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Poetry.

CHANGE AND THE CHANGELESS.

That eye which sparkles with a flash of mirth
Is quenched ere long in swelling streams of sorrow
Tears flood the source where laughter had its birth;
To-day we smile—we melt in woe to-morrow.

The traits and lineaments we hold so dear,
Harden and stiffen in a marble clamber;
We look our last upon the funeral gear,
And add one sleeper to a countless number.

But love is changeless in the changeless soul,
Though born of earth, and rear'd in humes that perish,
Buoy'd on the wings of ages as they roll,
It clings to memories it was wont to cherish.

Amidst the glories of yon radiant skies,
Transplanted thither from its mortal dwelling,
It dreams of those for whom in fleshly guise
With tenderest thoughts its faithful breast was swelling.

Oh! fondly nurture in thy heart of hearts
The precious germ whose produce blossoms ever;
And when thy spirit from the body parts,
Life's sacred ties e'en death will fail to sever!

THE POOR BOY'S PRAYER TO ST. NICHOLAS.

"I saw in my dream," and a poor boy prayed,
And these were the words of the prayer which he said:
"St. Nicholas! once I used to be glad
When Christmas came round, but now I am sad!
For, since we've been poor, you never come near us,
We are so far down town I suppose you can't hear us,
You are busy up town with all your gay things,
Books, dolls, candy, cakes, fruit, penknives and rings.
I don't ask for these, but for something to eat,
Some clothing and ding, and shoes for my feet.
Oh! was it the way which the saints did of yore,
To give to the rich, and not visit the poor?
Come, come to us now, and praye you're no stranger
To him who, to bless us, was born in a manger.
But, if you should come, mind! a bare-legged boy
No stockings can hang for your sweet gift of joy!
So bring me, good saint, if you know how to spin them,
A pair of warm socks, and some bits of bread in them.
So ended his prayer—and strange it did seem—
Just then I awoke, and behold 'twas a dream."
JOHN BUNYAN.

Lt. Stephen's House, Dec. 21.

Literature.

THE POOR OLD MAN.

"Should I reveal the sources of my grief,
If soft humanity e'er touched your breast,
Your hands would not withhold the kind relief
And tears of pity would not be repress."

Some years ago, fate turned my wandering steps to the North of Scotland, and on the morning of a fine cheery day about the close of spring I reached a little town, in one or other of the humble dwellings of which, I was for a short time to fix my abode. This little place, pleasantly situated on the north bank of one of Scotland's picturesque rivers, seemed to the eye of a stranger famous for nothing but the irregularity of its appearance. Its narrow, dirty streets, intersecting each other, at every possible angle, and skirted by narrow unpaved footpaths, appeared in a truly primitive state; while the houses presented a motley group of rude architecture. They were for the most part, one storey high, with small windows, and glaring, red tile roofs; but, now and again one met the eye, rearing its head a couple of storeys above its unpretending neighbours, as if shot up by volcanic

agency. The antiquated parish church, with its conical roofed steeple looked down from the summit of a gentle acclivity on the little town. To the eastward, stretched a thick plantation, for several miles by the river side, with here and there a few patches of furze. Not far distant to the west stood the remains of a fine old baronial mansion, snugly embowered among trees; while close to its ancient doorway, stood a fine specimen of holly, with a stunted yewtree on each side faintly embracing in their sombre shade its rugged roofless walls. The ow's now claim its shattered chimney top as their inalienable right; and

*'Mong the lumber, daws a shelter find,
Whose croaking din, is all that greets your ear
As silently you gaze, in thoughtful mood,
On arches, buttresses, and massive walls,
Graved by Time's tooth, and crumbling into dust.*

The streets of the little town had an air of stillness and quiet. No bustle, no business, seemed to be transacted. Now and then as you passed along you would hear the clicking of a shuttle, and at every other window would be seen a group of young females, busily poring over their webs of Ayrshire needle-work; while once and again some more aged maiden, with broad hemmed coif, would be stretching her nervous arms over a tambouring tent. But all around was as calm as the unrippled river which was slowly wending onwards to the sea.

While puffing a cigar at an open window of the inn, at which I had taken up a temporary abode, an emaciated and miserable looking old man came forward, and in a mournful tone, asked half a glass of whiskey. I looked in silence at the ghastly spectre, that stood before me, when a gentleman, who, along with some friends, was seated at a table in the centre of the room, handed to me a rummer, into which he had poured a glass and a half of spirits, and a little water, and requested me to give it to the old man,—saying at the same time—"Poor man he has seen better days; his craving for whiskey is now great, but to it alone he now looks for comfort in his wretched and forlorn condition."

The old man eagerly grasped the glass in his shrivelled hands; and, wary of the precious load, he bent his head, to meet halfway the trembling cup, and drained it at a draught.

Prompted by an ever active curiosity, I expressed a desire to know, by what untoward means, this old man had been reduced to so great a depth of misery; for, wretched as was his appearance, his countenance was altogether divested of that indescribable leer which sparkles in the eye of one who has spent his life in villany and vice.

After some general remarks,—as to my being a stranger in that part of the country, &c.—the person who had previously spoken, said there was a gentleman to whom he could introduce me, who would most willingly gratify me in that respect.—"Captain McPherson," he continued, "had in early life been parish schoolmaster; but, becoming tired of the

birch, he went to sea, and having been successful, now lived at home comfortably enjoying the fruits of his earlier industry. His memory was well stored with facts, and scraps of traditional incident, connected with almost every family, in the village, and nothing seemed so conducive to his happiness, as an opportunity, to narrate to a stranger, the little 'ups and downs,' so interwoven with his youthful associations."

I was shortly after left alone, to muse on the caprice of fortune which had thus involuntarily bent my steps to a retired and deserted looking little town, and separated from friends, from society, and all the excitement which a city life produces, I felt the force of Leyden's lines:—

*From love, from friendship, country torn,
To meet thy son I regret the prey*

I resolved however to dispel as far as possible all regrets, and fill up my spare moments, by making myself acquainted with whatever was of interest connected with the locality in which another page of my history was to be unfolded.

Considerably refreshed after a long rough drive, by profound slumber, and a comfortable breakfast, I set out with Mr. Drysdale—my new acquaintance, to visit the Captain. It may be as well to state here in the outset, that Captain McPherson, was at this time a tall, spare, hale and cheerful looking man, about 63 years of age. He was easy of access, and after five minutes conversation I found myself as much at home, as if we had been on a six cruise month's together. His long white hair which had in his younger years been fastened in a queue now floated round his shoulders. His eye was clear and full, and he had withal a sweet complacency, which was a presage of that gentlemanly bearing, and ingenuousness which characterised him. During the few months I remained in that quarter, we spent many pleasant hours together. He was very fond of music and valued highly an "old cremona" he had purchased, in one of his voyages. With the sweet tones of this fine old violin, many evening hours were beguiled, and while we wandered during the day by the river's brink, or sought the solitude which the adjoining woods afforded, or reclined on the verdant slope in front of the old castle, under the shade of the solemn yewtrees, he would narrate with the greatest pathos, some prominent incident, connected with his townfolks, whose movements he seemed to have closely watched.

On one occasion we rested on a settle, on the bank of the river, and while the stream flowed gently on in its course, with now and again a sloop or a schooner, borne on its rippled surface, he related the story of the "Poor Old Man," the following sketch of which is as near as may be, the words of my ever venerated friend.

It is no fiction of the brain, but, bears in its sad and solitary plaint a stern reality. The names it is true, are changed, all else remains, as nature gave it character.