

Family Reading.

THE COBBLER OF HAMBURG.
On a fine summer's evening, as crowds of artisans were passing along the streets of Hamburg, to drink coffee and to hear the music at Elb Ermelohung, or Altona, a shoemaker was busy cobbling his shoe beneath an awning near his door. Above his head was a starling, which sang and chattered, and seemed to keep up a busy talk with its kind possessor,—now turning his head and looking down upon his bald pate with a most curious eye, as a master would watch and examine an apprentice at his work; and then, as if quite satisfied, would ruffle his feathers, fly up to his perch, and pour forth every note, and bit of song, and witty saying which he had learned, to the great delight of old Hans the cobbler. "Ah! du lieber Vogel!" Hans would say, half-aloud—"thou art a happy bird and well provided for; and why should not I be a happy Christian with such mercies?"—and he would begin to sing one of his fine old German psalm-tunes.

While thus engaged on the said evening, hardly looking from the large shoe before him, and heedless of the crowded street, a young man who was passing by stopped and addressed him, saying, "Well, friend—beg pardon—but you seem merry fellow!" The person who thus spoke had the look and dress of a student. His features were dark and sombre, with the iron black eye, the high nose, and rather sallow skin which marked the descendant of Abraham. Hans looked up to him and replied with a cheerful voice, "Merry!—to be sure, I am right merry, my brother; and why should I not be so?" "All are not so!" replied the student, with a sigh and a shrug of the shoulders. "Why should you not? you asked," continued the student. "I would reply, that your own poverty might afford a sufficient cause for sadness in you. But you have no living thing, I suppose, to take care of, but the bird up there, who seems, by the way, to be as jolly as yourself!" "And why should he not be? my little speckled-breast!" said Hans, chirruping to his starling. "But he is not all my family, young man; for I have a wife and seven children to provide for with these hands; but you see I can sing at my work."

The student was silent; and he began to think of all the sorrow he had experienced in the midst of books and literature; and in spite of having youth and health on his side, with fair prospects of success in the world; yet, he knew not why or how, a sadness like the pall of the dead often rested on his spirit; and questionings from the endless future and from beyond the grave came to him in solitary hours, to which he could give no answer; and he had no peace from thoughts of God, when he had any thoughts of him at all; and he knew not Jesus Christ! He was a Jew; and felt that for his soul all old things had passed away, but nothing had as yet become new! And so, while in one of those gloomy moods, and when on his way to seek some repose from the music, and enjoyment from the company in the public gardens, he was arrested by the busy and happy cobbler, and by a sudden impulse was induced to address him, in order to discover from what source one so poor, and yet so contented, drew his happiness.

Again resuming the conversation, he said, "I confess, friend, I am surprised to see a poor artisan like you so cheerful." "Poor!" exclaimed Hans; "how knowest thou, friend, how my account stands with the bank? Poor! I am richer than thou knowest." "It may be—it may be," said the student with a smile; "I must have heard of, though I have forgot, thy name in the exchange, or heard of the sailings of thy ships, or when in the bank?" "Enough," said Hans, "thou hast confessed thy ignorance of me!"—and then stopping his work, laying his hand on the student's arm, and looking at him with an expression of countenance from which all fear was banished, he said calmly and solemnly, "Stranger, I am not poor. Don't pity me—envy me; for be it known to you that I am a King's son!"

The student started—made a low bow—and departed. "Poor fellow—poor fellow!" he muttered to himself. "And art thou happy only because thou art mad? and art thou able to rejoice only because all realities are to thee dreams, and all dreams realities? I have sought strength and comfort at thy mouth in vain!"

A week passed and again the student traversed the same street; and there, in the old place, was Hans, busy as ever in his stall; and the starling as happy as ever in his cage. The student, as he passed him, took off his cap, and said, "Good evening to your royal highness!" "Halt, friend!" cried Hans, with a cheerful but firm voice, "and come here to me for a few minutes. I am glad I have seen you again. You left me abruptly yester evening."

I suppose you thought me mad. But I am not so; but in sober earnest. I tell you again I am a King's son; and when you interrupted me, I was singing a song about my kingdom. Would you like to hear it?" "Surely, if it pleases your royal highness," replied the Jew, with a benevolent smile, and anxious to gratify his strange acquaintance, whose insanity he never doubted.

Hans, having provided a seat for the young Jew, began to sing a hymn on "Thy Kingdom come;" and when it was finished, perceiving that it was listened to with apparently deep interest, he asked if he understood its meaning. The Jew shook his head. Upon which Hans proceeded to explain all he knew—and it was much—about the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the glory of its King. Beginning with the promise uttered in Eden of one who should be conqueror, and bruise the serpent's head, he pointed out the growth of prophecy, from age to age, regarding the kingdom of the redeemer—showing how "all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms, concerning Christ;" how it behoved the Messiah to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory; but all power was now given him; how he was now establishing on earth a universal kingdom, "never to be moved," which embraced Jew and Gentile in one citizenship; and how every subject in his kingdom was a son and heir, yes, a "joint-heir" with

Christ the King, and would "reign with him forever and ever!"

As old Hans expatiated on these promises, his work was laid aside, his eye beam'd with love and hope; and deep feeling gave eloquence and grace to his language. The Jew sat as a child at his feet, gazing up to him with his full black eye, and so absorbed by all he heard, for the first time in his life, of the promise made of old unto his fathers, that he was roused from his waking dream only by Hans taking him by the hand, and saying, "Now thou seest how I am a King's son, and why I am happy; for I know and love this Jesus, and all things are mine, whether life or death, things present or things to come; and, young man," he asked with emphasis, "believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest! For unless I mistake thy countenance greatly, thy father did; and thou, my son, believing in them, must also believe in whom they have foretold, and whom God hath sent to perform the mercy promised to thy fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to thy father Abraham."

The Jew was silent. Unutterable thoughts passed through his mind. "Where?" he asked meekly, "can I learn more of this? for I see that thou believest and hast peace!" "From this Book," said Hans, handing him a Bible. "Go home and read there about the kingdom, and review to me when thou hast studied the passages I shall point out to thee—and then thou art a happy bird and well provided for; and why should not I be a happy Christian with such mercies?"—and he would begin to sing one of his fine old German psalm-tunes.

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AT THE DOOR.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." At what door? The barred door of your heart, fellow sinner; your heart, defiled, darkened, perverted, burdened, alienated from God and holiness, greatly needing the entrance of some one who can teach all this, restore it to God, and make it an abode of purity, love and peace.

Who stands there? Your best friend. He who has done for you already what no other being could or would; who has made possible the change you need, and impresses urgently upon your acceptance the provided mercy.

How does he knock? Reason asserts your true condition, your deep necessity, for just such a Saviour. Conscience thunders its commendation of your guilt. Memory peoples the past with accusing witnesses. Apprehension looks forward to dreaded, deserved ills that the future has in store.

He has knocked long. By his Word, pressed upon you in early childhood by Christian parents, friends, teachers, pastors, or, in later life pondered in the solitude of your closet. By his Providence, preserving life and health, or sending sickness; supplying every want, directing all your ways, protecting from danger, giving friends and removing them—in each case for your good. By his Spirit, awakening, convincing, reproving, rebuking, leading others around you to repentance, pardon, and peace; convincing you that you have only to accept the proffered mercy to be saved.

But he will not always knock. There is a time we know not when, A point we know not where, That goes or deserts us. To pass that limit is to die."

Many a soul has passed it, and found henceforth the fountains of feeling for ever frozen, the ears deaf to every persuasion, the soul unmoved even at the prospect of eternal misery, its destiny sealed with as much certainty as if the eternal darkness of despair already shrouded it. Hear that knock. Open and admit him. Then he and his Father will love you, come unto you, and make their abode with you. He is himself a "door," the only door of hope and safety for your soul. Knock, and shall be opened unto you. Still persist in your refusal, and you may be long knock at the door and find it shut.

There are others than thy Saviour about the door of thy heart. "If thou dost not weep—just thy case in this refusal—"sin lieth at the door. Death, too, lies at the door. The entrance thou refusest to a pleading Saviour, death at any moment force. Christ will never force an entrance. If he enters, it must be at thy own request.

He who knocks at thy heart's door in love and compassion, will soon appear before thee in another character.

"Behold the Judge standeth before the door." Are ye prepared to meet him with your heart still closed; to hear him say, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh?"

Are ye prepared to endure eternally that most terrible of all wrath, "the wrath of the Lamb?"

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