

PLAGUE OF LEPROSY.

A few centuries ago there were more than twenty thousand lazarettos in Europe. In the fourteenth century, in the domains of Seigneur de Coucy alone, there were ten of these leproseries; and in all France there were supposed to be more than two thousand. In Dauphiny there was one for nobles alone, and near Paris one for females of royal blood. Vanity of vanities! Let us devote a moment to recalling the ceremony which cut off alike the royal, noble, and plebeian leper from the society of his fellow-men.—Clothed in a pall, the dead-alive stood at the steps of the church at the appointed hour, the people forming a wide circle round him, and gazing with dread and horror on the victim thus pointed out by the wrath of Heaven. The clergy of his parish then appeared, walking in procession, and the leper followed them into the church, and laid himself down on a bier, set round with lighted tapers.—The service for the dead was then performed, with the usual chanting of prayers, sprinkling of holy water, and flinging of incense; and, when the unhappy wretch was religiously dead, he was taken out of the town to the solitary hut appointed for his habitation. A pall hung above the door surmounted by a cross, before which he fell upon his knees; and the priest then commenced the exhortation, enjoining him to the virtue of patience, recalling to his memory the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and pointing out to him that heaven above his head, where there are no tears and no lepers, but where all are for ever sound, for ever pure, and for ever happy. He then took off his coat, and assumed the leper's dress, and the clacket, or rattle, by which he was for the future to give notice of his approach, that his fellow-men might fly from the polluted path. The priest then pronounced the interdictions prescribed by the ritual. "I forbid thee to go abroad without thy leper's dress. I forbid thee to go abroad with naked feet. I forbid thee to pass through any narrow street. I forbid thee to speak to any one except against the wind. I forbid thee to enter any church, any mill, any fair, any market, any assembly of men whatever. I forbid thee to drink or to wash thy hands either in a well or a river. I forbid thee to handle any merchandise before thou hast bought it. I forbid thee to touch children, or to give them any thing." The priest then gave him his foot to kiss, threw a handful of earth on his head, and having shut the door of the hut upon the outcast, recommended him to the prayers of the bystanders, who immediately dispersed. The goods accorded to the leper were safe from robbers; his vineyard, his cow, his sheep might remain without a keeper; for no extremity of hunger could tempt any one to put forth his hand upon the property of the forsaken. His former clothes, his house, his furniture were burnt to ashes; and if his wife wished to follow the footsteps of his despair—which was not rarely the case—she also was devoted when living to the leper's doom, and, when dead, her ashes were refused a resting-place in consecrated earth. In consecrated earth? What have we said? It is the relic which sanctifies the place; and wherever were thrown the remains of the devoted wife, there was holy ground!—*Litch Ritchie's Wanderings by the Seine.*

THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASONS.

Oh! who was it came in the balmy Spring
On the sun-lit dews of its breezy wing,
Breathing, Peace, be still! to the winter gales,
In its rosy dress of flowering vales?
Was it not Hope, of Paradise breathing,
Chaplets of joy for misery wreathing?
Was it not Hope, her fairy buds twining,
Pledges of bliss to spirits repining?

Oh! who was it came on the Summer sky
On gossamer clouds of vermillion dye,

Sighing forth incense of praise from the flowers,
Painting the goodness of God in the showers?
Was it not Faith, with her rip'ning pleasures,
Revealing the fruits of Hope's Spring treasures,
With still small voice whispering around,
Thus shall thy promises, Heaven, be found?

Oh! who was it came on Autumn's dear smiles,
Gladdening meadows, and gardens, and wilds,
Scenting heaven and earth with richest perfume,
Dressing desert and bower with sunlight bloom?
Was it not thou, blest Charity, smiling
In gifts upon all, as if all reconciling?
For sorrow and joy thy plenty sheaves wreathing,
E'en on thy foes benignity breathing?

Oh! who was it came on the Northern blasts
Of the wintry snows, of the howling wastes,
Girt in the mantle of frost-spangled cloud,
Frowning defiance, and raging aloud?
'Twas the hopeless, faithless soul repining,
The springless and summerless soul declining,
The autumnless soul, cold and unfeeling,
Tho' sunbeams of Heaven round her are stealing!

PARABLES.

From the German of Krummacher.

THE GEM.

A rough gem lay hidden in the dust for years, among many ordinary stones of no value. It was walked over, or trodden under foot without being noticed. Its splendour was concealed from the eye of the traveller. For the beautiful does not obtrude, but appears in simplicity.

THE APPLE.

There lived a rich man at the Court of King Herod. He was lord chamberlain, and clothed in purple and costly linen, and lived every day in magnificence and joy. Then there came to him, from a distant country, a friend of his youth, whom he had not seen in many years. And to honour him, the chamberlain made a great feast, and invited all his friends. There stood on the table a great variety of excellent viands, in gold and silver dishes, and costly vessels with ointment, together with wine of every kind. And the rich man sat at the head of the table, and was hospitable to all; and his friend who had come from a distant country sat at his right hand. And they ate and drank and were satisfied.

Then the stranger addressed the Chamberlain of the King: "Such splendor and magnificence as your house contains is not to be found in my country, far and wide!" And he spoke of his magnificence, and pronounced him the happiest of men.

But the rich man, the king's chamberlain, selected an apple from a golden dish. The apple was large and beautiful, and its colour was red, approaching purple. And he took the apple and said, "This apple has rested on gold, and its form is very beautiful!" and he reached it to the stranger, and friend of his youth. And the friend cut the apple, and behold, in its middle was a worm! Then the stranger cast his eyes on the chamberlain; but the lord chamberlain looked upon the ground and sighed.

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