

"Why," rejoined I, "are they like dry trees?" "Because," was his answer, "there is no distinction between just and unjust in this world, but they are alike. For this world is like Winter to the just, because, living with sinners, they are not distinguished. As all trees in Winter, when their leaves are fallen, are like dry ones, and we cannot tell which are dry, or which green, so in this world there is no distinction between just and unjust, but all are alike.—*Churchman's Companion*.

THE SMITH OF RAGENBACH.—In the vicinity of Hohenlohe, Taugenburg, about twenty years ago, the following heart-rending but also heroic event took place. One afternoon in the early spring or autumn, my kind informant did not exactly know which, in the tavern-room of Ragenbach, several men and women having assembled from the village, sat at their ease, none anticipating what would happen on that eventful day. The smith formed one of the merry company,—a strong, vigorous man, with a resolute countenance and daring mien, but also with such a good-natured smile upon his lips that every one who saw him admired him. Every evil disposed person shunned him, for the valiant smith would allow nothing wrong in his presence, and it was not advisable to have anything to do with him except in a proper manner. His arms were like bars of iron, and his fists like forge hammers, so that few could equal his strength of body.

The brave smith sat near the door, chatting with one of his neighbors, on I know not what. All at once the door sprang open, and a large dog came staggering into the room, a great, strong, powerful beast, with a ferocious, frightful aspect: his head was hanging down and his eyes bloodshot, his red coloured tongue hanging down, and his tail dropped between his legs. Thus the ferocious brute entered the room, out of which there was no escape except by one door. Scarcely had the smith's neighbour, who was bath-keeper of the place, seen the animal, when he became deathly pale, sprang up and exclaimed, "Good Heaven, the dog is mad!"

Then rose an outcry! The room was full of men and women, and the foaming beast stood before the only entrance; no one could leave without passing him. He snapped savagely right and left, and no one could leave without being bitten. This increased the horrible confusion. All sprang up and shrank from the furious dog with agonizing countenances. Who should deliver them from him? The smith also stood among them, and as he saw the anguish of the people, it flashed across his mind how many of his happy and contented neighbors would be made miserable by a mad dog, and he formed a resolution, the like of which is scarcely to be found in the history of the human race for high-mindedness and nobleness. Certainly his brown cheek paled a little, but his eyes sparkled with divine fire, and an elevated resolution shone from the smooth brow of the simple minded man.

"Back all!" thundered he, with his deep, strong voice. "Let no one stir, for no one can vanquish the brute but I. One victim must fall in order to save all, and I will be that victim, I will hold the brute; and whilst I do so, make your escape." The smith had scarcely spoken these words, when the dog started towards the shrieking people. But he went not far. "With God's help!" cried the smith, and he rushed upon the venomous and infuriated beast, seized him with an iron grasp, and dashed him to the floor.

Oh, then, what a terrible struggle followed! The dog bit furiously on every side in the most frightful manner. His long teeth tore the arms and thighs of the heroic smith, but he would not let him loose. Regardless alike of the excessive pain and horrible death which must ensue, he held down with a vice-like grasp the snapping, biting, howling brute, until all had escaped!—till all, all were rescued and in safety. He then flung the half-strangled beast from him against the wall, and dripping with blood and venomous foam he left the room, locking the door after him. Some persons shot the dog through the windows. But, O merciful Heaven, what will become of the brave, unfortunate smith?

Weeping and lamenting, the people surrounded him who had saved their lives at the expense of his own. "Be quiet, my friends, do not weep for me, for I have only performed my duty. When I am dead, think of me with love and affection; and now pray for me that God will not let me suffer long nor too much. I will take care that no further mischief shall occur through me, for I must certainly become mad." He went straight to his workshop, and selected a long chain, the heaviest and strongest in his whole stock. He

then, with his own hands, welded it upon his own limbs and around the anvil so firmly that no power on earth could break it. "There," said he, after silently completing the work, "it's done. Now you are secure, I am inoffensive; so long as I live, bring me food.—The rest I leave to God: into his hands I commit my spirit." Nothing could save the brave smith, neither tears, lamentations, nor prayers. Madness seized him, and after nine days he died,—but truly, he died only to awaken to a more beautiful and glorious life at the right hand of God. He died, but his memory will live from generation to generation, and will be venerated to the end of time.

Search history through, and you will find no action more glorious and sublime than the deeds of this simple-minded man, the smith of Ragenbach. It is easy for noble minds to die like Winkelried, or Marius Curtius, the high-spirited Roman youth; but to go to the sacrifice with the certainty of death—and, moreover, being obliged to await a death so awful, during long, fearful hours and days—that is to die not once, but a thousand times. And such a death was that of the smith of Ragenbach. Such a sacrifice the smith of Ragenbach made in order to save his neighbors. May his memory ever be sacred.

DEATH OF THE HIGH-PRIEST OF JAPAN.—The Daii, or High-priest of Japan, inhabits a splendid palace in the city of Miako, on the island of Nipon. His court is composed of twenty thousand priests, who are entrusted with the charge of the four thousand temples of this immense city. His costume is a long tunic, over which he wears a large red dress; a white transparent veil, ornamented with golden fringe, is worn upon his head, falling about half way down his body. His countenance remains always invisible.

On the 1st of July, 1856, the Daii was taken ill. Immediately the chief priest, with his ghostly colleagues, two hundred priests of the first rank, who are endowed with the religious power of the empire, were summoned to the palace. By the next day, the invalid's situation became more critical, and on the third his death was pronounced to be inevitable and close at hand. The priests repaired at once to the temple, and informed the populace that the Daii had entered into a compact with the seven gods of heaven, and was upon the eve of rejuvenating his mind in the embrace of Ten-ryo-dai-sin, the principal of these deities, who the Japanese believe to have created the world. She has been at the head of affairs for about twenty thousand years, and from her sprang all the royal families of Japan. To her the inhabitants of the entire empire address their invocations as the protectress of the land.

At the conclusion of the first prayers, the priests declared the inhabitants could immediately enter the palace, and regale their eyes with a sight of their highly venerated high-priest. At once the crowd went to the palace, where they beheld the Daii lying stretched upon a bed of state. He was dressed in a white tunic, and his features covered with a very thin mask, were dimly perceptible through a veil spread over them. The priests prayed loudly, and wafted the sweet perfumes from their censers over the dying man. At 9 o'clock in the morning of the 5th of July, he breathed his last. As the last breath passed through his lips, the chief priest, raising his arms as a token of the departing spirit, assured the bystanders that the soul of the high priest had ascended to the abode of the gods, but that it would shortly return and resume its earthly habitation. Upon this announcement a solemn silence pervaded the audience. After the lapse of ten minutes, the chief priests, surrounded by a crowd of his religious companions, threw over the still warm corpse of the Daii, a large white cloth, which he instantly withdrew, and in the place just before occupied by the body, there appeared another, similarly attired, but alive and strong, who, raising himself from his recumbent position, went to an altar standing near the bedside, and bestowed upon the people his blessing. The crowd instantly broke out into exclamations of gladness and rejoicing.

By a well concerted stratagem, the priests had abstracted the body of the Daii, supplying the place with his son, who inherits his father's station. The state bed being hung around in drapery, rendered it all the easier to perform the trick without arousing the suspicions of the credulous inhabitants. The corpse of the Daii was carried in the night-time to the Ycie temple by the priests, where it was laid upon a pyre and burned to ashes. This being done the temple is closed, and all persons are forbidden to enter it. A violation of this law is punished by burning to death.

The Ycie temple, the handsomest one in the city, contains several rows of earthen statues of the deity Ten-ryo-dai-sin. These statues are about one yard high, are hollow, and have each a large opening at the back of the head. The ashes of each Daii are preserved in one of these statues, the same as in an urn. The inhabitants are not permitted to enter the portion of the temple where these figures stand. On the day after the death occurred, ceremonies of a very different character take place—the inauguration of the new high priest, who, as the people suppose, has had his soul renewed in the residence of the great gods.

On the 7th of July, the new Daii, surrounded by chosen priests, issued from his palace, and paraded

the different portions of the city of Miako. The people threw themselves to the earth, and addressed prayers to him as to a god. Upon this day all work was forbidden, all prisoners were set at liberty, and all criminal processes annulled.

On the next day, the procession proceeded to Nara, a short distance from Miako, which is considered as one of the most holy places of the empire. It contains a great number of temples of colossal dimensions. It is surrounded by a square portico, supported on each side by a hundred columns, each one yard in diameter. The statue of the god to whom this temple is dedicated, stands in the centre. Its breadth across the shoulders is forty-eight yards. On the 10th of July, the Daii, returning from Nara, held a grand celebration in his own capital. As soon as he had returned, the priests commanded public prayer to be held in all the temples in honor of the auspicious occasion.

These facts were related by an eye-witness, a Hollander, whose business in Japan gave him an opportunity of visiting the residence of the Daii.—He also states that if the slightest incredulity is manifested by any of the bystanders, they are instantly felled to the earth and mercilessly slaughtered.—*N. Y. Tribune*.

THE GREAT COMING COMET.—We have seen, in local papers, some absurdities respecting the approaching comet, which, unless promptly met by a true view of the case, may produce bad effects in many minds. It is confidently asserted by some (who ought to think more seriously than they do upon the evil consequences that may result from such silly boasting) that German and French astronomers have calculated that the comet must strike the earth on the 18th of June next, and that the result must be that the world will collapse, and the darkness of desolation throw a pall over its shattered wreck. In opposition to such ignorant alarmists the following letter has been communicated by the German astronomer, Von Littrow, to the *Vienne Gazette*:

"About the middle of the last century observers first perceived the resemblance between the orbit of the comet of 1264 and that of 1536, and began to conjecture that they were one and the same body, which accordingly might be expected to appear every 300 years. Calculations subsequently made confirmed this view. (Herr Von Littrow then details the conflicting calculations of astronomers, from which he concludes)—Only this is certain, that it is possible, although it is anything but certain, that we may see the comet between the present year of 1857 and that of 1860. The greatest astronomical authority of this century, Gauss, of Gottingen, has always been of this opinion. Hitherto, therefore, so far as the matter has publicly transpired, the whole subject would be reduced to a little useful talk and expectations prematurely excited. But recently a certain individual, having nothing better to do, thought proper to invest it with renewed interest by giving out, absurdly enough, that the comet would re-appear on a certain day, the 13th of June, this year; and, at the same time, he connected the event with some piquant predictions about the destruction of the world and the like. The false prophet has found credulous listeners, and what is yet worse, called forth unbidden comforters. Now, upon this last mentioned question let me remark in a few words that it is irretrievably certain that the matters of which comets consist form an extremely loose texture, and that comets are in reality not coherent masses, but mere agglomerations of small corpuscles, separated from one another by large interstices. Highly improbable as it is, because it could only take place by a concurrence of circumstances hardly conceivable, that a collision of the earth and the nucleus of a comet should ensue, such an event, far from entailing destruction on this world, could only be compared at the most with the fall of a meteor, and in its effects would barely equal those produced by ear thunder storms and hurricanes. A mere passing of the earth through the luminous appendages of one of these bodies, which it is true might more easily happen, would be unattended by any injurious consequences, since the matter of which comets consist is not coherent substance, nor is it even an atmosphere such as we could not inhale. With regard to the comet of 1536, its orbit is so situated that it cannot approach the earth within some five millions of miles, and therefore in its nearest possible advance would still be about nineteen times more remote than the moon."

THE SUNFLOWER AGAINST MIASMA.—A long communication from Lieut. Alury is published in the *National Intelligencer*, giving the details of an experiment which he made last season in planting sunflowers between the Observatory grounds in Washington and the Potomac as a bulwark against the miasma, from which the dwellers at the observatory