

The Family.

THE FORSAKEN FARMHOUSE

AGAINST the wooded hills it stands,
A host of a dead home, staring through
Its broken lights on wasted lands
Where old time harvests grew
Unprouched, uncrown'd, by scythe and horn,
The poor, forsaken farm-fields lie,
Once rich and safe with golden corn
And pale-green breadths of rye
Of healthful herb and flower bereft,
The garden plot no housewife keeps;
Through weeds and tangle only left
The rake, its tenant, creeps.
A lilac spray, once blossom-clad,
Sways bare before the empty rooms;
Beside the ruddiness porch a sad
Pathetic red rose blooms.
His track in mould and dust of droucht
On floor and heath the squirrel leaves,
And in the fireless chimney's mouth
His web the spider weaves.
The leaning barn, about to fall,
Resounds no more on husking eves;
No cattle low in yard or stall,
No threshers beats his sheaves.
So sad, so drear! It seems almost
Some haunting Presence makes its sign;
That down yon shadowy lane some ghoul
Might drive his spectral line!
— J. G. Whittier, in the February Atlantic.

SEVENTY YEARS AGO.

WHAT a long, long time seventy years seems to look forward to, and yet after all, how short to look back upon. Yes; it is just seventy years since I went to my first school in the little Perthshire village which I have not seen for many a long day. There were no school boards in those days to build gigantic houses with ample playgrounds in the thickest villages, and full of eager interest in the primary education of the small riveties. No; we had to pick up the crumbs of knowledge as we best might, till we were old enough to walk through the summer heat and the winter snows to the parish school

I remember my first school very well indeed. It was held in a humble little cottage—what we called a "but-and-ben." In the "ben" end lived the teacher, a poor sickly lad who had not had strength to fly with his compeers from the village nest, but eked out a scanty living by teaching the A B C and the Proverbs to what would now be called an infant school. The "but" end was the home of the village fiddler, a kind old man who used to play reels and jigs, and delighted to set us frisking about to the music of his violin when our little tasks were done. Each child carried with him to school a lump of peat fuel as a morning offering, so the dark little room, with its small, lozenge-paned window, never wanted a cheerful glow from the rude fireplace; while old Kirsty, the teacher's mother, sat spinning in the ingle-neuk.

Too soon poor Nanny died, and by-and-by we heard with sorrow that the student lad was to take his place; who was to walk daily from his home in the "Moss," get his dinner in my father's house, and for a small pittance conduct our most primitive seminary of learning. Our new teacher, George MacGregor, was a tall, slim youth with bent shoulders, and long fair hair hanging over his forehead, and deep-set blue eyes that always seemed to be looking at something far, far away. The "Moss," from which he hied, was a long tract of land lying between the rivers Forth and Teith. It was covered by the dwellings of crofters locally called "Moss Lairds." The crofts were held chiefly by Highlanders, who gradually cleared the ground, paying no rent for it till it was thoroughly reclaimed. The lairds formed a little community among themselves, and between the boys from the "Moss" and the schoolboys of the neighbouring village as bitter a warfare existed as between Town and Gown in the rough old Oxford days. The sons of the lairds went by the name of "Moss cheepucks." When Lord Kames became the proprietor of Blair Drummond, he found this work of clearing by crofters too slow for him. So he had a wheel erected at the Mill of Torr, which, elevating the water of the Teith twelve feet, dispersed it in little rivulets through the moss. When the upper surface of the turf was loosened it became an easy matter to float it away. Many still living remember the masses of soft, peaty soil which used to be constantly swimming about in the Forth and even found their way to the shores of Holland. After that, the crofts were gradually converted into large farms; and the poor lairds who survived the ruins of their little homesteads had to seek new homes for themselves beyond the seas.

Queer stories were told about the naive sayings and doings of the Moss people. Here is one about Nanny Reid, cousin of a man who rose to high place in the Church of Scotland. The old lady was very hospitable, and when the minister came to visit her one day she filled for him a glass from a treasured bottle, which had been preserved as a gift from the gentry at the "Big House." The minister, never doubting that it was the familiar beverage of the country, took a goodly sip, then suddenly set down the glass with a writhing face. "Tak' aff yer glass, sir!" said Nanny, cordially; "it's guid, white wine vinegar, I assure ye, sir!" Nanny was a humble soul who lived all her days, quite contented, on the "Moss." Her cousin was of another type. Step by step he rose to his eminent position. His ambitious spirit was so well known in the North that when William IV. died one Aberdonian said to another, "Oor — 'll be lookin' oot for the situation, ye'll fin' it!"

From among the good simple people of the "Moss" came our Gregor. The kind ladies of Keir had come to know of his thirst for learning, and they got for him a small bursary, which smoothed the way for his going to the University of Glasgow. When he came home in the long college vacation he was glad to continue his humble work in the village school, and I can hear yet the tones of his Celtic voice checking us as we would gabble over some verse of a psalm with irreverent haste, saying, "Say't la-ang, bairns! say't la-ang." When I was raised to the dignity of going to the parish school, I lost sight of Master Gregor. But at the age of 12, when a boy now-a-days would only be thought fit to leave a primary school, I was sent to the University of Glasgow. There I found Gregor MacGregor—for ill-health and poverty had made

his progress very slow—still plodding away in the Arts course. He looked very gaunt, with his faded red cloak hanging loosely around his spare form. His eyes looked deeper and dreamier than ever, and the pale face was often lit up with the glow of the fervent spirit which burned within him. His heart warmed to his little quondam pupil, and I could give him no greater happiness than by seeking his help in the difficulties of my new tasks. He said it was a kind Providence that gave him the chance of showing his gratitude for all my mother's kindness to him.

Young as I was I could see something of the pure spirit which seemed ever to be soaring heavenwards, when, opening his heart to his boyish listener, he would tell me something of what he longed to do when the Master should give him a place in his vineyard. So regular was Gregor in his habits, leaving his lodgings exactly to a second, and arriving at the very moment at the class-room door, that professors and students alike used to laugh and say they regulated their watches by Gregor.

One morning I stood early at the college gate, waiting till he should come, that I might get a little tip from him about my Latin theme. I looked anxiously at my watch; it must be wrong, for surely Gregor could not fail. Then I saw his class-mates file in, then Prof. Sandford hurried past, but still no Gregor. Something must be wrong, I thought. Soon after a tall young man came striding down the quadrangle. I knew him to be a class mate of Gregor's. To my astonishment he made for me, and, looking down on me kindly, said, "I say, little fellow, isn't MacGregor your tutor?" "He helps me with my Latin, sir, if you mean that," I answered. "Can you show me the way to his 'diggings,' then, my man?" Prof. Sandford is quite excited about his absence this morning; he says there must be something wrong with him, and I am going to hunt him up;—glad to get so easily off the Greek hour, you see!" Only too pleased to have the mystery solved, I flew up the High Street, by the side of tall Leslie, into George Street, and up the long stairs till we arrived, breathless, at the door of the humble attic room where Gregor lived. The door was locked, but a vigorous kick and a shake by the strong arm of Leslie soon burst the frail barrier. The sight which met our eyes made my impetuous companion still, and a strange awe crept into my young heart. Leslie took off his hat reverently and we timidly entered the dimly lighted room. There, in his dingy red cloak, ready, dressed for college, lay Gregor on his knees—dead!

An open Bible was spread before him on the wooden chair. His head had fallen forward on the sacred page, where those mysterious words are written "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for GOD TOOK HIM." AVIN.

MARK LORIMER.

A STORY OF QUEEN MARY'S REIGN.

ON a bright summer's evening, about three hundred years ago, two young men—scarcely to be called men, the one sixteen, the other a year or two older—walked down Cheapside together.

Business was over—people kept early hours then—the clumsy shutters were for the most part closed. Tradesmen lounged at their doors, pretty faces looked out of lattice windows, and apprentices played at clubs, and quarter-staff, or single-stick, in the road, and woke up quiet people with their chatter. (While things were thus, the two young men—Mark Lorimer the younger, and Edward Dawmer the elder—walked down Cheapside together. They were talking very earnestly, and did not seem to heed the boys at play, or the loud laughing that ran through the Chepe, and made the rooks upon St. Mary Arctubus come out of their homes to see what was the matter.

"I am sorry that it should be so," the elder observed; "and sorry that our lot should be cast in such troublesome times."

"Would God," returned Mark, "we knew when they would end!"

"I understand," went on the other, "that there is to be another burning in Smithfield to-morrow, and that Queen Mary and her husband will be present."

"God pity them!" said Mark; "may they find more mercy in the last judgment than they have meted out upon the earth."

"Amen!"

"Why," said Mark, and his face flushed crimson; "I heard, and know it for a truth, that they burnt a child not many days old in the flames with its mother; they drove another frantic and then slew it for its mad words. They are crowding the streets with orphans, and offering up, in the fires that are daily kindled; the best and bravest of the land—"

"Hush, hush!" cried Dawmer; "there are ears everywhere—be careful, for both our sakes."

"I am not afraid," Mark answered, with all a boy's heroism. "I say again that these things ought not to be."

"Yes, yes, that is all very well," Dawmer returned; "but it is not a pleasant thing to be tied to a whipping-post, as more than a score of lads were, not many days ago, and lashed almost to death."

"I would not deny the truth," said Mark, "if the whips were scorpions, and the whipping-post the stake."

"But supposing now," Dawmer asked—oh, so slyly and sofly!—"they were to come to you, and say: 'What do you think about the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper?'"

"What do I think of it?"

"Yes, what is it?"

"Bread and wine."

"But after the prayers of the priest?"

"Bread and wine."

"Why; don't you know," said Dawmer, "that it would be flat heresy to say so?"

"Why?"

"After the words of the priest, it is bread and wine no longer."

The young man laughed.

"What is it then?" he asked.

"The body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"That I deny," said the young man; "and always will deny."

"Well, you know it is better to be cautious," said Dawmer. "Nobody can tell what may happen in these troublesome times. Better, I should think, try some cunning way of getting out of it."

"What!" said Mark, smiling again; "frame some pet verse, like poor Princess Elizabeth; God save her!"

"Christ was the Word that spake it; He took the bread and break it; And what the Word did make it, That I believe and take it."

Thus talking the young men passed on, crossed the Stocks market, and shaped their course for London Bridge, where they parted.

Mark Lorimer lived with his father on this famous old bridge; for in those days it was covered with houses; and had the appearance of a regular street. It was evening, and the sun was setting when Mark reached home. In a small room, which overhung the river, sat his old father; he was watching the stream as it flowed rapidly onward, gurgling and struggling against the piles of the bridge, as it dashed wildly under the narrow arches. The old man turned his head as Mark entered, and clasped his hands. They sat and talked together about the troubles of the period, about the cruelty of Queen Mary, and the dread that was on all those who held the Reformed faith. They talked of those whom they had known, with whom they had often worshipped, but who had suffered death by fire or sword for the faith they held so dear. They sat and talked together till the last rays of the sun had glided away, and the pale moon had arisen in the heavens, and cast its flood of mellow light on the picturesque old city. Then the old man summoned his servant—a godly woman, stricken in years; the cloth was spread, a frugal meal spread out, and they sat down to supper. The old man asked God's blessing on their food; and, as he ended, there was a loud knock at the outer door. Margery withdrew to open it. A few moments more, and a tall well-made man strode into the room. He lifted his cap, as he did so, with a courtly air; then, pointing to a paper which he held in his hand, said: "In Queen Mary's name."

They saw it all. The old man arose, but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. Margery wept aloud, but the young man was gone. The few moments which had elapsed between the knock and the entrance had been sufficient to apprise the old man of his son's danger. The other knew and felt it, and at his sire's command had concealed himself in one of those secret closets with which old houses then abounded.

"Sir," said the officer, "I have come here, commanded to arrest your son. Let him come forth."

"Sir," returned the old man, "my son is but a child; yet do your errand if you list."

"Your son was seen to enter here—he is here now—surrender him at once!"

The old man refused. The officer called aloud to his men, who waited outside; and five or six stout fellows, in leathern jerkins and half-armor, came at his command. They searched and searched in vain; and when every effort proved fruitless, they turned fiercely on the old man, who watched their every movement.

"Old blood shall make way for young blood, if you conceal him longer," said the officer. "As I live, you shall taste the rack for this."

"Spare the green and take the ripe," the old man answered; "and God be judge betwixt us!"

What needs it to repeat all that was said—how oaths were mingled with the holy name of Jesus; and how they roughly used the venerable man, and were about to test him, as they said, by holding his hand over a burning lamp? Just at that moment the secret door was opened, and the young man came forth.

He was thrown into prison that night, and the old man, with a heavy heart, was left in his home. The next day the next he sought to see his son, but sought in vain; on the third he was condemned—that he who had betrayed him had borne witness against him—conclusive evidence, they said; of guilt. This fellow was but a lad himself, no other than Edward Dawmer—Judas that he was!—he had sold his friend for the blood money, and he had left him now to die.

So there was another high holiday. Crowds thronged the way again from Newgate to Smithfield; thousands gathered in that open space; and city officers and soldiers kept guard about the stakes, which were ready for the victims. Six or seven were to die that day, and huge bundles of fagots were being brought together for the burning. At the hour fixed, the prisoners were brought through the street—four men, two women, and the lad Mark Lorimer. They were exhorted by the priests to repent, but remained true to the gospel; and were fastened by strong chains and iron rings to the stakes, the fagots piled about them, and at a given signal fired. So the black smoke curled up, and the fire leaped and danced, and some of the people wept. It was more than an hour before it was all over, and then the people went their way. So perished young Mark Lorimer—a victim to the persecution of Queen Mary's reign.

If you had entered the old house on the bridge, and gone with Margery to the little room that overlooked the Thames, you would have seen the old man kneeling down. If you had touched him, you would have found him—dead!

NOTES BY "PHILO."

PERMANENT MEMBERS OF ASSEMBLY.

IT is difficult for those not acquainted sufficiently with the nature of our Presbyterianism to understand how it comes to pass, that certain ministers and elders of the Church come to be fixtures in the General Assembly. The ordinary pastors have to take their turn in attending that court. It can get on without them when it is not their turn to be present. They stay at home contentedly and allow others to go and do the Church's work. But in regard to a small number of their brethren it appears that it is necessary they should be in the Assembly every year. It seems to be coming to be believed, that without these half dozen or more the General Assembly could not get on. Probably these brethren come gradually to believe that themselves. Hence every year the main part of the Assembly's work comes to be done by the same men. The impression grows by degrees that no one else could do it. And already we see the impression deepening that no one else should be allowed to do it. This state of things is not so much an honour to these worthy men, as it is a humiliation to the Church. For it is practically a confession that there are only some half-dozen men in the Church competent to conduct affairs in the General Assembly. If this state of things is not to be resisted and a change sought, the Assembly might as well remit the business of the Church to these brethren and allow the others to stay at home.

IT IS AN INJUSTICE.

INASMUCH as these permanent members keep out other brethren who have a better right to be there. Not that they are superior to the permanent members, but that they have an equal right to go as commissioners to the supreme court, and might go, but for the fact that Doctor this or Professor that has to go again. Not that he has sought the position, but to senu plain Mr. A or B; who for years

has never been at a supreme court, and to leave the Professor or Doctor at home, would seem discourteous. It would appear as if presbyteries were actually coming to take this view of the case, and if they are, or if they act as if they did, need we wonder that the permanent member should think himself indispensable? Mr. A and Mr. B would like to go occasionally, have a right to go, and if they went, would probably be of as much use as the others, but they must stay at home. If they went, one of the fixtures would be displaced. If the Church submits to this sort of thing a little longer, we will have a spurious episcopacy as firmly established as if it were ordained by law. Already a look of surprise greets any member who ventures to assert his opinion in opposition to one of these brethren. And seldom is a motion allowed to pass, however adequate, unless it has passed the supervision of a permanent member.

IT IS INEXPEDIENT

AND injurious to the interests of the Church to set up a few men who gradually assume the rôle of leaders. It introduces a personal and even a political element into church affairs. It tends to the growth and perpetuation of abuses. It is a hindrance to the just settlement of questions. It is apt to engender that blight to all fair dealing, a party spirit. It grows imperceptibly into a settled ordinance of the Church, and destroys that freedom and independence of discussion which are essential to healthy church life.

IT HINDERS DEVELOPMENT OF GIFTS

IN the ordinary pastorate. Who will say that among the hundreds of pastors whose lives have been spent in bearing the burden of the Church's work, there are not those who could make useful contributions to the administration of church affairs? Yet these are not allowed to do so. The system of leadership prevents it. Only those are encouraged whose ideas are in harmony with the leaders. Anything original or in the way of a new departure is frowned upon. It is not the offspring of a leader. It is the child perhaps of a rustic parent and hence it meets with a cold reception and a proud dismissal. On this account, already able men in the Church refuse to go to the Assembly. They are willing to let the work be absorbed by the few rather than contend for a hearing. Hence also many go to the Assembly who take but little interest in its proceedings. They know that only a permanent member can get anything carried through, and they know that discussion has no effect on a leader's mind, or the mind of a blind follower—hence they remain silent or indifferent. A very short time now in our Church, unless there is a revolt against this state of things, will produce what is seen in church courts in Scotland, a large and intelligent Church held in submission to the views and guidance of a score of its more notorious office-bearers. Such a state of things also tends

TO NARROW THE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH.

FOR no small number of men, however acquainted with church work, can contain all the ideas and views of church policy or procedure, that are open to the guidance and acceptance of the Church. Probably no class of mind is so narrow and ungenerous as the ecclesiastical politician. However good the man may be, however honourable, and all our leaders are of course good and honourable men, the habit of managing grows until it exercises a deadly power over the mind. The love of power, and the custom of setting aside the opinion of others grow by exercise, until fairness of view and candour of spirit become difficult. The Church has the matter in its own hands yet. But every year is making it more difficult to deal with. It is not the interest of the fixed members to touch it. They will naturally resist any change. Even good and wise men, when the Church insists on leaning on them, come to think they cannot be dispensed with. They come to think that there is no other man capable of filling their place. We need not look to them therefore to encourage any change. And such is the power of traditionary feeling, such already the subserviency of the Church, that it is very doubtful if the expression of a desire for a change of law will come from any quarter. It is a discouraging state of mind for the Church to get into. Our colleges now occupy much of the time of our Assemblies. They also supply a number of the permanent members. And it would make little change on the present state of things if pastors and elders stayed at home and let the colleges supply a permanent staff to do the work of the Assembly. We have not referred to elders in these remarks, because practically the elders take no independent stand in church courts. Even on financial matters and matters of business, in which we so often hear they tower above the pastorate, they follow where they are led. A principal can lead them whithersoever he lists. In politics they are accustomed, as most of our people, to follow with blind obedience the dictates of the party leader, and in church affairs, so far as any independent action is concerned, their voice is never heard. Whatever the elders said should be done, would be done, if they would speak untriedly. And it would be good for the Church if clerical influence were less widely felt than it is at present.

IT IS CURIOUS WHO GIVE.

"It's curious who give. There's Squire Wood, he's put down \$2; his farm's worth \$10,000, and he's money at interest. And there's Mrs. Brown, she's put down \$5; and I don't believe she's had a new gown in two years, and her bonnet ain't none of the newest, and she's them three grand children to support since her son was killed in the army; and she's nothing but her pension to live on. Well, she'll have to scrimp on butter and tea for awhile, but she'll pay it. She just loves the cause; that's why she gives."

These were the utterances of Deacon Daniel after we got home from church the day pledged were taken for contributions to foreign missions. He was reading them off, and I was taking down the items, to find the aggregate. He went on.

"There's Maria Hill, she's put down \$5; she teaches in the North District, and don't have but \$20 a month, and pays her board; and she has to help support her mother. . . . And there's John Baker; he's put down one dollar, and he'll chew more than that worth of tobacco in a fortnight. 'Cyrus Dunning, \$4.' Well, he'll have to do some extra painting with that crippled hand, but he'll do it, and sing the Lord's songs while he's at work. 'C. Williams, \$10.' Good for him. He said the other night to prayer-meeting that he'd been reading his Bible more than usual lately. Maybe he read about the rich young man who went away sorrowful, and didn't want to be in his company."—Advancer.