

THE BOLTED DOOR.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—Rev. iii. 20.

God is knocking,
Ever knocking,
At the heart's thrice bolted door,
Which we're locking,
Ever locking,
As we oft have done before;
And we hear, yet hearing, heed not,
While we faster bolt the door.

He is calling,
Ever calling,
In a soft and gentle tone,
To the fallen,
And the falling,
To the weary and the lone
Still they answer not the summons
Till the Spirit-voice has flown,

He's entreating,
Ever entreating,
By his mercy, by his care,
Knocking, knocking,
And repeating,
Calling, calling—this his prayer:
"Let me enter!" Hear it, mortal,
Open wide the sin-locked portal;
Hear it, mortal, open quickly!
God is waiting at the door.
—*Watchman and Reflector.*

"QUESTION-DAY" IN THE HIGHLANDS.

Off the village of Plockton we anchored among a fleet of boats from Kishorn, from Jeantown, from Loch Aish. The haven was girt with striking shores, mountain walls and grey crag; the hills at Loch Carron grizzly with moraines and wasted precipices. Brushwood swept the beach; black pines covered the flanks of the hills, Rocky isles were scattered treacherously about; we had been the better for our pilot in the smuck. The red sunlight was striking the great corries of Ben Gorm, and deepening the azure belts across the face of the mountain at Kishorn. About these shores the glitter of the deep marked hidden dangers. On Wintry nights the mouth of Loch Carron is full of treachery.

The fishing craft were run alongside a half-ebbed isle over which the strangers clambered. Through the village of Pockton they walked, a sober throng, towards the moorland. There was no want of sedateness; the faces might have been those of pilgrims nearing their shrine. We are not among idle worshippers summoned by chimes, by the solitary peal of the kirk-bell. Eyes were hardly raised from the roadway, greetings were tenderly given, silently spoken, subdued by humble reverence. Everywhere among the aged a sense of awe was deepening.

The people were turning aside from the road to Durnish; they were disappearing through a cleft in the rocks. We clambered with others over crags, past an aged man standing by a little box which was set upon a short staff, and into which coppers were thrown. We reached the edge of the corrie, a gully in a rock bluff. We were suddenly in the presence of three thousand people, more or less—a vast congregation filling the hollow and clustering about the sides. Our amazement pleased the bystanders; the young people looked up at us; the old folks sat silent and motionless. No service was going on; but faint whispers were reprov'd with sudden looks. In the narrower end of the hollow stood an upright wooden house, somewhat like a bathing-box, half open on the side next the congregation. In it were accommodated the officiating clergyman. The congregation waited very silently while the later comers found seats in the grassy hollow or upon the rocky ledges. The older folks sat nearer the clergyman—the old men with their bald heads uncovered, the old women with white handkerchiefs tied over their white caps. Plaids and overcoats were drawn over the head's at times; the women drew plaids and shawls over their caps. The matrons held a corner of their plaids over their mouths; shrouding their faces to the eyes through some decorous fashion and ancient usage. The little maidens lifted the corners of their pinafores, and endeavoured to cover the lower part of their faces as their mothers did. It somehow gave an earnest look to these simple worshippers. The younger women homo from the south avoided the custom; their gayer dresses were disturbing to the sombre grayness of the picture. Above the crest of the corrie young boys clambered, grave fellows in their ragged clothing.

We found that it was "Question-day"—one of the several consecutive days during which service is held, in these parts, by way of preparation for the communion.

While the worshippers were hidden in the moorland sanctuary, the crags about them commanded all the mountains of Carron and Kishorn, the Sound, Scalpa and Raasay, with its curious "Dun," the mighty peaks of Glencraig, and the nearer Coullins. In the hollow were gathered penitent folks, mourning with the outer signs of tribulation; all about them the glow of the summertime was softening the hills and falling upon the sea. There was no ecclesiastical accessories, or sacerdotal adornments; but the solemnness was supreme.

The silence so impressive was broken; one of the clergyman rose, and spoke in Gaelic in an undertone, the only language used. His words were spoken to an elder of the people, who rose, after a pause, and said some inaudible words. He had been asked to speak, but evaded himself. Another elder was appealed to; he also had some excuse. Others were spoken to; but all declined although they had previously agreed to speak and expound certain points in proof of their ableness to minister to the spiritual wants of some remote clachan. The fashion, or formality prevailed of declining to speak at the first call; it might seem ostentatious to do so, and the men were as coy as maidens. On the second request being made, the elder who had been first asked, and so far recovered as to speak with composure. He had a solemn and "punctual" way of uttering his advice. His plaid fell back from his arm, his measured speech sounded about the hollow, blown by fitful airs, and striking attentive ears. There was nothing in his sonorous voice to recall the broken speech of the Celt when he leaves the hills. Others of the elders spoke, and without further hesitation. There was no painful pauses in their speech; the speakers might have had the ready utterances of gifted tongues. Their language unchanged for centuries, was the same spoken by the first Christian teachers on their coasts. Our pilot told us that the Gospels had an "austere" sound in the Gaelic, and the preaching had a more homely sense in his mother speech. It might have been the sombre throng, the anguish of the earnest faces, the moorland blackening in the moonlight, that gave a pitiful cadence to the voices; but an unknown tongue was moving us as the softer English has seldom done.

One of the preachers rose to speak; he was a tall, thin, wiry man, with high features and a black beard cut in the American style. His voice, loud and full, rung far across the moor. His discourse was more of a "spiritual nature" than the others we were to listen to. The Gaelic words for "grace" and "love" were frequently repeated. Towards the close his voice rose wildly, it might be emphatically; he chanted his sentences with a not unmusical rhythm. The congregation listened with a stricken calm; some of the people were swaying themselves to the pastor's cadences.

Another preacher spoke, a little man with grey wavy hair; his voice was thin, and had grown hoarse through much preaching in the open air. His speech was forced and unequal. He spoke in one tone and seemed to answer in another, suggesting irrelevant recollection of ventriloquial efforts; but his exhortations were earnest, and drew his audience near to him. He had some gift of eloquence missed among most speakers of the Saxon tongue.

A farmer-looking, hearty man closed the service. He had a homely way, and had homely advice to give. He spoke a sentence to the right and another to the left, pausing to consider before speaking again. He closed almost every sentence with "agus," and folded his hands to think over the rest of the sentence. When he was nearing the last of one of his homilies, he regretted that some came there with brazen faces, who believe in arts that were neither of this world nor were sanctioned by heaven, but came from the devil. Then followed an appeal to the congregation to remember the collection, which the elders were attending to on the outskirts of the corrie. The clergyman reminded his hearers that Christ had noticed the widow's mite.

The singing of the hymn was spiritless; the line read by the precursor was chanted by the congregation with a slight knowledge of the tune; but the winds softened the sound, and wafted it away into the heavens.

We walked along the way to Durnish, loitering till the sun was going down behind the violet wall of Raasay, with the peak of Duncane blackening in the glow like a pyre. We returned by the sanctuary, where some old men and women were loitering in the gloaming, feeling seeming comfort in the hushed words they spoke. They lingered as they might have done in the sunshine; there might still be a glow about the sanctified place that kindled the hearts of the worshippers. On the way to Plockton old people walked decently home to rest and prepare for the morrow.—*Sunday Magazine.*

Mere intellectual acuteness, divested, as it is in too many cases, of all that is comprehensive and great and good, is to me more revolting than the most helpless imbecility, seeming to breathe the spirit of Mephistopheles.—*Dr. Arnold.*

If men are to be fools, it were better that they were fools in little matters than in great. Dullness, turned up with temerity, is a lively all the worse for the facings; and the most tremendous of all things is a magnanimous dunce.—*Sydney Smith.*

ONE SPECIES OF INSANITY.

Did you ever see a woman who was possessed by the house cleaning fiend? Not periodically but at all times. Who would go about drawing her finger over every lounge and table and chair, peering into cracks and crannies for crooked pins and lint; holding tumbler up to the light for finger marks; in short, so utterly absorbed in the pursuit of dirt, that every other pursuit was nothing in comparison.

Now, being New England born I know what neatness is, and value it as only a New Englander can; but when it takes such shape as this, and robs life of all its charms, I turn my back upon it with righteous disgust. Who thanks these zealous juries for their self-imposed labor? Certainly not their husbands, who flee into corners from dust-pans and dust-brushes, and weary of the recitals of their prowess day by day. Certainly not their children, who have no place to stow away their little sacred property in the shape of bright bits of silk or paper, or broken cups which are dear and precious to them, and should always be held in respect within proper innocent limits.

Oh, ye careful and troubled Marthas of the household, stop and take breath. Place a flower on the mantel that you and your household may, perhaps, have some in your lives. So shall the cobwebs be brushed from your neglected brain, and you shall learn that something else besides cleanliness is necessary to make home really home for those dependent on your care.

Throw your broom out of doors; take your children by the hand, and let the fresh wind touch your wrinkled forehead. If your house is wound up to such an immaculate pitch of cleanliness, it can run on a few hours without your care. Laugh and talk with them, or, better still, listen to their foolish-wise talk. Bring home a bit of gingerbread for each of them, and play some simple game with them. Put on the freshest dress you have, and ask your husband, when he comes in, if he recognizes his wife.

"I wish my mother looked as pretty as you," said a little girl once to her neighbor.

"But your mamma is much prettier than I," replied the neighbor. The truth was that the child's mother was always in a wrapper unless company was expected. The rest of the time she was under the dominion of the house-fiend, and the children fled from such a joyless, utilitarian home, where no flower of beauty could ever get time to take root and blossom.

There is little need to interpret my meaning. Many a ruined life has come of a joyless home. Your children take to the sunlight as naturally as do the flowers. Shut it out of your houses, and they will go abroad in search of it, you may be sure of that. Isn't this worth thinking about, Oh, ye mothers? Careful and troubled about many things, and yet so blind to your first and greatest duty!—*Fanny Fern.*

WISE RAILROAD POLICY.

We take pleasure in laying before our readers a letter taken from the *Standard of the Cross*, which describes the policy of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad Company in the management of their vast shops at Altoona.

We believe that public corporations, as well as individuals, will be prospered in the largest degree, in this life, in proportion as they are mindful of their obligations to God and man in obeying the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day." All honor to the Pennsylvania Central Railroad Company in the attempt of its directors to give its employees the blessings of the Sabbath.

"We left Cincinnati on Saturday morning for a rapid journey to New York, and return. Before midnight on Saturday Altoona was reached, and there we were to 'rest on the Sabbath day, according to the commandment.' This is the city where locomotives keep Sabbath—where freight trains rest on the Lord's day, and, as a consequence, where engineers, and brakemen, and railroad hands of all grades, are both permitted and encouraged to enjoy Sabbath repose and its useful relaxation.

"It is as grateful a feeling as it is strange, to awake on a Sunday morning in quietness—scarcely a sound stirring—amid a population of twelve thousand, who all the week are driving the immense works of the Pennsylvania Central, or hurrying in attendance on trains which pass every few minutes, both day and night. On Sunday the laboring air is still; those terrible shrieks and whistles of locomotives, which tear the atmosphere to pieces all the week, are hushed. There is no roll of trains, no roar of engines, no groaning of escaping steam. The Sabbath stillness is scarcely broken, except by Sabbath bells. One passenger train passes, I believe, each way in the early morning and in the evening; but we saw no freight trains moving. We counted thirteen freight trains standing on the tracks in front of the Logan House.

"The result of this policy is according to God's law and promise, but, of course, equally according to a natural law. Workmen of a higher moral calibre are secured. The men are faithful, have more physical endurance, and more spirit than when their powers are overtaxed by seven days' labor in every week. An accident on this road is very rare; and the profits are rolling up by millions. It is not my purpose to encourage people to keep the Lord's day because of the profit it brings, although there is no question about it. God's Word never has failed, and never will. His sanction of Sabbath observance is merely an interpretation of an invariable natural law. But all that I desire is to put the facts side by side. Railroad men can decide for themselves how near they are related as cause and effect."

THE PEACE OF GOD.

"The sun is very hot on this side of the boat," said a portly gentleman, who, with two aides, was standing on the deck of a large steamboat.

"It is boiling," said one of the ladies, fretfully, raising a tiny parasol. "It will ruin my complexion; and on the other end of the boat it is blowing a perfect gale. For my part, I don't see any pleasure in it."

"Nor I," said the other. "It is hollow, like all the other so-called pleasures. I don't believe there is such a thing in the world as happiness. I would be glad to find even peace; but the more you cry 'Peace, peace,' the more you feel that there is no peace."

They were startled by a voice, saying, "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river."

Turning, they saw an old man, leaning heavily on a cane, for he was evidently past his threescore and ten years. His garments were coarse and ill-fitting, though they were carefully brushed; and the ladies drew back with a dignified air. The gentleman was about to order the intruder away, but his gaze was fixed afar off, on the calm flowing waters of the river, and they contented themselves with drawing away.

The lady who had last spoken, leaned over the side of the boat, and looked for a time down into the water; then she said,—

"That wasn't a bad comparison of the old fellow about peace flowing as a river. Just think of it; calm, but deep, never-ceasing, never-ending; lost only in an ocean of the same. I would give the world for such a peace as that."

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.

The old man was still gazing at the blue waters, and perhaps was speaking aloud unconsciously; but an angry exclamation escaped from the gentleman, and they walked hastily away. Meeting the captain, the gentleman said,—

"Captain, why did you take that crazy man on board?"

"What crazy man, Mr. Porter? O!" as his eye followed Mr. Porter's "that is to old Father Reid. He is no more crazy than I am. He used to be a wealthy merchant, but failed. He paid his creditors in full, but he left himself penniless. He says it was a blessed day for him, for it led him to seek for rest and peace, where alone they must be found. He is the happiest man I ever saw, and I meet with a great many men in my trips up and down the river, and the busy captain bowed, and passed on.

In the afternoon a thunder-storm arose, the lightning flashed, the thunder pealed, the waters foamed, while the boat shook as if it were a reed, at the mercy of the storm. The passengers were terrified, ladies shrieked, and even sturdy men paled. Loud and clear, in the midst of the tumult, rose the voice of Father Reid:—

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the seas; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; . . . God shall help us, and that right early."

The terror-stricken passengers almost felt as if he were a prophet, for even as he spoke the clouds broke, and though the rain still fell gently, a beautiful bow spanned the waters.

"Behold!" said Father Reid. "Behold the sign of God's promise, and be at peace;" and he quietly slipped out of the cabin, followed by Miss Porter, who grasped his hand, and asked,—

"Sir, how can I obtain this rest and peace?"

He looked at her with eyes full of love and pity, and said, gently,—

"Jesus said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"I have heard that often before," said she; "but it seems new."

"Yes, it is the old, old story, yet ever new; but it is all you can do. Only trust Him and follow Him; then, indeed, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind, through Jesus Christ."

LICHEN ON THE ROCK.

Lichen and mosses, how of these?—Meek creatures; the first mercy of earth's veil; with hushed softness its dintless rocks, creatures full of pity, covering with strange and tender honor the sacred disgrace of ruin—laying quiet fingers on the trembling stones, to teach them rest. No words that I know of, will say what these mosses are. None are delicate enough. How is one to tell of the rounded houses of furred and beaming green—the starred divisions of cubed bloom, fine filmed as if the spirits could spin porphyry as we do glass, the traceries of intricate silver, and fringes of amber, lustrous, as here-cent, burnished through every fibre into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for the simplest sweetest office of grace. They will not be gathered like the flowers, for chaplet or love token, but of them the wild bird will make its pillow.

And, as the earth's first mercy so they are its last gift to us. When all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and the gray lichens take up their watch by the headstone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift bearing grasses have done their part for a time, but these do service forever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chambray, coral for the granary, moss for the grave.

Yet as in one sense the humblest, in another, they are the most honored of the earth's children. Unfading, as motionless, the worm frets them not and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant hearted, is entrusted the dark, eternal tapestries of hills; to them, slow penciled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn blossoms like drifted snow, the summer dimes on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip gold—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen spots rest, starlike on the stone; and the gathering orange stain, upon the edge of you western peak, reflects the sunsets of a thousand years.—*Rushkin.*

THE GREAT LAKES.

The following facts in regard to the five great lakes in North America, are not generally known, and will prove especially instructive to young people:—

Lake Superior is the largest body of fresh water in the world. Its greatest length is 355 miles, its greatest breadth 160 miles, and its area is given as 89,000 square miles, its average depth is variously given at 688 and 1,000 feet. It is 600 feet above the level of the sea, 22 feet higher than Lake Michigan, and 50 higher than Lake Erie.

Lake Michigan is 320 miles long, 108 miles in the widest part, and the mean depth of it is 600 feet. In its greatest length it is longer than Lake Superior, being 890 miles. It has an area of 28,000 square miles.

The greatest length of Lake Huron is 200 miles, the greatest width 100 miles, the mean depth 600 feet, and the area 20,000 square miles.

Lake Erie's greatest length is 250 miles, its greatest width 50 miles, the mean depth of its waters 84 feet, making it by far the most shallow of all the five lakes, and it has a superficial area of about 9,000 square miles.

The greatest length of Lake Ontario is 180 miles, the greatest breadth 65 miles, the mean depth 260 feet, and the area 9,000 square miles.

The length of all the lakes is more than 1,500 miles.—*Rural New Yorker.*

SCRIPTURE KNOWLEDGE.

London papers relate curious anecdotes of the blunders made by Oxford undergraduates in the Scripture examination which they have to pass before taking their degrees. It is told of one that when asked who was the first king of Israel, he was so fortunate as to stumble on the name of Saul. He saw that he had hit the mark, and wishing to show how intimate his knowledge of the Scripture was, he added, confidently, "Saul, also called Paul." Another was called upon to mention "the two instances recorded in Scripture of the lower animals speaking." The undergraduate thought for a moment and replied, "Balaam's ass." "This one, sir. What is the other?" Under-graduate paused in earnest thought. At last a gleam of recollection lit up his face, as he replied, "The whale! The whale said unto Jonah, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!'"

Sir Thomas Frown says, "I desire to exercise my faith in the difficultest point, for to credit ordinary and visible objects, is not faith, but persuasion. This I think is no vulgar part of faith, to believe a thing not only above but against the arguments of our proper senses."