

A GREEK FESTIVAL.

For a month before Christmas every pious Greek has observed a rigid fast; consequently the "table" which on that day is spread in every house produces something akin to festivity. My friends of the evening begged me to sit down and partake of the meal that they had prepared. It was somewhat of a struggle to me, I must own, for I expected it would not be served in very magnificent style. Still I was hardly prepared for what actually happened. On a small round table was a perfect mountain of macaroni and cheese—not such cheese as we are accustomed to put with ours, but coarse sheep's milk cheese, which stung my mouth like mustard, and left a pungent taste therein for days. Then there were no plates, no spoons. The master of the house had a knife with which he attacked the dish, and the one which on ordinary occasions fell to the mistress was now kindly placed at my disposal. As for the rest of the family they were an example of the adage that fingers were made before forks, and these fingers grew obviously cleaner as the meal progressed. What a meal it was indeed, as if it were a contest in gastronomic activity! Yet it was pleasant to see the appetite with which great and small entered into the contest and filled their mouths to overflowing with the savoury mess. I was left far behind in the contest, and I had, I fear, to tell many untruths concerning my appetite and the excellence of the dish, and great was my relief when it was removed, and dried fruits and nuts took its place. To drink we had resinated wine—that is to say, wine which had been stored in a keg covered with resin inside, which gives the flavour so much relished by the Greeks, but which is almost as unpalatable to an Englishman as beer must be to those who drink it for the first time. The wine, however, had the effect of loosening the tongues of my friends, who had been too busy as yet to talk, and they told me many interesting Christmas tales.—*The Gentleman's Magazine*.

EFFECT OF IMPRISONMENT ON THE MIND.

To the ordinary mind, full of busy schemes and plans for future good, in the many active and fruitful years which people are so sure remain to them, the condition of one condemned to die at the hands of the law is inconceivable. To the sick, oftentimes the restraint which comes from their own weakness, the irksomeness of inactivity, is harder to bear than all the agonies of pain and disease. This is but the beginning with the prisoner. Withdrawn from all the interests of the world, having no longer any part in humanity, destined at a fixed hour to have the poor remnants of his pale and shadowy life choked out of him at the hands of the race of which he was once a part, he must count the days and hours that remain to him till that agonizing moment when he shall, before the un pitying eyes of the community he has wronged, writhe out that wretched existence, to which he yet as an animal clings. All crime probably has an element of insanity in it. There is something abnormal and unbalanced, there is no sense of proportion, no idea of values. All things are seen through a refracting medium which strangely distorts and falsifies them. But under the strain of prison life the sanest mind cannot long retain its tone. *H. E. Warner, in the American Magazine for November*.

JOANNA SOUTHCOTE'S CRIB.

Among a large number of original papers relating to this probably self-deluded woman some of the oddest are those which describe the gifts made to her by her followers in anticipation of the promised birth. The value of these amounted, according to the calculations of some, to several thousand pounds; but of all, the most conspicuous must have been the superb crib, of which an illustration was published at the time. It was actually exhibited for some days at the warehouse of an eminent upholsterer in Aldersgate Street, and inspected by "hundreds of genteel persons of both sexes." On the rim of the canopy was inscribed the words, "A Free-Will Offering by Faith to the Promised Seed." Whether Joanna was a hysterical enthusiast or an artful impostor, she must have made a pretty good thing of her malady from first to last. In a broadside published in 1814, dedicated "to les Gobbes mouches Anglaises," we are informed that it is computed that the number of persons who received seals up to 1808 amounted to upward of 6,400. Each of these considered that seal as a passport to heaven. The sealing was stopped, for some unknown reason, in 1808. The price of the seal was originally a guinea, and was subsequently reduced to 12s.—*Notes and Queries*.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF DANTE.

To attempt to refine upon Dante is to make him ridiculous. Coarse and grotesque in expression he doubtless is at times; but the indelicacy is not of that Swinburnian type which revels in rotteness, and for which he would have found an appropriate nook in one of his *Belgias*. It is rather inherent in his subject. The dominant sentiment of the *Inferno* is that sin brutalizes. Through successive circles he leads us downward to lower developments of bestiality. His heroes have no affinity with the Miltonian Satan or with the Mephistopheles of Goethe. The polished, sarcastic, keen-witted, sneering, denying devil, and the "archangel ruined," retaining traces, of his "original brightness," are alike absent from Dante's Hell. His Lucifer, at the apex of the infernal cone, is the supreme incarnation of demigiac animality. Accordingly, he pictures his devils with all the accompaniments of brutal depravity in word and act and mien. Dante is a plain speaker on whatever subject he is dealing with. He refuses to circumvent or to gild with circumlocution or euphemism. For a translator to attempt to mitigate the plain directness of such passages is to make them doubly offensive.—*Marvin A. Vincent, in New Princeton Review for November*.

LETTERS.

Such a little thing—a letter,
Yet so much it may contain;
Written thoughts and mute expressions,
Full of pleasure, fraught with pain.

When our hearts are sad at parting,
Comes a gleam of comfort bright
In the mutual promise given:
"We will not forget to write."

Plans and doings of the absent,
Scraps of news we like to hear,
All remind us, e'en though distant,
Kind remembrance keeps us near.

Yet sometimes a single letter
Turns the sunshine into shade;
Chills our efforts, clouds our prospects,
Blights our hopes and makes them fade.

Messengers of joy or sorrow,
Life or death, success, despair,
Bearer of affection's wishes,
Greeting kind or loving prayer.

Prayer or greeting, well or present,
Would be felt but half unsaid;
We can write, because our letters—
Not our faces—will be read.

Who has not some treasured letters,
Fragments choice of others' lives;
Relics, some, of friends departed,
Friends whose memory still survives?

Touched by neither time nor distance,
Will their words unspoken last;
Voiceless whispers of the present,
Silent echoes of the past.

—Chambers' Journal.

A COLOUR STUDY.

Though the bloom-laden boughs of springtime and the roses of summer are gone, there is yet a richer, rarer beauty in garden and forest and field, which lovers of Nature will delight to heed. Yet, viewing with the eye of the horticulturist all the panorama of loveliness which autumn has spread for our enjoyment, we are led to conclude that we have much to learn in the way of planting for autumn decoration, for, with all our care, our lawns are but dull for weeks, at a season when they should be at their richest and best.

Give Nature full rein, and what shall you see?

"Golden gleams by every brook,
Crimson lights in every nook,"

and beauty running riot everywhere.

Every knoll has its watch-fire of glowing colour. Every cliff its veil, embroidered in leaf and vine, which no human skill can imitate; every stump its bit of carmine; every rough tree trunk its climber of crimson and green. It is hard to understand why so much of beauty, such fairy touches of decoration, are hidden away from prying eyes. Is Nature shy of man, that she sets her choicest gems of colour and artistic arrangement in the midst of the swamp or the bottom of the forest? Then let us woo her, until she shall light her autumn fires close by our own door-stones, until, even while we are watching, she shall dash upon the palette of our own lawns all those artistic combinations of tints which she loves to lavish on an autumn forest.—*Vick's Magazine for November*.

THE KANGAROO.

On level ground high-bred horses and dogs in full training can be tolerably sure of running down a kangaroo, but if the animal can make its way to broken and rocky ground, especially where the trunks of fallen trees beset the track, it can mostly make good its escape. When brought to bay it is as formidable an antagonist as the stag itself. It has no horns, but it has hind feet, and at the tip of the fourth toe there is a claw of great length, shaped like a bayonet, and scarcely less formidable. A single kick from this weapon will rip up a dog as if the animal had been struck with a sharp sword, and even an armed man does not like to approach it in front. Generally, when at bay, the kangaroo stands upright, resting its back against a tree, so that the dogs cannot attack it from behind. The hunter, however, takes advantage of this habit. He trains his dogs to make false attacks on the animal in front, without coming within the range of the terrible claw, and while its attention is engaged in front he slips behind the tree, and strikes his long hunting knife into the body of the kangaroo. Not many years ago the kangaroo swarmed like the bison in America. But great cities have sprung into existence where, scarcely fifty years ago, not even a hut was to be seen, and the black men and the kangaroo were masters of the land. The time is not far distant when sheep and cattle will have taken the place of the kangaroo, and Australia will only know her most characteristic animal by reputation. The kangaroo and the bison will alike fall victims to advancing civilization.—*Good Words*.

THE Rev. Wiper Wilson, the new parish minister of Stonehouse, is making Professor Drummond's great book a subject of study in his Bible class this winter.

PROFESSOR STEWART was inducted to the chair of Systematic Theology at Aberdeen on Nov. 4. The installation ceremony, conducted by the twenty delegates who formed the examining body at the competition for the professorship, took place in the university chapel on the previous day.

British and Foreign.

GLASGOW University has 2,255 students; in 1874 the total was 1,333.

So long ago as 1723, a painful scholar counted 630 commentaries upon the Psalms.

MR. DAVID PATRICK, M.A., is to be editor of the new edition of "Chambers' Encyclopedia."

PROFESSOR BLACKIE publishes a sonnet in the *Scotsman* in which he praises Rev. John McNeill as "a man who knows what preaching means."

PRINCIPAL CAIRD preached recently at the reopening of Kilbarchan Church which had been closed for two months for repairs and alterations.

FATHER HUNTER BLAIR, of the monastery at Fort Augustus, is about to publish a translation of Bellesheim's "History of the Catholic Church of Scotland."

DR. HORATIUS BONAR, in a recent letter to a friend, says: My writing days are done. The public must be contented with what I have written in prose and verse.

MR. JOHN GREIG, M.A., of Edinburgh, is the first Scotsman who has achieved the distinction of passing the examinations for the degree of doctor in music at Oxford.

THE Rev. Colin Campbell, B.D., Dundee, preached at Balmoral before the Queen, and had the honour, along with the minister of Crathie, of dining with her Majesty in the evening.

THE Rev. W. Lyttelell, M.A., of the Scots Church, Longtown, Cumberland, has received three months' leave of absence, and has started for Canada on a lecturing and a preaching tour.

JOHANNES BONGE, the founder of the sect of Dissident Catholics in Germany, whose reform movement excited expectations which it failed to realize, died in Vienna lately in his seventy-fourth year.

A BUSI of the late Dr. John Ker was placed in the library of the U. P. Synod Hall in Edinburgh lately. It is a gift to the college by Mr. and Mrs. Nairn, the brother-in-law and sister of Dr. Ker.

THE Bishop of Lincoln is strongly in favour of closing public houses in England on Sundays. The testimony in favour of this course from Scotland, Norway, Wales and Ireland, he accepts as conclusive.

MR. MARSHALL LANG, with the concurrence of his Kirk Session, has consented to take charge of the Scots Church in Melbourne for four months, and will probably sail for Australia about the middle of this month.

THE Abbey congregation, Paisley, are about to erect a new church in Greenlaw Avenue, Glasgow Road, for which they have raised \$5,500. It is intended to work the church in the first instance by the Abbey minister.

No appointment has yet been made by the Crown to the vacant chair of Oriental Languages at Aberdeen, and Rev. Gordon J. Murray, M.A., Greyfriars Church, has been asked to carry on the work of the class during the vacancy.

MR. A. EMBLE EVANS, in a magazine discourse upon sermons, expresses the belief that England can never become incurably light-headed so long as there is the salutary burden of two millions of sermons a year distributed over the surface of society.

MR. WALTER THORNBURN, M.P., addressing his constituents at West Linton, said he lived in the hope that by honourable concessions on each side a union might be effected which would make the Church a united and prosperous Church of Scotland.

THE *Pall Mall* suggests that the London City Churches should be thrown open this winter to the poor as temporary asylums. They are so little used, even on Sunday, that it is rarer to meet a man who has been inside one than a man who has been to Australia.

THE Rev. Alexander Gunn, of Watten, brother of Dr. Gunn, of Whitby, was presented at the celebration of his jubilee on the 26th ult. with an address from Caithness Presbytery, and a silver salver and cheque for 130 guineas from his congregation and friends.

PRINCIPAL CAIRNS and Mr. Walton, the latter the occupant of the Berwick pulpit, formerly adorned by the Principal, took part in the special evangelistic services at Duns held under the auspices of the United Presbyterian Presbytery. Both preachers attracted overflowing congregations.

THE documents and plans for the chapel built in Bury Street for Dr. Watts, the father of modern hymnology, lately came into the hands of Dr. John Stoughton, who mentions that the total cost of the building was only \$3,500. That no doubt looked a large sum to be expended for such a purpose in the days of Queen Anne.

MR. JAMES SMITH, who is returning at an advanced age to mission work in India, does not fall in with Canon Taylor's fulsome eulogy of Mohammedanism. He says the moral code of Mohammed leads to the most lax moral life it is possible to live. There is scarcely a Hindu in India who does not shudder at the very name of Mohammedan rule.

At the third annual conference of the four northern U. P. Presbyteries, held recently at Peterhead, valuable papers were read, including one by Mr. McFarlane, of Keith, on the relation of the pulpit to politics. Mr. Robson, of Inverness, and Mr. Smith, of Edinburgh, were the deputies from the Synod, and Mr. Esslemont, M.P., presided at a great public meeting in the music hall.

BISHOP RYLE in his visitation charge to the Liverpool clergy said that there were two dark clouds hanging over the Church. The first was the lawlessness of the clergy men who insisted upon ceremonialism contrary to the order of the law courts endorsed by the bishop, a matter that must be dealt with by parliamentary legislation. The second was the growing tendency of most preachers to be content with a very low standard of teaching.