

Family Circle.

PRIZE POEM.

"THE CHILDREN OF THE BATTLE-FIELD."

Some time since the American Presbyterian offered a prize for a poem on the death of Sergeant Humiston...

Upon the field of Gettysburg When the morning shone again...

Upon the field of Gettysburg When the morning shone again...

Upon the field of Gettysburg The full moon slowly rose...

LETTERS

From a Lady visiting Philadelphia, during the Winter of 1863, to her young friend in the Country.

NO. I.

PHILADELPHIA, October.

If it were not for my promise, dear Edith, I would decline the request you have made in your last letter...

My friends were at the "depot" waiting to welcome me; they at any rate are not marked by the frigid reserve said to belong to the citizens of Philadelphia...

The following morning, while at the breakfast table, we discussed our plans for the future; and they were not surprised that I was obliged to devote two or three days to shopping...

They both were silent, as if listening for some sound in William Thorburn's house, but all was still as the grave...

is one of those housekeepers, whose agency is only visible in results. The daily supervision is so quietly performed that I rarely know anything about it...

I fear my letters will be rather desultory; there will be so much to engage my attention that I shall probably disappoint your expectations...

I find that Aunt Helen has formed various plans for my benefit, she is determined to make the most of my time...

WEE DAVIE DEAD.

BY NORMAN MACLEOD, D. D.

It was a beautiful morning in spring, with blue sky, living air, springing grass, and singing birds...

Mrs. Fergusson trod the wooden stair that led to the flat above his with slow and cautious step; and as she met her boy running down whistling, she said, "What'd ye mean, Jamie, wi' that noise? Do ye no ken wee Davie is dead? Ye should hae mair feeling, laddie!"

The Corporal, whose door was half-open, crept out, and in an under-breath beckoned Mrs. Fergusson to speak to him. "Do you know how they are?" he asked, in a low voice.

"No," she replied, shaking her head. "I sat up wi' Mrs. Thorburn half the night, and left Davie sleeping, and never thought it would come to this. My heart is sair for them. But since it happened the door has been barred, and no one has been in. I somehow dinna like to intrude, for, nae doot, they will be in an awfu' way about that bairn."

"I don't wonder,—I don't wonder!" remarked the Corporal, meditatively; "I did not believe I could feel as I do. I don't understand it. Here am I, who have seen men killed by my side;—who have seen a few shots cut down almost half our company; and—"

"Is it possible!" interposed Mrs. Fergusson. "It is certain," said the Corporal; "and I have charged at Pampeluna—it was there I was wounded—over dead and dying comrades, yet will you believe me? I never shed a tear—never; but there was something in that Captain—I mean the boy—and the Corporal took out his snuff-box, and sniffed vehemently. "And what a brave fellow his father is! I never thought I could love a Radical; but he is not what you call a Radical; he is—I don't know what else, but he is a man—an out-and-out man, every inch of him, I'll say that for him,—a man is William Thorburn! Have you not seen his wife?"

"No, poor body! It was six o'clock when she ran up to me, no distracted either, but awfu' quiet like, and wakened me up, and just said, 'He's awa,' and then afore I could speak she ran doon the stairs, and steekit her door; and she has such a keen spirit, I dinna like to gang to bother her. I'm unco wae for them."

They both were silent, as if listening for some sound in William Thorburn's house, but all was still as the grave...

door. What was spoken there between them I know not.

William rose to receive old David, and remarked, in a careless manner, that "it was a fine spring day."

David gave a warm squeeze to his hand, and sat down. He soon rose and went to the bed. William followed him, and took the cloth off the boy's face in silence. The face was unchanged, as in sleep. The flaxen curls seemed to have been carefully arranged, for they escaped from under the white cap, and clustered like golden wreaths around the marble forehead and cheeks...

"I never lost ane since my ain wee Davie dee'd, and yours, Willie, was dear to me as my ain," exclaimed the old man, and then broke down, and sobbed like a child.

William never moved, though his great chest seemed to heave; but he seized the poker, and began to arrange the fire, and then was still as before.

That afternoon Dr. McGavin called, and manifested quiet, unobtrusive, but most touching sympathy. His very silence was eloquent affection.

"With your permission, good friends," said Dr. McGavin, "I will read a short psalm and offer up a short prayer before I go."

"And may the lamb be the means of making the auld sheep to follow!" added the Elder.

When the prayer was over, Jeanie, who had hardly spoken a word, said, without looking at the Dr., "O sir, God didna hear our prayer for my bairn!"

"Dinna speak that way, Jeanie, woman!" said her mother, softly, yet firmly.

"I canna help it, mither; I maun get out my thochts that are burring at my heart. The minister maun forgie me," replied Jeanie.

"Surely, Mrs. Thorburn," said the Dr., "and it would be a great satisfaction to me were I able, from what God has taught myself in His Word, and from my own experience of sorrow, to solve any difficulty, or help you to acquiesce in God's dealings with you; not because you must, but because you ought to submit; and that again, not because God has power, and therefore does what He pleases, but because He is love, and therefore pleases always to do what is right."

"But, oh, He didna hear our prayer; that's my burthen! But we were may be wrang in asking what was against His will."

"He did not answer you in the way, perhaps, in which you expected, Mrs. Thorburn; yet, depend upon it, every true prayer is verily heard and answered by Him. But He is too good, too wise, too loving, to give us always literally what we ask; if so, He would often be very cruel, and that He can never be! You would not give your child a serpent, if in his ignorance he asked one, mistaking it for a fish; nor would you give him a stone for bread?"

"When Nathan, the Lord's prophet, told King David that his child must die," said the Elder, "yet nevertheless David even then, when it seemed almost rebellion, prayed to the Lord to spare his life, and I dinna doot that his Father in heaven was pleased wi' his freedom and faith. He couldna but tak' kindly such confidence frae his distressed servant."

"I am sure," said the Dr., "we cannot trust Him too freely. But let us always remember, that when God refuses what we ask, He gives us something else far better, yea, and does far more than we can ask or think. So it may be thus with regard to your dear child. If He has taken him away, can you, for example, tell the good He has bestowed thereby on himself or others, or the evil and misery which He has thereby prevented? Oh, how many parents would give worlds that their children had died in infancy!"

"We are ignorant creatures!" exclaimed William.

"And consider further, Mrs. Thorburn," said the Dr., "how the Apostle Paul prayed the Lord thrice to have a thorn in the flesh—a very messenger from Satan—removed. But the Lord did not hear even his prayer in his way, but answered it, nevertheless, in another and better way, when he said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is perfected in weakness.'"

"True, minister," said the Elder; "nor did He ever say, 'Seek ye my face in vain.'"

"And as regards your dear child, Mrs. Thorburn," continued the Dr., touching her arm, and speaking with great earnestness, "I believe sorrow's crown of sorrow to a Christian parent, and the heaviest he or she can endure on earth, is that of seeing a child, dearer than their own life, living and dying in wickedness! What was David's sorrow for his dead babe, when compared with that wail of bitter agony for his wicked son, 'Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' God has saved you from that agony. He has done so by taking your child to Himself. Your precious jewel is not lost, but is in God's treasury, where no thief can break through and steal: that is surely something!"

"Something!" exclaimed the smith, "it is surely, after all, everything. And yet—"

a' these blessed thochts about our wee bairn, he's an awfu' blank! Ilka thing in the world seems different.

"But minister, let me speir at you, sir: Will I never see my bairn again? and if I see him will I no ken him?"

"You might as well ask me whether you could see and know your child if he had gone to a foreign country instead of to heaven," replied the Dr. "Alas for Christian love, if we did not know our beloved friends in heaven! But such ignorance is not possible in that home of light and love."

"But," continued Jeanie, with quiet earnestness, "will our bairn aye be a bairn, Dr.? Oh, I hope so!"

"Dinna try, Jeanie dear," said David, "to be wise aboon what is written."

The Dr. smiled, and asked,—"If your child had lived, think you, would you have rejoiced had he always continued to be a child and never grown or advanced? and are you a loss or a gain to your father and mother, because you have grown in mind and knowledge since you were an infant?"

"I never thocht o' that either," said Jeanie, thoughtfully.

"Be assured," continued the minister, "there will be no such imperfect and incomplete beings there as infants in intellect and in sense for ever."

"Let me repeat a verse or two to you, Thorburn, which I am sure you will like. They express the thoughts of a parent about his dead girl, which have already in part been poorly expressed:—"

"She is not dead—the child of our affection— But gone unto the school Where she no longer needeth our protection, And Christ himself doth rule."

"Not as a child shall we again behold her; For when with raptures wild In our embraces we again unfold her, She will not be a child;

"But a fair maiden, in her Father's Mansion Clothed with celestial grace, And beautiful with all the soul's expansion Shall we behold her face."

A DUTY OF THE LOYAL WOMEN. A recent article in the Boston Transcript, copied into Littell's Living Age, upon the great and unseemly extravagance of the women in this time of war, deserves to be widely circulated. After a paragraph, in which "the spectacle of extravagance, expense and ostentation exhibited in the attire of many of the ladies of the land," is contrasted with the scenes of bereavement and woe in the battlefield, the hospital and the homes of the fallen soldiers, the article then continues:

To cater to this unseasonable appetite for show,—to enable the frivolous, the inconsiderate, and the self-seeking to go clad in silks and ermines,—our foreign importations are stimulated to an unhealthy and unparalleled extent, and millions in gold are needlessly sent out of the country, at a time when all the sinews of war are wanted to help our success in the field, and to fortify the Government against that financial embarrassment which always eventually brings in its train political and military debility and demoralization. The present immediate consequence is an enormous rise in all the necessaries of life, distressing to the poor, and visiting with alarm and anxiety thousands of households. Material results still more pernicious are in all probability pending.

But worse than any merely material damage or disaster is the lowering of the tone of the public morals, the withdrawing of the attention of the active and enterprising from the urgent needs of the war to the poor ambitions which wealth enables them to gratify, and the introduction of a spirit of emulation, not as to who shall do most to help save the country, but who shall get rich the fastest, and enable wife and daughter to make the most astounding display.

Let it not be thought that we would insinuate that the gentler sex are alone culpable for this state of things, or that we regard them exclusively as guilty of extravagance. But in their case we can see and measure the evil. It is on the outside, palpable, glaring, obvious. It meets us in the street, and flaunts itself even in the house of prayer. Its example is constantly operating to aggravate the consequences that are flowing and must continue to flow, in ever-increasing volume, from the acts of that reckless folly which in time of war makes the luxurious importations of a people exceed threefold their exports.

Probably there are twenty thousand women in our large cities who could, by the effect of their example, and by an organized combination in favor of an economical reform in respect to dress, bring down the price of gold twenty per cent. within three months.

The way is by organizing a grand Loyal Ladies' League, composed of women who, braving all ridicule and misconception, are willing to pledge themselves to maintain, while this war lasts, a decent economy in their attire; to discourage the importation of those expensive foreign fabrics for dress and furniture, the use of which sends gold out of the country with no corresponding benefit to the people;—to discountenance by all the means in their power that extravagance which grumbles at the calls for aid to sanitary commissions, recruiting funds, and sufferers from the war, but thinks little of brushing our sidewalks with its expensive silks, or of spending on a single dress an amount that would support for a whole year the family of a soldier slain in battle. The way is simple and feasible, calling for no other sacrifice than that of personal vanity and of that feminine fondness for dress, to which, under proper circumstances and restraint, no serious objection would be made.

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