

be a suspected man, with a disgraceful secrecy hanging like a cloud about him. He could not live so at Riversborough, among his old townspeople, of whom he had once been a leader. He must find some new sphere and dwell in it, always dreading the tongue of rumour.

And his son and daughter? How would they regard him if he maintained an obstinate and ambiguous silence towards them? They were no longer little children, scarcely separate from their father, seeing through his eyes, and touching life only through him. They were separate individuals, living souls, with a personality of their own, the more free from his influence because of his long absence and supposed death. It was a young man he must meet in Felix, a critic and a judge like other men, but with a known interest in the criticism and the judgment he had to pass upon his father, and less apt to pass it lightly. His son would ponder deeply over any account he might give of himself. Hilda, too, was at a sensitive and delicate point of girlhood, when she would inevitably shrink from any contact with the suspicion and doubt that would surround this strange return after so many years of disappearance.

Yet how could he let them know the terrible fraud he had committed for their mother's sake and with her connivance? Felix knew of his other defalcations; but Hilda was still ignorant of them. If he returned to them with the truth in his lips, they would lose the happy memory of their mother and their pride in her fame. He understood only too well how dominant must have been her influence over them, not merely by the tender common ties of motherhood, but by the fascinating charm of her whole nature, reserved and stately as it had been. He must betray her, and lessen her memory in their sorrowful esteem. To them, if not to the world, he must disclose all, or resolve to remain a stranger to them forever. During the last six months it had seemed to him that a humble path lay before him, following which he might again live a life of lowly discipleship. He had repented with a bitter repentance, and out of the depths into which he had fallen he had cried unto God and been delivered. He believed that he had received God's forgiveness, as he knew that he had received man's forgiveness. Out of the wreck of his former life he had constructed a little raft, and trusted to its bearing him safely through what remained of the storm of life. If Felicita had lived he would have remained in the service of his father's old friend, proving himself of use in numberless ways; not merely as an attendant, but in assisting him with the affairs of the bank, with which he was more conversant, from his early acquaintance with the families transacting business with it, than the stranger who was acting manager could be. He had not been long enough in Riversborough to gain any influence in the town as a poor foreigner, but there had been a hope dawning within that he might again do some good in his native place, the dearer to him because of his long and dreary banishment. In time he might perform some work worthy of his forefathers, though under another name. If he could so live as to leave behind him the memory of a sincere and simple Christian, who had denied himself daily to live a righteous, sober, and godly life, and had cheerfully taken up his cross to follow Christ, he would in some measure atone for the disgrace Roland Sefton's defalcations had brought upon the name of Christ.

This humble, ambitious career was still before him if he could forego the joy of making himself known to his children—a doubtful joy. For he had not cut himself from them by his reckless and despairing abandonment of them in their childhood? He could bring them nothing now but sorrow and shame. The sacrifice would be on their side, not his. It needs all the links of all the years to bind parents and children in an indestructible chain; and if he attempted to unite the broken links, it could only be by a knowledge of their mother's error as well as his. Let him sacrifice himself for the last and final time to Felicita and the fair name she had made for herself.

He was stumbling along in the dense darkness of the forest with no gleam of light to guide him on his way, and his feet were constantly snared in the knotted roots of the trees intersecting the path. So must he stumble along a dark and rugged track through the rest of his years. There was no cheering gleam beckoning him to a happy future. But though it was thorny and obscure it was not an ignoble path, and it might end at last even for him in the welcome words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord."

His mind was made up before he reached the valley. He could not unravel the warp and woof of his life. The gossamer threads of the web, he had begun to weave about himself so lightly in the heyday of his youth and prosperity and happiness, had thickened into cables and petrified; it was impossible to break through the coil of them or find a way out of it. Roland Sefton had died many years ago. Let him remain dead.

(To be continued.)

#### HOW SPONGES ARE CAUGHT.

A correspondent of an exchange tells how they fish for sponges in the Bahamas. When a vessel arrives at the fishing-ground, it is anchored, and the men, in small boats, proceed to look for sponges in the water below. The water is a beautiful light blue colour, and so clear that a sixpence can easily be seen on the white sandy bottom in thirty-five to forty feet of water. Of course, when there is no wind, and the surface of the water is still, the sponges are easily seen; but when a gentle breeze is blowing, a "sea-glass" is used. A sea-glass consists of a square pine box about twenty inches in length, a pane of glass about ten by twelve inches placed in one end, water-tight. To use it, the glass end is thrust into the water, and the face of the operator is placed close to the other. By this means the wave-motion of the water is overcome, and the bottom readily seen. Sponges when seen on the bottom attached to rocks, look like a big black bunch. They are pulled off their natural beds by twisted hooks, which are run down under the sponge, which is formed like the head of a cabbage, and the roots pulled from the rocks. When brought to the surface it is a

mass of soft glutinous stuff, which to the touch feels like soap or thick jelly. When a small boat-load is obtained, they are taken to the shore, where a crawl is built in which they are placed to die, so that the jelly substance will easily separate from the firm fibre of the sponge. These crawls are built by sticking pieces of brush into the sand, out of the water, large enough to contain the catch. It takes from five to six days for the insect to die, when the sponges are beaten with small sticks, and the black, glutinous substance falls off, leaving the sponge, after a thorough washing, ready for market. To the fishermen generally, the occupation is not a lucrative one. I am told the wages will hardly average three dollars per week, besides board. There is but little diving for sponges, except for a particularly fine bunch which cannot be secured by the hook.

#### "LIFE HATH ITS BARREN YEARS."

Life hath its barren years,  
When blossoms fall untimely down,  
When ripened fruitage fails to crown  
The summer toil, when nature's frown  
Looks only on our tears.

Life hath its faithless days:  
The golden promise of the morn,  
That seemed for light and gladness born,  
Meant only noontide wreck and scorn,  
Hushed harp instead of praise.

Life hath its valleys, too,  
Where we must talk with vain regret,  
With mourning clothed, with wild rain wet,  
Towards sunlight hopes that soon must set,  
All quenched in pitying dew.

Life hath its harvest moons,  
Its tasseled corn and purple-weighted vine.  
Its garnered sheaves of grain, the blessed sign  
Of plenteous ripening bread and pure, rich wine,  
Full hearts for harvest tunes.

Life hath its hopes fulfilled;  
Its glad fruitions, its blest answered prayer,  
Sweeter for waiting long, whose holy air,  
Indrawn to silent souls, breathes forth its rare,  
Grand speech by joy distilled.

#### INSECT ANNOYANCE IN BRAZIL.

Mr Ernest Morris, the young traveller and naturalist, who has just returned from Brazil, repeats the general observation of explorers that the exuberance of insect life is the principal obstacle to the enjoyment of a sojourn in that part of the world. Cockroaches swarm in every house despite the inroads of an army of spiders which sally forth from every chink to prey upon them; scorpions are intrusive and dangerous; a small red insect called the "mecum" is an intolerable annoyance; at certain hours of the day the air is black with flies and mosquitoes; and ants are a universal plague. To baffle these last named foes of peace, Mr. Morris was obliged to keep his entire collections on hanging shelves, the cords of which were soaked in the oil of copaiba. "The most destructive ant in Brazil," says Mr. Morris, "is the sanba. It will strip trees of their foliage in a single night, and in many places orange trees cannot be grown for this reason. The tocandeira is a very large ant, the bite of which is poisonous and makes a painful sore. I was once rendered unable to work for a week from a bite received from one of these ants. Some species travel in large bodies, marching in straight line and never turning to the right nor to the left. If a house lies in the track of one of these marching bodies, unless they are completely exterminated, they will pass through. Nothing will be injured, but every crack and cranny will be explored, and not a spider or cockroach will survive the visitation. They are therefore regarded as friends, and their advent is always welcomed. Go where you will in Brazil, you will meet ants. You live, sleep, and eat with them—and eat them, too.

#### ANCIENT CHINESE COFFINS.

A recent number of the "Celestial Empire," referring to a discovery of some ancient graves near Shanghai, gives, says "Nature," an interesting account of Chinese burial in former times. A man of means purchased his coffin when he reached the age of forty. He would then have it painted three times every year with a species of varnish, mixed with pulverized porcelain—a composition which resembled a silicate paint or enamel. The process by which this varnish was made has now been lost to the Chinese. Each coating of this paint was of some thickness, and when dried had a metallic firmness resembling enamel. Frequent coats of this, if the owner lived long, caused the coffin to assume the appearance of a sarcophagus, with a foot or more in thickness of this hard, stone like shell. After death the veins and the cavities of the stomach were filled with quicksilver for the purpose of preserving the body. A piece of jade would then be placed in each nostril and ear, and in one hand, while a piece of bar silver would be placed in the other hand. The body thus prepared was placed on a layer of mercury within the coffin; the latter was sealed, and the whole then committed to its last resting place. When some of these sarcophagi were opened after the lapse of centuries, the bodies were found in a wonderful state of preservation; but they crumbled to dust on exposure to the air. The writer well observes that the employment of mercury by the Chinese of past dynasties for the purpose of preserving bodies ought to form an interesting subject for consideration and discussion in connection with the history of embalming and "mummy making."

## BRITISH AND FOREIGN ITEMS.

THERE are now no Jews either in Bethlehem or Nazareth. MORMON proselytising missionaries have been warned out of Morgan county, Miss.

THE police in Ireland have been diligently searching for the assassins of Lord Cavendish and Mr. Burke, but as yet without results.

IT is rumoured that the minister of a leading Presbyterian London Church is about to resign his charge, and proceed to New Zealand.

THE crime of suttee, or widow-burning, is still openly practised in Nepal, within sixty miles of British territory in Northern India.

A STATUE to Luther is to be erected in Erfurt, to be unveiled next year, which will be the four hundredth anniversary of his birth.

THE workmen constructing a railroad near Denver encountered a buried forest of petrified trees of all sizes, and many varieties turned into agate.

THE Spanish Government is discussing the propriety of conceding oral and public procedure in law courts, a step preliminary to the institution of trial by jury.

THE thirty-two vacant niches in the Scott Monument, Edinburgh, have been filled with statues of Scotch worthies, or of the characters created by the pen of the Wizard of the North.

THE Bible in the Basuto language has been issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society, at a cost of \$20,000. This is the ninth completed Bible in the native languages of Africa.

WILLIAM E. DODGE was re-elected president of the National Temperance Society at its annual meeting in New York. Receipts for the year, \$60,000. Friends of the cause are congratulated upon the marked progress of temperance reform.

PROF. COSSAR EWART, of Aberdeen, has been appointed to the Natural History Chair in Edinburgh University, and Prof. H. Alleyne Nicholson, of St. Andrews, is to succeed him at Aberdeen.

THE General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of the United States, by the very close vote of 616 to 606, have given their congregations the right to use instrumental music if they wish.

THE English Presbyterian Synod have decided by a small majority, after a lengthened discussion, that the office of Moderator of Session, Presbytery, or Synod, shall be limited to ordained ministers.

IT is one of the hopeful signs for England that coopers for the great brewers at Burton-on-Trent are now almost unemployed, and that not half the usual quantity of beer is sent away by rail.

THE cotton planters on the Yazoo river, in Mississippi, reckon that their lands are worth four or five dollars more an acre from the sediment left upon them by the late floods. No ill without its good.

ROME recently celebrated its 2,635th birthday with great enthusiasm. The new excavations at the Pantheon and the Forum were open to the people, and the ruins in and around the Forum were illuminated in the evening.

POPE LEO's physicians urge him to remove at once to some high locality, as his prolonged confinement in the Vatican is seriously affecting his health. It is doubtful if he will obey, as it is part of the policy to keep up the ridiculous complaint that the Pope is a prisoner.

TWO of the Free Church Synods decided recently in favour of liberty to use instrumental music—Aberdeen by 24 to 14, and Fife by 16 to 10. The new Free Church Hymnal is now issued, containing the "Te Deum," the "Gloria in Excelsis," and a collection of Scripture sentences.

THE ladies connected with Dr. Taylor's Tabernacle, New York, have during last winter sent twenty-two well-filled trunks to as many home missionary families. Each trunk contained a general supply of clothing and housekeeping goods, a pulpit suit for the missionary, and about twenty choice volumes. The value of the gifts is £800.

THE census of Calcutta shows that there are 30,400 professing Christians in that city. Of this number 11,095 are Roman Catholics; 8,678 belong to the Church of England and 1,869 to the Church of Scotland; 557 are Baptists; 758 Methodists; 692 Independents, etc. Only 29 are classed as Unitarians and Theists, and 49 as Agnostics.

A MARRIAGE has been arranged between the Hon. and Rev. E. Carr-Glyn, vicar of Kensington, and Lady Mary Campbell, daughter of the Duke of Argyll. It will be remembered that the duke is married to the elder daughter of the Bishop of St. Alban's, so that this noble Presbyterian family is becoming closely connected with the Church of England.

THE receipts of the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions were \$592,289 68, larger than any other year since the reunion, and nearly \$84,000 more than in 1874, when a great effort was made to wipe off a large debt. The receipts of their Board of Home Missions were \$403,109, being \$15,872 less than their payments and \$54,989 less than last year.

THE funeral of Lord Cavendish at Chatsworth called together an assemblage of thirty thousand persons. A special train conveyed from London the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, Mr. Gladstone, and others, and three hundred members of Parliament walked in the procession. The coffin was borne by tenants of the Duke of Devonshire, of whom five thousand were present.