

Pastor and People.

NOW.

If you have a kind word—say it;
Throbbing hearts soon sink to rest;
If you owe a kindness—pay it,
Life's sun hurries to the west.

Can you do a kind deed—do it,
From despair some soul to save;
Bless each day as you pass through it,
Marching onward to the grave

If some grand thing for to-morrow
You are dreaming—do it now;
From the future do not borrow,
Frost soon gathers on the brow.

Speak thy word, perform thy duty,
Night is coming—leap with rest;
Stars will gleam in fadeless beauty,
Grasses whisper o'er thy breast.

Days for deeds are few, my brother,
Then to-day fulfil thy vow;
If you mean to help another,
Do not dream it—do it now.

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THE CHILDREN'S PULPIT.

EDITED BY M. H. C.

THE YOUNG ROAD-MAKERS.

How the battle would have ended we cannot tell, perhaps in the death of Tship and his young master. But as the Donki were about to strike, their raised arms were suddenly stopped. The galloping of horses, a sharp word of command, the clank of weapons petrified them. "It is the soldiers, the soldiers, dear grandmother," cried Pretsha, and good old Dachaim opened her eyes towards the child's beaming face. It was the soldiers, their old friends of the march from Karakorum. In they came with their long swords and iron-shod maces, and in the twinkling of an eye the four Donki were disarmed and bound with thongs. Now Alik called Tship off the fallen Talingu, and he was served in the same way as his companions. "There are more of them outside," said the sergeant in charge of the soldiers; "we have got all the Donki robbers in the neighbourhood ready for the great Khan." The children did not know what this meant, but they rejoiced to think that at last they were safe from their enemies. Then the soldiers put up their tent near the house, and beside it they fastened the prisoners to posts driven into the ground. While one of them remained as sentry in charge of the captured Donki, the others joined Dachaim and her grandchildren in feasting upon the supper prepared for Talingu. What a time of pleasant talk the children had that night, and how the grandmother enjoyed it too, though her head was aching, and her body was sore from Talingu's brutality, and although Alik had to translate everything for her from Mongol into Khitt. After the soldiers went away to their tent the one who had been left a sentry came to get his supper. He brought with him a large bundle and a letter which the sergeant had given him for the children. Pretsha opened the bundle and Alik read the letter. It was from Colonel Peyen. "He is coming to see us," cried Alik; "coming early to-morrow morning, and he has sent clothes for us both, and for the grandmother, they are in that bundle, I suppose. Yes, and he says there are horses for us children, and a cart for the grandmother to ride in, and we are to go over our own road to meet him." Then if he had been an English-speaking boy he would have shouted hurrah, hurrah, hurrah! but he did it in Khitt all the same.

What were the clothes like? Pretsha's was a court lady's riding dress of dark cloth, embroidered with gold thread and ornamented with silver chains and brooches. This was to meet Colonel Peyen in; but there were others made of many-coloured silks, like that worn by the Greek merchant's wife. The grandmother's robes were of very fine cloth, but plain and dark, as was fit for an old lady, and besides them she had a hood and a long cloak, both lined with beautiful soft fur. But Alik's new clothes were the wonder of wonders. When he dressed himself in them and stood before his grandmother and sister, they could hardly believe that the handsome young officer of the Imperial guard, in his uniform of scarlet and gold with the captain's silver plate on his tall helmet and a sword jingling by his side, was their Alik. Yet so it was, and Pretsha said he looked almost as well as Colonel Peyen. "Your ponies and the waggon are outside," said the sentry; "we will have them ready for you in the morning." Saying this he left them and joined his comrades. Then, when they were alone, Dachaim and her grandchildren bowed down till their foreheads touched the floor and thanked the great God of Heaven who had saved them from their foes and sent them these welcome gifts through their kind friend. There was not much sleep that night, for long before it was day the little family was up fitting on their new clothes and preparing the house for the expected guest. Even Tship was up waiting to be dressed, for he had not been forgotten. A gorgeous red Morocco collar with silver studs and a plate bearing the names of Alik and Pretsha was soon fastened round his thick neck. It took him almost an hour to become used to it, but after that he would no more have parted with it than Alik with his sword. When Alik went out to get wood for the fire and Pretsha to milk the cow, they found the soldiers and prisoners

gone, and wondered very much what had become of them. But near the house they saw their ponies picketed, and with them two large horses for the waggon which stood on the road. After a short talk with the ponies they peeped into the waggon and saw how elegantly made it was and how beautifully painted and cushioned within. On the floor of it lay the harness and trappings of the horses. So it was true after all that they were going along their own road to meet Colonel Peyen.

When the sun had been up some hours the eleven troopers rode up without their prisoners. Some of them harnessed the horses to the waggon which was driven by a man in the great Khan's uniform, who had come behind one of the soldiers. The sergeant handed Dachaim into the coach while two other Mongols brought the ponies and set Alik and Pretsha on them. All the people of Koleda had come to see them off, and could hardly believe they were not dreaming when they beheld Dachaim sitting in her carriage like a great lady, and Alik and Pretsha like a prince and princess riding on before her, while the soldiers formed a guard round about them. Thus they rode along the village road, by the river bank through the cutting in the hill and over the filled-up ravine when who should appear on the other side than Colonel Peyen himself with a standard-bearer riding in front of him, to show that he was no longer a colonel but a general, the commander of ten thousand men. And before they reached him the children saw that the second hill they had begun to work upon was cut through so that far away along a road broad and straight and smooth as those of Karakorum or Khanbalig, they could see a great army marching towards them. General Peyen had only time to say a few kind words to his young friends and their grandmother and hear their brief thanks when the soldiers before them opened their ranks, making a lane between them to pass through. "Ride on," said the General; "there is someone else who wants to see you." Wondering very much, Alik and Pretsha rode forward through the grim soldiers, who looked pleased to see them and do them honour. Then they heard bands of music playing and saw many banners waving in the air. "It is the lord of all the earth," said Alik in a whisper to Pretsha; but she let go the reins, clapped her hands and cried aloud. "I know it is, I was sure that he would come." Not on his elephant, as was his wont, but in a state carriage drawn by many white horses, sat the great Khan. Down from their ponies, which were held by the soldiers, came the children and out of her carriage came Dachaim and bowed to the ground before the lord of all the earth. "Rise, Alik and Pretsha of Koleda," he said in the Mongol language; and then he added in the Yenisei tongue, "Rise, good mother," which filled Dachaim's heart with joy. "Thank you, my children, for this beautiful road. I have come with my host to be a judge in your land and punish the robbers of my people." So Alik and Pretsha rode back to Koleda, one on either side of the lord of all the earth, while the grandmother's carriage followed the great conqueror's state chariot. Some distance behind them, with their hands tied behind their backs, trudged Talingu and twenty of his people. The wicked Donki chief now found that the joke he had laughed at so heartily was no joke at all.

Thus the great procession entered Koleda. When Alik and Pretsha looked at their skin-clad villagers and their miserable huts they wondered how they had dared ask the lord of all the earth to come to such people and such a place. But to their surprise he came down from his chariot, spoke to some of the villagers in their own tongue, and went with them and the grandmother into the house. For a full hour he remained talking with them there and making friends with Tship, whom General Peyen brought in with him. "Will you give me your dog?" the Khan asked Pretsha, and although it would have broken her heart to give the faithful Tship to anyone else, she answered gladly: "I am so happy, great lord, to think we have anything to give you. Take our Tship, take all we have take us altogether if we are worth taking. You are better than your word, for it is you who have made the road and not we." Then Kublai answered: "I will take Tship because he is faithful, and to give him to me is the greatest mark of your love; and I will take you and Alik to make you great, and your grandmother that she may be at ease and in comfort in her old age. But it is you who have made the road, for your heart was to make it all, and all that you could do you have faithfully done." So Alik and Pretsha took Tship and bade him crouch with his nose between his outstretched forelegs at the feet of the great Khan. Then, while the emperor laid his hand upon the dog's glossy head, bending over him to do so, Alik said: "Tship, the lord of all the earth has come to save and bless us. He is your master now and you must serve him faithfully." Tship understood it all, and, rising with the dignity and gravity that became a right royal dog, he licked his new master's hand and stood on guard by his side.

"Come, my children," said Kublai at last, "it is time to go to the court and the judgment seat." Alik and Pretsha wondered where these could be, but their wonder was changed to admiration when they saw beside the road on what had been a large, useless field a great wooden palace erected within the short hour, and stretching far away into the distance long rows of pavilions, or large tents, which made Koleda's scattered village look like a great city. Once more the lord of all the earth sat upon his throne in his royal hall as they had seen him at Khanbalig. Before him on one side stood the trembling Talingu and his companions, and on the other the people of Koleda. He listened while the persecuted Khitt told all the wrong that the Donki had done, of the things they

had stolen, the property they had destroyed, the people they had murdered. Talingu said it was not true, so Dachaim and the children and the eleven soldiers had to tell what they had seen. The Khan was very angry. "Robbers, murderers, liars," he said, "you have done nothing but wickedness, because you love to do harm and wrong, and because you thought there was no judge in the earth. As for you men and women of Koleda, for your sakes I would never have come here for you never asked me to come, nor when I promised would you help these children to build the road. Therefore, when they return you shall be their servants. This land is my land and, whosoever wants justice or lawful help let him ask it from me or from my officers. Nor let the wrong-doer think to escape from me. Neither mountain nor river, valley nor stony waste shall hinder the march of my ever-victorious army." Then the Donki chief and his followers were taken away by the guards and were never seen again. Whether they were put to death or sent away to a far-off country Alik and Pretsha never heard. When they had been removed, all the soldiers and the people of Koleda bowed themselves, and cried: "The lord of all the earth is just and good." So the court of justice broke up for the day.

The next day was spent by Kublai in examining the mounds and the inscriptions on the cliffs. He ordered his stone-cutters to engrave in the Mongol language beside the old Khitan writing an account of his visit, and the laws he desired his people to keep. He gave directions to General Peyen to send soldiers to all parts of the northern country wherever people lived of any tribe to check the wrong-doers, to help the weak and bring all under his authority. For this purpose he left a large body of troops under the General's command, and then, with the rest of his army, went back to Karakorum. The grandmother remained at Koleda under the care of General Peyen, but Alik and Pretsha went in the train of the great Khan, and Tship ran beside his chariot full of doggish importance. From Karakorum they went to Khanbalig, where Pretsha lived in the palace she and Alik had entered as supplicants, under the care of the Khan's good wife, while Alik entered the army and studied to be a brave and skilful soldier. When seven years had passed away Kublai needed his great General, Peyen, nearer home, for though young there was none of his officers whom he trusted so much. So he ordered Alik, now twenty years old, to go and take his place, and he allowed Pretsha to go with her brother for a visit to her grandmother. So the handsome young officer and beautiful young court-lady travelled in state over the well-known road to Karakorum, and then over the road which the lord of all the earth and they had made to Koleda. If they were astonished to see the castle-palace there, and Dachaim's great house and fine grounds together with the improved dwellings of the villagers and the barracks of the soldiers, all the people in Koleda were as much astonished to see their little Alik and Pretsha changed into such great persons. Alik took General Peyen's place in the castle, with grandmother Dachaim near at hand, but Pretsha, strange to say, went back after a few days to Khanbalig, and she and the General were never separated after. You may be sure that the Donki did not come any more to Koleda.

Now what is this long story about. I have not time to tell you all. Part you must find out for yourselves. But the miserable little Koleda is just the world in which we live, not the whole earth but the part of it that is round about each of us and in us, too. There is a great deal of wrong in our little world, and even the young children among you have suffered from it. Our oppressors are the evil desires of our own hearts, the bad examples set by other people, the temptations of the wicked one, and what is good in us and in our friends is so feeble that, like the Koleda villagers, it cannot help us. But when we learn that these oppressors are robbing us of what makes life happy because it is good we will, like the children, wish to have the robbery stopped and the robbers punished. So we journey far away from the world to the Lord of earth and heaven in faith and by prayer. He answers us in His Holy Word, saying: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." But you say, "How can I prepare a way for God into my heart or make a straight path for Him to come to me through the crooked, rough desert of my little world?" Well, answer me this. Peter and John told a lame beggar who had never walked to stand up. Why did he not say, "How can I stand up?" You know the answer to this question. It was because God gave him strength to stand as soon as he tried. So it is when you agree to make the road into your hearts and begin to work at it. You find a great mountain to cut through. It is pride, that which makes you think you can do something worthy of eternal life. Then there is a valley to fill up, the valley of unbelief, into which you must throw all that you know of God's power and love, topped with His precious promises. Next there is the crooked place to be made straight, and we make it straight by trying to be truthful and honest with our own hearts, with one another and, above all, with God, for crookedness is deceit. And last, there is the rough place to make smooth. The rough place is one full of stones and fallen timber and ruts in the road, and all these are stumbling blocks to fall over. Anything we can remove that tempts us to sin, anything we love better than God or the commands of our parents, who are God's lieutenants over us, is a stumbling block. Take it out of the way and make the path smooth. What will happen then? Why, as soon as we begin, God will come with His great power, for He says: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The first part of the text is a command, but this part I have just read is God's promise to those who obey the command. Work, therefore, at the road for the King of Glory, remembering that it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

(To be continued.)