



THE LETTER.

Heaven.

Beyond these chilly winds and gloomy skies,
Beyond death's cloudy portal,
There is a land where beauty never dies:
Where love becomes immortal.

A land whose light is never dimmed by shade,
Whose fields are ever vernal;
Where nothing beautiful can ever fade,
But blooms for aye, eternal.

We may not know how sweet the balmy air,
How bright and fair its flowers;
We may not hear the songs that echo there,
Through those enchanting bowers.

The city's shining towers we may not see
With our dim earthly vision;
For Death, the silent warder, keeps the key
That opens the gate Elysian.

But sometimes adown the western sky
A fiery sunset lingers,
Its golden gates swing inward noiselessly,
Unlocked by unseen fingers.

And while they stand a moment half ajar,
Gleams from the inner glory
Stream brightly through the azure vaults afar
And half reveal the story.

O, land unknown! O land of love divine!
Father, all-wise, eternal,
O, guide these wandering, way-worn feet of
mine,
Into those pastures vernal.

A LITTLE boy, out West, walked
four miles to Sunday-school all last
winter. Surely he must have had
some bright example that made him
superior to the cold and snow. Was
it his teacher's?

The Letter.

THE old fisherman is not much used
to letter-writing. He would rather
haul a seine or face a gale. But when
a duty is to be done, he faces it with
resolution. He firmly sets his lips and
enters upon the arduous task. The
old quill pen, I suspect, badly needs
mending. The ink is probably scanty,
and the writing-desk looks rather
totterish. But I venture to say that
it will be a shrewd, commonsense letter
that our hard-headed friend will write
before he gets through.

Lincoln's Mother.

THOUGH President Lincoln's mother
died when he was ten years of age,
yet she lived long enough to inspire
him with a noble ambition, to train
him to love truth and justice, and to
reverence God and goodness. Years
after, when men were looking to him
as one who might become a national
leader, he said:

"All that I am, or hope to be, I owe
to my mother."

The wife of a pioneer, she shared
the privations and hardships of life
in a wilderness. The struggle for
existence familiarized her not only
with the distaff and the spinning-
wheel, but with an axe, the hoe and
the rifle. She helped her husband to
clear and break up the soil, to kill wild

turkeys, as well as deer and bears,
whose skins she dressed and made into
clothes. When she married, her hus-
band could neither read nor write, but
she found time, toilsome as was her
life, to teach both rudiments to him and
her son. She was unusually intelligent
and refined for a pioneer's wife. Her
taste and love of beauty made her log
house an exceptional home in the
wilderness, where the people were
rugged and lived so far apart that they
could hardly see the smoke from each
other's cabins.

When Abraham Lincoln had gained
the people's ear, men noticed that he
scarcely made a speech or wrote a state
paper in which there was not an illus-
tration or a quotation from the Bible.
"Abe Lincoln," his friends used to say,
"is more familiar with the Bible than
most ministers." He had been thorough-
ly instructed in it by his mother. It
was one book always found in the
pioneer's cabin, and to it she, being a
woman of deep religious feeling, turned
for sympathy and refreshment.

Out of it she taught her boy to
spell and read, and with its poetry,
history and principles she so familiar-
ized him that they always influenced
his subsequent life. She was fond of
books, and read all she could beg or
borrow from the pioneers far and near.
Her boy early imbibed his mother's
passion for books. Here and there

could be found in the cabin "Bun-
yan's Pilgrim's Progress," "Weem's
Life of Washington," and "Burns'
Poems." Young Abe read these over
and over again, until he knew them as
he knew the alphabet.

When his mother died the son had
already received a good education—he
told the truth, he loved justice, rever-
enced God, he respected goodness, he
was fond of reading, he could swing
the axe, shoot the rifle, and take more
than a boy's part in subduing the
wilderness and building up a home.
She selected the place for her burial.
It was under a majestic sycamore on
the top of a forest-covered hill that
stretched above her log-cabin home.
No clergyman could be found to bury
her, and the neighbours took part in
the simple, solemn rites. Months after,
a preacher, who had been written to,
travelled hundreds of miles through the
forest to preach a funeral sermon under
the sycamore.

The boy of ten never forgot those
sad, plain services, nor the mother
whose memory they honoured. She
ever remained to him the incarnation
of tenderness, love, self-sacrifice and
devotion to duty. When he was
President he honoured her training by
the thought: "She placed me here!"
—*Youth's Companion*.

The Rat Evangelist.

MISS FRANCES POWER COBNE tells us
a story of a French convict who was
reformed by a rat—a man who was
long the terror of prison authorities.
Time after time he had broken out and
made savage assaults on his jailers.
Stripes and chains had been multiplied
year after year, and he was habitually
confined in an underground cell, whence
he was only taken to work with his
fellow-convicts in the prison yard; but
his ferocity long remained untamed. At
last it was observed that he grew rather
more calm and docile, without apparent
cause for the change, till one day, when
he was working with his comrades, a
large rat suddenly leaped from the
breast of his coat and ran across the
yard. Naturally the cry was raised
to kill the rat, and the men were pre-
pared to throw stones at it when the
convict, hitherto so ferocious, with a
sudden outburst of feeling, implored
them to desist and allow him to recover
his favourite. The prison officials for
once were guided by happy compassion,
and suffered him to call back his rat,
which came to his voice and nestled
back in his dress. The convict's grati-
tude was as strong as his rebellious
disposition had hitherto proved, and
from that day he proved submissive
and orderly. After some years he be-
came the trusted assistant of the
jailers, and finally was killed in de-
fending them against a mutiny of other
convicts. The love of that humble
creature, finding a place in his rough
heart, had changed his whole character.
Who shall limit the miracles to be
wrought by affection, when the love of
a rat could transform a man?