

The Story.

HAVE you listened to the story
Sweet and old,
Have you listened to the story,
Filling life with light and glory,
Men have told?
How there came a heavenly stranger,
Cradled low in Bethlehem's manger,
Strong to shield from death and danger
God's dear fold.

It is full of human sweetness,
Rich in love's divine completeness,
Ever new.
Grief, her lonely vigil keeping,
Care, her crust with sorrow steeping,
Lift their eyes and hear it, weeping;
'Tis for you.

He was wronged above all others,
Mocked, denied;
He was wronged above all others,
Bruised and broken, O my Brothers,
Crucified;
In a purple robe they bound Him
With the cruel thorns they crowned Him,
Pitiless, they gathered round Him,
Till He died.

When I heard the wondrous story,
So divine,
When I heard the wondrous story,
Coming down through annals hoary,
Christ was mine:—
O that love beyond comparing!
Burdened heart, thy sorrow sharing,
For thy sake the thorn crown wearing,
Is He thine?

—Rev. W. Houghton.

Persia and the Persians.

PERSIA is a country about 1,200 miles long by 850 wide. It has a population equal to that of Canada—about 5,000,000. The country is chiefly a plateau, 3,000 or 4,000 feet above the sea. In the interior is a great desert, 400 miles long by 250 wide. The Elburz Mountains rise to the height of 18,000 feet. The heat in summer often reaches 100° or 110° in the shade. Where irrigated the soil is very fertile. The people are mostly Mahometans. It was in Persia that the heroic missionary, Henry Martyn, died, a victim to his zeal. Teheran, the capital, is about the size of Toronto, with a population of 120,000.

Labour is cheap in Persia. Each servant is expected to do only a few things, while the elaborate etiquette of society requires a great many duties which are never dreamed of in America.

In observing this and other peculiarities of Oriental life, one is often reminded of Scripture scenes and illustrations. In fact, until one has become familiar with life in Eastern lands, I do not see how he can thoroughly understand or enjoy many of the descriptions of passages in the Bible.

The household of an Oriental gentleman is divided into the main dwelling and the zanderoon, or harem, occupied by the ladies of his family and their servants. The servants in the zanderoon are necessarily women, often slaves, for no man, except the husband, enters that secluded part of the establishment. Never having seen Persian women at home, I can only speak of their costume and usages from hearsay. But while in the street they go muffled by a close tunic and veil, in their private apartments their dress is distinguished by great brevity of skirt, and an ease which dispenses entirely with corsets or tight lacing boots.

The head servant of the main household is the nazire, or steward. The house servants under him, besides the cook and his assistants, are several pishketmets, or table-waiters, and several sherbet bearers, or waiters intended solely to serve refreshments and pipes. Besides there is the department of the stable, also under the charge of the nazire.

This is a very important part of a Persian establishment. For the only way of travelling about the country is on horseback, and no gentleman thinks of going out of his house without a large retinue, whether on horseback or on foot. If the former be the method chosen for an afternoon visit or excursion, then the giliôdar must lead the train mounted.

After him follow two or more attendants, called foranshes, also mounted; then comes the master himself, and several golems or foranshes bring up the rear. Thus a Persian household includes a large retinue of servants, and horses enough to mount them.

Another peculiarity of Persian life is the pedler. It is very difficult for women of the upper classes, or even of any class, to shop in the bazaars or markets. During five months of the year many of them are in the country, while all of them are as fond as women in other countries of seeing pretty things, turning them over and trying to buy them for something less than cost. Hence the pedler is one of the most important characters of Persian society.

The pedlers travel in pairs. A diminutive donkey is part of their capital in trade. They carry their wares in a pair of saddle-bags. The goods are owned either by each pedler singly, or in partnership, or both. For a time, perhaps, the same men will travel over the roads of Persia together, dispensing goods to the women of the country.

Sometimes the business is followed by father and son. What do these men sell? you may ask. I answer, everything. Some of them deal in small wares, gloves, pins, needles, stationery, and cheap jewellery; others have choice carpets of Kurdistan or Turkistan, or shawls of Cashmere, silken scarfs, pieces of old embroidery, stuffs worked with gold thread, or tablecloths and slippers wrought in the ingenious and sumptuous designs of Resht; others bring you carved woods of Kashan, inkstands of Shiraz, playing-cards of Teheran, and so on.

Then the business of buying and selling begins; on the one side by depreciating the goods as utterly beneath contempt; while on the other side the goods are cried up to the skies as the finest of their kind; and a proportionate price is demanded—three or four times what the seller expects eventually to receive. By long and slow degrees each advances towards a compromise which generally results in the purchase of the article for about one-third to one-half of the sum first demanded.

Often, having failed to accomplish a bargain, the pedlers pack all their goods, and march off with an offended air, as if insulted that so insignificant a price should be offered for a certain article.

Having left the house, they go some distance until they come to a tea-shop. There they discuss the matter over again, and decide to accept the offer. In an hour or two you may see them returning and handing you the article at your own terms. I have had pieces brought back to me sometimes a week after the pedler had left in apparently high dudgeon.

Constantly wandering about as they do, picking up every sort of marketable article, these pedlers often come across very choice examples of old faience, metal work, embroidery, carpets and silks of other days, which are

becoming more and more scarce every year, for they are being fast gathered up for European museums or private collections.

Another character as important in Persian life as the pedler is the scribe. The East and the West differ entirely in many usages and modes of thought. But nothing better illustrates this difference than the method of writing. In Europe and America they write from left to right. In Persia and generally throughout Asia the words proceed from right to left.

The difficulty of writing Persian has perhaps been one reason why it has come to be one of the fine arts of the country. In former ages the Persians illuminated manuscripts of extraordinary beauty, displaying marvellous skill and artistic taste. The recent introduction of printing, and especially lithographic printing, into the country has led to a decrease in the preparation of book manuscripts.

But the scribes still take great pride in writing an elegant hand, and the leisure enjoyed here, as well as the slowness with which one is forced to write in the Persian character, encourages handsome penmanship.

The mirza, or scribe, is naturally an important character in Persian society. He is often in demand to write letters or receipts, and is the repository of almost as many secrets as a lawyer or a clergyman. When the letter or receipt is written, it must be signed. But perhaps the signer cannot write. In that case he takes out his seal with his name engraved upon it, dips it in the ink, and prints it on the paper.

Naturally the engraving of seals is an important occupation in Persia. Indeed, the lapidaries of Teheran or Ispahan could hardly be surpassed in the engraving of gems by any craftsman in Europe and America.

"Whatever is Best—is Best."

BY ELLA WHEELER-WILCOX.

I KNOW, as my life grows older,
And mine eyes have clearer sight,—
That under each rank Wrong somewhere
There lies the root of Right.
That each sorrow has its purpose—
By the sorrowing oft unguessed,
But as sure as the sun brings morning,
Whatever is best, is best.

I know that each sinful action,
As sure as the night brings shade,
Is somewhere, sometime, punished,
Tho' the hour be long delayed.
I know that the soul is aided
Sometimes by the heart's unrest,
And to grow, means often to suffer,—
But whatever is best, is best.

I know there are no errors,
In the great eternal plan,
And all things work together
For the final good of man.
And I know that when my soul speeds onward
In the grand eternal quest,
I shall say, as I look back earthward,
Whatever is best, is best.

One Life's Influence.

A LITTLE more than forty years ago there came to London a young apprentice. He was poor and friendless; he had but a single endowment—Christian faith. He took lodgings in St. Paul's Churchyard. His bedroom overlooked the vast wilderness of homes, with the dome of St. Paul's hanging like a crown of faith above it. He came to his room unknown, and there made a simple prayer of consecration alone. He felt the solitude of the city. Some eighty young men were employed in the same establishment as himself.

"I resolved," said a great reformer,

"to have no friends by chance, but by choice, and to choose only such as would help me in my spiritual life and development."

The young apprentice had a like purpose. He found a few young men among his fellow-workmen whose lives had a moral aim and purpose. Some of these he invited to hold religious services with him in his room. These invited others to meet with them for the same purpose. The meetings grew in numbers. They multiplied. Young men's meetings for young men became a movement among the London trades, and in 1844 they led to the forming of the first Young Men's Christian Association.

The society spread. Its influence was felt throughout England; America took up the work; the islands of the Pacific; parts of Asia. Nearly three thousand associations were represented or reported at the tenth annual conference held in Berlin. Now the movement is found to meet the needs of colleges, and more than two hundred associations have been formed in colleges and schools.

Some months ago, a gentleman walking along the Thames Embankment saw the grand dome of St. Paul illuminated by the twilight, and recalled to a friend the historic associations of the church.

"And yet," said the friend, still gazing upon London's crown, "the influence of that church during the present century has, I think, been outweighed by the work of a single individual."

"Who?"

"A mere boy." He added, "I mean the apprentice who began in his simple room in St. Paul's Churchyard the work of Young Men's Christian Associations in the world."

We cannot weigh influences, but the above remark is inspiring in its lesson to those who seek to be helpful to others, but whose only resource is—faith.—*Youth's Companion*.

Betrayed by Bad Grammar.

"THREE of these girls say they go to school regularly," remarked Justice Power in the Tombs police court the other day, as four children were about to step down. Agent Chiardi, who had arrested the three as delinquents, and the other for picking up bones, took the fourth girl to one side, and said he knew the others did not go to school.

"An't they all together?" asked the court.

"No, sir," answered one of the trio. "Us don't belong to she."

"What? The next girl who goes to school—was that sentence correct?"

"No, sir."

"What should she have said?"

"Her an't one of we."

"Horrors! The next try it?"

"She be n't one of us three."

The justice groaned, and asked the fourth girl to repeat the sentence. She had said nothing about school; but she replied, "She is not one of us."

"You are discharged," said the court. "The others will have a chance to study in a reformatory."—*New York Herald*.

A LITTLE girl was asked by her mother on her return from church how she liked the preacher. "Didn't like him at all," was the reply. "Why?" "Cause he preached till he made me sleepy, and then hollered so loud that he wouldn't let me go to sleep."