

## The Other Half of the Garden

REV. DR. JOHN MACLEAN, WINNIPEG.

**B**EHIND my old shanty stands the garden, a heap of wild flowers, and a few trees for the comfort of the birds. In the late afternoon of the summer, I lie with my face nestling in the soft grass, and kiss mother earth for the sheer love of it. When I was younger, and my limbs were not bothered with the "rheumatiz," I was wont to go in the early morning and sit on the sunlit side, and drink in the pleasures, holding fellowship with my little brothers of the air and the flowers. I tasted the berries on every bush, the bitter and the sweet, and was well content.

Those were my thoughtless days, when I sang for myself alone, and had no care for the listening leaves, or the feelings of the tiny creatures that crossed by path. I was a vagrant child of nature bent on pleasure, and no disciple of Saint Francis. I was always fond of the daisy "wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower," and the wild bluebells, and I well remember a day that as I gathered a bunch of them it began to rain, and I fled into the shanty. Flowers are flowers, but the mood had passed with the coming of the shower.

Since I have grown older, the turf is worn smooth in front of the seat under the gnarled oak, in the other half of the garden. When the shadows linger through the day, I sit and muse, and grow wiser with the passing hours. It is a queer notion and it all came through the discovery of a dusty and well-worn volume, wherein I have learned some of the secrets of the shady garden nook. The writer had gone far in the quest of happiness, and eaten the fruit of all the trees, carefully shunning the untrodden path of sacrifice, until near the close of his days, he learned that the secret of life is suffering.

I was not ready to pass out of Eden into Gethsamene, and some years were away, before I had the courage to cross the Rubicon. In the narrow shelves close by the fireplace where a few choice volumes are kept for frequent use, I happened to turn over the leaves of a folio, and my eye fell upon three great names. I knew them well, but had never put them together in the same gallery; Dante, the "voice of ten silent centuries," with the simple laurel on his head; Carlyle, the censor of all England, and Christ, the Master of all nations and times. What grace, dignity and sadness lingered in their faces!

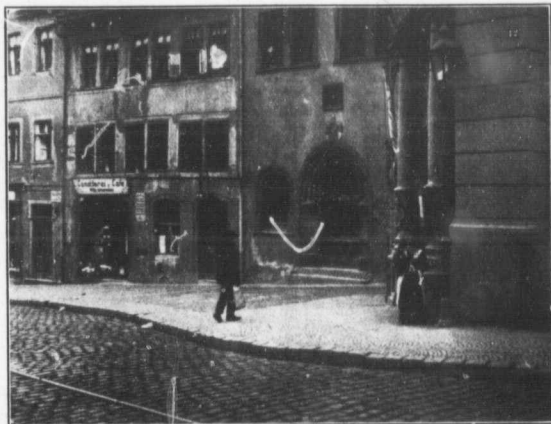
Out of pain and sorrow were the stars born, and the worlds built, and a groan the anthem of every new birth, whether of books, or planets, or men. All great souls have found a retreat in the other half of the garden, and all great poems have been written on the moss-covered seat under the gnarled oak. It was there that Dante wrote the Divine Comedy, and Tennyson, the In Memoriam. Sorrow is the supreme emotion of which man is capable, and the type and test of all great art.

The other night I heard a quaint songster sing a plaintive anthem in one of the apple trees, and from his retirement, the music borne on the air came wafted to my ears, and I trembled with joy. Lately I have moved my armchair, the friend of many years, from a dark window to the west, and I cannot give any reason for my choice. But, that is what I have been doing all my life, moving chairs, taking small journeys, eating and drinking without any reason.

It was not by any chance of mine that I left the sunlit side of the garden, and retired to the seat under the oak, and that is one of the sweet and unconscious blessings of life. For somehow we are led, and sometimes driven into the deep

recesses where light and shade are intermingled, and there hold communion with great passions born of the years.

I am not a gull scholar, yet my head was gray, before I could understand Goethe's lines, "who never ate his bread in sorrow, . . . He knows you not, ye heavenly powers," or Dante's strange words, "Sorrow remarries us to God." I could not interpret in the lusty days of life, the prose poem of the man, who from the bronze image of the "Pleasure that liveth for a moment" was to make



HOUSE IN WHICH MARTIN LUTHER DIED.

Photo by Mr. Malott.

the image of the "Sorrow that abideth for ever."

I have heard the unmeaning and untranslatable laughter of the man of coarse and callous temperament, and did not understand it, but I have never heard a groan or a sigh which did not appeal to my heart, for pain wears no mask. A noted English writer once remarked to a lady, that there was enough suffering in one London narrow lane to show that God did not love men, and that wherever there was any sorrow, though but that of a child in some little garden weeping over a fault that it had, or had not committed, the whole face of creation was completely marred. He was wrong and the lady told him so. And he learned the truth so well, that he afterward confessed, that love of some kind was the only possible explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering in the world. If the world had been built of sorrow, it has been built of love, for in no other way could the soul of man for whom the world was made, reach the full stature of its perfection.

"What is sorrow?" asks Richard H. Stoddard in some beautiful verses. Sorrow is a garden, and joy a rose which grows in it. It is a gloomy cage, and joy is a little bird singing therein. It is an endless sea, and joy is a little pearl, "round which the waters whirl." Hopeless sorrow has no virtue, but there is something real and worthy in genuine grief, that those who experience it are loved by their fellows, as possessing a virtue which they admire, and enjoying a blessing that makes them akin to the angels. Dante placed love in the Inferno those who wilfully lived in sadness,

though none were sadder than the poet himself.

Refinement of soul comes to those who seek not sorrow, but are compelled through the mysteries of Providence, to walk alone through the valley of shadows, for as time mellow the surfaces of pictures, so does a great sorrow long borne, imprint a softness upon the character, and beget beauty to the whole life. The tender yearning for the loved and lost, who have gone before to the better land, refines and elevates the mind. Real suffering begets sympathy for other folks, brings peace to our own souls, for

" Oftentimes celestial benedictions Assume this dark disguise."

Beauty is born in the other half of the garden, for the man who finds not thorns and briars on the road of life, will never reach the land where sorrow is unknown. The sorrow of redemption has a saving message for every penitent soul, and in the Penitential Psalms there is an appeal to the heart of the world, while the Man of Sorrows becomes the friend of publicans and sinners. Without the other half of the garden there would have been no redemption, without sacrifice and sorrow there would have been no Christ as the Saviour of man, for salvation comes by the path of penitence, as purity follows the purging of the cross through fire.

Come into the garden and rest awhile, away from the din of the city, and the strife of sinful men, and keep to the other half of the garden far from the madding crowd, that you may hold fellowship in the sacred place with the highest and best of men.

### WANTED

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