole troop came up in time to hear the Muse's concluding words.

"One was buried in the cemetery, and the other far, far away; but a memorial cross was erected to these children, whom their parents called 'two folded lambs,' who had gone to 'one fold, one Shepherd.'"

Hearing these words, the children quietly seated themselves round about on the green rocks, with the yet distant tide breaking in occasional gurgling murmurs in the pools at their feet, whilst the Poet-brother, whose heart seemed full of a kind of peaceful sadness, began—

Clouds and Crowns.

1876 : 1882.

WHAT are clouds? Why, science tells us
  Clouds are vapours born of earth;
Yet that sun, which shines above them,
  Needed was to give them birth.
So the clouds that shade our pathway
  May arise thro' earthly love;

But the God Who rides upon them
Speeds their shadows from above.

What are crowns? Why, crowns are circlets,
Set with gems and bright with gold;
Yet the ray of heaven's fair sunlight
Waits their beauties to unfold.
Yes! the crowns may be of earth's work,
Gold from quartz, or gems from mine;
Still the Lord, Who ruleth alway,
Makes our gems and gold to shine.

Our small bark was ne'er so buoyant
But to feel her ballast well;
Our blue sky was ne'er so cloudless
But we felt the storm-cloud's spell,
Cloud on cloud has rolled above us,
Storm on storm has raged beneath,
But we've learnt 'mid all our tossing,
Crowns fear something worse than death.

Had you seen the roses blooming
On our humble little tree,
"Life from death," you would have echoed,
As they blossomed—one, two, three.
First, one came at heavy flood-time,
Waters wild were all around;
Next, a frail one, fair and tender,
When the summer suns abound.

Then a boy, so bright and rosy,
When our home was full of gloom!
When fond hopes our hearts had cherished
Seemed to meet their direst doom.
Oh! the care and added sorrow,
Seeming more than heart could bear—
These, though mighty, were forgotten
In love's prattling joy so fair.

Then a boy, a pale and fragile
Bud, that scarce dared be a flower ;
Month by month did " Tiny " linger,
Scattering smiles in dimple power.
Then a sojourn in a homestead,
Hoping health and strength to gain ;
Then a buff, pink paper billet,
Such as bring hearts care and pain.

" Come at once ! for baby's dying ! "
These were all the words it said ;
While the lettered Mercury-server
Whistling went—perhaps baby dead !
" Time ? " you ask. Yes ; time to follow
Wandering eye and heaving breast ;
Time to see our " Tiny's " petals
Fold in everlasting rest.

Years of waiting now passed o'er us,
Only three blooms on our tree—
Years of watch, and pain, and anguish,
Years of weary agony.
Then a rosy cherub darling,
Seeming born to give us joy ;
Clustering curl and dimpled smiling,
Such as baby's charms employ.

One brief year had run its rounding,
When our floweret drooped its bell ;
Such a change had passed upon him
As your grandam gossips tell.
Just a threadlet on our branches,
Just a sparklet on our hearth ;
Night or day, or well or weary,
Must we watch our darling's path.

Autumn deepened into winter,
Day and night we kept our ward ;
O'er the snow the bells were ringing,
" Christmastide ! and Christ adored ! "

Eighty-two was breathing hardly,
  Few brief hours now had to live ;
We sat waiting, watching sadly
  O'er the life we could not give.

"Has he gone?" the father murmured,
  "Has he really gone to rest?"
Then the Sabbath-bells rang vespers,
  "Can it be God's will is best?
What! with Death, long fluttering o'er us,
  Entering in our tiny fold!
With each dear one scarce eluding
  Death's last grip, so chill and cold!"

When the baby-form was buried,
  Only two could sadly go—
Death, still lingering on the threshold,
  Waiting long and warning low.
Two pale mourners on the hillside,
  Three pale sufferers left at home,
Can you marvel if we wondered
  When our Master should say "Come"?

Step by step our Father led us
  From the margin of Death's stream ;
One by one His mercy fed us,
  Hearts grew calmer, more serene.
Yes, "one fold," and but "one Shepherd,"
  Our "two folded lambs" now knew ;
We have learned, while in that furnace,
  Learned to wait to be with you.

Crowns may have their golden glories,
  Children bring their joys to home ;
But the truest brightness lingers
  Round that hearth Christ makes His own.
Clouds are vapours, damp and clogging,
  Troubles too may be like they ;
But a bright and cloudless morning
  Waits for those who "watch" and "pray."

CHAPTER X.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

MINISTERS, surely, must look upon the seaside as the "maddest merriest place" to spend a summer day. For several days there had been much commotion amongst the upper ten (not the most noble house of British Lords, gentle reader, but T.'s own house of little lords and little ladies) on account of some mighty posters adorning the town, announcing that a certain menagerie was about to visit the place, with the philanthropic purpose of enabling its inhabitants to see the "wonders of nature in the animal world."

A sudden craze for scientific study set in with the upper ten, and the poor little mother was besieged with daily inquiries as to the size of elephants, roar of lions, strength of tigers—always concluding with a touching petition to "go and see."

The queen-mother effected a happy compromise, and the scientific few were permitted to go on condition that they afterwards instructed the unscientific many; which they vociferously promised to do for ever and a day.

Returning in charge of one who was not very happy in

being chargeable with such a rollicking crew, mother thought a blow on the shore would best clear the phantoms out of the young brain; and then, to mend matters, we found nurse, snugly in a corner, telling one of her endless and somewhat legendary tales. The Hermit, approaching unnoticed, heard the conclusion of a marvellous history—much more marvellous than true; and instantly made up his mind how to act.

Knowing how much he and his friends, Traveller and Muse, were in harmony on the great Temperance question—the subject with none of them having quite assumed the rabid or mania stage—he determined to improve the occasion by a new version of "Beauty and the Beast," which might prove useful to elder and to younger alike.

Jumping down from the Esplanade on to the beach, not without some risk to his own limbs, and much consternation amongst his little friends, his hearty greetings soon gathered the party around him.

Having heard the adventure of the menagerie, he mysteriously told them of a much more marvellous beast he had once seen, and of the dreadful ravages it had committed. The Hermit was thoroughly unhinged from theological fetters now, it was quite clear; and very happy the whole family were as they heard the sad, sad tale of

Beauty and the Beast.

A NEW SETTING OF AN OLD TALE.

Of course the world will tell you the strange story of "Beauty and the Beast" is all fiction. Perhaps the loves and domestic felicities of so strangely assorted a couple may be; but what I have to tell is more ancient, more strange, more true.

"Once upon a time"—that is the correct story-telling

style—in a time so far away that there were no poor-law, no police, no steam, no electrics, no æsthetics, no School Boards—and in a land so far away that as yet neither Ordnance Survey nor Geographical Society have reported upon it, neither road nor rail, torpedo nor balloon have discovered it—in the far, famed Freeland, in the fertile Fairshire, was the town of Beauty, in which dwelt the Beast.

It is hard to say if the Beast were humanity or divinity, for people credited it with the attributes of both; nor could one say absolutely if it were deity or lover, for it was sometimes wooed and sometimes worshipped; nor were it safe to assert if the Beast were an enemy or friend, for it had the fondest fascination for some, and the most degrading bondage for others.

Beauty was a prosperous busy town; but if her inhabitants wanted heat, they applied to the Beast; if they needed cold, they went to the same place. If they needed an inspiration in time of war, or quiet in time of peace, they went to the Beast. If they wanted to be over-merry, or if they needed to be over-wise, they still paid their dues to the Beast.

I wish I could describe this Beast, but he is more difficult to analyse than the whale, more rare now-a-days than the dodo, more changeable than the chameleon. But perhaps when the missing links of evolution are perfected, and technical education has done its work, it may be seen that, whether owing to survival of the fittest or unfittest, a simple grain was the life-germ of the Beast.

It could not be classed as fish, flesh, or fowl, though it claimed the virtues of all. It resembled reptile, quadruped, multiped, and biped; and yet strictly it was none of these, while producing all; for, strange to say, many of its devotees passed through all these stages.

The erect man became the quarrelsome, the quarrelsome the erratic, the erratic the prone, until the savants of Beauty

began to wonder if there were 'devilution' as well as evolution, retrogression as well as development.

It dwelt in the centre of Beauty, in a kind of glittering cathedral of glass, and silver, and gold; its priests were of bright and ruddy countenance, whilst its worshippers early manifested the reverse.

The saddest part of the story is the fact that this Beast was an usurper, as well as an abortion. There was a rightful Ruler in Beauty, from whose service his devotees were won; until two factions filled the town, Beauty's friends and Beauty's foes.

Such was the spell the Beast swayed over the people that no single transaction could take place without reference and offerings to him.

Every week the local clay-plates recorded the names of those who were born, or were married, or were dead—events over which the people had small control.

The nurses invariably taught each raw recruit in the world, by precept and example, how to worship the Beast; and many a helpless infant had been found at his altars, with nurse and even mother cold in the arms of death.

When all that was manly and all that was fair met on the bridal morn, for the exchange of life's irrevocable vows—sometimes before, invariably after, did the happy pair take counsel with the Beast; some indeed vowing briefly in the palace of the King, then vowing fondly at the altars of the Beast, many hours before they entered the shrine of their home.

It was an established custom that none must die without potations from the Beast, and an equally established belief that none could die if faithful to the Beast. This was strange, as every death was recorded in the temple; but the account was kept by double entry, the new names added being always balanced by old names erased—on the principle

of the Irishman's sheet, which it was proposed to lengthen at bottom with a piece from the top. Malicious people said there were sixty thousand a year. But the new calculating machine will put all that straight when it gets into local working order of truth.

Professions and trades had curious associations with the Beast.

All the guilds, of course, met under his roof; and some masters even paid wages on his altar stones. It is true it was out of the way, and hindered much time; but then it was the custom.

At assize time—and they had a good many assizes then—attorney and counsel, lawyer and client, went hob-a-nob to his shrine before entering the palace of justice; and malicious people said some of the judges paid secret vows.

The doctors knowingly shrugged their shoulders, but still custom was necessary to nervous patients; and many prescribed periodical visits—and malicious people said some paid them; so that the wisdom of the physician was occasionally replaced by the wisdom of the Beast.

Beauty had a good many priests, wearing different robes, but serving the same King; and it was the custom, one of the most antiquated too, for the priest, when robed, to pay his orisons before a small black image of the Beast (not at the temple of course), in order to get an inspiration for his holy work. This custom was called "the gown and the glass."

At apprenticeship, the articles were sealed at the shrine or with the sanction of the Beast; and at freedom many were the offerings, precious offerings, left at the temple of the Beast—on some occasions a fellow workman even lost his life at the shrine, and more often his character.

When a bargain was struck in the market, buyer and seller adjourned for the ratification of the Beast.

When property was bought or sold, it was done under the shadow of the Beast.

The Beast was omnipotent; the people made it omnipresent.

But night, hideous night, was the Beast's carnival.

The harlot's cheek crimsoned with shame till painted by the Beast; the youth halted in his folly till inspired by the Beast.

The hand of violence was safe till nerved by the Beast; the knife of murder was still till consecrated to the Beast. The curses, the crimes, the sorrows, the sins, the dangers, the deaths so multiplied in poor Beauty town at last, such dishonour was done to the King, and such peril to the state, that in desperation a few fanatics conceived the idea of casting out the Beast.

Appealing to the King, he helped them so that steps, mighty steps, were soon taken to this end. These foolish people said, "*Practice* and *Prayer* win the day."

Perhaps they will.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHILDREN'S MEDLEY.

HAVING written these three words, and leaned back with closed eyes in my study chair, what was my surprise on waking to find on my blotter in large hand, copy-book style, "meddley—or meddlesome."

No, Master Ralph, you are wrong for once! I have spelt my word right enough. The young rogue has a friend who is a School-Board boy, and so he prides himself upon his word-ology. While men slept (you see, men shouldn't sleep), that young enemy had tried to sow his tares in my book.

Well, he has sown such confusion in my poor brain that I can't quite remember what I was going to say. "Meddly, meddlesome!" But I wasn't going to write about naughty Matilda, was I? "Medley!" Oh, that's the old boating spot in the old college days. But surely I wasn't going to write about dear old Oxford. "Children's!" Now I have it! Let me make sure this time, and lock my study door before I begin.

Now for it, then.

Well, the Travellers were all very foolish next day, very.

There was a blazing sun above and a blazing sea beneath; and they must needs all go to the sands, all dig, all build, all paddle—all do the most unreasonable things. I verily believe the Muse was the leader in the whole mischief; for really in boyish mischief and girlish nonsense he seemed to eclipse himself.

At last it came to an end, as even mischief must, and he lay laughing and exhausted on the sands. But the children hadn't had near enough. Completely beaten, he begged for mercy. His tormentors readily granted this, but on the most unreasonable terms, namely, that he should give them a children's hour all to themselves.

The foolish man reluctantly consented, and this was the birth of

The Children's Medley.

My dear little girls,
My dear little boy,
Pray how do you do?
I wish you all joy!

FOAM.

Thou wild and dashing foam,
Thou cruel, crawling foam,
Climbing my slippery side,
Then falling back with the tide,
All the day.

Much fun was created at the idea of the Muse being overrun by the wild waves, when it was only Baby May putting sand in his hair. Perhaps he didn't know any better. So he went on—

My dear little daughters
My dear little son,
Oh, see the big waters!
Oh, see how they run!

STORM.

A storm one moment sweeps the sea,
And blots out every sail;
The next, the storm-cloud's swept away,
And light and joy prevail.

It was quite clear that he was dreaming now, as the sky was a cloudless blue, and had been so all day. The only remedy was more sand, which Baby May assiduously shovelled into his hair with the following result:

A WOOLACOMBE DREAM OF THE SANDS OF DEE.

And all across the sand,
And up and down the sand,
The footprints on the sand
For miles are seen.

And round and round the land,
And through and through the land,
The Travellers in the land
Have wearied been.

There are the great, great rocks,
Which give great, cruel shocks,
And big, relentless knocks
To trembling ships.

And there their sharp, sharp teeth,
Keen biting underneath
Both boat and weedy wreath,
With cruel nips.

This last must have come into the Poet's dream by a new torture just added to the Poet's misery in the shape of sundry ear pinches, which Frederick and Francis, proper young gentlemen both, had devised to waken th sage. But he went on —

My dear ones, great and small,
My dear ones, one and all:

A SERMON—"Big and Little" *for a text.*

I. BIG.

Big sailing ships at sea,
Big enough for you and me.

Big rocks that vessels break,
Big sailors' hearts then quake.

Big men in foaming surf,
Big boys on mossy turf.

Big guns now booming loud,
Big storms in sable cloud.

Big ducks to table sent,
Big sheep for mutton meant.

II. LITTLE.

Little brig and little boat,
Little they can hardly float.

Little shells so bright and clear,
Little inmates do not fear.

Little boys, with spade and pail,
Little girls so wan and pale.

Little foxgloves going pop,
Little bunnies stare and stop.

Little ducks and little hens,
Little—what? why, wipe your pens!

Clearly there was no understanding the Poet; where his dream had led him now, nobody knew. To begin with "big ships," and finish with "wipe pens," was enough to exasperate any school-boy. They thought he meant Devonshire; but he went on again—

BOYS.

The Big Boy is talking
To the Little Boy,
So that the Little Boy may know
About the Big Boy's joy.

Good-bye, Freddy,
Be a good boy;
So says his funny Muse,
Bidding him "Good-bye."

"No, no!" they all cried out in chorus, not "Good-bye yet;" and the good, patient man, with closed eyes, went on again—

DINNER.

Now Poet must run;
The first bell has rung
For me, Number One,
To dinner to come.

So, good-bye, dears,
Lose all your fears,
Come, dry those tears,
We're going home.

"Oh, he wants his dinner!" was the children's cry. "Something real good, Poet, please," was the grand chorus that saluted the unhappy man on opening his eyes; "and then you really shall go." And he prosed again.

TWICE ROUND THE CLOCK.

Day in the Country.

At I. the yeoman seeks his home;
At II. the scholar's studies come.

At III. the ploughman stays his team;
At IV. the milkmaid skims her cream.

At V. the peasant homeward turns ;
At VI. the housewife's oatcake burns.

At VII. the farmyard sinks to rest,
At VIII. the lover dons his best.

At IX. the night-winds hear his vows,
At X. the lowing of the cows.

At XI. the wearied rustics sleep ;
At XII. the owls are left to weep.

Night in the Town.

At I. the loiterer's cab is heard ;
At II. the surgeon's murmuring word.

At III. the mews begins to stir ;
At IV. mill-wheels begin to whirr.

At V. the watchman's wand goes by ;
At VI. the weaver's shuttles fly.

At VII. the housemaid's sleep is sound ;
At VIII. the milkman takes his round.

At IX. the school bell fills the air ;
At X. the merchant scans his ware.

At XI. the cabs our windows shake ;
At XII. the Muse is wide awake.

And then the tormented Poet, shaking himself free from his torments and tormentors at the same time, turned upon his persecutors for a final piece of fun. It was really refreshing to see the hearty good-nature of the big man, who had experienced, as they knew, many sore trials, which had sweetened rather than soured his noble spirit. Wearied at last with all the joy of the day, the party wended homeward—the Poet to dine, and the children to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

ON CHURCH-MEETINGS.

IS it not strange how care sits alternately on the shoulders, first of the husband and then of the wife, first of the parson and then of the "parsoness?" Does my reader object to that term? So do I. But then a good wife, as well as a good minister, is from the Lord; and many a poor husband can testify to the abundant help rendered to him by her whom the Lord has sent him as his "parsoness." Let that term pass, please, Mr. Deacon; for if you have your "deaconess," why should I not have my "parsoness?" and the sooner you train the "parsonesses," the better.

Friday, that most unlucky day, was a very busy day in Mr. Traveller's study at home; and he found at Slocombe Mr. Hermit was equally busy at the same time. Saturday, on the other hand, was an equally busy day for the "parsoness," whether she rusticated at Littletown or hermitated at Slocombe. So it came about, the two friends this Saturday evening, after Milton,

> "Thus, arm-in-arm, with wandering steps and slow,
> Through Slocombe took their solitary way."

The Traveller, in his morning walks after his morning dips, had picked up some strange acquaintances, of whom perhaps Mrs. T. would scarcely have approved. One of these was an antiquated salt named Jonas, who possessed the foibles without the vices of his class. He could spin a yarn without a centre of blasphemy and a cornice of oaths; he could answer a question politely without suggesting the propriety of a "screw;" he could even give the most important information without suggesting the desirability of wetting his whistle, or directing attention to the extraordinary heat of the atmosphere. But he could not say many words without a touching reference to his "heavenly Father," nor walk many steps without telling you of his "church."

His church was of a somewhat peculiar type, I should suppose; for they seemed to have some enthusiastic class-meetings, as well as some very solemn church-meetings.

The two friends had accosted the old pilgrim in their usual hearty manner; but to-day he seemed solemn, if not sad.

"Ah! gen'lemen," he said, "I often wonder what the heavenly Father thinks about His people, when they don't come to do the business of the Lord's church. We had a church-meetin' last night, gen'lemen, about repairin'—some said restorin'—our dear old chapel. Ah! its more nor fifty years now since I were called to the Lord; more nor fifty years now since I knelt at the penitent form; and for nearly fifty years now I've attended nearly every church-meetin' our brothers and sisters have held. It's very dear, our old chapel is, gen'lemen, very dear to me; and I seem as if I can't bear the old place to be touched. I have seen a good many ministers come and go in my time, and I have had a good deal of pain many's the time about them; but the idea of restorin' the old sanctuary seems too much for me. And if the brethren had only ha' come to the meetin', it needn't ha' been."

On further conversation, it was gleaned that the younger members had been rather stirred by the erection of a bran-new chapel in a neighbouring village; and, perhaps not unmoved by envy, they had mooted the question of the beautifying of their own conventicle, certainly not one of the most inviting structures, as it stood just now, and in need withal of considerable repair, if not of some little ornament.

The old man looked upon the church-meeting as his opportunity for the exercise of a religious franchise, and he would as soon think of forfeiting his freeman's vote for Slocombe, as he would of withholding his vote from the urn of the church. He saw the justice of government by majorities, but his great point was, if the brethren were faithful "it needn't ha' been."

Comforting the old saint with some empty platitudes as well as they could, the brethren passed on in silence, for "church-meetings" were to each of them a problem of some difficulty.

"How do you manage church-meetings, brother?" at last said the Hermit.

"Well," was the answer, "if the truth must be told, I'm afraid church-meetings used to manage me."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, the members looked upon these as so peculiarly their own right, that it was with some difficulty, at first, I could act as anything more than their chairman on the occasion."

"I should think you acted more as a mayor amongst the aldermen."

"Well, it appeared that under a former pastorate the members had been reduced to such a condition of absolute submission and silence, that they could do really nothing but assent to the propositions which their minister made. Then, after a sort of Cromwellian era, or interregnum, a

reaction set in under the next pastorate; and the tables were so completely turned that he was as powerless as the feeblest member of the flock."

"But these were extremes, surely?"

"Undoubtedly they were; and the golden mean had somehow to be secured," said the Traveller.

"How did you accomplish this?" asked the Hermit.

"First of all I had a thorough discussion of every matter with my deacons; and in that way got to know their mind on the subject in hand, and at the same time exalted them in the church as a kind of standing council for the well-being of all. Then I persuaded my people to put such confidence in us as a council, that they might submit every matter to our previous discussion. And now I can't say church-meetings are a very great trouble."

"Well, I know many ministers do find them troublesome."

"Oh, yes; I know many such myself. But does it not arise from a lack of mutual confidence? Is not the minister jealous of the church, or the church jealous of the minister? Is there not sometimes too much *autocracy* in the minister, and not enough of the brother, and thus arises discord? Or, on the other hand, is there not too much *democracy* on the part of the people, and far too little of charity, and thus discord begins?" inquired the Traveller.

"Really, I don't know which of the two evils is the worst. I have known in church-meetings, and as a matter of sacred duty, forsooth, this democratic spirit has objected to an otherwise acceptable minister on the ground of the lack of style manifested in his dress, and the irregularity or lack of beauty shown by his features; and the brother was rejected on these grounds. I have known ministers, on the other hand, who have held so tight a rein over their people that no single proposition was ever made but by his own voice or at his own bidding."

"The age is largely a republican age; but in the Christian Church it should ever be a Christian brotherhood. Business there must ever be belonging to the Church of Christ; and few things test a man's loyalty to Christ more than the routine business of a church-meeting."

"We want a robust Christian spirit, as well as a robust political spirit, in these days. That kind of sleepy assent to, or feeble dissent from, an action, are both of them equally reprehensible, I think," said the Hermit.

"Yes; and so few of our members attend from mere cold acquiescence; and fewer still vote on the most vital matters simply on account of fear. We want to do all these things heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men."

"Unto men," were the words that broke upon their astonished ears.

For they had wandered far on to the sandy loneliness, and stood with the towering crags above them, beetling o'er their heads like a great rock in a weary land.

Looking inquiringly at each other, as if wondering whether they could play a practical joke so personal as this, they both involuntarily repeated, "Yes, unto men."

A mocking duetto this time saluted their ears and divulged the secret. And now at the solution of the enigma, both ministers laughed heartily—for the Pulpit was taught by the Echo, against which it had so often railed.

"Yes," said the Hermit, "we need to say these things to men, as well as do these things unto God."

"Our audience is a very obedient one, in words at least," playfully responded his brother; "for once we have had a sermon in stones."

"Which warns us to return, lest, like lost sheep, we wander from the right way, and set a bad example to our own flocks instead."

Much more was in their minds, as they retraced their

footsteps homewards. Much more talk followed upon kindred topics, such as will exercise the soul of the true minister of Jesus Christ. But perhaps the Echo's warning, "Unto men," was not lost upon them, whether resting before renewing that ministry unto men, or still in the midst of the word which God had sent them to proclaim unto men.

As the Traveller reached his resting-place, and looked at his sleeping little ones, he thought, "And are we ministering unto men in these unconscious sleepers; are these the pupils God has sent into our school?" And when the worthy couple bowed their heads in simple prayer that night, both the minister and his wife felt deeply the importance of their work; whether it were exercised amongst the little fledglings of the family nest, or amongst the sons and daughters of those scattered up and down the world—it was "unto God" as well as "unto men."

The Hermit, as he cast himself down in his study that night, fell musing on the work of the minister rather than on the difficulty of church-meetings. He felt the utter helplessness of his soul for this work of ministering unto men. His voice was not the voice of Wisdom, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." But as he thought of the sainted McCheyne, and his stirring words of love, he realized his Master was the same; and his power would be the same, if in helplessness he rested upon the same strength. Turning his thoughts into prayer, he asked, "Father, let my ministry be unto God: let Thy power also make it a ministry unto men."

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE WRECK.

MONDAY was happily fine, but the state of the tide had driven all the visitors on to the Esplanade; and later on, even this became dangerously impassable. The children were highly amused as they saw the pranks which the mighty waters played amongst the handiworks of men, shaking with their thunder the very ground on which they stood.

Consulting an old fisherman near, who told them when this high tide would become low, as well as the strange sights which might then be seen, an arrangement was made for an afternoon stroll, so that all might have one long walk on the floor of the mighty deep ere he returned to his more usual bounds.

One great event was when the steps to the sands were wrenched from their fastenings and carried out to sea; a piece of old Ocean's mischief in which boys and girls found equal delight.

Another was presented in the showers of spray, which the sea in his playful mood to-day was freely distributing

amongst all who sought too close an intimacy with his seaship.

Still another event was the shower of stones, which in his more passionate moments, the sea threw against the great barricade which men had built to shut him in—and, for the matter of that, at the builders also.

When the party started at the appointed time for their long walk down the sands, the Slocombe men were clearing the Esplanade for future action; and it was instructive to see how old Ocean's wrath recoiled upon himself, when his shot and shell were returned to him with interest.

But the crowning event was when the reef was reached. Boats were busy here and there in some of the deeper pools, their inmates busily plying their special fishcrafts. But, black and rotting, standing like some giant skeleton against the sky, were the huge ribs of a noble bark, which had once proudly ridden the waves, but which a little before had been woefully wrecked.

"But what is that gaunt creature astride of the bulwarks? Surely the dead do not cling yet to that old rotting shell? No! it moves, it speaks, it reads, it turns. Yes, it is our darling Muse. Now we have his secret. He reads his sermons, or, if not that, he learns them—what we call, professionally, you know, 'memorizing.'"

"Come down, sir; come down!" was the general cry.

But the Poet, who was master of the situation, demurred.

The children suggested they should "go up," the Muse wickedly promising ample accommodation, even for the ladies in the gallery.

After many a gallant effort, and many a galling failure also, all found free sittings in this strange house of hearing. True to his promise to read, the Poet, who surely never slept at all, but alway watched that nothing might escape his notice, thus gave his views on

Extremes:

OR, REMEMBRANCES OF A HIGH TIDE.

CAN you tell the strange infatuation,
  Why English folk run to the sea;
From the centre to outermost circle,
  Running anywhere business to flee?

Is it mere, idle, rank dissipation,
  That must taste Nature's nectar at will?
Is it real, busy, calm contemplation,
  That the fast leaking memory would fill?

How this is I cannot conjecture,
  But of this I am perfectly sure—
Not a nook or a corner of sea-beach,
  But the visitors flock to the shore.

Now here is a tiny, snug township,
  E'en its name speaking true of its state;
But the grand, leaping sea of the Father
  Makes attractions both potent and great.

Here's the usual mile for our walking,
  And the usual pier for our rest;
The usual four-wheeler and war-horse,
  To assault Neptune's savage old breast.

The old sinner is savage at seasons,
  When he threatens to seize the whole town;
But a fair, gentle, winsome appealing
  Makes him sullen retreat to his bound.

Had you seen him when lashing yon sea-wall,
  With great waves many furlongs in length,
With his great showers of sea-shot assaulting—
  You would tremble at thought of his strength.

Just now the old warrior's retiring
Two good miles' retreat from yon heath ;
While the veteran's vain wrath is revealing
All his secret grim chambers of death.

All that secret of long drawn-out moaning
Which one constantly hears from the shore,
Is this mighty reef hid 'neath the surface,
But as shallow as death's secret door.

Yes, this hidden, not deep-sunken horror,
Has wrecked many a proud, gallant bark :
On that sea-wall so strong and so massive,
Many hopes have been quenched as a spark.

Yon poor, hardy fishmen and fishwives,
They are terrible sufferers by sea ;
For their "lives" and their "living" are swallowed
By old Ocean with horridest glee.

Man has placed a strong light-ship to northward,
So to warn the unwary in time ;
God has placed His own lights in the heavens—
These will always keep Neptune to line.

Man may warn against errors existing,
And may teach men a danger to shun ;
God can bring evil counsels to nothing,
Till he make the earth fair as a sun.

What a sight was the sea in the morning,
When those mighty waves rolled to the shore !
What a calm is the sea now 'tis evening,
With the lazy tide lapping its floor !

What a scene of commotion and fury,
As the battle-cry rung on the land !
What a scene of calm, halcyon beauty,
As the tiny waves ripple the sand !

What artillery belched forth their thunder
  Like the mitrailleuse-showers of his stone!
What a sweeter song now than the vespers
  Which the baby-waves sing near his throne!

For the sun and the moon are combining
  At the spring-time and autumn, they say;
They will draw the old warrior to shoreward,
  They will make him in passion to play.

But the sun and the moon are uniting,
  All his passionate wrath to restrain;
While in fetters like Love's, kind and gentle,
  They will lead him back to his domain.

See the sun, as he goes down in glory,
  He retires, like a conqueror, to rest;
While the moon, as she rises in splendour,
  Makes her mirror in Ocean's calm breast.

Thus, by day and by night, through the seasons,
  In the autumn and spring, through the years,
Through tempest and calm, down the ages,
  Does old Neptune e'en smile through his tears.

And my life, with its marvellous passions,
  Must by infinite love be restrained,
And my soul, through its storm and its sunshine,
  Must for heaven and its joy here be trained.

May God's sun shine above me as victor;
  May His moon ever mirror His face;
May my soul ever be through the ages
  A trophy of infinite grace.

A hushed and happy spirit had fallen upon the party as they listened to the Poet's lines; and when he ceased, the sound of a ringing-bell broke the silence of the evening with its silver warning note. All eyes were directed out to

sea, where, even through the glory of a golden sunset, could be seen a moving light, telling that a tossing buoy was moored there to warn mariners of this reef, by day by sight, by night by flame, always by sound.

Without request, our Muse quietly recited a few lines on

Duty.

THE captive buoy, the breaker bell,
Each well perform their duty ;
E'en though, upborne on ocean's swell,
They wear no shape of beauty.

The rocks below, by them made known,
Would shipwreck make of mortals,
Did not their fettered tongue and crown
Warn from dark peril's portals.

So, many a life of purpose clear,
And full of grand ambition,
Is chained to some dull, lonely sphere,
But still its right position.

For God, Who knows the needs of home,
There sets, to warn of danger,
The heart that of itself would roam
And spend its life a ranger.

The life that best performs God's will
By faithful notes of warning,
And fills its sphere with "Duty still,"
Shall find a new life's morning.

A life where danger cannot come,
Where duty's always pleasure,
Its lesson learnt, its victory won,
Its blessings without measure.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STORY OF A GREAT FIRE.

AT last the day had really come, just the right kind of day. Traveller, in his morning pilgrimage, had consulted Jonas; and Jonas, who was a great authority, had said—

"Just the day for a children's sail, sir."

I am not authority enough to say the meteorological phenomena which it is necessary to combine to produce such a day—whether it was

> "A southerly wind and a cloudy sky
> Proclaimed a sailing morning."

["Oh! fie, sir. That's profane. That's out of some unauthorized 'Book of Sports.' King James didn't order that to be said or sung in churches, I'm sure."

"No! I think I was wrong."

But, really, at first on that morning my own head was so cloudy, and my own pulse so squally, that I couldn't surely say what the sky was, and where the wind was.]

All safely on board a very capacious boat Jonas had provided for them, and with that distinguished worthy at the helm, they set off amid a solemn silence, which gradu-

ally changed to a ripple of whispers, a rattle of chatter, a volley of laughter, and roars of applause.

Yes, Jonas was quite right; all would sail well to-day.

The prying eyes of the Hermit saw an old newspaper poking invitingly from Jonas's pocket. Even a parson could not resist such a temptation. Amid titters of suppressed laughter the penny dreadful was stolen; and the Hermit solemnly read a heading:

"GREAT FIRE IN LONDON."

The idea of a great fire in London meant the Thames on fire, of course; and the idea seemed too absurd just now on the bosom of the mighty deep.

Jonas enjoyed the fun immensely, as did the children, and even the ladies also. But Jonas had his revenge.

"Mr. Minister," he said, "as a punishment, I vote you tell a story."

"Carried unanimously," we all shouted.

And, nothing loth, the Hermit began—

Ruined:

A STORY OF A GREAT FIRE.

"JUST the place for a missionary college."

These words were not uttered at Whiteley's, nor yet at Wood Street; and yet they were uttered at the ruins caused by a great fire. The fact was, the ruins served to ride the missionary's hobby; and that hobby was a missionary college.

The two friends had met at last from their posts of duty at the ends of the earth: the teacher had gained his great ambition, and become the missionary in a far distant isle of the sea; the scholar had found his destiny as pastor of a rural flock. And in lionizing on the home ground of the

old country, the ruins of the village hall had called forth the words—

"Just the place for a missionary college."

There had been a meeting that evening "under the big tree," and very pleasant, if very homely, were the sights and the sounds of that simple gathering. The bleating of flocks, the lowing of herds, were borne from the distant pasture; the noisy rook and the saucy daw keenly competed for notice; the perky thrush and the cooing dove made the plantations alive with their notes; and the voice of rural song joined in this harmonious praise to God.

Under the tree were clustered the singers, and scattered wide were ranged the chorus—the little ones, bepinafored, besmocked, bemired—the larger ones, muscular, motley, merry—the elder ones, careworn, cavilling, captious—the aged ones, decrepit, desirous, delighted.

Simple prayer had followed simple song, the words of the grand old Book had been read, and never had the truth of the old, old story seemed grander than under these simple circumstances, as both pastor and missionary urged the people to find in the Saviour a life of hope a death of peace, a home of rest.

Then the friends retired arm-in-arm, to satisfy the missionary's curiosity as to the ruins of which he had seen a part through the trees at the meeting.

A high wall enclosed as in a ring fence the tiny estate; outside this wall ran a stone causeway high and dry, but deserted, grass-grown from the lack of busy feet; an entrance lodge and gates invited access, and the friends entered. The drive, bordered by splendid hedges of box many feet in height, and still trimmed to an exact curve, was really now bordered by hedges of blackened death.

There had been the children's swing, of which only the beam was now left suspended between two lofty firs. These

were the shrubberies; but how few of their inhabitants had survived that worse than torrid heat? This was the sweep in front of the mansion; it is clear from rubbish, but the grass and the moss have wholly appropriated the gravel now.

This was the house, many-windowed, many-banded, plain, formal, correct, a kind of Roman well-to-do affair. That cord, waving across a window-space, once enclosed the flowers on the sill of my lady's boudoir. That pedimented entrance, with the ugly crack from parapet to basement, has witnessed many times the arrival of the gallant and the fair; it is open-all now.

Passing round, please, not between those tottering walls, the friends saw the section of the house, drawn by a hand of fire. There was the hall, there the grand staircase, there the garden terrace; that was the dining-room, that the drawing-room, that the library; this was the justice-room, this the billiard-room, this the conservatory.

A heap of bricks and mortar occupies the site of the garden steps; and yet how prim the garden is still! The dial is still clean, the arbours yet habitable, the garden-seats inviting; the beds are well kept, the flowers in profusion, the walks not overgrown; the paddock, the avenue, the pond, all seem in order. Yet all is deserted, forsaken, void.

When the little twelve-acre estate had been explored—its laundries, stables, coach-houses, cottages, offices, buildings —then the missionary had exclaimed—

"Just the place for a missionary college."

Looking southward, he said, "There's just a nice little view to cheer the student; in the garden occupation, in the paddock recreation; but everywhere quiet, repose, rest. How comes all this about? What does it all mean?"

The pastor answered, "As I replied before, as I say ever-

more, the fire," happily not noticing his own rhyme. "But you shall hear the story from the lips of the oldest inhabitant. Here's his cottage. Well, John, how's the breath to-day?"

"Main bad, thankee, sir," was the wheezing reply.

"John, here's a live missionary."

"My service to yer honour. I be main glad to see you, sir."

"Will the breath tell the story of the fire this evening, John?"

"If you'll step inside, gen'lemen: the air do get a bit chilly to me of late."

Inside the cottage a cheery lamp had been lighted by John's wizened, shrunken little spouse, who formed a striking contrast to her big powerful husband—velveteen shooting-coat and sporting buttons, grey gaiters, like a second-hand footman, and checked silk neckerchief of brilliant pattern, contrasting strongly with the tiny shawl, neat print, and close frilled cap of John's better half.

"The fire, sir," said John, when some civilities and courtesies had been exchanged, "I beant likely to forget the fire, sir, till I forget my breath. The fire ha' ruined me quite as much as the maister. I were head groom at the Hall, sir, I were, the night of the fire, four years ago as ever were. It were the day after Christmas-day, when the maister always gave the party, and grand parties they used to be when the maister had learnt Lunnon ways.

"It were getting early morning, and the carriage and pair had just gone with the last ladies and gen'lemen home, when from my window, over No. 3 coach-house, I saw a flashing light in the kitchen. Waiting a minute or two, I saw it couldn't be all that fool of a footman's *fun*, for it had begun to shine over the hall door, and then on each side of the staircase, and when I reached the house it shined everywhere.

"'John!' shouted the maister, 'fetch the engines for your life; take any horse there is left, as hard as you can go.'

"As I rushed away to saddle the ould grey mare, the only horse not out that night, I caught sight of the company—ladies, gen'lemen, servants, children—gathering like a flock o' huddled sheep on the front walk.

"I rode off like mad to the town seven miles away for help; and I wondered whether they couldn't see our big fire as well as I could see their lamp at the top of the town.

"But the ould mare were about spent, and I felt I should never get her up the last long hill. She dropped like a stone; and I slipped off, leaving her at the bottom.

"My breath, sir, were nearly gone with six miles' hard riding; but I went at the hill, and reached the engine-house speechless, only to find the watchmen fast asleep. They were lively enough when I pointed to the fire seven miles down the valley, and at my livery to tell them where it was.

"In a few minutes we were off on the engine at a break-neck speed down the hill, and speedily reached the Hall; but what a sight it wor! Engine after engine came all the morning, but, Lor', sir, it were only pumping on ashes, that's all. It were ruined, sir, and so were many more. My breath were gone, my voice were gone, and I han't ha' done a day's work since; have I, Mary?"

"No," responded Mary, meekly; "but the parish do help us a little now, John. They don't help the maister."

To make a long story short.

Groom and his wife were ruined in pocket and health through that fire. Master and mistress had been ruined in estate by that fire. Sons and daughters were ruined in prospect by that fire. Servants and visitors had been ruined in expectation by that fire.

The property, being wholly uninsured, is to this day a ruined heap.

The family left for a small town house, and utilized the remaining premises to bring in a small rental to pay the rates and taxes of the estate. The lodges were let to peasant tenants; the laundry made a one-floor home for a newly married pair; the west wing served as a lodging for the gardener's family; the stable rooms were let to various people; the stables themselves were degraded to farm duty.

The only thing that sustained its former reputation was the stable clock, which rung out the hours as usual, but only to a desert, a ruin, a waste, though a guide to the people still.

All this happened through the foolish freak of a drunken footman. Is there any office willing to insure against the damages of drink, taking all risk? Surely "the trade" can float a company for the purpose.

This story is not a ponderous leader like Jonas's Jupiter; nor flashing criticism like Our Own Correspondent's; it is merely a tale to show the chains the devil weaves, but dare not show, in everyday life and the everyday curse.

We are asked to indemnify "the trade" for the withdrawal of their former patronage, and give the licensed victuallers a respectable retiring allowance as benefactors to the State.

We have heard a Boniface stoutly and sincerely maintaining he was amongst the pillars of the State. Did he not lodge both cavalry and infantry, and were these not the pillars of the State? Did he not sustain the civil subjects of Her Majesty, and were not these the pillars of the State? and so on, *ad libitum*, *ad nauseam*.

When the country has been first indemnified for the mischief, or even when the country has received an estimate of the mischief, it will be quite time to talk of compensation.

There are insurances against dishonest servants and disreputable practices, but who will insure us against the moral and the spiritual consequences of drink? One

drunken fool ruined all these hopes, but there was no compensation.

The best compensation we can give "the trade" is to appropriate their property (of course after fair purchase) to better purposes, making S. A. B. no longer Stout Ale Brewery, but Salvation Army Barracks; G. T. B. not Good Table Beer, but Gospel Temperance Buildings. The drink ruins the man who fondles it in some part of his being; and the best knots are the three nots, "Touch not, taste not, handle not."

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE LIGHTHOUSE.

I OFTEN think Her Majesty's Navy must need a great deal of my Majesty's patience; for they must at times be terribly bored by the shoals of visitors and the showers of questions that beset them. Let us hope that duty with them is always pleasure. *I* sincerely hope so.

The Traveller's conscience rather accused him of guilt in this matter. He was the foolish man who proposed at breakfast this visit to the lighthouse. The motion was passed by both houses, and received the royal assent, with far greater celerity, and certainly with far greater acclamation, than a recent piece of "urgent" British law.

After dinner, preparations were soon completed, and except the very tiniest, who might have found more fear than fun, all were speedily under way.

It was a tolerably complete specimen of a British lighthouse, and occupied a commanding position on the cliff, so that the dreaded reef out in the sea might be well commanded by its rays.

All were much interested in the lantern and its wonderful

reflectors; in the ingenious method of colouring the rays on a certain spot; in the ponderous machinery which kept the revolutions in accurate time; in the engines belonging to a most deafening foghorn; and in the rocket apparatus and mortar outside.

But perhaps the boys found their greatest delight in a model of old Eddystone, made by the keeper's own hand, and beautifully made too; whilst the girls even became quite absorbed in the kitchen and sleeping accommodation of the tiny dolls who served as its keepers.

Altogether it was a happy time; and the happiness was in no degree lessened when at the very gate they met Mr. Muse. He had been travelling, he said, since he last saw them—whether near or far he would not say; all he had to tell to-day he should tell in rhyme.

So behold them under the rocks, amongst ferns, and heather, and bloom, listening to our Poet's description of

Littlehampton for Little People.

HERE is a low-lying sea-beach, over which the wild waters come leaping,
Pouring their floods thro' the township, as well as all over the meadows;
A land so receding and gentle, so calm and so soft undulating,
It is hard to determine the shore-line where old Neptune claims to be monarch.

'Tis a name of significant smallness, "Tiny ville," being freely translated,
With all its belongings in keeping, like a Lilliput town spread before us:
With a harbour, a fortress, a lighthouse, a pier, and an embryo sea-wall,
Like the toys for a Titanic child's play, in the days of a Titanic play-time.

The children in safety may linger, and play on these sands slow receding,
With no danger of depth to alarm them, or put motherly hearts in a flutter;
The children here often are meeting for sweet simple singing and worship,
With loving appeals to their young hearts to give themselves wholly to Jesus.

This common so open and breezy, in sight and in hearing of windows,
Forms a fine healthy pasture for riding, or cricket, or tennis, or croquet;
And on calm nights the children will muster, and sing their sweet songs of the Saviour,
While their gay little schooner with lanterns goes by with its news of Salvation.

This long promenade so inviting forms a pathway quite free from all danger,
As a slip from its loftiest summit means only a fall of few inches;
And at eventide oft a procession, without acolyte, crucifer, incense,
Will pass its whole length in the gloaming, with singing of Jesus and Heaven.

This tiny, projecting wood-pier, like the deck of the tiniest steamboat,
Forms a miniature promenade running its low-lying length to the ocean;
And 'tis here that full often the darlings, all sitting in love round their teacher,
Will help him, by prayer and by singing, to preach the sweet Gospel of Jesus.

That tiny, toy lighthouse at shore-end, with the tiniest possible watch-tower,
To descry the bark waiting for entrance, or guide the ships out to the darkness,

Forms often a beacon whence children can be well seen, or heard too, approaching,
Or a light for the children to steer by, when they come to their kirk on the pier.

This tiny fort, too, on the left bank, near that long, slender, timber projection,
Tells of enemies dreaded, prepared for, by the loud-booming cannons of warning ;
Teaching the veriest children that life is beset with its dangers,
Showing that boldness for Jesus is the very best guard against evil.

This wide-spreading meadow-land near us is covered with soldiers in practice,
Taking distance, and angle, and foresight, to make of them good skilful gunners :
The little ones, this lesson learning, may see how to conquer temptation,
By putting in practice the precepts that their Father hath given in the Scriptures.

These windmills adorning the country, right up to the Arundel wharfage,
Speak of wind as a means of mill-motion, that will help to keep want from the threshold ;
The children thus seeing in pictures, like the picture-words used by Egyptians,
The breath of the Spirit, the water of Life, help to grind up the Seed of the kingdom.

Tiny ships are oft tugged down this river, tiny boats often dance on its bosom,
Then spread out their wings like the sea-birds, or glint in the afternoon sunshine ;
Teaching all of us life is a voyage, with peril that soon will be over,
A perilous voyage for ending on the bright shore of Heaven's Fair Havens.

As they stood in silence, full of the thought the Poet had last left upon their minds, the sun had just dipped his burning edge into the golden sea. In a few more minutes a bright light shone forth over their heads, telling that the night-work and the night-watch of the lighthouse had begun.

Noticing this, our Muse continued.

False and True.

'TWAS evening ; I stood by the Western Bay shore,
The marvellous Pebble Beach lay at my feet ;
The shades of night deepened, and ocean's hoarse roar
Enchained me where peril had fixed its firm seat.

The dark, heavy storm-cloud now covered the sky,
The "white horses' manes" scarcely gleamed through the dark ;
The spray of the breakers fell wrathful, shot high,
And all seemed conspired to wreck fishers' frail bark.

But see ! far away on lone Abbot's drear shore,
A bright, gleaming beacon now lights up the scene,
Now mounts, with its fire-betipped tongues crying "More !"
Now sinks to a smoulder, nor flame to be seen.

But see, on grim Portland's bold headland there gleams
A calm, steady light, which the storm cannot dim ;
The mariner sees, now of hope fondly dreams—
False beacon for others ! true lighthouse for him !

So the false and the flickering first win our fond heart,
Till danger's white crest rises nearer to view ;
Thank God, for the friendship which death cannot part ;
Thank God, for the false He has given us the True !

Calmly happy, the whole party prepared for the walk home in the twilight; their eyes taking in the evening sights, their ears the evening sounds—but, may we not hope, also those lessons which at life's eventide shall make it light

CHAPTER XVI.

SOME SICK VISITING.

NO, dear reader, you need not be excited about them. Thank God, though many, they were all quite well. *They* had not needed a professional visit from a professional man; it was quite in a different way this "sick visiting" came about.

The theorizing parsons had so well learnt the Echo's lesson, that they abstained for several days from ministerial speculations, and seemed more than ever to realize their work should be "unto men."

Traveller, having an hour or so to spare (must I tell why? then I believe it was because of some "shopping" the girls had persuaded their mother to undertake), sought his bosom friend the Hermit. Finding him on the point of leaving home, evidently on business bent, his friend said—

"Sorry to have disturbed you, brother. You were just going out?"

"Brother," was the answer, "I was on the point of starting for my sick visiting."

"I also go with thee," unconsciously quoted the Traveller.

"Well," said the Hermit, "after the Echo's rebuke for

our speculations, it wouldn't be amiss to deal with a little fact."

"Brother," said the Traveller, "the same idea has impressed me ever since; and inasmuch as Cowper says

> 'Absence of occupation is not rest;
> A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed;'

and the vulgar proverb says, 'Change of work's as good as play,' I really think it will rest my mind, as well as keep my hand in, if I also go sick visiting."

Their way led first of all to the back part of the town, amid the wretchedness and squalor that the visitors seldom see.

Talking by the way, or comparing notes perhaps, they freely opened their hearts to each other on the important work of a minister's sick visiting.

Traveller said: "I try and see my sick folks pretty often, and pretty regularly; for the mind during affliction becomes specially sensitive under seeming neglect, and specially interested in an expected event."

"But isn't it wise to reserve one's own liberty in visiting, and thus save the possible disappointment of that expectancy?"

"To some extent, yes. I make a difference. To the people who desire my visits, I try to be fairly regular—that is to say, on the same day. To people who would shun my visits, if they could—and who make the most formal preparations for them, because they cannot—I am most irregular."

"Oh, I know what you mean. That terrible preparation of Bibles, and glasses, and handkerchiefs, and all that. Isn't that exquisitely ludicrous; or rather, isn't it painfully sad?"

"Brother," said the Traveller, "I have sometimes ill

restrained my levity at the sight—I have sometimes not restrained my tears."

"And yet you know, the Bible is handy," observed the Hermit.

"Well, yes; but I prefer a more guerilla warfare. Like a brother who always carried what he called 'devil shot'—tracts to wit; I always carry my trident and net—my Bible to wit."

"But isn't that cumbersome?"

"Not at all," said the Traveller; "mine is a sort of pocket pistol. I can load, present, fire, in a moment; and we are on our knees in prayer before the astonished nurse has dusted her glasses."

They had now reached a cottage on the outskirts of the town, where the Hermit said they would make their first call. By a mutual arrangement, one only was to talk, and one only was to pray.

Knocking at the door, which formed a very ill-fitting portal to a very primitive home, a gruff voice called out "Come in." The secrets of Chubb's patent were not to be conquered in a moment; but at last it was discovered that a loose string with a button at the end formed the magic "Open, sesame!" of this unpalatial abode.

Looking round the turf-walled room, dimly lighted as it was by a tiny window of green glass, not much larger than a ship's porthole, the visitors discovered at last its sole occupant to be a weather-beaten old man, who, sitting by the grey ashes of an extinguished fire, received more light on his hoary head from the sunshine down the capacious chimney, than he received from the bull's-eye window which should have performed this task.

Noticing, with his quick, ready eye, this feature of the scene, after some usual but very brief salutations, the Hermit said—

"Ah, John, I see you've got the glory this morning—the glory already, John! 'The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness,' you know; and God has been sending His beautiful sunshine down your smoky chimney, you see, just to cheer you up on your voyage home."

Then, in terms half biblical, half nautical, he went on to cheer the old man with the glorious thoughts of light which were scattered up and down the Holy Word. The old man was too ill to reply, and the Hermit therefore made all the talking, as he told the old saint of the day-star in the heart, always to be seen as from a mine bottom, when our troubles are many; of the Lord as a "sun and shield," for the guidance and protection of the warriors of the earth; of the Bright and Morning Star which God has sent to guide a weary world to Himself; of the eventide of sorrows which God can make so light; of the Light of the world, the Sun which never can go down, the Moon which can never withdraw; of the Lamb as the light of the city of gold, where the days of our mourning are ended.

Then, without reading from the Book this time, the Traveller led the three bowed souls in simple prayer, that the precious truths to which they had just listened might be the experience of all—the resting visitor, the working minister, the waiting believer—till each should reach the land that knows no sorrow, the land that knows no sin.

The next visit the Hermit intended to pay led them to a very neat, comfortable cottage some distance from the shore; where lived a stalwart young fisherman, who had just met with an accident from a falling yard, which had broken one leg, and sadly bruised and wounded him into the bargain.

Sitting at the cottage door was his neat and tidy wife, with two little children playing at her feet; while her watchful eye

could see, with equal quickness, the path that led to the garden gate, and her husband's couch near the window on the other side of the cheerful room.

Seeing the visitors approach and open the gate, she courteously moved her chair, and invited the strangers to enter. The prisoner, for it was a prison indeed for him to lay on a sick-bed, had been just one of those good, moral, worldly people who, by assenting to everything but accepting nothing, give more anxiety to a minister's heart than he can possibly express.

The Hermit, knowing all the circumstances of his wife's piety and of his own unconcern, skilfully contrived to draw his thoughts away from the great trouble about which he was so full; or, rather, to draw his thoughts to the connection it had with his loving Father above.

"Surely," the Hermit said, "the Lord must have known how near your rent-day was, and how soon the season would be over, and how bad the fishing was in May, and what great catches are being made now. Oh yes! the Lord knows all about that, I'm sure. But he wants you to think of a house where there's no rent, and how soon another season will be gone, and how disappointing the world is, and what a Pearl of great price is Jesus. Oh yes!" he glowingly continued, "the dear Lord knows a great deal more about us than we dare tell about ourselves; but the precious Master has done all for us, paid the price of all our sins for us, and now that we're weary and heavy-laden He says, 'Come unto Me.'"

Taking the conversation thus at first by storm, all that followed was in a similar key. The gossip of the world could not creep in, and even the sorrows of the home had another setting; and their everyday troubles were every one bathed in the sunshine of the Father's love.

Reading without warning a few verses from that tiny Book

of his—the smallest in the world, the grandest in the world—the Traveller led the whole family to the throne of grace, comprehending in a few words the suffering father, patient mother, cheerful children—all.

When they left the cottage, the family had only a bewildering sense of happiness, that a ray of sunshine had come into their home, and that its light and glow, there even yet, belonged to Jesus.

Only one other visit did the friends pay in company just then.

On the other side of a wide sheep-pasturing heath stood the lonely cottage of the shepherd of the plain. They found him tending his flocks in the fold. He was an intelligent man, of perhaps fifty summers, but weather and sorrow were both marked upon his brow. The fair brow, shaded by an old brown hat, showed furrow above and tanning below. After a few cheery words on both sides, the ministers continued their way, and presently reached the shepherd's home. A good substantial stone house it was, with Tudor mouldings telling of some former grandeur, whilst the low mullioned window showed painted glass in many a diamond pane.

The door standing open, the visitors entered without ceremony. It was a tidy room, humble but comfortable, suggesting plenty without repletion, comfort but not without care. A large empty arm-chair, high backed, chintz covered, with a curtain drawn round it from the ceiling, spoke volumes of such thoughts as Longfellow's "Vacant Chair."

Descending the creaking stair came a plain, patient-looking mother, whose experience had been bought in the sick room rather than in the sunny fold. Pointing to the chair, the Hermit said softly, "Ah! not so well, I fear."

"No, sir; not nearly so well. Come up, please;" and she led the way to what would soon be the death-bed of her last darling child.

So shadowy was the fair form, so sharp the transparent features, so shrunken the pale lips, so brilliant the large brown eyes, that a moments glance told each heart the truth. She might have been the May-Queen of earlier days—she was the dying Alice of these; but there was the sense of peace and of rest.

A motion to the Traveller was enough, and with gentle words he almost whispered the truths of the Shepherd of Israel Who never sleeps, the valley of the shadow where the Shepherd follows; of the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for the sheep, and the tender way He carries His lost ones safely home; of the one fold, and the one Shepherd, where He leads them by the fountains of living waters, and "wipes all tears from their eyes;" concluding—

> "To lie within the light of God as I lie upon your breast,
> Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Standing by the dying damsel, the Hermit prayed in gentlest tones for her and hers; while in the furnace was there not the form of the Son of man, and in the sufferer's heart the heavenly voice of Jesus, saying "Talitha cumi—Damsel, arise."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FOLIO OF ODDITIES.

SLOCOMBE was undoubtedly a slow place. But the reader will not take this as the secret of its etymology. After consulting the Domesday Book, and the distinguished Hearne, and some other obscure antiquarians, we are only able to suggest the following:

SLOCOMBE { "slo"—O.H.G. *slou;* Nors. *sleou;* Icel. *schleugh:* to slay.
"combe"—Grimm. *colmb;* Gramm. *columb;* L. Dut. *comb:* a scratch.

Yes, undoubtedly, I repeat, it was a slow place. For whilst it had a promenade—"Esplanade," the natives called it; and a jetty—"Pier," the natives termed it, it had no steamboats, nor at present had it received a call from one.

Yes, bills had been posted on the pier for some days, with a really wonderful picture of a steamship in full sail, its steam in one direction and its sails in another, announcing that on Friday this A 1 clipper would call at Slocombe Pier, and take up passengers for an excursion to Yagh.

Yagh, as its name implies, was a place so delightfully remote from the common haunts of men, that the most romantic adventures floated before the imagination at the very sound. It must be a sort of unspoilt Fairyland, some old Norse settlement or ancient British Camp, at the very least. And of course such intellectual creatures as the Traveller and Hermit could not miss such a splendid opportunity for antiquarian research.

Mentioning the matter casually one morning at breakfast, what was the Traveller's astonishment to find the matter had long been settled; that every one, including Baby May, had been promised the *trip* in the *ship*.

"Farewell, a long farewell, to all my dreamings," inwardly groaned the Traveller.

Happily remembering himself and another line often used at Littletown at the same time, he said, "'But put a cheerful courage on;' my precious dream is past."

The eventful Friday had now come, and at an early hour you might have seen the pilgrim fathers, and pilgrim mothers, and pilgrim children, going on board the *Sunflower* (that's an æsthetic name, you know), in search of the inhospitable shores of Yagh.

The voyage outward bound was full of the usual incidents; the rigging, the stokehole, the engine-room, all had their due attention; the captain, the helmsman, the call-boy, all had their due admiration. But *then*——common humanity imperatively demanded a little necessary attention to others, and not very much admiratin for their suffering selves.

Like another voyager, they were permitted at Yagh to go on shore to refresh themselves, which they were all very happy to do. But judge of their astonishment when they found the missing Muse, hob-a-nob-ing with the swarthy natives in all their war-paint, like another John Dunn amongst his sable subjects in the Dark Continent.

Tide and time wait for no man, and the shrill whistle of the bark commanded at last to retire. They couldn't think of leaving the Muse behind, so they carried him off by force, defying "the sullen and random shots that his friends were sullenly firing."

When safely on board again, they saw our Poet had treasure, hidden treasure, in the shape of a large portfolio, such as ladies carry for sketching; upon which, perhaps for his own comfort, perhaps for its greater safety, he had made his seat. While it is not unusual, of course, for a poet or a poem to be "sat upon," they thought it somewhat out of course that a poet should be "sat upon" by himself; and, merely with the most humane object in view, a rescue was decided upon.

Asking our Poet, in a moment of abstraction, to pick up a lady's fallen basket, the folio was seized. After a secret and hurried glance at its contents, the loss was discovered, and restitution demanded. After a vain attempt at "hunt the folio," a compromise was effected, and the Poet promised to read selections, which he did as follows:

The Meteor.

'TWAS midnight! I stood 'neath the blue arch of heaven,
The river beneath softly heaved her fair breast;
The moon's silver face by her wave was scarce riven,
And the pulse of the city lay still and at rest.

Above me the gem-bedecked, measureless blue,
Rose glorious with many a dazzling bright star;
The silver of Venus, fierce Mars' blood-red hue,
Spoke of Heaven's silver trumpet, but of Earth's nations' war.

The sky on a sudden was dazzling with light,
As a glaring, bright meteor shot o'er her calm path;
And the sweet, tiny pole-star, so clear and so bright,
Seemed lost in the blaze of that meteor's fierce wrath.

'Twas past—and my pole-star still peacefully lay,
Surrounded by myriads as faithful and true ;
The brightness had vanished, as stars pale at day,
When the trail of its light had receded from view.

So a life, to be great, must be fixed and content ;
And friendship, if true, must be lasting and deep ;
When it seeks to bless others, for others is spent,
It will live, ay, and outlive the spell of death's sleep.

Turning over his papers, our friend came upon another poem, which, to keep up the armistice, he read to the voyagers. Certainly he couldn't have picked up the following at Yagh, for it was summer-heat just then. However, let the Poet have his way, and give his iceberg.

A Winter Cascade.

'MIDST rocks, and trees, and ferns, and flowers,
The spring-drops thread their way ;
Their noiseless, hidden path they steal,
And shun the light of day.

But Winter's stern and icy hand
Is felt o'er all the scene ;
Flowers fade, leaves fall, ferns shrink away,
Before his breath so keen.

Those drops a beauteous cataract form,
Congealèd one by one,
Till all adown the rocky height
Pearls glisten in the sun.

From crag to crag its path it takes,
And day by day it grows ;
For many a day it lives and shines
After the melted snows.

So prosperous times our graces hide,
And virtue's springs seem dry;
Full many a soul has perished, too,
Beneath a cloudless sky.

But adverse days, when hopes all fail,
Reveal our comforts' springs;
Then shines our grace, then beams our joy,
'Midst wreck of earthly things.

Nervously fingering his papers, he muttered what seemed like "a cross stick"—not a very gentlemanly allusion to the Traveller, I suppose. However, his friend magnanimously allowing the insult to pass, the Poet read—

Edgehill:

A CONTRAST AND A MORAL.

EDGEHILL, Warwickshire, where the first battle was fought between Charles I. and the Parliament, is a favourite resort for picnic and holiday; resounding far more with shouts of laughter than the peal of guns, with lovers' sighs than soldiers' groans.

A CONTRAST.

E DGEHILL! where once the Royal Martyr camped,
D own whose fair sides the furious Rupert tramped;
G one now for aye, we trust, those scenes of blood,
E ssex, Fairfax, or Cromwell bravely stood.
H ow Heaven must weep when brethren disagree
I n deadly strife, tho' making captives free!
L oud guns boom thunder down the Red Horse Vale,
L oud and more loud, till every face grows pale.

E dgehill! on whose fair ridge again I stand,
D own whose fern-verdured breast I view the land—
G entle, but good, simple, serene, and calm,
E ach heart must feel beneath thy heaven-sent balm.

H ow I rejoice amid thy sylvan shades,
I n calmest joyance tread thy woodland glades.
L oud laugh yon maidens, low yon lovers sigh ;
L ove, hope, and joy beam forth from every eye.

A MORAL.

M OURN as we may the Royal Martyr's blood,
O n English liberty has England ever stood ;
R ound our frail lives the wars of time will fly,
A t last to calm in death and heavenly joy :
L ord, grant us liberty, but hopes that never cloy !

Slocombe now began to rise upon the Poet's sight, which appeared to remind him of some former weary journey of his ; for by way of conclusion he read to us—not unfittingly perhaps—

Hope Villa.

("*After*" LONGFELLOW.)

THE shades of night had fallen at last,
As through a straggling village passed
A man, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A count'nance with this strange device
—"Hope Villa !"

His brow was sad, his eye beneath
Dropped like a falchion in its sheath ;
And like a muffled dumb-peal rung
The accents of that solemn tongue
—"Hope Villa !"

In happy homes he saw the light
Of bedroom lamps gleam warm and bright;
Above, the spectral pine-trees shone,
Above, the stars—but hark, that groan
—"Hope Villa !"

"Try not the hills," one old man said,
"Dark frowns the snow-cloud overhead,
And Mayford torrent's deep and wide;"
But weird that ghostly voice replied
—"Hope Villa!"

"Oh! stay," the young men said, "and rest
Thy weary head in Burton nest."
A tear stood in that drooping eye,
But still he murmured with a sigh
—"Hope Villa!"

"Beware the elm-tree's falling branch;
Upon the Common never launch!"
This was the Langleys' last "good-night;"
The voice replied, far in the night
—"Hope Villa!"

At break of day, as heavenward
The bell-boy, in the Workhouse ward,
Rung loud upon the morning air,
A voice groaned, more in dream than prayer
—"Hope Villa!"

That traveller now, whom nought could rouse,
Lay sleeping there, and muttering vows—
Amongst them, some could not rejoice,
Sepulchral tones and saddest voice
—"Hope Villa!"

There, in the morning cold and gray,
Tossing and restless, still he lay;
While from his world of dreams afar,
These words fell, like a falling star
—"Hope Villa!"

Whereupon, gentle reader, they sought their villas, and, in due course, their slumbers also; not, we hope, entirely having lost a day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON PRAYER-MEETINGS.

SATURDAY, when "over" is called—the "parsoness" taking the on-side and the "parson" the off-side—found Mr. Traveller with a little *ennui*. With that charitable disposition of his, which always prompted him to share his troubles as well as his joys, he sought his friend the Hermit with *this* hospitable intent.

His friend, he was told, had gone to the vestry of his church on some trifling errand, whither the good man determined to follow. Looking over the place with more freedom than he could do on the Sabbath, he was much pleased with the accommodation provided for school purposes and week-day meetings.

Finding his friend snugly ensconced in one of those cloistered cells usually provided as a vestry for the minister—invented doubtless in order to impress him with the proper solemnity of his office, and give to his countenance the proper proportions of leanness and length—the Traveller boisterously greeted him with:

"Oh, here you are—at last!"

"Yes," said his friend, "you must have a good scent; what say you to turn detective?"

"Oh! thanks, I have plenty of that sort of work already in looking up absentees."

"But don't you usually find them ill at home?"

"By no means, Mr. Hermit; the absentees I seek I usually find abroad. I mean the absentees from the prayer-meeting."

"Ah!" sighed the Hermit, "I see."

"Brother," he went on abruptly, "what do you think of this subject? Do you think we should give it up, change the time, read pretty books, recite a little poetry, read nice prayers—with no vain repetition, no noisy crying, no bad grammar?"

"Not so fast, brother, not so fast; let us divide the subject in an orderly manner, please. Thus: I. Time when. II. Place where. III. Means how."

"By all means," echoed the Hermit.

"As to the Time when, first. I should say, choose the most suitable hour for business and for home life, changing the hour for the winter season with the same object; so that a large proportion of business people may come, and some proportion of the home birds also."

"People do complain so that the prayer-meeting interferes with their business hours or with their home life."

"Very likely," replied the Traveller; "simply because said prayer-meeting was never consulted in the planning of said business time, nor in the arrangement of said home life."

"Yes, of course, that is true. Instead of the business or home life being the injured party, it is the prayer-meeting that should be the complainant in the case. But would you suggest an occasional lapse; say, for 'harvest' amongst our rural folk, or 'season' amongst our town folk?"

"I know the argument is," answered the Traveller, "the prayer-meeting becomes fresher—on the same principle as

Dr. Tanner after a fast would enjoy a good dinner, I suppose; but I prefer, as my good old nurse used to say, 'little and often.'"

"But is the argument valid? Is the meeting better after the pause?"

"My experience says, 'Decidedly not.' But, brother, I go deeper; I object to such pause on principle. I would lay down as an essential a weekly prayer-meeting, before I discuss the best methods of carrying it on."

"I am glad to hear you speak out so plainly. I feel, quite as strongly as you do, a great principle is at stake," warmly responded the Hermit.

"If the prayer-meeting be the pulse of the church, let it not only be healthy, but always at work," said the Traveller.

"Well done, doctor! If prayer is a confession of weakness, it is the only way also of securing power," said the Hermit.

"Well done, professor! 'It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord;' and that Holy Spirit is only given in answer to the prayers of God's people, which certainly seem more powerful when they are with one accord in one place."

* * * * * *

"Secondly," said the Hermit, "the Place where."

"Yes, by all means, let us pass on. I should say, usually, the best rooms in the church that can be prepared for the purpose. The church is too solemnly cold, the school too solemnly bare; let us have a clean, comfortable, home-like room. But there, you have already solved that part, haven't you?"

"Yes, happily, we have excellent accommodation here; but I must confess that the meetings are not what they should be—perhaps one-tenth of the Sunday numbers; but I cannot say I am quite satisfied."

"Have you ever made inquiries of your absentees?" asked the Traveller.

"Oh yes, many. The usual answer is, the distance is too great for their limited time; and there really is something in the objection."

"Could they not hold family or cottage meetings in their own neighbourhood? Oh, brother, what a powerful people we shall be when we are thus a praying people! I become enthusiastic at the bare idea."

"I am happy to say," said the Hermit, "they have already done this, with the happiest results. To tell you the truth, brother, if you once carry your first point of necessity, the difficulties of place and method give way."

"Yes, I see that; but I did not take that order for strategy: I took that order on principle. I am sure if the spirit be there the place will be found, whether it be near or far."

* * * * * *

"Lastly, brother, the Means how."

"Yes, thirdly; we are to be instructed now!" playfully responded the Traveller. "Grant us the principle, we will meet you as to method."

"The objection has been made that the petitions are the same. I think the language is certainly very similar, but then God knows the different desires which the words may fail to express. He wants heart accuracy, not word accuracy; heart right, not grammar right."

"My remedy is, 'Many men, many minds;' if there be monotony, I would get variety by numbers. Let the unsophisticated begin, and the set speech will pass through a change in quick time. I get as many as twelve, if possible."

"But how can you, if you sing four hymns and give an address?" asked Mr. Hermit.

"Oh, I gauge my meeting, and act accordingly. We only

sing such verses as seem to do us good; my address only leads up to the privilege of prayer, and this sometimes broken up into many little addresses; while the brethren will pray very briefly—two, three, between each singing."

"But can you always get enough brethren for your purpose? That has often been my difficulty," said the Hermit.

"Yes, and it is frequently mine. But if you grant my principle that prayer must be made, then on that I stand and reply (isn't it heresy?), 'Yes; and in the absence of brothers, *sisters* must make it.'"

"But does that answer? I am not afraid of the heresy in that matter."

"Yes," responded Mr. Traveller, "it has answered splendidly; and many of the brightest, warmest, tenderest prayers, are offered by our sisters in the church. With their great preponderance in numbers, surely there is no doubt of their preponderance in interest; and I see, therefore, no incongruity in their praying for the church, of which they form so large and so active a part."

"Well, brother Traveller," concluded the Hermit, "I think we have spent a profitable time; and I am sure we ought to have a tiny prayer-meeting to ourselves. Better methods there may be; best place there should be; but prayer-meetings there must be."

At this moment the energetic female, who had acted from time immemorial as the sextoness of the church, somewhat imperiously rapped at the door, inquiring—

"Prayer-meeting just as usual next week, sir?"

"Just as usual, Mary, as to the time and the place; but perhaps a little unusual as to the persons and the plan."

"What *do* you mean, sir?"

"Why, my friend here, who is a minister from far away, has been instructing me as to some better methods of conducting prayer-meetings, Mary; and really I think I shall

try some of his suggestions, namely, short verses, short prayers, female voices."

"Oh, sir," broke in Mary, "that's like the good old days come back again. When my poor old man were alive," pursued she, with her talkative vein touched, "what glorious prayer-meetings we used to have, to be sure!

"That were in the old chapel, sir; Sunday morning we would be up at five in the winter, and a beautiful fire and bright candles all ready for the meetin' at seven. There were Deacon Jones always there, brother Simms and his wife, lads from the factory, lasses from the shops; the fisher lads always came; and what grand times we used to have.

"Then at night, sir, after all were over, we had another prayer-meetin', where more ladies and gen'lemen used to pray; and that's when my poor Bill as was drowned, sir, and my Jane as died, both came to the penitent form and declared for the Lord.

"Then on Tuesday, sir, were the meetin' when the mothers used to come, sir; because you see the fathers got home early o' purpose and minded house. We didn't often have a penitent form then, though.

"Then on Thursday were the lecture, sir—that were beautiful; the brothers used to pray beautiful for the minister. And then on Saturday night we used to have our neighbours in to our own house to prayer."

"Ah, Mary!" said the Hermit, as she retired, "pray on all you can, and God will bless us."

"'God will bless us, and that right early,'" reverently added the Traveller.

Then they knelt and poured out their hearts before the Lord, that them and their works their heavenly Father would ever abundantly bless.

CHAPTER XIX.

LITERARY MEN.

I SAID Slocombe was a slow place. I don't like eating my own words; but in some respects it was fairly ahead. For instance, it had an Institute. This Institute at present held its court in the rooms of two houses which had been altered for the purpose. I would describe this building, if I could, for the benefit of any economical philanthropist who may read these pages, burning with a desire to bless his fellow-men and emblazon his name on the marble shields of his parish church.

To prevent mistake, one of the two outer doors had been duly stopped up, but very unduly hidden, by some new plaster and some newer paint, with an elevation now like the double effect of a variegated rabbit, with a very decided lop to one ear.

Then to right and left of the narrow passage it had a pair of inventions; namely, one door which was made to open, and another which was now made to be closed. The stranger invariably pushed against the nailed door with all his might, and concluded the assault by falling *hors de*

combat at the unexpected opening of the second, or opening door.

Picking himself up, supposing the visitor had attacked to the right, he found himself in a kind of double action chamber of horrors, where the largest number of persons could be suffocated in the shortest possible time—folding-doors limiting the space for the purpose when needful; the window at each end being carefully frosted that the victims during the process might duly inscribe name, date, and other interesting details, as with a pen, on the glass for ever.

On the left, which the visitor would try cautiously, was a single room, with a window similarly prepared for its unfortunate occupants, whilst some wooden shelves, painted a grey stone colour, served as the depositories of the Circulating Library of Slocombe.

The companion room at the back was used as a kind of reading-room for Slocombe, visitors being admitted to its unspeakable privileges at the charge of a labourer's hire, to wit, a penny a day.

Within this sanctum behold our three literary men, themselves their only company, scanning the columns of last week's "Wessex Gazette," or the tide-tables in the "Slocombe Almanack and Advertiser."

It was wet outdoors; happily the frost prevented our friends seeing that, as well as the back premises of the Institute; so there was really nothing to disturb the literary dreams of Messrs. Traveller, Hermit, and Muse.

Conversation having turned upon rhyming, the Traveller confessed once—he assured his friends only once—he had made the attempt. Therefore, unbewildered by much poetic dreaming, without effort, he kindly gave the following:

God is Love.

A MISER grieved his hoard to lose ;
A merchant grieved at saddening news :

A maiden mourned her blighted heart ;
A husband mourned his better part :

A sister lost a brother's joy ;
A mother lost a cherub boy :

Men all made moan o'er fancied woe ;
Men all fixed eyes on earth below :—

Yet over all, from heaven above,
Yet sweetly floated, " God is love."

Being all three members of "the cloth," it was no wonder, after such a sermon on such a text, that texts and sermons should occupy attention.

Strange texts were now quoted thick and fast, from "The knives of Ezra" to "The beast." Traveller quoted as a climax an anniversary sermon on "Now concerning the collection;" when Hermit doubted the legality of such a piece of isolation as ministers often committed in the selection of such texts.

"Why," he said, "if you separate texts from their contexts, you may make the Bible mean anything. We never do so with other literature, except "—he said by way of correction—"in the way of scissors and paste manipulation."

He then read from a newspaper in his hand the following —which being not original but anonymous, the author cannot otherwise acknowledge, and will therefore quote :

"A Literary Curiosity.

" 1. *Chatterton.* What strange infatuation rules mankind,
2. *Rogers.* What different spheres to human bliss assigned ;

3. *C. Sprague.* To loftier things your finer pulses burn,
4. *R. H. Dana.* If man would but his finer nature learn ;
5. *B. Jonson.* What several ways men to their calling have,
6. *Falconer.* And grasp at life though sinking to the grave.
7. *Cowper.* Ask, What is human life ? the sage replies,
8. *Ferguson.* Wealth, pomp, and honour are but empty toys ;
9. *Quarles.* We trudge, we travel, but from pain to pain,
10. *Burns.* Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main.
11. *Tennyson.* We only toil who are the first of things.
12. *Beattie.* From labour health, from health contentment springs ;
13. *Dryden.* Fame runs before us as the morning star.
14. *Byron.* How little do we know that which we are ;
15. *Pomfret.* Let none then here his certain knowledge boast
16. *Waller.* Of fleeting joys too certain to be lost ;
17. *Hood.* For over all there hangs a cloud of fear,
18. *Steele.* All is but change and separation here.
19. *Dwight.* To smooth life's passage o'er its stormy way,
20. *Herbert.* Sum up at night what thou hast done by day ;
21. *Dunbar.* Be rich in patience, if thou in gudes be poor ;
22. *G. Whitney.* So many men do stoope to sight unsure ;
23. *Rowe.* Choose out the man to virtue most inclined,
24. *Langhorne.* Throw envy, folly, prejudice, behind.
25. *Congreve.* Defer not till to-morrow to be wise,
26. *Dr. Johnson.* Wealth heaped on wealth, nor truth, nor safety brings.
27. *Goldsmith.* Remembrance worketh with her busy train,

28. *Drayton.* Care draws on care, woe comforts woe again ;
29. *Webster.* On high estates huge heaps of cares attend,
30. *Southwell.* No joy so great but runneth to an end ;
31. *Thomson.* No hand applaud what honour shuns to hear,
32. *Sher. Knowles.* Who casts off shame, should likewise cast off fear.
33. *W. S. Landor.* Grief haunts us down the precipice of years,
34. *E. Moore.* Virtue alone no dissolution fears ;
35. *R. Greene.* Time loosely spent will not again be won,
36. *Cowley.* What shall I do to be for ever known ?
37. *Joanna Baillie.* But now the wane of life comes darkly on,
38. *Keats.* After a thousand mazes overgone ;
39. *B. Barton.* In this brief state of trouble and unrest,
40. *Pope.* Man never is, but always to be, blest ;
41. *Marsden.* Time is the present hour, the past is fled.
42. *Elliott.* O thou futurity, our hope and dread ;
43. *Blair.* How fading are the joys we dote upon.
44. *Oldham.* Lo ! while I speak the present moment's gone.
45. *Akenside.* O Thou Eternal Arbiter of things,
46. *J. G. Percival.* How awful is the hour when conscience stings ;
47. *J. A. Hillhouse.* Conscience, stern arbiter in every breast,
48. *Mallet.* The fluttering wish on wing that will not rest.
49. *Shakespeare.* This, above all, to thine own self be true,
50. *Sir J. Denham.* Learn to live well, that thou mayst die so too.
51. *Spenser.* To those that list the world's gay scenes I leave,
52. *Young.* Some ills we wish for when we wish to live."—ANON.

"Well," said the interested Muse, "that is a curiosity indeed. Many beautiful thoughts, nevertheless."

"One text for every Sunday in the year," observed Mr. Traveller, who had carefully kept the number on his fingers.

"I see, by the paper here, a little barque was wrecked along this coast last week; but I heard nothing of it," said the Hermit.

"All hands were saved, though, according to the paper, I think," said the Traveller.

"I am glad of that," observed the Muse, "for it reminds me of a strange story I heard on the Devon coast, of a little brig that was wrecked from Norway; and the men, who all escaped, took shelter till morning inside an unfinished chapel."

"Just one more, Mr. Poet, if you please? I have seldom heard your lines, you know," said the Hermit.

"In my own way, then?"

"Oh, certainly," was the united response; and he began.

A Strange Consecration.

'TWAS night; the wild waves lashed the shore
On rugged Devon's coast,
Where 'mid the waves' and waters' roar
A Norway brig was lost.

Not knowing well those lofty rocks,
Where raged the treacherous deep,
Their helmsman steered, 'mid staggering shocks,
To shipwreck on the steep.

On those fierce shark's teeth now impaled,
The hapless vessel sways;
Her creaking timbers, yielding, wailed:
But still the Norseman prays.

Wave after wave broke o'er her side,
  Billow on billow rolled ;
Their pretty ship-bell, once their pride,
  Their death-knell sadly tolled.

Amid the crash of falling spars,
  The wrench of binding gyves,
Full many a prayer beyond the stars
  Reached Him Who ever lives.

Was it a miracle that saved
  From gaping jaws of death?
A mighty blast, a mighty wave
  Swept o'er, they held their breath.

When lo ! strange sight, their upper deck
  A mighty raft now floats ;
While, lifted far beyond the wreck,
  Drift from them all their boats.

But God has sent His loving Hand
  To answer all their prayers ;
A mightier billow lifts to land,
  They're saved from Ocean's snares.

Saved, yet all dripping, in the dark
  They climb the giddy height ;
The seething billows hide their bark,
  They search the land for light.

Is this an unknown, desert waste ?
  No man to live or pray ?
Oh ! here is shelter, found at last,
  Where they can wait for day.

But first their captain bluffly prayed—
  When he had told his crew,
And found each man and boy were saved—
  To God the kind and true.

With bowèd head, on bended knee,
The rugged Norsemen pray ;
Their captain, in strange accents free
Prayed till the dawn of day.

When the grey light of morning broke
On their astonished eyes,
The chapel walls, could they have spoke,
Would tell of prayers that rise

Up to the throne of God on high,
In shrine, on land, on sea ;
The "consecration" cannot lie,
From such a bended knee.

The fisher folk, their brawny guests
Did tend with loving care,
Because, like birds in sheltering nests,
They oped their "house of prayer."

That little church now bravely stands,
A light, tho' it feeble be ;
But none forget, who worship there,
Its "bishop" from the sea.

CHAPTER XX.

SOME HEAVY LINKS.

AMONGST the books loaned from the Slocombe Library, Mr. Traveller had read "The Devil's Chain;" and, like many more, he had been sadly bewildered by the undoubted truth of the story, but somewhat perplexed as to the propriety of publishing it.

And yet his was a noble nature, that shrank from hiding truth; and withal a tender spirit, that equally shrank from inflicting pain.

Full of these thoughts as he took his early morning walk, what was his dismay at finding prostrate across the very centre of his road, and in imminent peril from the first vehicle that passed, the body of a fine young woman. His first anxiety was to see if she lived. Yes, she lived; happily it was not murder. Nor was she wounded or injured, but breathing heavily as she lay: he watched another moment.

She was poorly clad, and yet with many little signs of feminine taste; she had a fine form, with features of a superior mould. Evidently some mystery was here.

Gently rousing her, he asked if he should lift her up. No

response came to this inquiry; and the good man made the attempt, but she fell heavily at his feet. This time she lay a little nearer to the wall by the side of the road, and with a great effort he succeeded in propping her up there, when she opened her eyes and looked wildly round.

"Are you going to Slocombe?" said Mr. Traveller.

"Yes," was the thick reply.

Footsteps were heard approaching, and two hearty labourers drew near.

"Hulloa!" shouted one, "why, how came Mary here?"

"Are you going to Filstone?" asked the other.

"Yes," was her answer.

Here was a mystery for the Traveller to solve—she was going in two opposite directions. She was simply under the dreadful influence of the drink. After a little more conversation, finding the men knew the poor girl's home, and were going in that direction, he begged them to help her. This they promised to do, and with one stalwart walking crutch on each side, he saw the last of a very "heavy link."

This affected Mr. Traveller to such a degree, that he actually shut himself up the whole of the morning, which was beautifully fine; and as the whole party sat on the beach after tea, the diffident Traveller actually read the following paper, which he said he should give at Littletown the very first thing when he arrived at home.

A few more Links in the Devil's Chain.

EDWARD JENKINS, in that powerful work of his, "The Devil's Chain," has taught us that one feature of its links is the fact that, whilst they are all *joinable*, none of them are joined. If the world once saw the frightful connection of all forms of human crime and sorrow with the Drink, it must abstain, from universal horror.

But the object of this paper is to point out that these links are all *portable*, and, unfortunately, are being carried, some with glad hearts, some with sad, noisily or silently, to the very grave.

There has just been constructed, for mission-work in Africa, a steamer built in sections, no section being more than a one-man burden. The name of that vessel is *Peace.*

There is daily being constructed, for the devil's work in England, a vessel built in parts, no part being too heavy to lay on the shoulders of some unfortunate slave. Some parts are labelled Hilarity, Vanity, Wretchedness; some are ticketed Pauperism, Lunacy, Crime. But, when fitted together, as most accurately they are made to fit, each burden bears the name of its maker, "Drink," and the name of that vessel, alas, is "Death!"

Call it steamer, or call it chain, fancy its sections to be burdens, or fancy them to be links—here are a few facts evidently fitting together, if their maker had dared to fit them. But as the devil will not do this, the world will and must.

Dotted over a farming country in the far north, where everyday life was what everyday life used to be in those old days, came a series of troubles falling upon rich and poor, and all, as it seems, from the distance of many years, to be stamped with the trade-mark of "Drink," and to form part of the chain of "Death."

* * * * *

Link 1.—This is the farmhouse, surrounded by its several hundred acres and its full complement of barns; this is the farmer, surrounded by a smiling wife and a fair sprinkling of "bairns." While the patrimony lasts, things seem to go pretty well, the only discernible weakness being over-hospitality. If the doctor, or the vicar, or the lawyer called, the first question was, "What will you take?" Market

days became "market merry;" and the farmer's golden morning was wasted in bed, to the manifest injury of the farm-work.

The farm became neglected, the labourers increased, the harvests were impoverished, and a bad season now pressed woefully hard. The vicar's visits became fewer, for his parishioner seldom sought or accepted spiritual counsel; the doctor's visits increased, but his patient's case was very peculiar; the lawyer's visits became numerous, as a good deal of business seemed necessary to be done.

Rents and wages next fell in arrear; large loans were negotiated by the suretyship of friends; but still there was a manifest creaking of the wheels. Soon there came a crash; the whole neighbourhood was paralyzed, and the family were overwhelmed by the weight of the burden—the trade-mark of which was "Drink."

* * * * *

Link 2.—Returning from the family council in this time of trouble, were a merry party seated in a tall whitechapel. They had plied the whiskey-bottle so freely, that all were full of a marvellous courage, defying lawyer and landlord, bailiff and bank. This courage they tried to instil into the spirited beast, and furious beating was added to furious driving as capital fun.

The lurching vehicle gave an ominous creak; and a yawning ditch brought the inevitable crash. Some of the passengers escaped with shakings and bruises and marks; but one carried a heavier burden, of lifelong injuries, to his grave, one big man's-burden—the trade-mark of which was "Drink."

* * * * *

Link 3.—A few miles away, near to a northern cathedral city, dwelt another relative, who once seemed prosperous and happy. But strange, secret habits occasioned secret

misgivings, for an ominous gloom soon rested on that care-worn brow. A settled fear of poverty dwelt in that once bright mind.

Argue as they might, none could remove that strange unworthy fear, nor could any penetrate its hidden cause, known only to its victim. One day came the news of that financial crash, and soon a sharp pistol-shot rent the air, and the victim was found in his own stable, miserably maimed by his own hand.

Not dead—no, not dead; but dying—yes, dying through succeeding weeks, till at last the poor spirit was released and gone. On the suicide's grave was a big one-man burden, the trade-mark of which was "Drink."

* * * * *

Link 4.—Here lived a brave, honest, abstemious soul. To save his fellow-man from sorrow, in his generosity he became surety for one large loan. It was difficult to get settlings, and the brave, good man was sorely tried.

To be honest, he reduced his establishment, sold some of his patrimony, rose early and sat up late, and struggled bravely against continuous ill-health. Legal intimation came one day that the forfeited loan must now be paid, and the same day a visit was paid to the town, and the necessary instructions given for immediate payment.

Returning, that brave man had taken chill, took to his bed, rapidly sank, and in a day or two was gone. That is the grave of a noble martyr, and on it may be discerned the heavy one-man burden, the trade-mark of which was "Drink."

* * * * *

Link 5.—Another bondsman was a young and hopeful tradesman, whose whole patrimony had been swallowed up in his business venture. Nobly, honestly, abstemiously did he toil from morning to night, not without secret misgivings as to that unfortunate loan.

The world, always busy with its rumours, began to whisper the young tradesman would likely have to pay, and, alas, his creditors began to be a little troublesome.

When the legal demand came, it was a strong, staggering blow to that honest home. Bravely they met it; nobly they struggled to carry it; but the millstone burden cast upon their happy home bore on it the trade-mark of "Drink."

* * * * *

Link 6.—In the glen were one or two tradesmen, who thought it honour to serve at the big house, though they found the unusually long credit somewhat trying to their business.

When the crash came, and by a strange legality they found themselves excluded from the miserable hope of two shillings in the pound, they looked very blankly at each other.

The young son determined to leave the old concern, and venture elsewhere for himself; whilst his father, alas! took comfort at the village inn, and left his weakly wife to mend, as best she could, their failing fortunes. That house totters under its heavy burden, the trade-mark of which was "Drink."

* * * * *

Link 7.—At the entrance to the glen, one bitter January day, a number of men and a few women were assembled in solemn conference at the close of the "sale." Since harvest, few of them had work; since harvest, none of them had wages; and now all had been for weeks out of employ.

Those simple folk had rendered account after account, and fostered hope after hope; but by some strange legality they were now assured *they* must be excluded from the two shillings in the pound. Old scores were all unpaid, further credit utterly refused, and now the last hope of payment was gone.

What a blow! Some turn violently to the bad; others nobly face their fate: but the brand on the one-man burden carried by each, impelling to sin or repelling from sin, was "Drink."

* * * * *

Such are the "links" which are being forged all over the land, paralyzing our commerce, wrecking social happiness, hardening the heart, destroying the hope which men in the darkest hour will seek and cherish. Is it not high time that the world knew what is being woven in their midst, that mischiefs were traced to their rightful source?

Religion must make a holy alliance with the subsidiary ranks of Temperance, and the holy force of prayer must be the motive power of each and all. The sister graces of Temperance and Gospel come to each sufferer, and promise him relief; to take their hands is to be led in a safe, if a self-denying, path.

The Gospel will not let the Levite Christian pass by on the other side; nor will it despise the most degraded victim of the drink. The Temperance will not let your enemy besiege your heart with the old weapons of war. Temperance will make those hands strong: Religion will teach those hands to pray.

The drink, alas! has kept out the Christ; besotted self has excluded the Saviour; sensuality has banished the dear Redeemer of souls. But are these links round your heart, reader? So strong, so fair, so wise, and yet a victim! Just take these two vows—"Hate to the Drink," "Love to the Christ," and then will be broken for you "a few more links."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CATHEDRAL.

YES, the truth must be told — the children were really getting tired of the sea; and therefore must seek new pleasures on the land. One morning after breakfast Mr. Hermit strolled in, and asked if the Travellers had been to the "Ruins" yet. Replying they had not, he suggested, as a splendid outing, that they should make a pilgrimage to the spot, and leave the rustics there to cater for their wants.

This part of the arrangement found with Mrs. T. a ready assent; and it was arranged that the whole strength of their company, and that of the Hermit also, should be present on the occasion.

This time they had a coach, with four-in-hand, and it did all good as, according to their different bents, they determined to enjoy themselves to the utmost.

Packing the tiny ones with nurse as inside passengers, and giving an ample supply of sweets into the bargain, the whole deck, from stem to stern, was at the disposal of the elders.

Mounting Mrs. T. and Mrs. H. on the coigne of vantage,

post of honour, knife-board, or whatever my reader likes to term the box-seat, it was pleasant to see Mr. Jehu instructing the ladies to right and left in the mystery of what he termed his "ribbins."

Behind came an interesting row of passengers: the Traveller and the Hermit acting as buttresses on either side, and three young lady Travellers snugly packed between them, highly interested in the "ribbin" lecture in front, as well as by the learned remarks of papa on one side and Hermit on the other.

Next, a kind of Board School mixed, young gentlemen preponderating, who most gallantly held for the ladies the sunshade or other feminine property—not always to its advantage or to its owner's.

But the last, the stern—the boot, is it called?—presented the most extraordinary sight, and at times emitted the most extraordinary sounds. The darling Muse and the daring Harold had volunteered to act as senior and junior guards, for the general safety and comfort of the occupants of the coach.

They took charge of the sticks and umbrellas, but were constantly charging the passengers *with* the same—if not *for* the same; whilst, having found in the coach-office an ancient instrument resembling a gigantic stethoscope, the Muse made the welkin ring with his "muse"-ic (*hic!*). Safety was secured; but about comfort, perhaps the less said the better.

Duly reaching their destination, the excursionists found it to be a little village, occupying the site of what in very ancient days had been a cathedral city. Seeing, in a cottage garden, rustic benches awaiting tea, on the Hermit's advice the happy party seated themselves; and then Harold and the Poet made splendid amends for their boisterousness by their assiduous service as waiters in livery.

Finding the "Ruins," the Hermit acted as fugleman and guide, and politely told the whole story, legend or fact, belonging to this once grand cathedral; and when the weary group were resting quietly on the sward before the return journey, the Poet, who had once been to the southern cathedral, it seemed, gave his rhyming remembrances of what he saw, and thought, at

Chichester.

COME with me across the marshes,
To yon towering city spire;
Let us leave that circuit railway,
Let us kindle friendship's fire.
As we walk our hearts will open,
Free and full the flow will be;
Reaching thus the tall cathedral,
We shall stand in unity.

Chichester, "The Prince's Camping"—
Such tradition makes the name—
Stands there pointing with its finger
To heaven's sun's most sacred flame.
There is Arundel to eastward,
With its lofty Gothic pile;
Rich in slope and grassy woodland,
Castle, park, and river wild.

Why, how speedy was our travel!
Here we stand by city arch;
And the glories of the temple
Rise as in triumphal march.
This the spot men call the market,
This fair fane the market cross;
E'en conventicles are Gothic,
Nothing here must suffer loss.

This cathedral has its cloisters,
Hostel, chapel, transept, choir,

Spire and campanilè soaring,
Bathed in heaven's grand golden fire.
Ancient walls surround the city,
But in part, not as of yore ;
Time, who paints with glowing finger,
Crumbles ruins on earth's floor.

Let us muse awhile, and wonder,
Till the matin songs begin ;
Let us lose these vast dimensions,
Let our fancy have her whim.

* * * * *

Down the nave a long procession—
Mitred priest and surpliced choir,
Singing in their grand old Latin—
Banners, incense, holy fire.

Hark ! the ring of mail and armour,
Clashing on the cloistered floor ;
List ! the rustle of silk and satin,
As they pass the rush-strewn door.
See ! the knights are bending lowly,
As the benison is sung :
See ! their gentle spouses linger,
As the Host's gold bell is rung.

Oh ! 'twas far adown the ages,
In eleven ninety-nine,
When the fane that frowns around us
Was a consecrated shrine,
Tell, oh ! tell, ye walls, your secrets ;
Speak, oh ! speak, ye towers, your mind ;
Pageant, battle, famine, conquest,
Through long ages left behind.

* * * * *

See ! another gay procession,
Glides along the marble pave ;
Knights beplumed and dames beruffled,
Speak of times in history's grave.

'Tis the queen men called "The Maiden,"
'Tis the court of "Good Queen Bess"
Come to visit "Prince's Camping,"
Come to hear her bishops bless.

Oh! the years have passed and faded
Since fifteen and fifty one,
When the "Faery Queene" so proudly,
Stately passed your bishop's throne.
Tell, oh! tell, ye stones, your story;
Speak, oh! speak, ye brave in heart;
Rout and tourney, siege and bloodshed,
Did ye not play, too, your part?

* * * * *

Hark! what means that maddest pealing
Of those campanilè-bells,
Ringing now like silver music
Which some blessèd lesson tells?
They a faithful crew and loyal,
Like the vicar, famed, of Bray,
Always with the winning siding,
Always safe in battle's day.

Oh! the days in myriad numbers,
Buried were beneath your notes;
You have sung Time's thousand nurselings,
Tolled their death from brazen throats.
Tell, oh! tell, ye bells, your moral;
Speak the secrets of your souls;
Shall we men act wary like you,
Reach, at any cost, our goals?

* * * * *

Rise, ye great ones, from these charnels,
Poets, bring your stirring verse;
Bradwardine and Janen learnèd,
Shrouded 'neath Death's sable hearse.

Collins, Hayley, bring your rhymings,
Let your pages move my soul;
Let my musings be some profit,
Let your teaching make me whole.

Oh! 'tis vain to linger longer
For the dead past to rise again;
Out upon the walls of duty!
Work! in joy or deepest pain.
Walls of old must be demolished,
Fabrics rare must fall to dust;
Cloister, chapel, beam, bell, hostel,
Only fall as man soon must.

Ye were true: I cannot charge you:
With the double end in view;
Men might ring *their* changes on you;
They were false, but ye were true.
Lessons grand ye always teach me,
Sermon-stones ye are to me;
Set on me the seal of heaven,
Stamp me for eternity.

There, ye men, ye buy and barter;
Here ye train men for the Lord;
Oh! the motley, strange commingling,
When in peace men sheathe the sword.
Life is work and meditation,
Market-hope and worship-fear;
Life in heaven is work and worship,
Take me, Lord, in training here.

Is my soul a living temple,
Consecrated to my God?
Does my heart see constant worship,
Ere its body seeks its sod?
Up, my soul, and be a rampart,
Campanilè, warning bell,
Be a hostel, be a temple,
Till thy Master say "Done well!"

CHAPTER XXII.

FIVE ALLS: THREE BALLS.

THERE had been what landsmen called a storm all day. The wind had been strong, the waves had been high, the rain had been heavy. Really it was like a black-letter day in a red-letter week. But the visitors were not exactly unhappy; for they had a nice large nursery upstairs, and a capital hall downstairs; and, between intervals of reading and knitting, the Travellers Senior had intervals of romping both upstairs and down.

The ever thoughtful Hermit called about tea-time to inquire about the state of affairs, and gladly joined in as they sat around the family table. Seeing that their inventive genius had about run down, and that the interval between tea-time and bed-time would be bridged over with some difficulty, he suggested and taught a new game to the juniors, who returned to their nursery in the full enjoyment of the same; whilst he promised the seniors an early edition of a paper he had prepared to send to the Slocombe Institute MS. Magazine.

The good Hermit had his soul deeply moved by what he saw, in the course of travel or in the course of ministry.

He was a man who mused, till the fire burned, and at last glowed out in all its brightness, if not in all its passion. He was a man who gladly gave up a pleasure for the benefit of his fellow-man; and much was he pained as he saw the folly and the sensuality of his countrymen.

He was a patriot as well as a parson, could teach economy as well as religion; and in the season he gave many useful lectures to the men and women of Slocombe. The Traveller family, ever grateful for his great kindness, listened with deepest interest to the Hermit's advance sheets on

Five Alls: Three Balls.

Do you know what it is, gentle reader, to run an involuntary steeplechase? In other words, have you ever been run away with?

Parsons find a dangerous hobby in their "points," and topers ride a treacherous steed in their "pints," but authors run a serious risk from their "pens."

Mine is not a "Pickwick," so it is not funny; it is not an "Owl," though at times meditative; nor is it a "Waverley," though occasionally romantic. Mine is a philanthropic pen, and on certain subjects it is apt to get a craze.

One of these topics is the subject of "Signs;" not the "Signs of the times," which give our theologians a craze, but the "Signs of our streets," which make our philanthropists exceedingly anxious, and, I fear at times, exceedingly wroth.

"Signs: their history, mystery, mastery!" What a splendid literary monument that would be! My fingers seem to itch in anticipation of such a colossal task, and my brain swims under the laurel wreath of a glorious literary success.

What's that? Oh, the ink! Perhaps that overturned inkstand, Miss Pussy, is less a misery than a mercy; it has

at least disturbed me in my day-dreams, and recalled me to my theme, "Signs."

It is some years now since I found myself in the street of a certain small town, just as two Sunday afternoon congregations were assembling and dispersing. On one side of the street the pious worshippers were gathering together for prayer; on the other side another devoted congregation were just dismissed, having paid full orisons at the shrine of Bacchus, leaving a liberal collection behind.

Inquiring of a bystander, I learned "It be turn-out time, sir."

Looking up at the mystic sign over the head of the crowd (all males, by the way), I felt once more my ignorance as I read, "The Five Alls."

Thought, though not a modern invention, is even more speedy than the "wire," and rapidly my mind suggested, in defiance of all grammar, "Branksome-hall," "Netherby-hall." Then followed "Dredge's Heal-all," "Ford's Cure-all." Perhaps it was a proverb; and the Shakespearian nerve suggested "All's well that ends well," "All the world's a stage."

But it wouldn't do. This was not ending well, and there were too many fools on this stage.

I ventured to inquire of my rubicund friend again, who replied—

"That be the Five Alls, sir."

"Yes," I replied, copying the dialect, "but what *be* the Five Alls?"

With a look of eloquent compassion and superlative contempt, my informant said—

"King rules all,
Soldier fights for all,
Lawyer pleads for all,
Parson prays for all,
Fool pays for all."

Lower down on the opposite side, there glistened three golden apples on a leafless bough—suggestive of means and money to some, but of misery and poverty to others. This was the sign of the "Three Balls," once heraldic, homely now. That establishment was now closed; and full of the "Alls," I murmured to myself—

"Pawn takes all,
Drink drugs all,
Death finds all."

These "signs"! What a variety they present in character; what a unity they show in design! "Many devices, object one."

The celestial signs, embracing angels, suns, moons, and stars; the terrestrial signs, comprising mermaids, woods, mountains, and seas; the royal signs, such as kings, queens, and princes; the masonic signs, such as square-and-compass, heart-in-hand; the animal signs, with their beasts, birds, fishes—normal and abnormal—lions that are white, pigs that are blue, sheep that are red; the human signs, with their monstrosities of "green men," or curiosities of "silent women."

But of all the curious proverbial signs, gentle reader, did you ever hear of the "Five Alls"? "Bird-in-the-hand-is-worth-two-in-the-bush" would puzzle a drunken man in a dark night. "Hit-or-miss—luck's-all" is somewhat problematical: but commend me to the "Five Alls" for a fair sample of British wisdom.

How long these signs have flourished I cannot tell; how long they ought to flourish I think I can tell. The worthy Medicis of Lombard Street may have been very useful seven hundred years ago. I doubt their utility to-day. The inns and signs may have done some good in past days. I more than doubt that good to-day. The one is a take-all; the other is a spend-all.

But observe the wisdom of the British public, and the equal sagacity of the British parliament. On Sundays, when the British workman cannot make money, he freely spends it. On Sundays, when he so freely spends it, the law decrees he must not make it. If Sunday closes the make-trap, surely it should close the spend-trap.

"Not so," say our British Solomons; and instantly they legislate for a thirsty nation and a peripatetic people. We are all travellers: we are all necessitous: we are all dry.

On that Sunday afternoon, the congregation leaving the house of drink was fully equal to that assembling in the house of prayer. All males, as I have said, they represented all stages of manhood, the man-boy and the boy-man—the man whose age has brought him to a second childhood, and the boy whose years have not yet given him manly discretion. They represented, too, all grades of labour in the place, from the superior artisan to the day labourer. They represented all social responsibilities, from the child in the house of the father to the father in the house of the child.

The head of the "Five Alls" was addressed with a curious pleasantry by the name and title of "mine host." In any other house the British workman would have fought the man who called himself host, and then asked for pay; but at the "Five Alls" *fools pay for all.*

On the Monday following I was passing along the same street, when my attention was arrested by a group of lady visitors at the "Three Balls."

They were evidently visitors, because they sought a private door at the side. They were as evidently friends, because "mine host" was here addressed as "my uncle." Still more evidently was their mission one of peace, from the peace-offering carried in every arm.

These were the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, of the friends of "mine host" at the "Five Alls," they themselves

being compelled to make friends of "mine uncle" at the "Three Balls."

On Mondays my lord's best raiment has to go as hostage for my lord's Monday's dinner; but on Saturdays my lord must have his clothes and his dinner also. Thus *fools pay for all.*

Thus do "mine host" and "mine uncle" mutually support each other. The "drink-shop" and the "dolly-shop," the "wee dram" and the "wee pawn," being very near of kin, it is even thus *fools pay for all.*

Nay, this matter is too serious, far too solemn, for a humorous vein.

Solemnly we demand from the Legislature the Sunday closing of all these houses of drink. Solemnly we adjure each Christian in this matter to be a Christian indeed. Solemnly we implore Englishmen to use wisdom and to manifest love. Solemnly do we pray God so to open the eyes of State and subject, husband and wife, parent and child, to their danger and their duty, that soon, very soon, the "sign" may be—

> "England has heard her Master's call,
> No longer now fools pay for all."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAMAGE AND DEATH.

THE little town, retired as it certainly was from the busy world, could not fail to hear the terrible news of earthquake in the far distant Mediterranean. And as if to teach its inhabitants something of the dangers of the land as well as something of the dangers of the sea, a sad incident had occurred during the night under the cliffs near Filstone Point.

The storm of the previous day, which the landsmen thought to be heavy, increased, as the sun went down, with the utmost rage and fury. The Traveller, hearing the roaring in the chimney as the Hermit read his paper, and really anxious to see old Ocean, if he might, in one of his furious moods, had volunteered to see his visitor home.

Keeping their feet with some difficulty as they passed the end of a street leading down to the sea, the Traveller inquired if it were not a wild night, rather.

"Not at present," said Mr. Hermit, "but I am sadly at fault if the morning does not see serious damage."

"May we go round a little way by the shore, do you think?" asked the excited but nervous Traveller.

"Oh, yes; there is small danger there at present."

Linking arm in arm, the friends faced the fierce sou'-wester as it roared and blustered in from the sea. On nearing the shore, clouds of spray met and enveloped them in one blinding shower. The road next the Esplanade was one continual deluge, whilst out at sea, except the regular gleam of the distant light-ship, nought but dim, dark chaos, scarcely lighted by the cloud-ridden moon, could be discerned.

Finding a place of comparative shelter, and high enough to escape the flood, Mr. Traveller looked, and trembled, and wondered. The moon, breaking from her cloud-captors for a season, shone out with silver brightness o'er the watery waste, and dimmed the distant light by her steady heavenly beams.

It was a wild scene. The pier trembled with an almost musical vibration as it re-appeared from the rolling watery mountain that swept like a mighty giant from end to end; whilst the shock of that Titan water-play, like the force of ten thousand mighty geysers in ready line to charge old Ocean back, shook as in a death agony the solid ground on which men stood. The crash of glass and fall of brickwork told man's work was in jeopardy; would the land itself succumb?

"Yes," said the Hermit, "there will be damage if not death to-night. God help poor men on land and sea."

"Amen," said the now awed Traveller. "I feel the power of those words now—

> "'Eternal Father, strong to save;
> Whose arm hath bound the restless wave;
> * * * * *
> O Christ, whose voice the waters heard,
> And hushed their raging at Thy word:
> * * * * *

Most Holy Spirit, who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude ;
* * * * *
O hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea ! ' "

"Amen !" responded the Hermit. "Let us go. I will see you safely home, and reach my own home another way."

Soon the friends parted ; the Hermit was at home ; and Nature was left to her deadly work.

When the morning dawned, a strange scene of havoc presented itself to the sentinel coastguards, who had bravely watched throughout the night.

Once or twice in their walk, they thought above the din they heard the roar of falling rocks. Now that day lent its light to the scene, they saw whole roods of man's sea-wall had been swept away, and lay a weltering mass like the wounded, dying, dead of this colossal fray.

Along the coast, mighty masses, undermined by the resistless waters, had fallen with their deafening thunders, seaming the earth with yawning chasms as if her agony had been too great to bear, while the basilisk eyes of the storm left her gaping in her pain. But, worst of all, a party of benighted fishermen driven ashore far up towards Filstone, unable at present to climb the dizzy wall, and taking shelter in a well-known rocky cavern, had been crushed beneath the falling cliffs ; and, as the Hermit feared, there had been death as well as damage in the night.

The sea was still high when the gate-keeper permitted the pier to be opened in the morning, and many visitors, by seeking the refuge at the farther end, could see for themselves the wild work of the sea. The stronger Hermit, Traveller, Muse, Harold, Reginald, nobly leading the weaker, sheltered all their party. Then the Poet read to the company his parting rhyme on

Ischia.

JULY, 1883.

THE tideless, blue waves hurried in to the shore,
The bright, cloudless sky was as blue as the main,
The peak of Vesuvius showered not his fire-rain,
The slopes of fair Naples were clad as of yore.

The bright verdant islet, that rose from the sea,
Was pure as a Paradise earthly can show;
Its vines and its olives all purpling below,
The glad little town was as gay as could be.

'Tis true there were mutterings and warnings of doom;
But who heeds a muttering when all things smile fair?
Who heeds e'en a warning 'mid scenes debonair?
So warning and muttering in hearts found no room.

In grief or in sympathy—was it—the wave
High heaved his bosom, then sunk low his breast;
In passionate pain tossed his arms in unrest,
Whilst fickle and frail shared the fate of the brave?

The ocean's wild throbbing and grief were in vain,
'Twas bosom of earth that was troubled and torn,
'Twas breast that had nursed when man feebly was born,
The earth-mother's agony burst it in twain.

O'er placid, blue waters there grew on the sight
A vision of mountain-top smiling and grand;
The chord of communion that stretched from the land,
Broke forth in fierce wrath wild and dark as the night.

Oh! hoary old mount, could you slay your own child;
This mandate from God had you really received?
Hadst no other scapegoat would stand you in need,
Where God, the Great Father, in sympathy smiled?

The shore shook with terror, turned pale as the Death
Whose wing swift as lightning was hurrying by;
The vineyards asunder were torn, like the sky
When angels shall summon men's souls with their breath.

The forest king bowed in deep anguish his head,
  Earth's heart too was melted, its strings snapped in twain;
  The passion of Vulcan seized Earth in her pain,
For beauty a ruin, for living the dead.

The architect's fane in a moment is lost,
  Lies fairest of temples as low as the cot;
  The bigger the glory, as though it were not,
The bigger the ruin, the vaster the cost.

The altar and theatre, church and the world,
  In one common ruin lie prone in the dust;
  The man of religion, the creature of lust,
Fill one grave of death, to one common doom hurled.

There's wreck on the sea, and there's wreck on the land;
  There's woe in the street—woe for youth and for age;
  There's wail at the altar, and wail on the stage;
There's everywhere sorrow: man's work cannot stand.

But is it for stones that alone we can mourn?
  What, have we no teardrops for perishing men—
  For eight thousand souls, who will ne'er live again
Till harvest of God and humanity's bourne?

Oh! turn for a moment to ponder the scene,
  Where king has been busy his mercy to show,
  Where thousand kind hands are now toiling below,
And thousand warm hearts beat in sympathy keen.

Italia's brave soldiers shun not the fierce heat
  Of tropical sun, as it plays round their head;
  Nor do they shrink back from the touch of the dead,
With charity's fire burning fragrant and sweet.

List now to their stories, and heed well their tale;
  Perhaps there is mercy where most we saw woe;
  Perhaps God is kinder than judgments can show;
When seen the whole drama, our faith must not fail.

* * * * * *

What picture was that which the searchers' eye met?
A once lovely drawing-room broke on their view—
There sat the musician, his hand firm and true,
The proud head bowed down, in death's agony set.

The beauty and skill of a man cannot save,
When throes of old Nature set in from the shore;
The beauty of thought, touch of hand, evermore
Are things of the past, each one lost in its grave.

Around were the friends who had heard their last sound,
For whom again never should strike the soft chord;
The angels' wild trumpet blast—so says the Word—
Shall peal and shall wake their cold dust in the ground.

* * * * * *

More marvellous still is a story of life:
Two poor, simple youths, sad co-partners in grief,
Just saved from dire death, but for interval brief,
If help is not near them prolonging the strife.

Close by were some viands, tho' meant for the beast,
Which animal life in the youths did sustain;
Five days, in their chamber of horror and pain,
They longed and they waited for change in their feast.

Deliverance came near them, when hope was nigh dead
A brother put forth one more effort for life;
And soon the glad tidings reached mother and wife,
"They live!" and in time forth in triumph they're led.

* * * * * *

The strangest of stories has still to be told,
How infant uncrushed for two days lay entombed;
While mother and loved ones in death were all doomed,
The life of the infant came forth as pure gold.

Was ever a cradle so cruel and kind,
To cut off all darlings at one fated stroke;
To shield from destruction that life, as it woke,
With sweet dimpled smiling, in grave dark and blind?

What Moses was this from the jaws of grim death !
What tender and merciful Providence rules !
Oh, surely, too surely, men argue like fools,
They miss the grand lesson, God gives them their breath.

* * * * * *

The gay little town so bombarded by Fate,
At each troubled footstep shows ruin and wreck ;
Once green in its beauty, a fair jewelled speck,
The gay little islet now yawns at death's gate.

The homes of the island are ruined and torn ;
Here wife, o'er a husband and sisters, wails wild ;
Here son, saves a mother, but loses a child ;
The hearth and heart broke, living gone, life forlorn.

Oh ! mystery lies hid in these ruins around,
But mercy is hid at the feet of our God ;
Death slays his poor victims, they sleep 'neath the sod,
But life, grand, eternal, shall ever abound.

We trust God in mystery, who know Him in love ;
His mercy has shown us the love of His heart ;
The pangs of affection, these friends who depart,
Remind us of meetings for ever above.

For life is an isle in the ocean of Time,
Its fair human hopes are conceived and are lost ;
The fairest of pleasures by tempests are tost,
While strongest joy clings to Heaven's hope so sublime.

"The time is approaching," some soul cries in fear,
"When e'en earth and heaven must for ever depart ;"
Yet is there not One on whose word each poor heart
May rest, and then rise to His home loved and dear ?

CHAPTER XXIV.

WATCHING FOR SOULS.

THE last day had come — don't start, gentle reader!—of course I mean the last day of the minister's month; and Duty, from a distant town, was imperatively calling upon him to return.

By a mutual arrangement there had met in the morning exceeding early—early enough, indeed, to see the sun rise instead of set—the three friends, Hermit, Traveller, Muse, for one more morning meditation, ere the midday train should separate them, perhaps for ever.

Passing through the town in the dusky gray of dawn, they reached their rendezvous by the pier-gate at nearly the same time. The Muse, who was really the first to arrive, had been pacing a few yards up and down the Esplanade watching the swallows, who seemed as if preparing for their autumn flight.

The greetings on all sides were certainly subdued, if not sad; and perhaps the dull leaden loneliness of the solitary scene had something to do with the quietness that had fallen upon the friends. It was not till, arm linked in arm, they

had taken the road to the eastward, so that from the Point they could see the monarch of the day rise from his slumbers, that their usual cheeriness seemed to be regained.

Leaving town and esplanade behind, their path lay upward o'er the dewy lawns that stretched far into the land or rose far above their heads. Reaching a point of vantage from whence they might see the coming king, who promised soon to arrive, with smiling expectancy they sat in silence to wait his speedy approach.

His messengers were already on the road, and a thousand fleeting raylets shot into the eastern sky, seeking some tiny cloud to which to tell the good news, and leave behind the truth, "The king of day, he comes." The silent tramp of the heavenly horsemen followed in the fleeting path of the running footmen of the sun, as with an ever broadening, brightening track they took the sky by violence, and the blue vault of heaven as the country of their king. The solid phalanx of the armies of the sun now led the way in gorgeous uniforms of red, saffron, gold; the sky hung out a thousand banners to welcome her coming lord; the swan-like morning star, though paling before the brightness of his coming liege, sung sweetly in his praise.

And now the first gold crescent of the monarch's car just betipped the sluggish sea, not now slow to sing her song and welcome back her king. The chariot drawing ever nearer, rising higher, burning fiercer, defied the sight of man with daring to behold. From every cloud and paling star, from every wave and giddy height, each thing of earth, each host of heaven, in song proclaimed, "The king of day is come."

The friends, averting for a moment their gaze from that burning throne, saw each face lighted with the glory of the rising sun; his reign had come to them, on them, in them. And sitting thus in happy silence, the friends thought of

another Sun that had shined in their hearts, of another King it was their delight to serve.

* * * * * *

Retracing their footsteps, the friends had reached a lonely spot amongst the rocks, whence they could easily reach their homes, when time warned them to depart.

Earth's gray-green pillars far, far beneath their feet, were glowing like some golden fire in the burning rays of the morning sun; the waves—their dash and fall but faintly audible—fringing the ramparts of earth with a delicate ever-changing embroidery of light. The birds, white winged and glistening, catching the morning rays on their broad breasts, flashed and glimmered as they sailed, or swooped, or shot their airy course; and even the swallows, insignificant beside the proud sea-gulls, could not help reflecting from their snowy breasts the same glad light the Father had sent into the world. The twitterings of a little swallow colony overhead awakened the excited Muse to his early thought; and he quietly recited

The Swallow.

WHAT means this fluttering overhead,
These gleaming breasts and wings outspread?
What means this cheery, twittering cry—
Cheery, but mournful, minstrelsy?
What means this eager friendliness
'Mongst those who late had bitterness?

Swallow, for whom my roof is free,
You seek a home beyond the sea;
A home of calm and sunny skies,
Where storms scarce come nor tempests rise;
The autumn winds warn you to fly
Ere winter's blast shall make you die.

Soul, learn a lesson from this scene:
Though home may smile, though earth be green,
The winds of Time are autumn sighs,
Telling of dread eternities;
Plume then thy wing, soar for thy rest,
Where Christ e'er dwells, the Ever Blest.

"Surely," said the Hermit, "after a long pause, our friend the Muse has spoken to us all. We are all three ministers of the gospel, all three engaged in the work of winning souls; and I cannot help thinking we shall also have to watch for souls."

"Certainly we are like birds of passage," replied the Traveller, "here to-day, and gone to-morrow; and the Muse's lines impressed me deeply with the necessity of carrying the light wherever we may go. It is a solemn thought, and yet a sustaining thought, that we speak as ambassadors for Christ."

"Yes," said the Muse, "and did you notice the sunrise just now; how each ray, each cloud, merely carried the light on to others, from heaven to earth, from earth to men? The light just being in us, compels us at once to be the messengers, but only the bearers, of the message."

"But, dear Hermit," asked the Traveller, "what did you mean just now by watching for souls?"

"Oh! I meant," answered his friend, "that our work is only half done when we have scattered the seed, however ably: that we shall need to watch for, and watch the process of, the application of the truth to the hearts. We want meetings for what I call the one-to-one, heart-to-heart ministry."

"I am so glad you have mentioned this. It has long been on my mind that what we want in these days is not so much a new setting of gospel truth, as the close personal dealing with souls in relation to the truth."

"But," gently said the sensitive Muse, "you can't force this work, you know; you can't pull the ground about to examine the blade; it groweth up we know not how."

"Quite true, dear Muse," answered the Hermit; "but having sowed the seed, we must watch the field. We must not let the world come back and harden the soul by its unhallowed traffic again. We must scare away the night birds of sin, and even the day birds of delight, so that the Lord's harvest fail not."

"Oh!" said the Muse, "I think we pretty well agree as to that. The thing is, is there any way of more pointedly dealing with souls? Can you button-hole a man, and say 'Are you saved?' with advantage."

"That is a plan that must be adopted by the natures that impel to it, I think," said the Hermit. "There are Philips and Andrews in character; they must be Philips and Andrews in work."

"But," said the Traveller, "if we have no watching machinery, how can we ever be said to watch? We have all felt (in our fraternal gatherings, say) the power of a small prayer-meeting or the impressiveness of a simple Bible-reading. I think the reason is that the human element of the work is more out of sight. We don't meet for one to preach, but all to pray; we don't meet for one to expound, but all to learn."

"Meetings, really," continued the Muse, "of a more private and more unstudied character. The greatest difficulty, I have," he went on, "is how to deal with inquirers at such meetings. I can manage fairly well when a soul comes quietly to me like a Nicodemus; but I am not prepared so well for the soul-cry of a jailor. And yet it is just this we are praying for, waiting for, watching for, dying for."

"Too much prominence cannot be given, I think," said the Traveller, "to the three R's. Ruin seen, means repent-

ance felt; redemption seen, means redemption sought; regeneration seen, means regeneration desired. Depend upon it, we must begin at the beginning, and begin deep enough also."

"I sometimes fear that sudden conversions may mean shallow conversions," observed the thoughtful Hermit. "I believe in all the types of conversion to be found in the Word; but we must have all the types of teaching also. Lay the foundation deep, I say."

"The saving truths of Scripture," said the Muse, "are so blessedly complete. That word seems to govern the whole scheme from beginning to end. Complete sinners, but a complete Saviour. I always put it very plainly that Christ has really died, the just for the unjust, to bring men to God. And having brought them to God here, He will not leave them till He presents them faultless to His Father above."

"Dear friends," said the Hermit, who sat in the midst, "it has been a mutual joy to us all to have this intercourse from week to week; and I am sure we all feel it has been a season of profit. But it is just a profit we shall invest for Him, our Master. Any vigour of body, power of brain, tenderness of soul, is just so much new capital entrusted to us, that we may more than ever watch for souls."

"The gladness of the gift," continued the Traveller, "is enhanced by the goodness of the Giver, and the glorious fact that all He bestows can be used, as you suggest, for His praise."

"Well," said the Poet, "our gifts at least are poor, very poor; but the best of all is, that the Spirit helps infirmities also, so that the most crippled may not debar himself of Divine power."

* * * * * *

The ministers descended the hillside in happy communion, and, as if to remind them how practical was the work God had called them to undertake, they found the little town, so solitary when they left, active and busy with its morning life. There had been the lonely communion of the mount first: there could well be the busy intercourse of the mart next.

Those children, even the tiniest, had been taught first to have their talk with God, first their strength from their Father in heaven.

Those mothers, through many a sorrow, many a care, had gone up to their Sinai throne, to come down as from a heavenly Zion whence they renewed their strength.

Those ministers, learning one last lesson, not the least, in the quiet intercourse with the Master-Friend, now could meet the renewal of their work, as "unto God" and also "unto men."

THE END.

INDEX OF POEMS.

SEASON, 1883—4.

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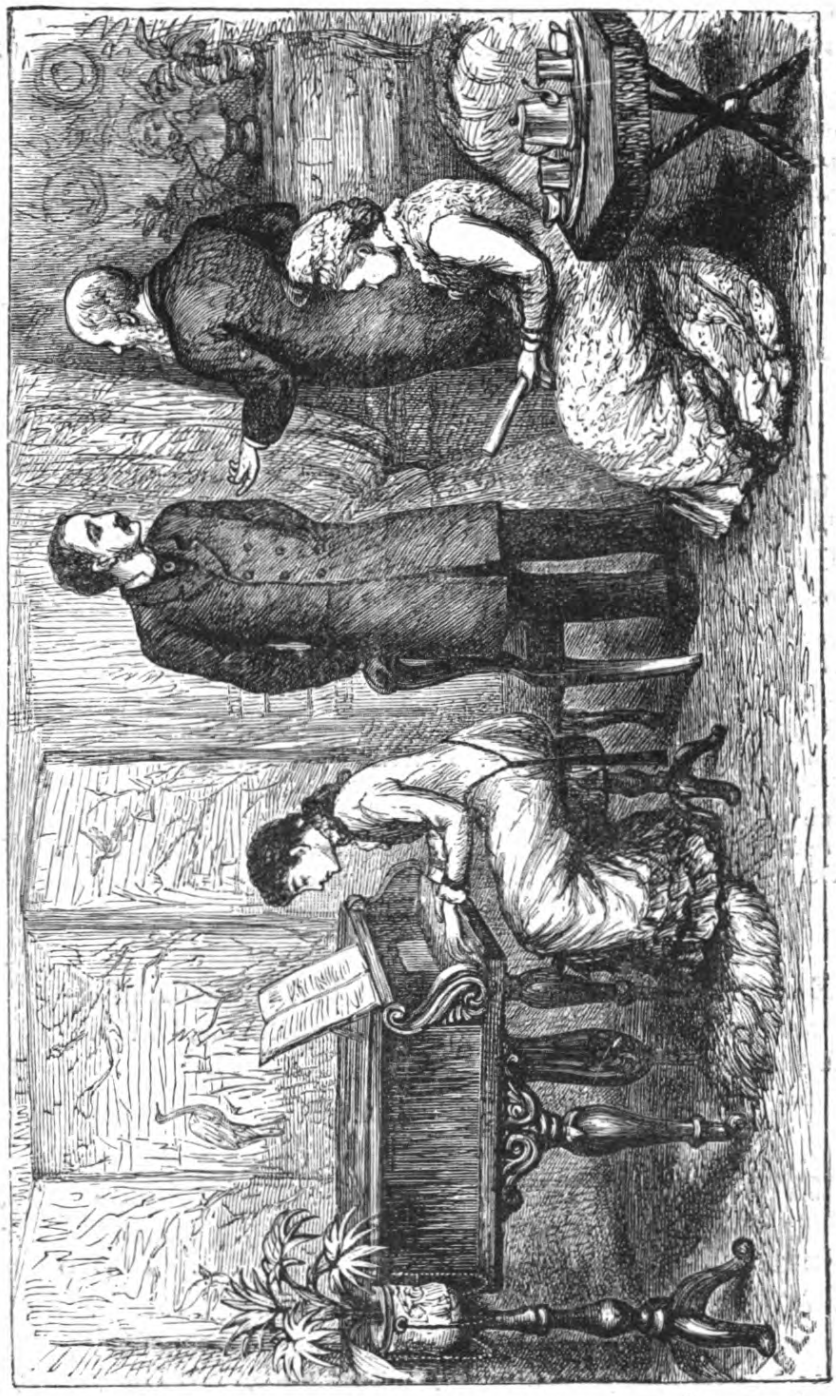

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