THE SUNDAY AT HOME

O DAY MOST CALM, MOST BRIGHT! . . .
THE WEEK WERE DARK BUT FOR THY LIGHT.—*Herbert.*

A BRETON "PARDON."

PILGRIMS.

THEY told us over-night, at our quaint little seaside hotel, that a "Pardon" was to be held the following day at a village church some three miles away. There would be, they said, a *pélérinage* towards the place all through the night, and we must not be surprised if the usual silence were often broken by the voices and footsteps of passing pilgrims.

Without this warning we should certainly have experienced great surprise at the continuous sounds that disturbed our dreams all the night through; for it seemed as if the whole world were abroad, and the continuous hum of voice, and tramp, tramp, of heavy foot-falls beneath our windows hardly ceased all through the short summer night. This was the more strange as

being in such marked contrast to the ordinary habits of the people of the district. Of all quiet, go-to-bed-early places I have ever been in, this little Breton fishing-village was the quietest.

It seemed to us, as a general thing, that all the place was asleep soon after nine o'clock. It was our habit to take a stroll upon the quay or along the shore after dinner each evening, and as we returned through the village, at about half-past nine or ten, not a light was to be seen in the windows, not a sound to be heard along the quiet street—if the irregular rows of cottages deserved that name. All was silent as a city of the dead; and, did we chance to meet a belated pedestrian upon the road, we observed that he regarded us with a kind of awe, evidently greatly at a loss to account for our presence there.

But on this particular night all was changed. Tramp, tramp, tramp—hour after hour we heard the sound of passing footsteps. We heard, each time we woke, the voices of the pilgrims talking in the curious unintelligible Breton tongue, which sounded to our ears more like Welsh than any other language or *patois* we had heard.

These sounds, mingling with the ceaseless murmur of the sea, contrasted strangely with the utter silence of all else around. As one lay awake listening, one could not but wonder where all the people came from in this remote and thinly-populated district, and speculate a little as to the causes that had drawn them hither as by one consent. What was the motive? Was it simply fashion or habit? an agreeable break in the quiet monotony of their lives? Or was it the belief that the journey—the pilgrimage, as it was called—together with the simple ceremonies in which they would partake, could really bring to them relief from past sins? These were questions more easy to put than to answer. I doubt if the people themselves could have told. Probably they went because they had been accustomed always to go, as their forefathers had gone before them; because they enjoyed a large gathering of their own country-folks, and liked to don their best clothes and grandest holiday caps, and see all that was to be seen; feeling at the same time, no doubt, that they were performing a pious act that would in some way or another bring its own reward.

When we assembled at breakfast next morning, we found ourselves all of one mind. We would follow the pilgrims to this little village church upon the cliffs, and witness the "pardon" of which we had heard. We were told that at three o'clock there would be a procession which was said to be very well worth seeing, so after our noon *déjeuner* we started off for our destination, the church of *Nôtre Dame de la Clarté*.

It was an exceptionally beautiful walk along the coast, and the coast in Brittany is nearly all of a fine rocky character. The sea looked very blue and deep under a rather stormy sky; but the sun still shone, and the great waves flashed and sparkled as they rolled in and broke with a crash over jutting rocks or beds of firm yellow sand.

Our walk (there was no carriage to be had in the place) was anything but solitary, remote as this part of the country was. Crowds of peasants were following the same road. We were continually overtaking or being overtaken by groups of country people, all bound for the same spot as ourselves; and, from the way in which they stared at us, and chattered and gesticulated, we guessed that the sight of foreigners was rare in those parts. No solemnity was observable in the deportment of these pilgrims. They laughed and talked gaily and ceaselessly as they tramped along, and seemed more bent on securing a pleasant holiday than on obtaining any other object that we could discover.

Beggars there were in abundance, of course. It seemed as if all the halt, and lame, and impotent folk in Brittany had gathered together on this particular day in this locality. They were not pleasant objects to contemplate, and their main desire appeared to be to make themselves as repulsive as possible. I suppose the idea was to obtain larger alms from the charity of passers-by by the display of their infirmities, and one could not but pity the poor diseased creatures; but our *sous* were speedily exhausted, and it was in any case a hopeless task to attempt to relieve all. Very possibly they were far less wretched than they looked.

We had good opportunities for studying the costume of the peasantry, but were somewhat disappointed by it. The costumes in North Brittany are not nearly so picturesque as those in the South.

The caps of the women formed the most striking feature, and were, as a general rule, both pretty and picturesque. Some were made with great peaks behind, and a sort of stiff framework all round the face. Others had great wings on either side, that flapped in the wind with very great effect. Others, again, were peaked in front somewhat after the Marie Stuart fashion, and were very becoming to the younger women. There seemed an almost endless variety of shapes, but it is difficult to retain a distinct impression of more than a few. As a rule, however, the cap was the most interesting part of the costume. The dresses were almost all dark—indeed, black was the prevailing hue—but there were a few dark greens, and reds, and browns, scattered about to make a variety. They were all made with the short, full skirt common to the foreign peasantry, partially concealed by a long, ample apron (generally of greyish blue) with a very small bib. The dresses were generally open at the throat, but there was nothing pretty or picturesque about the bodice. All the women wore shawls pinned crosswise over the chest. These shawls were very pretty; at least, they would be so considered by admirers of the "æsthetic" colours, at that time just coming into fashion. Not that the Breton peasants had the least idea of following any new fashion, or could have had a notion that a whole section of society in England was going into raptures over such tints and colours as their ancestral shawls displayed—dusky olive greens, dull peacock blues, terra cottas, and Pompeiian reds. As these costumes are not new, but are family heirlooms handed down from one generation to another, it is plain that there is nothing new under the sun,

at any rate, not in æsthetic colours. The dress of the men had not the smallest claim to the picturesque. It was of black cloth, and, though with a distinct difference of style and cut, would, in a written description, be almost identical with the Sunday costume of all old-fashioned English rustics. The hats were all alike—black felt wide-awakes.

We reached the village at last—village by courtesy, that is; for it had no name, so far as we could discover, and comprised only a few tiny cottages or huts scattered irregularly about amongst huge blocks of stone almost as large as themselves, which form one of the most curious characteristics of this remote and barren country. It was a very queer, wild, little place, seemingly almost at the world's end, with sea on two sides of the jutting promontory, and wild bleak hill-slopes behind. What life can be like in so remote and strange a spot is hard to picture. The thin layer of soil that covers the hard rock is manifestly unproductive. There is no railway within twenty-five miles, and the coast in the immediate vicinity is too treacherous to admit of much fishing.

How so tiny and remote a place ever came to possess so large a church is one of those questions to which no satisfactory answer can ever be obtained. Not that this structure is in itself strikingly large or handsome, yet it would undoubtedly accommodate the entire population of the district at least ten times over.

To-day however *Nôtre Dame de la Clarté* was crowded to suffocation. Indeed it was a matter of some difficulty to get near the place at all. The little grave-yard was packed full of peasants, some waiting their turn to go in, others loitering about after they had come out. It was a lively and interesting scene, made so principally by the animation and gaiety of the people. Men, women, and children, youths, and maidens, the rich, and the poor all seemed in the same gay mood. They laughed and chattered and elbowed each other with the utmost good-humour and friendliness; the crippled beggar and the well-to-do farmer seeming for once on perfect equality, enjoying it all with a heartiness that was amusing and pleasant to see.

We had imagined that there would be some set form of service going on within the church, some priestly absolution, perhaps, the attendance at which would secure the "pardon" that gave the festival its name. This, however, did not appear to be the case. The people simply streamed into the church, when and as they would, said a certain number of prayers, left a lighted candle before one of the altars, and retired to make way for new-comers.

We made our way into the church at last. The atmosphere was stifling, reeking as it was with the combined odours of cheap tallow and the Breton peasant! The place was quite devoid of pews or chairs, and was crowded with kneeling worshippers. There was no priest officiating, but near to the altar an old woman was praying aloud in a high-pitched monotone, though whether or not this was a part of the ceremony we had no means of ascertaining. In places, the floor was a mass of tallow. Candles were burning and guttering at every possible angle on the piked stands placed for their reception. We were glad in a few minutes to make our escape into the open air again.

Finding that our foreign appearance attracted a little more attention than was altogether agreeable, we retired from the churchyard and took up our position in a field upon the hill-side; from which vantage ground we had already ascertained that an excellent view of the procession could be obtained.

Some five or six hundred yards away from the church stood one of the way-side crucifixes, frequently met with in that part of the country. We learned that the procession would start from the church, march as far as this spot, circle round the crucifix, and return whence it came; and the position we had taken up secured an excellent view of the road for the whole distance.

Presently it became evident that the procession might shortly be expected. People began streaming away from the dense mass that surrounded the church, to range themselves in lines along the sides of the road. Rain began to fall somewhat heavily, but it did not appear to damp the enthusiasm of the people one whit. All the peasants appeared to possess umbrellas, which were instantly unfurled, forming a compact array of coloured domes most curious to see. For the umbrellas partook of the æsthetic tints of the women's shawls and were very large as well. There was something novel and striking in the sight of a tossing sea of cotton umbrellas—green and blue and red and brown and even dusky yellow.

After a somewhat tedious interval, which, however, gave the shower time to blow over, the procession was seen slowly emerging from the church. We saw the banners fluttering over the top of the sea of heads and umbrellas, and as soon as it left the churchyard we obtained an excellent view.

First marched, with great and pompous dignity, a functionary who will perhaps be best described as a beadle. He was gorgeously arrayed in a uniform of pale blue, and held a gold-headed staff of office in his hand. Behind him walked about a dozen men, bearing banners and a crucifix, and these standard-bearers were followed in turn by a large image of Christ with a little child at His side, which image was carried on the shoulders of six men. A priest in robes came next in order, and behind him numbers of little children all dressed in white. First amongst these were little tiny mites, some mere infants, and these were all carried by their mothers. The little ones wore white robes and close white caps, and the idea of including the babies in the procession was pretty and poetical, but the effect to the eye was somewhat marred by the dark dresses of the mothers who (in their ordinary attire) walked in somewhat straggling fashion after the priest, their children in their arms.

Behind the babies came numbers of little girls, all in white muslin frocks. Some were so small as to be only just able to toddle along, holding the hand of a bigger companion, whilst the hindermost were girls just verging on womanhood. In every case, their hair was let down

(which is never done in Brittany on ordinary occasions) and hung in curls upon their neck and shoulders. They wore wreaths of white flowers upon their heads, and those who were old enough carried white muslin banners, with various mottoes and designs. Such a number of dark-eyed Breton children, with their simple white frocks and falling hair, formed a very striking and pretty picture, whilst the mixture of shy pleasure and awe-struck reverence on many of the faces was in itself a study.

Behind the children, borne this time by women in black dresses and white caps, came a gaudily-painted image of the Virgin with the Infant Saviour upon her knee, and this image was followed by several priests, and by choristers, men and boys, chanting alternately.

Next came a number of boys in white sailor dress, with glazed hats and red or blue sashes, and these carried on their shoulders several very beautiful model ships. They walked two and two in groups of six, and each group had its own vessel to carry; whilst behind the elder lads walked a number of quite little fellows similarly attired, and these carried over their shoulders miniature oars.

Then followed more banners, more priests and choristers, and behind these a number of young women and grown-up girls, dressed like the children in white muslin, with wreaths upon their heads; and these wore in addition, long white veils, which almost covered them. Eight of them bore on their shoulders a gilded image of the Virgin, and behind followed several very splendid banners and another crucifix.

Last of all came a brass band, which played stirring music, of a character more military than devotional. We were amused to note that the conductor walked last, conducting vigorously to the backs of his troop with one hand, whilst holding to his lips a huge horn with the other. As the procession passed, all the men uncovered, the women crossed themselves, and some few knelt; whilst after it had passed great numbers, both of men and women, fell in and followed, forming a kind of irregular rear-guard.

There was no kind of service at the way-side cross, the procession simply wound slowly round it, and returned to the church by the same road.

It was a picturesque and impressive sight. Under a sunny sky the effect must have been exceedingly beautiful; but, perhaps, there was something more in harmony with the drear wildness of the surroundings in the dark lowering sky, the bleakness of the purple hills, and the sheets of blinding rain that swept across the landscape from time to time, almost blotting out its outlines. The contrast presented to this dreary wildness by the gay fluttering banners, the white dresses of the girls, and the brilliant sashes of the boys gave a weird charm to the scene that sunshine might have spoiled.

When the procession reached the church again we saw in a moment that all was over. The peasants began at once to disperse, and almost immediately the white roads which stretched away in many directions from the church, became dotted with the black forms of the returning sight-seers.

We took our cue from the peasants, and made our way home as well as the crowded state of the roads would permit.

E. EVERETT-GREEN.

Sympathy.

I HEARD the face of Sympathy
Was passing fair and sweet,
I sought her 'mid the beautiful,
And longed her form to greet;
To feel her gentle hand touch mine,
And hear the voice they called divine.

Two sisters met me in my quest,
And said with gravest mien,
That Sympathy was wont to tread
Where they before had been;
And would I join them, I should find
She would not linger far behind.

I shivered, as the aspen thrills,
They looked so stern and grey;
And yet they bound me with a spell
I could not but obey;
Sorrow and Sickness were the twain
That conquered me in every vein.

Ah me! in anguish and unrest
I little thought of her,
Whose blest renown had touched my heart,
Set every pulse astir;
Until the soft perfume that stole
Through the dark chamber reached my soul.

I felt, but did not hear the step
That passed around my bed,
A rain of tears and blessings fell
Upon my aching head;
My weary eyes beheld a face
Godlike in its mysterious grace.

I'm glad that I have known her thus;
The blessings brought by Pain
Are sweeter in the aftermath
Than any earthly gain.
Sad sisters, ye are dear to me;
For in your train came Sympathy.

They do not know the charm of hope
Who have not seen despair;
None apprehends the grace of Him,
The Altogether Fair,
Who has not learned without, within,
To recognise the lures of sin.

So failure, disappointment, grief,
So penitence and pain,
Prepare the way for happier guests,
Nor is their mission vain;
Like herald-angels they proclaim
Peace through an ever-blessed Name.

SABSON C. J. INGHAM.

OF ALL DEGREES.

CHAPTER XVII.—HONORIA AT HOME.

There are so many plague spots in London that Honoria Vivian had no lack of choice when, her year's probation in the hospital over, she set about her task of healing.

The great tide of benevolence mainly flows towards the East end, not that its wants and needs are more clamant or more pressing than those of other quarters, but simply because appeals have been more persistent on its behalf. In the south and in the north, even in the west, there are foul slums that hang on the skirts of respectability, tainting the air morally and physically. In any quarter, indeed, of this great Babylon, one has but to penetrate a very little way beyond the outward show and seeming to discover the rottenness behind.

Honoria's choice fell at last upon a densely-populated quarter lying to the south of the river, not far from the point where London Bridge spans it. An appeal from a hard-working clergyman, who had found his life's business there, reached her, and she responded to it.

She did not join any sisterhood or other recognised band of workers, in part because of the greater freedom her nature demanded, and in part from a feeling, half morbid, that life in any such little community might be made too easy and too cheerful.

"I have no right to ease," she said to Alice, who was her first visitor; "and how shall I get near to them—these, my poor brothers and sisters—if I shrink from hardship?"

Alice was silent. That vision of a great purpose which sustained Honoria in all the faintings and discouragements of her self-imposed task was a noble dream to which she could not fail to respond. Her own more tender and clinging nature demanded perhaps some human companionship and sympathy in her resignations, but there are strong souls that seem to be only braced to larger effort by loneliness.

"Your father," faltered Alice, who very clearly recognised those God-given relationships born into the world with us—"your father, will he not miss you?"

"I think not," said Honoria gravely: "I have his full consent in all that I do. I could not hope to prosper if I began in disobedience, could I? Papa does not need me; he has his own life and ways, but he is very generous: he gives me as much money as I require."

Once again Alice was silenced; and it was not difficult for her to tell herself—so poor in self-esteem was she—that her own inborn yearning for affectionate comradeship might be a weakness, hindering great aims and fettering the best impulses.

Honoria, at least, was fitted to breathe the chill, cold air of solitude, for that strength of will that had upborne her in a thousand girlish follies and vanities was now all diverted into a new channel, and went to feed the ardour of her repentance. To spend herself—to give herself, to consecrate all that was left her of a misspent life, was what she claimed. What did all else matter, so long as one was allowed to serve?

"I shall have no time to feel lonely," she said, in answer to some faint remonstrance on Alice's part. "Oh, there is so much to do, there are so many to help, and one can but touch on the edge of it all. And besides, I shall soon have a large family. Come and see my new home."

They had met at the great hospital where Honoria had received her training, and where some errand had again claimed her presence. Alice had gone to see her there more than once, and had learned to accustom herself to the recognition of the proud and beautiful face and figure in that plain and simple dress which a probationer wears. But even such small pomps and vanities as a probationer may indulge in if she will in her holiday hours Honoria denied herself. Her rough black dress and cloak were almost penitential in their severity. She had no thought of merit, and yet it would seem as if her repentance needed this outward form of expression, just as in former days men thought to scourge the devil out of them by the hair shirt and the knotted rope. It is perhaps the temptation of all strong natures to exaggerate; and if Honoria courted the rough harshness of her dress, and felt it to be in keeping with her inward rigours, it was only the little seed of weakness that spoils the perfection of all human effort. Not here, and not yet, can we fully attain to what our heart dreams of perfectly good and noble.

But the face under the extremely unbecoming bonnet was only more beautiful for its ugly setting. Sad it would always be. The suddenness and solemnity of her call had been burned too deep into Honoria's memory for her ever to be very vivacious or gay. It set her aloof from laughter, and coloured and determined her life anew, but her expression was charged now with a calm and beautiful peace it had never worn before. The grave eyes were lit with thoughtful kindness, the firm lips were softened in their curves: it was a face fair and good to see.

A year had thus changed Honoria, as it had changed Charlie. Depend on it, time never ceases his chiselling on your face or mine from the hour of our birth until the coffin lid hides it from sight. And it is for us to choose what he will grave there, whether good or bad, since it is for us to determine our soul's history.

"I have taken a house," Honoria explained, as they went on their way. "At first I tried lodgings—a room in a great house full of people, but the population shifts and changes."

"Did you live there alone, Honoria?"

"Yes, why not?" Honoria looked at her with a little surprise in her dark beautiful eyes. "It was quite safe, safer than some London drawing-rooms."

"But the work—your food—your washing."

"Oh, the work," she said with unfeigned indifference, "that was easy, the easiest part of it. Hands soon learn their use in the world"—she held them out—those shapely hands where rings had once sparkled. She wore no gloves, and Allie saw that the delicate fingers were roughened. Somehow the sight gave her a foolish pang of pain.

"It does not take much cooking to keep one's body in life and health," said Honoria lightly seeing the tears in those affectionate eyes—"and when you come to study the clothes question it is wonderful how philosophical you can be over it. Half our supposed requirements are really superfluous litter to a one-room lodger. Besides, Allie," her tone deepened, "could I dare to go down praying to be allowed to help these poor strugglers and toilers and yet refusing to sacrifice so small a thing as my own selfish comfort? Oh, the discomforts count for nothing—one has no time to think of them, or if one does it is to remember with shame the years that were given to folly and vanity. Those wasted years—shall I ever forget them?"

"You have left your lodgings," Allie said after a little pause. "Tell me about the new place."

"I have become a householder—a landlord—I was going to say, only I don't mean to charge any rent. Allie, do you remember once telling me how you had grieved because you could do so little for the neighbours round you, and then how it had come to you and Janey as if by a sort of inspiration just to set open your door, and the homeless or those whose homes were uncongenial and the tired crept in?"

"We could do so little," said Allie repudiating any idea of praise with instinctive shrinking, "so very little beyond making them welcome."

"Ah, but that was everything—just the welcome and the certainty of it. Doctor Ellis—you knew that he was an acquaintance of ours long ago, didn't you, and that I met him once or twice at the hospital? Doctor Ellis told me that the poor young girl whom you sheltered and nursed was saved by that alone."

"Mary?" said Alice in surprise. "She was ill—taken seriously ill in our house and it was only Doctor Ellis's skill and care that made her recovery possible."

"That is not his version." Honoria looked at her friend with a beautiful light in her expressive eyes. "He says it was the loving care that did

it. Any ordinary woman, he said—even a well-disposed woman, would have sent her to a hospital thinking she was doing the best for her in that way, and she would simply have pined and faded. What she wanted was mothering."

"I am very glad," said Alice simply in the gratefulness of her heart, "but he forgets his own part."

"Oh, I don't think he will easily do that," Honoria smiled; "but his words and your deeds, dear Allie, and one thing else set me thinking. The one thing else was a sermon I heard at Barford. It was at that time—that time of great darkness a year ago,"—her voice was very sad,—"when papa and I went to Oakdene alone. The church bells seemed to draw me yet I went in heaviness and despair, expecting nothing, but God had a message for me. The vicar preached from the text, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' and as he spoke the light came and I knew that that was what I needed—just to rest from self and lean on Him."

They were walking in the crowded street, but Allie took her companion's hand and pressed it in both her own.

"It was Mr. Durrant?" she asked eagerly, many emotions struggling in her face. "It was his voice that first brought me comfort too."

"Yes," said Honoria rather dreamily, looking down on the sweet, blushing face. "Yes, he is a good man. And it struck me," she went on a moment or two later, "that here was something I could do for whom so much had been done—a very little thing. I could set a door open for some of the poor tired ones, and perhaps when their weary bodies are refreshed they will turn to the only true Rest."

"You want to make it a sort of home?"

"Yes, and no, there are drawbacks to most of such institutions. The home may come, when I see my way more clearly, but what I think of now is a sort of travellers' rest for women and girls—for those of them who go out at night, Allie," she said dropping her voice. "Have you ever thought what it must be—what it means to have no place to sleep in? of the pain in the leaden feet that drag so wearily over the pavement, of the pangs of hunger, the physical pain of cold and wretchedness, and the moral pain of degradation? With all these assailing what an easy victory temptation must have. Don't you think if I make the house bright and warm they will come, and perhaps stay?"

"Yes, they will come," said Allie with a smile, "some of them—a very few, will be grateful, but others will impose on you."

"It is no imposition to be hungry and destitute, and that is all the passport I shall ask. Ah, but there is something else I do need, and that is a helper—some one who will be tender and forbearing and yet firm."

"I think I know just the right some one if she can be persuaded to come. She is a dressmaker who finds her clients among shop girls of the poorer class and servants, but she has done a good deal for them in a quiet and unostentatious way besides sew their finery."

"But my travellers will not even be of that class; it is the hidden deeps, Allie, the sad sores one can't shut one's eyes to that we must be prepared to meet."

"That will be only a reason the more to weigh with Miss Lemming. Indeed I think if your wayfarers were all respectable she would not care to leave her lodger on their account. He is a very precious lodger and an old friend, and you must make up your mind, if Miss Lemming comes to you to have many visits from Mr. Augustus. He will help too, in his own way."

"There cannot be too many," said Honoria with a sigh, "and any way that is a good way is welcome."

The house which Honoria had taken had nothing to mark it outwardly from its fellows. It was just as dingy and as shabby as they, and indeed it was no part of her scheme to make her habitation in any way conspicuous. Such attraction as it had was to be found within. They went over the rooms—several on each floor, most of them small, and all of them dilapidated and dingy as only a human warren can be. The rooms spoke eloquently of the poverty and dirt and disease that had housed themselves there. Allie looked at the calm, resolute face of her companion and sickened a little at the thought of leaving her there.

"Aren't you going to do anything for it?" she asked.

"Yes, but not much," said Honoria wakening out of a reverie. "Clean windows, some ventilation, and abundant whitewash for health's sake, and for the rest, beds to sleep on, perhaps, and fires. The fires are the main thing—did you ever feel the physical pain of mere cold through having too little to eat or to wear? I did once, and it hurts. And I have noticed that to be thoroughly warmed all through, as the children say, is what gives these poor things the truest sense of well-being. So we shall have big, honest fires and benches drawn up to them."

"And am I to leave you here?" Alice asked the question rather unsteadily. They had mounted to Honoria's own room, the meanest and barest of them all—a nun's cell could scarce have been more modestly fitted. There was a table with one or two books on it and a chair, a bed in one corner and in the other a cooking apparatus. The only approach to luxury was to be found in a large bath full of water.

"It is a very good place to leave me in," she said with her grave smile. "I am afraid, Allie, you have a strange misconception of what constitutes furnished lodgings in this part of London."

"I know what you have been used to," cried Alice no longer restraining her feelings, "and—and are you not tempting your resolution by too sharp a test? I reverence your impulse to share the life around you—it is blessed and beautiful to give—most blessed of all to give ourselves, but, my dear, my dear," she faltered, "we were never commanded to make the way too hard for our feet to tread."

Honoria laid her hands on Allie's shoulder, and looked down into the sweet, troubled anxious face.

"Don't be afraid for me," she said, "the stony way may be the best. I had my days of soft going and ease and they made me cruel. He who was banished from His father's house for us and had no where to lay His head will help me to bear this for His sake."

She stooped and kissed her and so silenced the last protest on Allie's lips. It was the cry for inward renovation that urged her steps and gave her life its motive—who could take it on himself to bid her quit her task?

They parted at the door, and Allie lingered there a moment to watch the tall, gracious figure passing away and losing itself among the poor and obscure, the sinful and the sorrowing with whom she had cast her lot. Surely there were some among them who would rise up to call her blessed.

THOUGHTS AND BYTHOUGHTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE HARVEST OF A QUIET EYE," ETC.

HARVEST IN STORM.

A PICTURE lies before me, on my study-table; —a picture of a woman, reaping. The clouds lower overhead, the drench of rain has been, —or is coming; there is, above all, a Rainbow against the gloom. As she reaps, the gust catches the falling grain, it seems to scatter it; —it grew and ripened in warmth and under blue of Summer; it finds its end amid driving of the storm.

And contemplating this picture, I, as it were, gather up a stalk from this place and from that, a stalk eared with grains of random reflections; reflections disconnected, save for the string wherewith it pleases me to bind them.

And first, I seem to note a pathos (false-sentimental save in so far as it be allegorical), a pathos in this ending of the life of the tall summer-grain. For now, while I write, 'tis June, early June, following an ideal April, and a poet's May. And this June enters upon an unmarred inheritance of full and complete foliage. The lush green of the Linden spreads in perfect leafage over the daisied lawn; the broad Chestnut fans are unbroken under the unperturbed milk and rose of their quiet spikes; the soft shining leaves of the Beech have no rent in their delicate tissue; from the Abele, it is true, a leaf or two of frosted silver lies,—I know not why nor how,—upon the mown grass. The ferns have early attained this year to the goal of perfection: with intense, yet restful green the plumes stand out of the matted ivy: plumes of lady fern; of broad fern and male; of prickly shield fern, second in beauty to none. The glad light green, peaking skyward, of the hart's-tongue is wonderful above the dark stone and the brown mould. The sorrel hue of the King fern gives delight of contrast among the rest. Beneath, the apple-green of the small Oak fern, delicately perfect, and the duller hue of the Beech and the Limestone fern, carpet the ground. It is the distinguishing characteristic of this superb Spring and early Summer, that, as in Paradise, all has been left to develop to its ideal (save for some blight), free from unkindness of frost, from bitterness of wind. We have seen before, all as beautiful, almost, in the early stage, but then, upon the Eden of it, a blasting wind came, cruel, devastating all. Aye, bringing upon it ruin that the whole later year could not recover. Now, this year, in early June, the utmost of perfect, that is possible in this present world, seems to be given to us.

And the corn has grown in uninterrupted serenity in all this luxurious and splendid season. Hot sun has given it strength and flintiness, gracious showers have, from time to time, given juice to the leaf, and sap to the stem. But it is early June, only early June now; and a drawing of "Harvest in the Storm" makes one think of the unknown future days, for the year and for the corn.

To grow in early days of Spring—and even into the blossom time—even into maturity, into filling of ear, and, almost, ripening of grain—and then, after all, wind and drenching rain laying the promise of the harvest; life ending, disappointingly, in storm.

And at once I become aware that, according to my wont, I am weaving parables of human life into the experience and possibilities of the summer-lands.

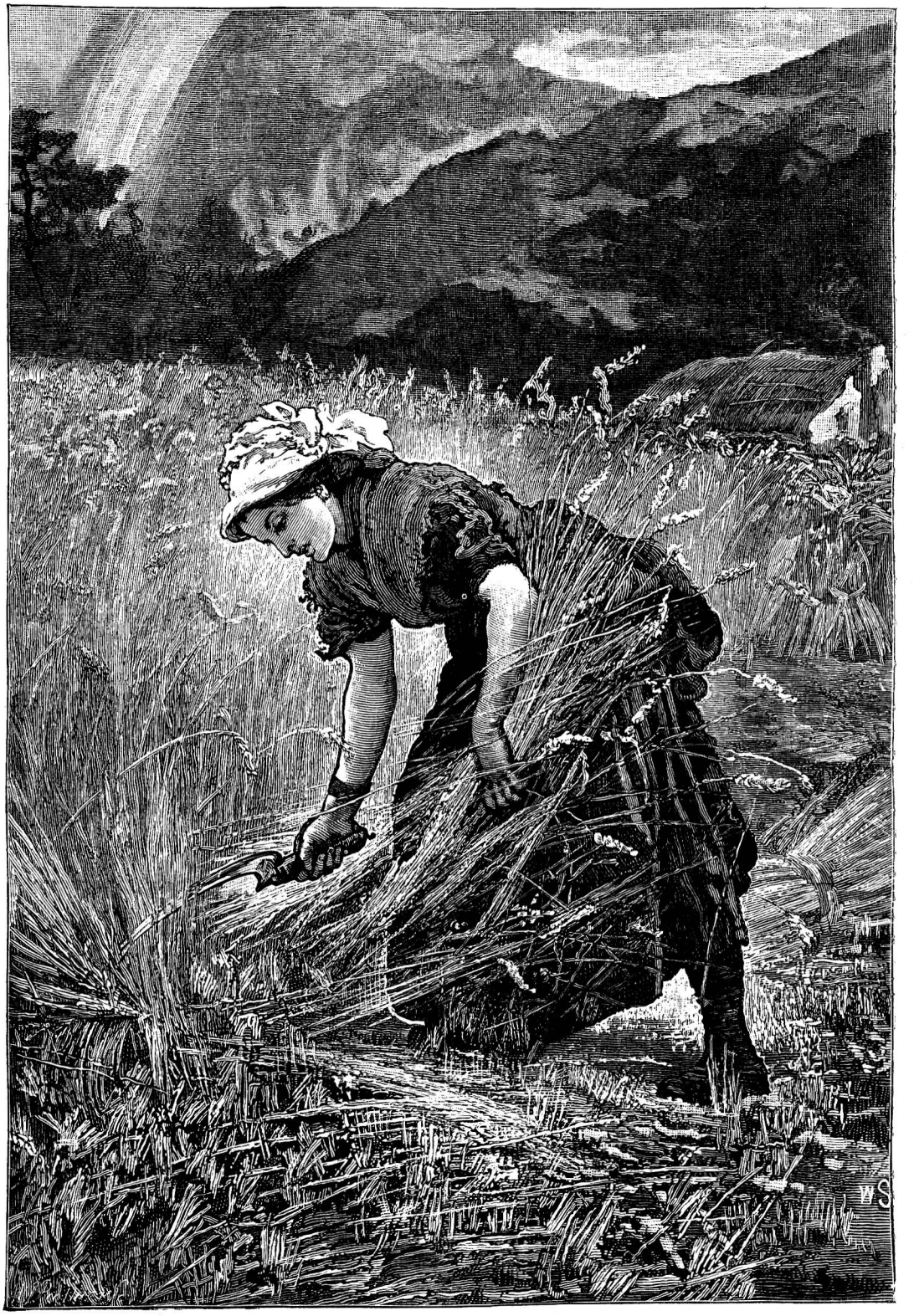
Is it an uncommon thing, in this strange, sad human life of our's—is this an uncommon experience—smooth, sweet days of early and late Spring, aye, of summer-maturity, and then, harvest amid storm?

A small cloud appearing in a sky heretofore blue and serene, and then life's ending hustled with tempest, and the harvest, if any, half spoiled, and snatched, as it were, some half of it merely, from the inroad of ruin.

It seems to me an experience of so many of the saints of God, at any rate, of the Old Testament saints. How serene a Spring, how fair a Summer—that of King David. The showers and the rough winds of early life, these did but brace and strengthen growth. Then, after March and April, came such a May, such a June, such a July and August.

But, afterwards, in late September, the onset of passion, the fury of sin; and harvest in storm after all. Harvest. Yes, doubtless. But in torrents of Absalom-tears. In fury of Joab-tempests.

Jehoshaphat, too, and Asa, and Josiah. Heze-



SAVED FROM THE STORM.

kiah even. All smooth and well, until the later days of life. Then a sudden blighting blast; and harvest, yes, really, harvest, no doubt; but in storm.

And Solomon. Can we forget him? The lovely May; the splendid August; and then, "It came to pass, when Solomon was old——"

Is there any sadder ending of such, so wise, so earnest a life, anywhere in any history?

The Lord, who had been so near to him, who had revealed Himself to Solomon,—forsaken,—when Solomon was old!

Was, then, all that lovely Spring, all that beneficient Summer, blighted? No. I hold that there was a harvest of that life, for God, Jehovah. But—a harvest plucked out of storm.

And so it is that, looking on the fresh young lives around us, basking in the warmth, swaying in every air, growing fuller, growing taller in life's June, in life's July, we wistfully wonder and long. It is one of the peculiar sadnesses of life, that we *are* so liable to deterioration. "Where is the kindness of *thy youth?* the love of *thine espousals?*" "Nevertheless, I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." These are sad words from the Divine Bridegroom to the soul that in early days plighted itself without reserve to Him. But are they not too often applicable,—deserved?

Or Faith was serene and calm in earlier days, and aye, into maturity, and then,—when harvest of it all seemed near and secure, the storm broke, the darkening sky hid the blue; the rainbow was too faint to be noted, and much was marred, if some was saved from the storm.

Aye, and sometimes, as in the case of him who, as king, was the man after God's own heart, some terrible fall will amaze men towards the close of a life hitherto blameless to all appearance —aye, a holy life. Some sudden temptation, or some careless hour; "retirement neglected and hurried prayer" having for long, it may be, wasted the roots,—and the tree falls, in heaped ruin, on a summer day,—the tree that "had withstood unmoved the onset of a thousand wintry whirlwinds." In such a case we hope "though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down." But it will be salvage from the storm.

How much of God's harvesting does seem to be salvage from the storm! "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not." "Return, oh, backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings!" "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." How much of the grain, garnered in God's garner, will be grain reaped in the tempest, snatched from the storm?

For this reason we, God's Husbandmen, should never lose heart. The very going out to reap in the storm shows hopefulness, expectancy. The reapers do not lay the drenched grain in swathes with the idea that it will decay and prove worthless; they see the rainbow on the cloud, and they are hopeful that the clouds will roll by and the warm sun come out, and the harvest that was reaped in tears, be gathered in at last with joy.

And, in our husbandry of God's grain, the hopeful persistency, the invincible expectancy, will often go far to fulfil itself. It is not for *us* to say, "too late," here and now, to *any* human soul. To say it may bring about that so it shall be. But to urge "To-day"—aye, To-day, *even after so long a time*, "*To-day*, if ye will hear His voice." He is yet waiting to be gracious. Words of untiring patience, of unyielding hope—

> What! fallen again? Yet trustful rise.
> Thine Intercessor never dies!

—such words may "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees."

"I know, and am certain, that I am lost," said a man once, labouring under religious depression.

"I am glad to hear that," rejoined the good counsellor to whom he spoke.

"*Glad*," returned the other amazed, "glad to hear it! and why?"

"Because," he was answered, "the Son of man came to seek and to save *that which was lost*."

And Parents, let them lose heart *never*. Though the days of home-purity, and of home-simplicity be left behind, and the days even of home-love seem as though forgotten, and drought and drench, and storm-blast seem all leagued against any harvest of these *dear lives* for God, yet let the lovers of them toil on unstayingly, and hope on unceasingly, *determined* on a harvest, even it be snatched out of the storm. The Husbandman, Who will gather His sheep out of all places where they were "scattered in the cloudy and dark day," will, be sure, in His harvesting, not "suffer the least grain to fall upon the earth." But to find these, aye, to save them from decay in self-despair, in self-neglect, it does seem to please the Master of the harvest to make use of the diligence and untiring persistency of His labourers. Let us then gather, in our reaping, the corn that is drenched and beaten down, as well as that which has ripened under an untroubled blue.

And, to bind another thought in our bundle, how much of life's best work has been done under cloud and in storm, with only or scarcely rainbow promise overhead. How much of the most precious results of such work might be spoken of as having been harvested in storm.

The thought comes to mind of good and grave Richard Hooker (*judicious* Hooker, save in his marriage), and his study, and his world-famed writings, wrought amid the contentiousness of his wife, Joan, and the drudgery of field and household work entailed upon him by her tyranny. Of how his two pupils, coming down to see their tutor, found him, book in hand, tending his sheep in a common field, while the servant was gone home to dine, and to assist the good man's wife in household matters. Quietly seated at last with his guests in his own house, presently Richard was called away to rock the cradle. With deep commiseration for his fate his old pupils left next day the intolerable household for a quieter lodging. A "life made up of perturbations" indeed. And yet what noble harvest was that garnered by this meek and quiet minded man out of storm!

The cares and troubles, the toil and moil of life, we are apt to groan under them; and ready,

sometimes, to complain; yet, if we look back, we shall find that *the best and noblest of our work was perhaps done in life's sad and stormy hours.* Sorrow and suffering take a man out of himself, and "unfold in him powers and capacities of which, but for sorrow and suffering he would have had no knowledge." Well has it been said[1] that a man was not at his best when in the mere fulness of his untried powers: "his physique fully matured, and his mind vigorous." That a man may be at his best when his energies are worn out by sickness or failure; that "a delicacy and refinement of moral and spiritual life may be produced by those very things which a hardy and robust man regards as absolute hindrances of his power." In that beautiful book, "A Noble Life," this truth is set before us. Again, in a humbler booklet, a book of one's childhood's days, "Charlie Burton." Indeed, in THE Book it is continually the theme of the teaching—How St. Paul feared lest "the thorn in the flesh,"—the hindrance to the power of his ministry,—should make himself less able, his work less efficacious for the Master. But he learned, in that Master's school, "most gladly to glory in those infirmities" which entitled him to draw, without limit, upon the power of Christ.

And the life of the Master, is it not, all through, a story of harvesting under clouds of gloom, and in drench of discouragement, and amid tempest of opposition? Perfect, Himself, as man, through sufferings. And is it not through His own cross-bearing that He is so able to bear the cross of others; yea, to enable weak hands and feeble knees to keep up under the pressure of their own? And how His custom was to gather in His harvest, in sunshine (if it ever came to Him) *and in storm.* Tired, and sitting on a well, yet, in His weary hour, the woman of Samaria, and others, her companions, were gathered in. Nailed upon the cross, enduring the onset of the supreme anguish, the crucified robber turned to Him, and not in vain. And still now, in rain of affliction, in storm of keen opposition, He is gathering in His harvest. And, at the last day, amid the crash and uproar of a ruining world, the great Harvest shall be gathered and the Reapers descend to bring home the grain of God. And after that storm there shall, indeed, be a great calm.

We are not, then, to repine, or even to wonder, if things go not smoothly with us in any work for good and for God, in this our life of Time. We are to sow in tears and not to expect always, nor often, here and now, to reap in joy. We should be more ignoble than we are, and our work would be meaner and of poorer quality, but for the stress against which we had to put our force, and for the obstacles and disadvantages that brought out what otherwise had been undeveloped powers; it may be powers, but for this, for ever unknown and unsuspected. We "rose to the occasion," but then, if the occasion had not come, we had remained in the lower grade. Adversity draws out the powers which were but latent. How are great Captains discoverable, unless there be wars? Of what credit to labour only under blue skies and in sunshine; and how poor the husbandry that would reap only in the fine-weather years. The very labour, even, if it miss of its object, shall be counted as harvest to the true and faithful labourer.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,

"Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain—in the Lord."

[1] Bp. Boyd Carpenter.

WORKHOUSE LIFE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

BY MRS. BREWER, AUTHOR OF "HOSPITAL SKETCHES AT HOME AND ABROAD."

II.

A QUARTER of a century ago it was said that foreigners, coming over to England for knowledge and medical education, were not slow to discover that the hospitals of which we were so proud accommodated only a small portion of the sick—that the great majority were in the state hospitals or workhouse infirmaries, and that these were useless as medical schools, seeing that students were unable to gain admission to them.

This was quite true; the infirmaries, which would have opened a far wider field for the study of deep and vital questions concerning the health and happiness of society than the voluntary hospitals, were closed to observation. They paid no toll to science; they were under the rule of men quite ignorant of hospital rules; and they were shut out from the world of medical criticism; and thus a large mass of valuable material for the clinical instruction of medical students remained useless and wasted.

This surely was a great fault—for although medical men never refuse skilled help to the poor and destitute, they consider that they have a right to make the study of their sufferings a valuable means of saving life in the future. This is regarding the closing of the infirmaries from one point only. The evil practices which abounded in them could not have existed had they been thrown open in the same way as our hospitals.

At the time of which we speak it was by no means rare that one doctor only, and he not living on the premises, should have the care of all the sick in the infirmary of a workhouse, and find the drugs, for 50*l.* a year! and his orders for extra and more nourishing food were useless seeing it was at once consumed by those in charge of the patients.

The nurses employed were all paupers, who, instead of money wage, received daily a full meat meal and an allowance of beer and gin. The way they mismanaged and neglected the sick seems to us in these days incredible.

On an average, eight only in a hundred of these nurses could read, and how they distributed the medicines or of what use the doctor's labels were it is impossible to say.

Then they were all so old. Of five hundred in the London workhouse infirmaries at the period of which we are writing, one half were over fifty years of age, one quarter of them over sixty, several not less than seventy, and one, between seventy and eighty, who had the care of imbecile women and of others who had fits. It was quite unsafe to trust them with stimulants necessary for the patients.

One of the nurses boldly stated that she had been sixteen times in the House of Correction, and was not ashamed of it. She was a woman much given to drink, and of a violent and ungovernable temper, causing great misery to the old people under her care.

The chief nurse in one of the acute sick wards of the Paddington Workhouse was a pauper named Pots and Pans, so called because in the summer she hawked these articles from door to door. During the winter months she was installed as head nurse. On being asked if she attended to the cries of the sick, she quite derided the idea, saying, "they were like a nest of young birds and always calling."

Of course none of these women were fit to have charge of the sick, infirm, and dying without some superior controlling power over them.

The male pauper nurses were even worse than the women, being rough, brutal and ignorant.

Shut out from all criticism, and delivered over to men and women utterly ignorant of sanitary and medical knowledge, and sometimes even of the common courtesies of life, is it any wonder that the workhouses and their infirmaries should have become lazar-houses, refuges for the destitute, hospitals for the sick, fever dens, and nests of filth, cruelty and wretchedness all in one? A place in which the idle and the profligate saw no terrors in being confined!

Every now and then the outside world was made painfully acquainted with the state of things, but the revelations of the Lancet Commission, in 1865, brought about a revolution in the whole administration of the Poor Law.

Every one interested in the subject of the sick poor and the destitute felt thankful that at last something was to be attempted to make clear the existing state of things, and to raise the standard of the workhouses and their infirmaries; but it is equally certain that the most sanguine among the onlookers had no particle of belief in any permanent good result. Even Charles Dickens, whose interest in the poor never slept, and who did so much in "Oliver Twist," the workhouse boy, to expose the wretchedness of the inmates of such institutions, even he wrote to one of the commissioners, "I admire your courage and rejoice at the attempt you are making with such energy—energy sufficient to rouse the seven sleepers, but not enough to rouse the guardians."

The scenes this Commission laid bare were so appalling that the heart of all England turned sick at the exhibition. It was seen that these infirmaries for paupers had grown up with all the external appearance of hospitals, but with no shadow of likeness to those well ordered institutions.

We will follow the Lancet Commission into a few of the workhouses so that there may be no mistake and no exaggeration.

First to Bethnal Green. Here there was an utter absence of classification of the inmates: the painful results of which were seen through the whole house; the imbeciles were dispersed through all the wards quite uncared for; there were no sanitary arrangements for the use of the sick and bed-ridden, and an utter want of decency prevailed. Foul cases were mixed with ordinary patients. Many poor children were diseased and ophthalmic. How could it be otherwise when seventeen of them washed in one tub, and, as a rule, in the same water, drying themselves on the sheets? There was neither occupation nor amusement for any of them.

Perhaps it would be difficult to find, even at that time, a worse illustration of the need of reform than the house at Kensington, which belonged to St. Margaret's and St. John's, Westminster. The parish had two houses, one in Petty France and the other, as I have said, at Kensington. Imagine the wards full of patients all locked up at night without fires, hot water, nurse, or bell, and the poor creatures in their bitterest needs having to be there without a soul to help them!

Lambeth was an average example of London; there was no organised system of night-nursing, and the suffering inflicted on the helpless, diseased, and infirm was intense.

In Rotherhithe, again, there were no arrangements at all for the aged, infirm, and lying-in women; they were practically left without any nurses. In this workhouse the doctor who visited daily about forty sick in the infirmary, in addition to the large number of aged and infirm, received for this and the supplying and dispensing of the drugs 35*l.* a year!

Camberwell stood well the minute inspection of the Lancet Commissioners. Of the day room in Bermondsey Workhouse the report of these gentlemen is pathetic.

> It is extremely bare and wretched. The poor creatures who are doomed to spend here the remainder of their lives were sitting on a range of benches against the wall, listless and miserable, in front of them only a bare deal floor and an empty space, with not a table in the room, nor any object of interest, the monotony varied now and then by the excitement of a troublesome and noisy lunatic. Such a scene perpetually endured is enough to make an idiot of a sane person.

The Strand Union was utterly unsuited for infirmary purposes. It was surrounded by noisy workshops and mews, and in addition to this, for the sake of economy, the guardians had established a carpet-beating business under the

windows of the sick wards. The patients were stunned with the noise and poisoned with the dust.

Two of the largest and best situated workhouses in London were, and are, the St. Pancras and Marylebone; the latter has always maintained a high standard, and we shall have much to say about it when showing its present condition.

Of St. Pancras Infirmary, Dr. Markham said he never saw wards more unsatisfactory, or more calculated to spread disease. He found that the clothing of those who had fever or small-pox was tucked under their beds and allowed to remain there until they recovered, and then, without being disinfected, was given them to put on, and in these the people went out spreading the disease in every direction. The sheets and blankets were rarely changed and new patients put into the beds just vacated. What would be thought of such a thing now?

With regard to nursing in this infirmary there was one pauper nurse in each ward during the day, and at night one old woman seventy-one years old had charge. Each nurse had twenty patients to attend to beside doing all the work of the ward.

These are but instances of the forty workhouses of London as they were in the past. Surely if the unemployed ladies of England had gathered round Miss Louisa Twining, the pioneer of workhouse reform, the Lancet Commissioners would not have had such terrible scenes to relate.

If visiting ladies had been permitted within the walls of these poorhouses, their quick eyes would at once have detected many an abomination.

In one of our large London workhouses the broth for the sick was found to be hot water with oatmeal floating on it, the bones and the meat of which it ought to have been made no where to be found. When this was discovered, of course the cook was dismissed, but no one knew how many a sick person had been thus defrauded.

A lady gaining admission to one of the infirmaries, came upon a poor old woman who had been bed-ridden for years, her hands were nearly useless, and the nails on the poor bent fingers very long. The lady asked why they were not cut. Her answer was: "I must pay to have them done, and I have not any money." The lady offered to cut them, but the old woman would not hear of it. The nurse would think she had been telling tales; she said she had to gnaw her food like a dog because no one would cut it up for her.

Leaving the sick, the aged, and the infirm, let us see how the tramps or casuals fared at this time.

At the period of which we are writing there were in the year about 300,000 who sought the shelters provided by the workhouses, and known to us as casual wards, and they were then, as now, a charge upon the whole of London.

"The majority of these," says one of the most reliable living authorities, "as much disliked regular work as the wild ass the crib;" but there was a sprinkling of both sexes who had seen better days, who, by pure misfortune or failing health, had been reduced to this extremity.

Let us look in at Bermondsey, where from its position, a large number were always to be seen applying for a night's lodging, sometimes, for example, forty or fifty although there was accommodation only for twenty-four. The beds provided were bunks or orange boxes, a wooden log for a pillow, a blanket and a rug to cover the sleeper, and not even a bit of straw to lie on; and many of these seeking shelter had had respectable homes and were by no means the dregs of society.

The accommodation for the casuals at Lambeth became known all over the world by means of Mr. Greenwood, who passed a night among these tramps, and published his experience in the "Pall Mall Gazette" under the title of "A Night in a Workhouse."

A short time previous to the Lancet Commission there had been no casual ward at Westminster at all. Even at the time of which we are speaking, 1865 and 1866, many were compelled to tramp weary and footsore three miles to the Kensington House, after getting the order for relief in Petty France; and arriving there they had not even a bit of bread for their supper.

Such was the state of things which the philanthropy of this practical age essayed to reform.

WHAT CAME OUT OF A SAILOR'S KIT.

NEARLY forty years ago, the thoughts of two or three good ladies in Edinburgh were much directed towards Spain. One of them, probably the beginner of the movement which we are going to tell about, still lives to see the wonderful and hopeful result of those thoughts and plans. The purpose was to send the Gospel of Jesus Christ to that darkest and most neglected part of the continent of Europe. What caused this interest to be taken in Spain specially we do not know; whether it was the romantic history of that country, from early times down to the Peninsular War in the days of Sir John Moore and of the Duke of Wellington, or whether it was from reading the story of the suppression of the Reformation in Spain in the sixteenth century as told by Dr. McCrie, a book which was well known to many readers in Scotland. There was no part of Europe where the reformed faith was received at first with more gladness, and with more promise of successful extension. But the light of the gospel was soon

extinguished, and the followers of the early reformers were almost exterminated by the cruel persecutions of the Romish Inquisition.[1]

It is true that attempts have been made at various times to introduce Bibles and religious treatises, especially from Gibraltar and from Cadiz, but the circulation of such books was on a very limited scale, and the watchful hostility of the priests suppressed these efforts. They were renewed during the short period when General Espartero was at the head of affairs, but the Romish power was soon re-established. If any copies of the Scriptures were preserved, they could be read only in secret; and in the long reign of intolerance and persecution no sign of spiritual life was visible. It could indeed be said, "darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people."

It was in the year 1852 that Mrs. Peddie and her friends in Scotland resolved to make an effort to send the word of truth into the dark peninsula. They heard of a pious seaman who was about to sail to Cadiz in a merchant ship from Leith. He was sent for, and asked if he would take some Spanish Bibles and try to distribute them in Spain. He knew nothing of the personal risk in doing this, and he was fully and faithfully warned of the danger of attempting such a charge. He was a man of courage as well as faith, and said he was ready to take the risk for so good an object. A new difficulty arose. There were no Spanish Bibles to be found in Edinburgh, and, as the ship was to sail in two or three days, there was no time to apply for a grant from the British and Foreign Bible Society. But a letter was sent to the Religious Tract Society, asking that a parcel of Spanish tracts should be sent from 56 Paternoster Row as speedily as possible. The parcel arrived just in time to be put into John Boyle's hands before the vessel sailed. So the ship departed, bearing its precious freight of the seed of life in a little parcel of not more than one foot square.

Months passed, and John Boyle returned not, nor could any tidings be obtained of what had become of him. There was much anxiety as to his safety, and the hopeful promise of his gospel mission seemed to have passed away. But at length he re-appeared, and his tale was this: At Cadiz he was seized with illness, so severe that he had to be left there, while the ship proceeded to other ports on the Spanish coast. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered he had returned to Leith in a homeward-bound ship. While on the voyage to Cadiz he told the captain of the vessel about the parcel of tracts under his care. When John Boyle was sent on shore ill, if he had taken the tracts with him they would have been seized and destroyed. The captain offered to take charge of the tracts, and to do the best he could with them.

"And he did so," says Mrs. Peddie, in whose own words we continue the narrative; "he did so in his own peculiar and cautious Scotsman-like fashion. The good captain took none with him on shore; but he told one party and another in Cadiz that good books could be got on board his vessel by any who chose to go and take them. Within a very short time the visits to the vessel for the 'good books' became so numerous that not a tract was left behind. And so sped this first small missionary enterprise to Spain. Deepest thankfulness was experienced by us at the promising result, but it was followed by a great disappointment, for this worthy seaman was not again to return to Spain; and he knew of no other who was about to visit that land. So the work began and seemed to close with John Boyle. Then again were Spain's spiritual desolations cast upon the hand of God, and did the Lord fail to help in this great emergency? We shall see.

"This simple work of faith was the commencement of a series of other varied private efforts on our part during the following two years to obtain an entrance for the Gospel into Spain. These efforts were eminently successful, and in the year 1855, the writer, with the conjoined help of an honoured husband, the late Robert Peddie, who fell asleep in Jesus on the 30th May, 1881, and a few personal friends, whom both of us interested in the work, succeeded in forming a missionary society for Spain, which was named 'The Spanish Evangelisation Society.'"

Passing over the work of these past years since the Spanish Evangelisation Society was formed, and the evangelistic work carried on by it, we may here state the fact that this society was quietly in operation in Spain when the door into the country was said to be shut. No sooner did the Revolution of 1868 take place, when General Prim guaranteed liberty of worship, than missionary boards of churches entered the country to possess the land for Christ. It is not our purpose here to give any account of the various missionary and evangelistic agencies that have been successively established. English and American Christians have taken up the work in different parts of Spain, and under separate ecclesiastical organisations—some Episcopal, some Presbyterian, and some Congregational. Pastor Fliedner, the chaplain of the German Embassy at Madrid, has also done much useful work, notices of which, as of other Spanish evangelistic agencies, have from time to time appeared in the SUNDAY AT HOME. The most hopeful feature is that there are now not a few faithful native pastors and teachers labouring among their countrymen in different parts of the peninsula.

The Religious Tract Society has had the privilege of aiding the efforts of the good men labouring in these various ways for spreading the Gospel in Spain. It appears from the last report of the society that in the year 1888, grants in money to the amount of nearly 1130*l.* were made for mission work in the Peninsula, and about 220*l.* besides in grants of publications. No agency is helped with more goodwill and liberty than the Evangelisation Society, the origin of which we have told in the story of John Boyle's parcel of tracts.

[1] The Spanish historian, Llorente, who had been secretary to the Inquisition, and had access to its records, has given details of the proceedings for the suppression of heresy, with the number of those who suffered. About 32,000 were condemned to death, and most of them perished in the flames. Above 300,000 were sentenced to imprisonment, or sent to the galleys, or driven from the country. How many were Jews, and how many of the Reformed religion is not stated.

THE GLORIOUS RETURN.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE siege for weeks went on — uselessly. And then, as the days grew cold and dark, the French retired to seek winter quarters. They flung a jibing message to the Vaudois, bidding them have patience, and wait for them there until Easter.

But, meanwhile, how was the Rock of Balsille to be provisioned? The enemy had burned the corn-stacks and granges in the valley, and had carried off every eatable thing to be found. Starvation came very closely into the Vaudois' reckoning in those early winter days, and starvation might have done the work in which the French had failed and conquered the garrison there and then, had it not been for a discovery of Rénée Janavel's.

She had wandered into the valley, past the mill of Macel, and along the banks of the river, seeking something, if it were but a few frost-bitten cabbages wherewith to make soup for her mother-Madeleine. She was unsuccessful; the ground had been searched over and over again; not a leaf of salade, not an edible root was to be found. Icicles hung to the idle mill-wheel, and fringed the edges of the stream. Long whisps of grasses lay dead and drifted in the water; and the dark sky stooped so low and frowningly that the peak of the Balsille had pierced the clouds and was out of sight beyond the lowering vapours.

Rénée was cold and she was hungry, yet her eye was bright and her heart was lightsome; privation and suffering were not so hard to bear when safe in the love of those who loved her—the trials of the Balsille were small compared to the silence, and the waiting-time in that cave in the vale of Lucerna. She wrapped her tattered cloak more tightly round her, and shook the loosened hair from her eyes. She might even have been heard singing to herself as she crossed the wide snow-covered land that stretched by the banks of the river.

Suddenly she noticed a spot where some animal had been scratching in the snow. Could it be straw, grain—eatable, useful *food* that lay there under the white crust, frozen beneath the snow?

She flung herself on her knees, and began to search further and deeper. Presently a burning flush came on her cheeks, an eager light to her eyes.

There was rye beneath the snow. Rye, ripe and plentiful! weighed down, hidden and preserved by the thick white covering that had lain unmelted since the heavy storm of last September. Whole fields of rye! unreaped by the fugitive owners, unguessed at by the troops that had trodden across that white expanse, little dreaming of the treasure beneath their feet.

The girl ran back to the Balsille, and, panting, told her tale. Gaspard's face flushed with proud joy, as he heard her; he rejoiced that it was his Rénée that was bringing help to the Vaudois, that it should be the grandchild of Janavel who was the bearer of the best news that could come to the starving and half desperate people.

"It is our God's granary," said Henri Botta, solemnly. "Our Father, who Himself stored His corn for us thus."

And were not the words true? The God who feedeth the young lions when they cry had not forgotten His servants in the time of their need.

So the silent mill-stones of Marcel revolved once more, and the scent of the dry grain was as fragrance in the nostrils of the mountaineers. "We shall be ready for the foe at Easter," they said, and their light-hearted laughter rang out on the wind.

But their case was too grave, and their position too perilous for a few acres of rye to be their salvation. When Easter came they were still holding the Balsille, but as Arnaud called them together for the daily service of prayer, he noted how their ranks had shrunk, and he saw how sickness had reduced the strength of such as still called themselves fighting men.

The foe returned in early spring; a foe numbering now no less than twenty-two thousand! Arnaud and his feeble garrison could muster but about six hundred! surely an insignificant garrison to call forth such an armament for its reduction. Cannon were planted on the opposite hill; batteries were cast up on all sides. The Balsille must be taken now, were the Vaudois as obstinate as the "barbets" their enemies had scoffingly likened them to. A flag of truce was sent to them, and they were summoned for the last time to surrender.

Arnaud's answer is historical. "We are no subjects of the King of France," he said. "We cannot treat with his officers. We are in the heritage left us by our fathers from times unknown; by the aid and grace of the Lord of Hosts we will live and die therein. Discharge your artillery; our rocks will not be terrified, and we will listen to the thunder with calmness, should there be but ten of us left!"

The defiance was as lofty in tone as ever, but yet the heart of the man who sent that proud answer had been brought very low. His trust did not fail him, nor his submission to God's will, but he had begun to think that it must be this Will of God that he and his men should die there on the hills of their country, and that the race of the Vaudois should perish from the earth. "Even so, Father, since it is good in Thy sight."

On the 14th of May they saw the Balsille could no longer be defended. Flight only remained; and once more they must begin the weary wanderings amongst caves and holes in the rocks, chased as David was chased by Saul on the hills of Palestine.

Covered by a dense fog they crept through the French lines, a woeful wreck and remnant, flying to their hill hiding-places, afraid lest word or step should betray them to immediate slaughter.

Southwards they fled; down through Prali towards the mountains of Angrona.

"Mother," said Rénée, "this wild journeying will kill thee. We women can never keep up with the march of our troops. Is it not better to stay here where we stand? we can but die."

But Madeleine laid her hand against her lips. "Courage yet, dear child. It is nearly over now."

Nearly over—aye, but in another sense than that she meant.

On the 18th of May two men met the flying Vaudois. They were messengers from Victor Amadeus, and messengers to them.

MESSENGERS APPROACHING.

A strange message they bore. England, Germany, Holland and Spain had formed a coalition against Louis XIV., and had called upon the Duke of Savoy to decide at once whether he would join their alliance, or hold to his friendship with France. He had decided; and on the side of the strongest; therefore the French were now his enemies; and he sent to ask whether Arnaud and his mountaineers would enrol themselves on the side of Savoy, and help to drive Louis' men back across the frontier. If Arnaud consented the Valleys were to be placed there and then under his protection and control.

Could it be true?

"Protection," "control." Strange words in the ears of the handful of hunted outcasts who were flying for their lives. But to enforce the news and prove its truth the Piedmontese garrison of La Torre sent out food, and gifts of clothing which were indeed sorely needed; and other messengers came from the Duke, repeating the same tale and demanding instant reply. And presently—most conclusive proof of all—their minister Montoux, and others who had been carried prisoners to Turin, came hurrying to meet them in transports of joy.

Yes, it was true! God had remembered His promise, and had been faithful to His word. The trust of the Vaudois had not been in vain, the struggle was over. The victory was won!

Before many months were past the Vaudois were re-established in their homes; from the east and west they came, flocking homewards to their land won for them by Arnaud and his heroes. Or rather as they themselves would say, the land restored to them by the grace of their Father in Heaven.

The sharp endurance, the agony, the exile—all, all was past, and for the years to come they and their children's children might lift humble hearts in thankfulness that God had honoured them by letting them bear such witness for His truth.

The charter of their freedom was given at last. The Valleys were their own; their faith was secure.

* * * * * *

A white-walled cottage in Rora stood smothered in vines, and resonant with children's voices. Here Rénée, sweet-eyed as of old, albeit of matronly air and manner watches for Gaspard's coming from his work as her busy hands ply distaff or needle, and her foot keeps the rocker of the cradle moving in time to her song.

It is a song in which an aged voice joins now and again as Mother-Madeleine catches the well-known burden of the words—a song which the Vaudois have chanted since the hour of their "Glorious Return;" not the "song of strong confidence," but the song of their triumph.

"If it had not been the Lord was on our side
When men rose up against us,
Then they had swallowed us up quick and the
stream had gone over our soul:
Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us
As a prey to their teeth!
Our soul is escaped as a bird from the snare.
The snare is broken, and we are escaped!
Our help is in the Name of the Lord,
The Lord who made heaven and earth."