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Continued from week to week, the NEW STORY,
"THE FAMILY HONOUR."

BY MRS. C. L. BALFOUR.

CHRISTMAS.

VERY pleasant is the echo of that song which, almost nineteen centuries ago, floated o'er the fields of Galilee, and heralded His advent whose mission was to proclaim Peace and Good Will towards man. It was the world's best birthday, and the songs of angels fitly graced it. And who does not feel his heart grow warmer and every kindly feeling of his nature expand in the presence of our great festival. True, in this age the observance of Christmas is robbed of much of the romance which enveloped it in olden times. The huge yule log no longer blazes upon the hearth—the merry Mummings no longer flit upon the scene—and, at least with us, the midnight song of the "Waits" is never heard. Still we in our sober way rightly make merry, and are glad.

Ere we again have the pleasure of addressing our many thousand readers, another Christmas tide will have passed, and we now gladly avail ourselves of the privilege of wishing them for the first time, "A right Merry Christmas." We trust and believe that we shall enjoy many opportunities for like kindly greetings, and that each year will largely swell the number of our friends, and knit more closely the bonds which unite us.

CARLYLE.

IN our last number we expressed our intention of making some remarks on the moral tendency of the Life of Frederick. Before doing so, however, we must say a few more words as to its other properties. The labour expended by Mr. Carlyle in procuring materials for his work must have been immense, and his industry has been richly rewarded in that respect. No nook or corner has been left unsearched to serve his object, from the printing-shop to the royal cabinet; and he draws contributions alike from the buried lumber of "Dryasdust" or "Smelfungus," and the sparkling pen of Voltaire. We have doubts, nevertheless, if a considerable portion of these materials might not as well have been left undisturbed under the dust and cobwebs in which they had so long reposed. Indeed, Mr. Carlyle's diligent resurrection of some of the rubbish, forcibly reminds one of the equally useful employment of

"Dropping buckets into empty wells,
And working hard in drawing nothing up."

It appears to us that not a little of the information he has thus accumulated is not only of no value, but is an incumbrance to the work. It neither develops the course of events nor throws light on the characters of the chief actors on the scene. It is the mere rattling of dead bones, without purpose or effect. Another objection is,

that the Carlyle dialect is widely different from that in which the rest of mankind express their thoughts or relate their own acts, or those of others. No man in his senses ever speaks, or ever will speak, we hope, as the author of the Life of Frederick writes, when he is in the eccentric vein. Ancient Pistol, or Edmund in Lear may; but then Pistol was created to be laughed at, and Edmund affects insanity. This we consider the true test: Can the Carlyle dialect become a spoken language, the speech of men and women in this working-day world? In some future millenium of folly such a revolution may occur, but not before. In a healthy state of society, writings like those of Mr. Carlyle can do, at most, but temporary harm; for the sound mind rejects them after a short trial. But they are among the signs of the intellectual decline of a people. The decline and fall of Rome marched at equal pace with the decline and fall of Roman literature. The Anglo-Saxon race have not come to that pass yet; but our literature may undergo a partial eclipse in the end of the present century, as it did towards the close of the two that have preceded it, if we are not the more careful; and, above all, if we do not discountenance a vicious taste in such popular writers as Mr. Carlyle, who have possession of the public ear. A taste such as he would introduce in letters, marked the fall of Gothic architecture in Europe, the evidence of which can be seen in several buildings still extant in England and elsewhere. It exhibited itself in the form of what is called Grottesque Architecture. The Collegiate Church in the city of Manchester is a fine specimen of the order. Its design and form is in many points elegant and striking; but the interior is studded with sculpture of the most ludicrous character; and what is still more extraordinary, it is the work of Roman Catholics in Roman Catholic times. It is thus described: Rows of grotesque heads look down into the nave from the spandrils; some twist their features to the one side of the face, some to the other; some wink hard, as if exceedingly in joke; some troll out their tongue; some give expression to a most lugubrious mirth, others to a most ludicrous sorrow. In the choir—of course, a still holier part of the edifice than the nave—the sculptor seems to have let his imagination altogether run riot. In one compartment there sits, with a birch over his shoulder, an old fox, stern of aspect as Goldsmith's schoolmaster, engaged in teaching two cubs to read. In another, a respectable-looking boar, elevated on his hind legs, is playing on the bag-pipe, while his hopeful family, four young pigs, are dancing to the music behind their trough. In yet another, there is a hare, contemplating with evident satisfaction, a boiling pot, which contains a dog in a fair way of becoming tender. But in yet another, the priestly designer seems to have lost sight of prudence and decorum altogether; the chief figure in the piece is a monkey administering extreme unction to a dying man, while a party of other monkeys are plundering the poor sufferer of his effects, and gobbling up his provisions. Is not this our Carlisle in stone and mortar? In the one case we have religion, in the other history, turned into farce. All very clever, no doubt, but all out of place. To work is to pray, says the adage; and Mr. Carlyle's workers pray like men who had undergone a Circean transformation, monkeys being the prevailing tribe.

Yet with all the *embarras de richesse* with which these volumes overflow, one does not acquire much really valuable knowledge from them. The youthful student of history, especially, rises from the perusal of the Life of Frederick with a very confused notion of what

he has been reading. He has been dazzled with a panorama, crowded with figures of all shapes and sizes, until the whole becomes a chaotic mass which is more painful than pleasant to survey. Untenable, though ingenious paradoxes, and the distortion of facts, are not calculated to make us wiser or better men, and with these every page of this work is filled; for at best, it is only a Romance founded on fact. The two principal characters, Frederick William, and Frederick the Second, are no more the men of actual history than many of their opponents are the knaves and imbeciles they are described as being. All Mr. Carlyle's arguments lead to a foregone conclusion; no enemy of his heroes could by any possibility be endowed with a single virtue or talent. To admire Frederick is to insure the admiration of his historian; to depreciate him is equally certain to bring down the vials of the Carlylean wrath, contempt, and ridicule. If all histories were like his, Sir Robert Walpole's doctrine would be true to the letter, when he said that he knew them to be false; a sad censure from a man who had made so much history in his day. The following account of the battle fought on Abraham's Plains, on the 13th September, 1759, will convince the North American reader that Mr. Carlyle, to say the least of it, is sometimes loose in his statements of facts:

"Above Quebec, Night of September 12-13th, In profound silence, on the stream of the St. Lawrence far away, a notable adventure is going on. Wolfe, from two points well above Quebec ("As a last shift, we will try that way"), with about 5,000 men, is silently descending in rafts; with purpose to climb the Heights somewhere on this side the City, and be in upon it, if Fate will. An enterprise of almost sublime nature; very great, if it can succeed. The cliffs all beset to his left hand, Montcalm in person guarding Quebec with his main strength.

Wolfe silently descends; mind made up; thoughts hushed quiet into one great thought; in the ripple of the perpetual waters, under the grim cliffs and the eternal stars. Conversing with his people, he was heard to recite some passages of Gray's *Elegy*, lately come out to those parts; of which, says an ear-witness, he expressed his admiration to an enthusiastic degree: "Ah, these are tones of Eternal Melodies, are not they? A man might thank Heaven had he such a gift; almost as we might for succeeding here, Gentlemen!" Next morning (Thursday 13th September 1759), Wolfe, with his 5,000, is found to have scrambled up by some woody Neck in the heights, which was not quite precipitous; has trailed one cannon with him, the seamen busy bringing up another; and by 10 of the clock, stands ranked (really somewhat in the Friedrich way, though on a small scale); ready at all points for Montcalm, but refusing to be over-ready.

Montcalm, on first hearing of him, had made haste: "Où je les vois où ils ne doivent pas être, je vais les écraser (to smash them)!" said he, by way of keeping his people in heart. And marches up, beautifully skilful, neglecting none of his advantages. His numerous Canadian sharpshooters, preliminary Indians in the bushes, with a provoking fire: "Steady!" orders Wolfe; "from you, not one shot till they are within thirty yards!" And Montcalm, volleying and advancing, can get no response, more than from Druidic stones; till at thirty yards, the stones became vocal,—and continue so at a dreadful rate: and, in a space of seventeen minutes, have blown Montcalm's regulars, and the gallant Montcalm himself, and their second in command, and their third, into ruin and destruction. In about seven minutes more, the agony was done: "English falling on with the bayonet, Highlanders with the